

# READING ROMANS 5:12-21 IN LIGHT OF ROMAN IMPERIAL DOMINATION: UNDERSTANDING PAUL'S APOCALYPTIC RESPONSE

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## **ABSTRACT**

Romans 5:12-21 has attracted a variety of complex interpretations. It has been read (1) as a theological treatise of original sin (Augustine); (2) as a textual support for the doctrine of justification by faith alone (Luther and the Reformers); and (3) as Paul's discourse of cosmic powers of sin and death that hold people in bondage and God's salvific intervention to liberate human beings from cosmic powers of sin and death (contemporary "apocalyptic" school). Three major problems have arisen from reading the passage through these lenses. First, the passage is studied with lack of proper attention to the Roman imperial context in which the text was produced. Second, sin and salvation are over-spiritualized and personalized such that these concepts are rarely applied to concrete contemporary socio-political issues that affect the lives of people today. The result is not only a disjuncture between theology and ethics, but also the disconnection between the Christian kerygma and sociopolitical realities. Third, the rhetorical function of the text for its immediate audience is often underexplored. The implication is that theologians speculate on the themes of sin and salvation in Rom 5:12-21 without paying adequate attention to the concrete ideologies and behaviors that Paul was challenging nor the practices he was calling his audience to embody as a way of counteracting the systemic sins and evils.

This study offers an alternative reading of Adam-Christ antithesis in Rom 5:12-21 in light of Roman imperial domination and Paul's apocalyptic anti-imperial discourse using two contemporary frameworks—empire and postcolonial criticism. Using these frameworks, I read the Adam-Christ antithetical discourse in Rom 5:12-21 as Paul's critique of the realities of sin and death as embodied by the Roman imperial power. Paul engages in this critique by means of typological reflection on Adam and Christ—the two historical figures whose actions reveal two contrasting ways of being in the world that result either in death or life. Read against the background of Roman imperial domination in the first century CE, I argue that Paul's personification of sin and death as forces of domination, enslavement, and death-dealing in Rom 5:12-21 can be understood as the way that colonized subjects, such as Paul, give coded expression to the multifaceted experiences of colonial domination, as well as the culture of death that were prevalent within the Roman Empire. In Rom 5:12-21, Paul invites his audience to embody Jesus' obedience and justice as a way of countering the sinful praxes that he traced their root to Adam. In this way, Christ's believers can participate in the new age that God inaugurates through the events of Christ and the divine Spirit.

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to many African women who are victims of male violence



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## ABBREVIATIONS

AB	Anchor Bible
AD	Agamben's Dictionary
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJA	American Journal of Archaeology
AJRH	African Journal of Reproductive Health
AJSR	American Journal of Sociological Research
AnBib	Analecta biblica
AOTC	Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries
AUSS	Andrews University Seminary Studies
AYBRL	Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library
BCT	The Bible & Critical Theory
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BET	Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology
Bib	Biblica
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation
BJRL	Bulletin of the John Rylands Library
BSac	Bibliotheca sacra
CA	Classical World
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CC	Concordia Commentary
CCSC	Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture
CEJL	Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature

CJAS	Canadian Journal of African Studies / Revue Canadienne des Études Africaines
CL	Classical Philology
CPT	Contours of Pauline Theology
CTQ	Concordia Theological Quarterly
DOTWPW	Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry & Writings
EA	Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism
EBC	The Expositor's Bible Commentary
EJC	Edo Journal of Counselling
EP	Encyclopedia of Rape
ES	Emerging Scholars
ESJ	European Scientific Journal
FOTL	The Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GPBS	Global Perspective on Biblical Studies
HBT	Horizons in Biblical Theology
HCHCB	Hermeneia: A Critical & Historical Commentary on the Bible
HSM	Harvard Semitic monographs
HSS	Harvard Semitic Studies
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
ICC	International critical commentary
IJBS	International Journal of Business and Social Science
IOS	Israel Oriental Studies
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature

JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JFSR	Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion
JHI	Journal of the History of Ideas
JOG	Journal of Obstetrics and Gynaecology
JR	Journal of Religion
JPAS	Journal of Pan African Studies
JRWG	Journal of Research on Women and Gender
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the study of Judaism
JSNT	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSNTSS	Journal for the Study of the New Testament. Supplement Series
JSOT	Journal for the Study of Old Testament
JSP	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha
JSPSS	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha. Supplement Series
JTS	The Journal of Theological Studies
JWHC	Journal of Women's Health Care
LBS	Linguistic Biblical Studies
LHBOTS	Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies
LNTS	Library of New Testament Studies
NAC	New American Commentary
NAC-SBT	New American Commentary Studies in the Bible & Theology
NCB	The New Century Bible Commentary
NIB	New Interpreter's Bible
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum Supplements

NTM	New Testament monographs
NTS	New Testament Studies
NTSI	The New Testament and the Scriptures of Israel
OTL	Old Testament Library
PCC	Paul in critical contexts
PNTC	Pillar New Testament commentary
PTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
PUD	Paul and the Uprising of the Dead
RDL	Anamorphosis – Revista Internacional de Direito e Literatura
Relig	Religions
RSR	Routledge Studies in Religion
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature Early Judaism and Its Literature
SBT	Studies in Biblical theology
S&I	Scripture and Interpretation
SGBC	The Story of God Bible Commentary
SHBC	Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJT	Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Paper
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
SS	Semeia Studies
ST	Studia Theologica
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah
TAPA	Transactions of the American Philological Association
TDOT	Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament

TTCS	Teach the Text Commentary Series
TS	Theological Studies
TAPA	Transactions of the American Philological Association
TSK	Theologische Studien und Kritiken,
UBCS	Understanding the Bible Commentary Series
VT	Vetus Testamentum
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum Supplements
ZAW	Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
WBC	Westminster Bible Companion
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WC	Westminster Commentaries
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
ZECNT	Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testamen

## CHAPTER ONE

### GENERAL INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

Romans 5:12-21 has long been recognized as a foundational text for Paul's theological discourse on sin and salvation. Using the narratives of Adam and Jesus, the two figures who represent two contrasting temporal epochs (the age of sin and death, and the age of grace and new life), Paul expounds on two different ways of being in the world, one of which results in death, the other in life. In Rom 5:12-21, Paul conceptualizes sin and salvation as antithetical realms. The realm of sin and death stretches from the *aeon* of Adam to Moses, an era when sin and death reigned supreme over human beings, while the realm of salvation began with Christ and now stretches to believers. In the text, Paul conceives salvation not only as a liberation from the enslaving powers of sin, but also as a transition from the realm of sin and death to the realm of grace, righteousness, and new life. In this passage, Paul argues that before Christ's coming, all people following the example of Adam sinned and consequently came under the power of sin and death. But now, a new age of grace, righteousness, and new life has dawned for humanity through Jesus the Messiah, whose single act of righteousness sets the pattern by which God justifies and grants eternal life to all people (5:18-21).

For centuries, Rom 5:12-21 has been read predominantly from the perspectives of western theologies and hermeneutics (oftentimes written by men) which interpret the text mainly as an abstract theological treatise of inherited sin (the so-called "universal human predicament"), and the consequent imputation of Christ's righteousness on the godless through faith alone. Two major problems have arisen from reading Rom 5:12-21 through



this interpretive lens. First, the text is studied with lack of proper attention to the sociopolitical context that shaped Paul's discourse. Consequently, the rhetorical function of the text for its immediate audience is underexplored. The result is that theologians speculate on the themes of sin and salvation in Rom 5:12-21, exploring neither the concrete behaviors that Paul was challenging nor the practices he was calling his audience to embody as a way of counteracting the old way of existing. Second, sin and salvation (justification) are so spiritualized and individualized that these concepts are rarely applied to concrete contemporary sociopolitical issues that affect the lives of people. The result is not only a disjuncture between theology and ethics, but also a separation between ecclesial and sociopolitical realities. When Rom 5:12-21 is read as an abstract theological treatise, certain existential questions suffer from scholarly neglect.

This study offers an alternative reading of Adam-Christ antithesis in Rom 5:12-21 in light of Jewish apocalyptic and anti-Roman imperial discourses, using empire and postcolonial criticisms which pay close attention to the Roman imperial socio-political context of the text. Using these two frameworks, I read Rom 5:12-21 not as an abstract theological speculation about sin and salvation, but as Paul's theological critique of the social sins that have left many, especially women, at the margins of empires, whether ancient or contemporary, as well as his summons to all Christ's believers to participate in Christ's salvific mission of creating a new world order through just deeds. This study intends to reconstruct the background and nature of the soteriology of Rom 5:12-21, exploring especially the social and theological implications of Paul's theological discourse for women who have suffered multifaceted oppression, domination, violence, and systemic injustice. In the course of this study, other important questions about the text arise as well: What background best explains Paul's Adam-Christ's polarity? What is the rhetorical function and theological significance of Rom 5:12-21 for its audience? What

manifestations of sin, evil, and death do Paul allude to within the context of the first century Roman Empire especially as he personifies sin and death in Rom 5:12-21?

## 1.2 Thesis Statement

The core argument of this study is that Paul's personification of sin and death as forces of domination, enslavement, and death-dealing in Rom 5:12-21 can be understood as the way that colonized subjects such as Paul give coded expression to the complex and multifaceted experiences of colonial domination and violence, as well as the culture of death that were prevalent within the Roman Empire. In Rom 5:12-21, Paul offers an apocalyptic and theological critique of the realities of sin and death in our world, especially as concretized and embodied by first century Roman imperial powers. For Christ's believers, the text functions as a clarion call for an embodied justice as a way of participating in the new age which God inaugurated through the events of Christ and the Spirit. For contemporary African readers, especially women who have to face the systemic sins of patriarchal and colonial domination, Paul's discourse of justification (salvation) in Rom 5:12-21 acquires transformative and liberative meaning.

## 1.3 Statement of Problem

Pauline texts often display considerable tension and ambivalence, a reality recognized even in biblical times, as intimated by the author of 2 Pet 3:15-16. No one knows now the exact letter(s) of Paul that the author of 2 Peter had in mind, but Paul's Letter to the Romans has long been recognized as a challenge to understand, with historical critics and theological exegetes finding Rom 5:12-21 to be particularly a hard nut to crack. From a historical point of view, scholars are still debating the origin of Paul's Adam-Christ typology, pointedly asking what context or framework informs Paul's Adam-Christ

antithetical discourse. Two broad proposals, arising from two schools of thought, have competed for acceptance since the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The first proposal, which argues that the Greco-Roman background is paramount, originates from the History of Religions School (*Religionsgeschichtliche Schule*). Though scholars vary in their presentations, what unites this school of thought is the view that the mythical and anthropomorphic figure known as the Primal Man (“*Archanthropos*”), whether in Oriental or Hellenistic sources, lies at the heart of Paul’s Adam-Christ typology in Rom 5:12-21. Important proponents of this perspective include Richard Reitzenstein, Wilhelm Bousset, Rudolf Bultmann, Egon Bradenburger, Karl Barth, and Walter Schmithals.<sup>1</sup> For these scholars, the Gnostic or Iranian myth of a Primal Man (*Urmensch*-redeemer) constitutes the background of Paul’s Adam-Christ narrative both in Rom 5:12-21 and in 1 Cor 15:21-22, 45-49. The Gnostic view has been rejected by some scholars based on recent research, which has shown that Gnosticism and particularly the Gnostic Redeemer myth are found in second and third century sources, and thus postdate the New Testament writings, including those of Paul.<sup>2</sup> A second reason why some scholars are convinced that Paul’s Adam/Christ narrative cannot be derived from a Gnostic myth is that the ontological status and function of the Gnostic Primal Man vary from that of Adam in Paul’s letters. While the Gnostic redeemer myth is constructed on a doctrine of how the world came into being (cosmology), Paul employed the Adam story for a soteriological purpose.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Karl Bultmann, “Adam and Christ According to Romans 5,” in *Currents Issues in New Testament Interpretation: Essays in Honor of Otto A. Piper*, ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (London: SMC, 1962), 143–65; Egon Brandenburger, *Adam und Christus: exegetisch-religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Rom. 5, 12-21 (1. Kor. 15)*, WUNT 7 (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1962); Walter Schmithals, *Gnosticism in Corinth: An Investigation of the Letters to the Corinthians* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1971), 169–70; Karl Barth, *Christ and Adam: Man and Humanity in Romans 5*, SJT Occasional Papers 5 (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963).

<sup>2</sup> Seyoon Kim, *The Origin of Paul’s Gospel*, WUNT 2/4 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1984), 163.

<sup>3</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 124–25.

Today, most scholars seek an explanation of Paul's Adam Christology in Rom 5:12-21 in Jewish sources. The move to locate the source of Paul's Adam Christology in his Jewish heritage originates from scholars within the Salvation History School. This approach to Pauline studies dates back to Albert Schweitzer, who contended that the Jewish context, particularly the Jewish apocalyptic worldview, provides the best hermeneutical lens for a proper understanding of Jesus and early Christian writers, including Paul, as opposed to the Hellenistic worldview and categories.<sup>4</sup> Today many Pauline scholars have adopted this position. Though differing in details, these scholars are unanimous in locating the origin of Paul's Adam-Christ typology in his Jewish heritage, including the creation account in Genesis 1-3,<sup>5</sup> Philo,<sup>6</sup> rabbinic sources,<sup>7</sup> and apocalyptic writings.<sup>8</sup> Major textual support for this line of reasoning is that Paul often appeals to Jewish Scriptures and extra-biblical traditions to support his Christological arguments. For example, in 1 Cor 15:45, where Paul makes his first such explicit use of the figure of Adam, he directly cites Gen 2:7. In this way, Paul underscores that he has the biblical Adam in mind as he writes this text. The same could also be said of Rom 5:12-21.

Although I identify with this hermeneutical school, the version of the salvation history interpretive lens that this study identifies with is the apocalyptic-eschatological framework. This school of thought argues that the apocalyptic periodization of history and its two-age schema is the conceptual framework that best accounts for the Adam-Christ narrative in Rom 5:12-21. While I identify with this school of thought, I find the current

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<sup>4</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

<sup>5</sup> A. J. M. Wedderburn, "Adam in Paul's Letter to the Romans," in *Studia Biblica 1978, 3: Papers on Paul and Other New Testament Authors*, JSNTSup 3, ed. E. A. Livingstone (Sheffield: JSOT, 1980), 413-30; Robin Scroggs, *The Last Adam: A Study in Pauline Anthropology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1966).

<sup>6</sup> For scholars in favor of Philonic background, see Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1284.

<sup>7</sup> W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, 1955), 53-55.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

argument of a strict dichotomy between the two ages in Paul's apocalyptic eschatology problematic. For some, including Ernst Käsemann,<sup>9</sup> Louis Martyn,<sup>10</sup> Martinus de Boer,<sup>11</sup> and Beverly Roberts Gaventa,<sup>12</sup> the relationship between the old age and the new age is conceived in terms of an apocalyptic invasion in which there is a radically disjunctive dualism between the ages. I believe that this view is flawed because such a radical discontinuity between the two ages is not evident, neither in Paul nor in his apocalyptic predecessors and near contemporaries, as I will demonstrate in the two apocalyptic texts I shall study: Daniel 2, 7-12 and 4 Ezra 3, 6-7.

Secondly, besides finding the conceptual background that informs Paul's Adam-Christ narrative, the other problem that scholars have faced when interpreting Rom 5:12-21 is understanding the nature of the soteriology of the text. What type of soteriology does Paul set forth in this *pericope*? What is the meaning of the δίκαιο-word group that occurs six times in the text (Rom 5:16, 17, 18 [2x], 19, 21)? Does it express a forensic imputation of God's righteousness upon a sinner who has come to faith in Jesus the Messiah, or does it convey God's covenant faithfulness that is revealed in Jesus' self-giving death on the cross, a gracious act that empowers a specific human response? While there is consensus among Pauline scholars that Rom 5:12-21 reflects his doctrine of salvation and justification, the nature of both salvation and justification in the text has been vigorously contested.

The most prominent readings of Rom 5:12-21 have emphasized an imputative forensic justification that downplays human agency in the economy of salvation. This view

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<sup>9</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 105–7.

<sup>10</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33A (Philadelphia: Doubleday, 1998), 97–105.

<sup>11</sup> Martinus C. de Boer, *The Defeat of Death: Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5*, JSNTSS 22 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1988).

<sup>12</sup> Gaventa R. Beverly, ed., *Apocalyptic Paul: Cosmos and Anthropos in Romans 5-8* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013).

dates back to Martin Luther and has been carried further by other Reformation theologians. In our contemporary period, this soteriological view has been promoted in western theology by proponents of the apocalyptic eschatological invasive model. For scholars in this school of thought, salvation is understood apocalyptically because it is primarily the victorious battle that God fought to free humans being from the clutches of cosmic powers/forces, a battle in which humans play no part.<sup>13</sup> The emphasis for these scholars is on God's ultimate triumph at the eschaton. Yung Suk Kim provides a brief but powerful summary of this view: "the apocalyptic theology perspective focuses on the matters of time and God's power. Therefore, human participation in this world is limited or not a goal itself because the ultimate meaning and completion of salvation is not through human participation but through God."<sup>14</sup> While this model correctly stresses the apocalyptic-eschatological nature of Paul's soteriology, it has downplayed the transformational aspects of God's action on human beings that are central to Paul's soteriological discourse in Rom 5:12-21. I argue that the nature of Paul's soteriology in Rom 5:12-21 is participatory. That is, God's action through Jesus the Messiah enables a new way of living for the believers. Paul's apocalyptic salvific gospel requires a human response to God and the divine Spirit who is God's agent for the transformation and renewal of our world.

Another important factor in Rom 5:12-21 is how to make sense of Paul's personification of sin and death in the passage. Do they refer to demonic bondage/cosmic powers (spiritual forces) from which human beings are to be delivered, or is Paul referring to socioeconomic or political authorities and systems of domination, or both? I question the reading of Paul's personification of sin and death in Rom 5:12-21, particularly from the contemporary scholars of the "Apocalyptic" school which offers a strictly spiritual

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<sup>13</sup> Shannon Nicole Smythe, *Forensic Apocalyptic Theology: Karl Barth and the Doctrine of Justification*, ES (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2016), 10.

<sup>14</sup> Yung Suk Kim, *A Theological Introduction to Paul's Letters: Exploring a Threefold Theology of Paul* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011), 12–13.

interpretation of the identity of sin and death as cosmic anti-God powers. This reading strips these elements of any material or socio-political significance. While not denying the spiritual identity of these powers (sin and death) in Rom 5:12-21, I argue that given the Roman imperial context of Paul and his audience, Paul's personification of sin and death as forces of domination and enslavement can be understood as the way that Roman colonized subjects give coded expression to systemic political and economic domination as well as to the culture of death within the Roman empire. As Daniel Oudshoorn points out in his discussion of *apolytrosis* ("redemption" or "emancipation") in Romans, when Paul speaks about redemption or liberation from the forces of domination, it is important to note that most of Paul's audience, those being addressed are people who were "literally either enslaved because of Roman conquest or were the immediate descendants of those who had been enslaved."<sup>15</sup> For these people, emancipation from real slavery or imperial domination is precisely what they understood. Given the imperial context of the letter, it is necessary to ask whether the text addresses socio-political realities.

Third, most studies of Rom 5:12-21 have been carried out in the abstract, without proper attention to the rhetorical function of text, whether in its original context or in our contemporary context. Most scholars have not asked what life in the old and new ages meant for Paul's audience, particularly for the female members of the Roman churches. I contend that the Letter to the Romans is remarkable for its theology of justice and inclusiveness. In contrast to some texts in which Paul or his disciples seem to subordinate women in both church and family spheres (cf. 1 Cor 11:3-16; 1 Cor 14:34-35; Col 3:18-19; Eph 5:22-33; 1 Tim 2:8-15; Titus 2:4-5), Romans takes a different trajectory. It includes explicit references to women who collaborated actively with men, both in church

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<sup>15</sup> Daniel Oudshoorn, *Pauline Solidarity: Assembling the Gospel of Treasonous Life* PUD 3 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2020), 211.

leadership and in the ministry of the word. The fact that scholars have not been able to see a direct relationship between Paul's apocalyptic soteriological vision and the praxis of the new communities of God's people to which he refers at the conclusion of the letter (ch. 16) is a significant lacuna in Pauline scholarship. A resolution of the above three-tiered problem (background, nature of soteriology, and rhetorical function of Rom 5:12-21) is the objective of this project.

#### 1.4 Argument of the Study

This project makes three interconnected arguments: The first is with regard to the background that informed Paul's antithetical discourse. Here, I argue that the Jewish apocalyptic periodization of history and the two-age eschatological schema are the conceptual frameworks for understanding the Adam-Christ antithesis. The second argument of this study is that when Romans 5:12-21 is read in its socio-political context of Roman imperial domination, it becomes evident that the text is Paul's theological critique of the realities of sin and death in our world, especially as concretized in the first-century Roman empire. What Paul addresses in the text are the historical realities of sin and death as they affect the lives of real people—in this instance, the lives of women and girls who have to face daily the socio-structural systems of domination and violence. The third argument of the study has to do with the nature of soteriology that Paul articulates in the text. Here, I argue that Paul's soteriology in Romans 5:12-21 is participatory rather than imputative. For Christ's believers, the text functions as a clarion call for an embodied participation in the new age which God inaugurated through the events of Christ and the Spirit.



#### 1.4.1 Reading Romans 5:12-21 in Light of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology

In order to make the case that the Jewish apocalyptic periodization of history and the two-ages eschatology are the frameworks for a proper theological understanding of the Adam-Christ antithesis in Rom 5:12-21, this study will offer a reading of Rom 5:12-21, in light of two Jewish apocalyptic texts, Daniel and 4 Ezra. The first reason for this methodological approach is that it enables us to interpret Rom 5:12-21 in light of these two important apocalyptic texts. This enables us to see both Paul's affinity with the conceptual universe of apocalyptic Judaism that is primarily characterized by a historical periodization and a dualistic eschatological doctrine of the two ages, and his unique reinterpretation of this worldview in light of the coming of Jesus the Messiah. The second reason is that Paul and the authors of Daniel and 4 Ezra wrote within the contexts of imperial domination that shed light on the social and political significance of these apocalyptic devices.

Etymologically, the *apocalyp*-word group is transliterated forms of the Greek word ἀποκάλυψις which means “revelation,” “unveiling,” or “disclosure.” As a type of literary genre, an apocalypse, as defined by the SBL Genre Project (1979) under the leadership of John Collins, “is a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another supernatural world.”<sup>16</sup> This is a significant and helpful scholarly attempt to articulate what scholars have meant by the concept “apocalypse” in terms of its form and content. In recent times, some critiques and emendations have been made to this definition. One important critique has to do with the

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<sup>16</sup> John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. John J. Collins, Semeia 14 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 9.

lack of any reference to the function of apocalypses. Consequently, in 1986, another study group under the leadership of John Collins tackled the functional question of apocalyptic texts, and a number of proposals were submitted. Adela Yarbro Collins expanded the definition of “apocalypse” by adding a functional description: (Such work) “is intended to interpret the present, earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behavior of the audience by means of divine authority.”<sup>17</sup> Another important functional goal of apocalypses was proposed by David Aune who submits, “In function, an apocalypse legitimates the transcendent authority of the message by mediation of a new revelatory experience for the audience to encourage them to modify their cognition and behavior in conformity with transcendent perspectives.”<sup>18</sup> What these proposals share in common is the fact that apocalyptic works have a rhetorical or ideological function, namely, the ordering or shaping of the audience’s mindset and ethical behavior by means of divine authority. They appeal to the audience to adhere to a certain form of ethical praxis.

As a literary genre, apocalyptic writing flourished among Jews in the postexilic period, between 200 BCE-200 A.D., when the Jews were under the domination of imperial powers.<sup>19</sup> The texts of Daniel, 4 Ezra, and Rom emerged within the context of foreign

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<sup>17</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, “Introduction: Early Christian Apocalypticism,” in *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins, Semeia 36 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1986), 7.

<sup>18</sup> David E. Aune, “The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre,” in *Early Christian Apocalypticism: Genre and Social Setting*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins, Semeia 36 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1986), 65–66.

<sup>19</sup> The assumption that all apocalyptic text arises in a time of crisis or traumatic experience has been challenged by contemporary experts of Second Temple studies. The point has been eruditely critiqued by Lester Grabbe who argues that “apocalyptic does not necessarily arise in times of crisis nor is it always a product of the oppressed, the marginalized, and the powerless.” Even though Grabbe affirms that a time of crisis, millenarian movement, feeling of deprivation or powerlessness, and a sense of alienation usually would lead to apocalyptic writing, yet he rejects the view that all apocalyptic texts emerged in a context of crisis. Grabbe submits that “apocalypse can be the product of clever and learned scribes or writers who produced them in their study, based on a strong apocalyptic tradition.” The book of the Watchers of *1 Enoch* is good example of this scenario. Lester L. Grabbe, “The Seleucid and Hasmonean Periods and the Apocalyptic Worldview—An Introduction,” in *The Seleucid and Hasmonean Period and the Apocalyptic Worldview*, ed. Lester L. Grabbe, Gabriele Boccaccini, and Jason M. Zurawski (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2016), 18–19.

empires. Scholars such as Paul Kosmin and Anthea Portier-Young have thrown more light on the imperial context of the book of Daniel, showing that the text was written as a response to the crisis generated in the Seleucid era when the Jews were ruled by a Seleucid Syrian king, Antiochus Epiphanes IV (175-163 B.C.).<sup>20</sup> In fact, it was around this period that many Jewish writers began writing what we now consider historical apocalypses, i.e., those works that deal with historical and political issues relating to the end of time. Likewise, 4 Ezra was written to address the trauma caused by the destruction of Jerusalem Temple in 70 A.D., when the Jews were under the domination of another foreign power—the Roman Empire. These imperial contexts shed light on the purpose of these books more clearly, a point that shall be explored later in this study. During these periods, the Jews wrestled with the theological question of God’s justice in the face of many social evils, such as the religious oppression, political domination, and socio-economic injustice they experienced as a nation. The writers of apocalypses emerged as prophetic voices addressing the social evils of their day, asserting that God would definitely prove his justice by rewarding faithfulness and punishing wickedness in this world. They maintained that “while evil rules at the moment, God will soon take control and address the injustice committed by those evil powers and people.”<sup>21</sup> But more than that, they believed that God’s intervention would be in such a dramatic way to set things right on a cosmic scale. Consequently, Jewish apocalyptic writers spoke of something new that God was going to do, expressing it in the language of new creation, new exodus, and new covenant.

The doctrine of the two-ages— ‘this age’ (ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος) and ‘the coming age’ (ὁ αἰὼν μέλλων οὗτος)—in which one age succeeds the other is an important characteristic

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<sup>20</sup> Paul J. Kosmin, *The Land of the Elephant Kings: Space, Territory, and Ideology in the Seleucid Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014); Anthea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011).

<sup>21</sup> Jerry L. Sumney, *The Bible: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 365–69.

of Second and Post-Temple Jewish apocalyptic eschatology.<sup>22</sup> Apocalyptic eschatology is a distinctive type of eschatology found in Jewish apocalyptic texts that are primarily concerned with God's saving intervention in human history in order to renew or transform it. It is "a way of constructing history as it is coming to an end through a series of events that culminate in a final judgment and in the inauguration of an endless age of justice in a new created order."<sup>23</sup> Jewish apocalyptic writers demonstrated a passionate interest in time and history, and saw the two as the arena in which God's salvific drama plays out.

Proceeding from a fundamental belief that the divine plan for salvation, particularly focused on Israel's salvation, lies at the base of the totality of world history, the apocalyptists championed an outlook in which historical events are viewed as processes determined by God. For them, the ultimate meaning of history is to be discovered in the working out of God's salvific plan. According to Klaus Vondung, this understanding of history crystallized over time into what we now call salvation history: "history as a chain of events from creation to redemption that is directed by God."<sup>24</sup> While God's sovereignty

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<sup>22</sup> The English term eschatology is derived from two Greek words: *eschatos* ("last") and *logos* ("word"). In traditional Christian theology, eschatology refers to the aspect of theology that is concerned with the "last things," or the "end of things," or "the future", particularly as it pertains to individuals and the material world. Hence, the subject matter of Christian eschatology includes: death, resurrection, final judgement, eternal life, purgatory, heaven, hell, and the Second Coming of Christ, etc. Central to this understanding of eschatology is the assumption that eschatology has to do with the final end or future destiny of both human beings and the created world. With advances in biblical theology since the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the understanding of eschatology, particularly biblical eschatology, has evolved to mean a theology of history, with specific reference to God's saving plan as it unfolds in human history (past, present, and future). Consequently, some scholars, such as Anthony A. Hoekema and G. K. Beale, have argued that the study of eschatology should include the present state of the believer and the present phase of the kingdom of God. In other words, biblical eschatology must deal with "inaugurated" and "future" eschatology. Other scholars such as Joan Martin contend that since Christian eschatology includes presuppositions about the divine origin of time, history, and humanity (concepts Martin referred to as "first things"); eschatology should be seen as theological talk about the 'last things' in light of 'first things.' See Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 2; "The End Starts at the Beginning," in *Making All Things New: Inaugurated Eschatology for the Life of the Church*, by Benjamin L. Gladd and Matthew S. Harmon (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 3–4; Joan M. Martin, "A Sacred Hope and Social Hope," in *Liberation Eschatology: Essay in Honor of Letty M. Russell*, ed. Margaret A. Farley and Serene Jones (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 212.

<sup>23</sup> Loren T. Stuckenbruck, "Some Reflections on Apocalyptic Thought and Time in Literature from the Second Temple Period," in *Paul and Apocalyptic Imagination*, ed. Ben C. Blackwell, John K. Goodrich, and Jason Maston (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 142.

<sup>24</sup> Klaus Vondung, *The Apocalypse in Germany*, trans. Stephen D. Ricks (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 67.

in directing the cause of history is emphasized in apocalyptic texts, this does not amount to a negation or denial of human agency or human causation in history. Rather, “the divine plan for history is worked out both through and in spite of human agents.”<sup>25</sup> In fact, given the imperial context of most Jewish apocalyptic texts, their eschatology addresses other powers that participate in the shaping of history past, present, and future, whether positively or negatively.<sup>26</sup>

David S. Russell has correctly noted that for many Jewish apocalyptists, the “divisions of time, their duration, and their measurement are all of the utmost significance in tracing out the divine purpose and its fulfilment in the time of the end.”<sup>27</sup> In the Jewish apocalyptic religious world-view, the present era, which is believed to be corrupt and evil and under the control of Satan, is expected to come to an end by means of divine power, to be replaced by a new order—a new heaven and a new earth (e.g., Isa 65:17; Rev 21:1-2).<sup>28</sup> The new age will be both qualitatively and quantitatively different from the old age.

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<sup>25</sup> Paul Niskanen, *The Human and the Divine in History: Herodotus and the Book of Daniel* (New York: T and T Clark International, 2004), 122.

<sup>26</sup> Martin, “A Sacred Hope and Social Hope,” 212; N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 140–41.

<sup>27</sup> David S. Russell, *The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, 200 BC-AD 100*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: SCM, 1964), 208. The argument that the two-age motif is the most essential characteristic of Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic eschatology has been aptly defended by some important biblical scholars. For instance, Philip Vielhauer argues that “the eschatological dualism of the two world ages, ‘this age’ and ‘the age to come’ is, the essential characteristic of the apocalyptic-eschatology.” According to him, “in the doctrine of the Two Ages, in the dualistic time-scheme of world eras (ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος and ὁ αἰὼν μέλλων οὗτος) the entire course of the world is comprehended.” Philip Vielhauer, “Apocalypses and Related Literature: Introduction,” in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. W. Schneemelcher, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox Press, 1964), 2: 549, 588–89. The same position has been maintained by some other important scholars of Jewish apocalypticism such as Paul Hanson, D. S. Russell, Martinus C. de Boer. See Paul D. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1973), 432, 440; Russell, *The Method & Message of Jewish Apocalyptic, 200 BC-AD 100*, 266, 269; Martinus C. de Boer, “Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *The Continuum History of Apocalypticism*, ed. Bernard McGinn, John J. Collins, and Stephen Stein (New York: Continuum, 2003), 166–95. In the recent time, some scholars have objected to the above position, arguing that the two-ages scheme although prominent in apocalyptic text is not a defining characteristic of the Jewish apocalyptic eschatology. For this position see Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 26; J. P. Davies, *Paul among the Apocalypses?: An Evaluation of the “Apocalyptic Paul” in the Context of Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature*, LNTS 562 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 72–112.

<sup>28</sup> David E Aune, *Apocalypticism, Prophecy and Magic in Early Christianity: Collected Essays* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 4.

This dualistic view of time and history is found in many apocalyptic texts. The earliest expression of this view is found in 1 Enoch 71:15, where the author speaks of “the world to come.” But it was mostly in the Books of Daniel and 4 Ezra that the “two-ages” motif, as well as the periodization of history, received a developed articulation.

The Book of Daniel deals primarily with the theology of history and time. It presents a theology of history that emphasizes God’s sovereignty over history as well as God’s ultimate salvific plan for the Jews. Written within the context of Seleucid Era, and particularly during the Antiochene persecution of the Jews in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E., the author reviews the history of his day in light of God’s final eschatological kingdom, making critique of the Seleucid Empire. Daniel makes use of apocalyptic periodization of history and the doctrine of the two ages for political and theological purposes. First, Daniel’s division of history into four world kingdoms—the Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek, in which “each kingdom represents a time of decline by comparison with the preceding one”<sup>29</sup>—until the arrival of the eternal messianic kingdom, functions as a critique of the Seleucid Empire, particularly, its ideology of time. Although the motif of the two ages is not explicit in the book, I argue that the basic concept of two-ages underlies Daniel’s periodization of history (cf. Dan 2:44; 7:14, 18; 12:2f). In the mind of the author, the four world empires or kingdoms, symbolizing the present evil age, will at some point be destroyed through divine power, and be replaced by an everlasting kingdom inaugurated by God through his emissary, the “Son of Man.” God will confer glory, dominion, and an eternal kingdom upon this figure, and all the peoples and nations will serve him (Dan 7:14). In his reign, the forces of good will be victorious over the forces of evil.

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<sup>29</sup> Jacques Le Goff, *Must We Divide History into Periods?*, trans. M.B. DeBevoise, European Perspectives (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 8.

Second, there are many occurrences of “end time” expressions in the book of Daniel, such as *עַת־קֵץ* (“the time of the end”; cf. Dan 8:17; 11:35; 11:40; 12:4; 12:9), *לְמוֹעֵד קֵץ* (“the appointed time of the end”; cf. Dan 8:19), *בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים* (“later days” or “the days to come”; cf. Dan 2: 28-29; 10:14; 12:12), as well as other temporal references and eschatological language and imagery (cf. Dan 2:45; 8:26; 11: 27; 12: 6, 13). The doctrine of the two-ages provides the framework for understanding these “end-time” references. Implicit in these end-time phrases and imagery is the theological significance the author intends to communicate to his audience. Andrew Hill has noted in this regard that the concept of “an appointed time of the end” emphasizes the fact that “the time has been set ... by the Lord of history thus underscoring the God’s sovereignty over the historical process.”<sup>30</sup> God is still the one in charge despite signs to the contrary. While God is portrayed as the one who determines what will happen at the appointed times and what must take place (Dan 11:26, 35, 36), human beings are also revealed to be active participants in the divine story. For instance, three times in Daniel 11, the author underscores that the king or some other agent within the narrative “will do as he pleases” (Dan 11: 3, 16, 35). Thus, from the perspective of the author, human beings are not mere puppets on a divine string; rather, they are free agents who can make either good or bad choices and hence are the subject of divine judgment and punishment. People determine their destinies through their actions. It suffices to say that the tension between God’s sovereignty and human freedom remains largely unresolved in the Book of Daniel.

Besides showing God’s sovereignty over history and time, the author uses “end time” or eschatological phrases and images to reveal the temporal and evil nature of this present age in which this world’s imperial powers dominate God’s people. The “time of

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<sup>30</sup> Andrew E. Hill, “Daniel,” in *Daniel-Malachi*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E Garland, vol. 8 of *EBC* 13 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 153.

the end” is a period of unprecedented tribulation for God’s people which will lead to a period “everlasting life” (Dan 12:1-2), marked by resurrection from the dead. For the author of Daniel, the present age is characterized by injustice, wickedness, troubles, violence, sufferings, oppression, power, and arrogance (cf. Dan 11:33-35). Moreover, the author attempts to calculate the end of history, to indicate when the transition to the new age will happen (cf. Dan 7:25; 9:24; 12:11-12). This points to the fact that the two-ages motif lies at the basis of Daniel’s theology.

Like the Book of Daniel, 4 Ezra deals with the themes of periodization of history (11:1-12:34) and the doctrine of the two ages. In fact, it is in 4 Ezra that the doctrine of two ages finds its classic expression. Faced with the problem of theodicy in the aftermath of the traumatic experience of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 AD, the text of 4 Ezra emerged as a response to key theological questions that God’s people raised in the context of injustice, suffering, and domination at the hands of imperial lords.<sup>31</sup> The main questions raised by Ezra throughout the text revolve around the broad concepts of soteriology and eschatology: when will God save Israel from its present plight? “How long and when will these things be”? (4 Ezra 4:33). Ezra urgently seeks an answer and receives it through a series of visions which provide the basis of hope for his audience. In the first, Ezra is meant to understand that the present world order is not all there is, that in fact the present age in which God’s people are being afflicted is “hastening swiftly to its end” (*quoniam festinans festinate seaculum pertransire*; 4 Ezra 4:26). In the second vision, Ezra is shown the signs that will characterize the end of this age. In the third vision, within the context of Uriel’s explanation about the fate of the righteous and the unrighteous, Uriel tells Ezra that “the Most High has not made one age but two” (4 Ezra 7:50). Not only do

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<sup>31</sup> Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 9–10; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 241.



we find these explicit statements regarding the two-ages in the text, the author also employs other metaphors and imagery to speak to the same reality (cf. 4:22-43; 6:7-10).

As with Daniel, the author of 4 Ezra not only affirms that the Most High created two temporal periods, he also maintains that the Most High had created the world to come in advance and had already determined when the first temporal order will come to an end and when the new age will begin.<sup>32</sup> The sentence “When the Most High made the world and Adam and all who have come from him, he first prepared the judgment and things that pertains to the judgment” (4 Ezra 7:70) points to this fact. According to the text, “the day of judgment will be the end of this age and the beginning of the immortal age to come” (4 Ezra 7:112-14). From the perspective of 4 Ezra, God’s creative design from the beginning includes both ages. The first age only needs to give way at its consummation for the other to begin. Again, as with the Book of Daniel, the age to come is consistently contrasted with the present age in quantity and quality (cf. 4 Ezra 7:12, 13, 27, 31). The present age is portrayed as full of evil, corruption, death, injustice, sadness, illness, etc. It is an age in which the justice and righteousness of God are obscured (4 Ezra 7:113-114), while the age to come will be beautiful and glorious: it is an era when evil, death, sorrow, injustice, and all sorts of corruption will disappear from the earth (4 Ezra 8:53-54), and the faithfulness of God’s people will be rewarded.<sup>33</sup>

At the heart of the Jewish apocalyptic articulation of sin and evil in the present age is the resilient hope of God’s eschatological intervention in the human world to make things right again. Jewish apocalyptic texts look forward to an eschatological age, often described as a “new creation.” They envision a time when there will be a divine

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<sup>32</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 286.

<sup>33</sup> Adela Yarbro Collins, “The Use of Apocalyptic Eschatology,” in *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction After the Fall*, ed. Matthias Henze and Gabriele Boccaccini (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 266–67; Leonard L. Thompson, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 19.

intervention to end this old and corrupt age marked by the reign of sin and evil powers, and the ushering in of the new age of God's reign, a time when God will make all things beautiful and put all things right. These texts are replete with salvation themes in reference to God's eschatological saving work. An interesting datum in most apocalyptic texts is the belief that the reign of God, or the new age, will be mediated by an eschatological figure who is identified sometimes as the Messiah or the Son of Man (cf. Psalms of Solomon 1-2, 8; Daniel 7). This eschatological figure is expected to inaugurate the reign of God that will also bring about universal salvation that will extend to the Gentiles (cf. Isa 49:6-9).

This study argues in line with some scholars of the "apocalyptic" school, that Paul shares in this narrative worldview and that its apocalyptic eschatology underlies Paul's theological interpretation of the Adam-Christ narrative in Rom 5:12-21. Paul's antithetical juxtaposition of Adam and Christ in Rom 5:12-21 provides a clear illustration of the doctrine of the two ages.<sup>34</sup> The contrast that Paul makes between Adam and Christ in Rom 5:12-21 is grounded in the dualism between the two ages that we find in some Jewish apocalyptic texts. Geerhardus Vos cogently expresses that "the comprehensive antithesis of the First Adam and the Last Adam, sin and righteousness, the flesh and the Spirit, law and faith are precisely the historic reflections of the one great transcendental antithesis between this world and the world-to-come."<sup>35</sup> In fact, the two-Adam motif and various dualisms found in Rom 5:12-21 make more sense when viewed from the lens of the two-ages schema of apocalyptic eschatology. Jason Meyer has also made a compelling

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<sup>34</sup> For some influential studies on this topic see R. H. Charles, *Eschatology, the Doctrine of a Future Life in Israel, Judaism, and Christianity: A Critical History* (New York: Schocken Books, 1963); E. M. Caudil, "The Two-Age Doctrine in Paul: A Study of Pauline Apocalyptic" (PhD diss., Vanderbilt University, 1972); Jason C. Meyer, *The End of the Law: Mosaic Covenant in Pauline Theology*, NAC-SBT 6 (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2009), 55–60; Maria Pascuzzi, *Paul: Windows on His Thought and His World* (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2014), 98–101; Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 1994), 60–65; James R. Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome: A Study in the Conflict of Ideology*, WUNT 273 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 108–9; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, HCHCB (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 372–89.

<sup>35</sup> Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology*, 60–61.

argument in this regard, noting that the apocalyptic doctrine of the two ages naturally gives rise to Paul's polarizing classifications. He writes:

These two age structures ground the earlier discussion concerning an underlying rationale behind the classification of "old" and "new." Paul unfolds the two-Adam concepts as a foundational corporate element that undergirds both his understanding of union with Christ and his usage of the language of "in Christ." ... The two-age structure of reality further supports the qualitative distinction between old and new in terms of eschatology. Old things are qualitatively old because they belong to the old age. New things are qualitatively new because they belong to the new age.<sup>36</sup>

For Paul, the apocalypse of God has occurred in the death and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah and the sending of the Spirit (Gal 4:4-6). The advent of the Son and the Spirit is the cosmic, apocalyptic event which Paul sees as the inauguration of the final saving acts of God in history which marks the end of the old order (this present age), and the inauguration of the new order (the age to come).<sup>37</sup> The new age has begun; but elements of the old remain (the "already-but-not-yet" eschatology).

There is other internal evidence that support this apocalyptic reading of the text. First, in Rom 5:12-21 we find Paul's periodization of history from Adam to Christ. Here history is divided into three chronological sequences of events: Adam's disobedience, the gift of the law to Moses, and Christ's obedience. The period of Adam (the beginning of human history) is marked by sinful disobedience to God which results in death not only for Adam but also for all of his progeny who share in his act of disobedience. The next is the period of Moses and the Law. Paul's argument about this period of time, as succinctly expressed by Timothy Gombis, is "that the 'apocalyptic' actors— Death and Flesh, in league with Sin, have hijacked God's good gift of the Law and made it an unwitting accomplice in their enslavement of humanity."<sup>38</sup> The time before and after the law is

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<sup>36</sup> Meyer, *The End of the Law*, 57.

<sup>37</sup> Louis J. Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul*, SNTW (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1997), 121.

<sup>38</sup> Timothy G. Gombis, "Paul," in *T&T Clark Companion to the Doctrine of Sin*, ed. Keith L. Johnson and David Lauber (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 106.

expressed by several indicators, such as ἄχρι νόμου (“until the law,” v. 13), ἀπὸ Ἀδὰμ μέχρι Μωϋσέως (“from Adam to Moses,” v. 14). The final era is the time of Christ (the new age of grace). This period is marked by grace, obedience, and righteousness which result in salvation and life for all who imitate Jesus’ filial obedience to God. While Rom 5:12-21 records three historical events, these can simply be divided into two periods: (a) the realm in which sin and death reigned, and (b) the realm marked by righteousness and life (eternal salvation). The time of Moses is a sort of *pro tempore* phase, designed to guide God’s people until the time of Christ.

With respect to the relationship between the two ages, this study will engage this scholarly conversation, arguing that the relationship between the two-ages should not be seen in terms of radical/strict dualistic separation, but rather the relationship between the two should be framed in terms of both continuity and discontinuity.<sup>39</sup> While Paul affirms the arrival of the new age, he does not deny the active role of this present evil age. Paul believes that “the age to come,” with its distinctive powers for righteous living has been inaugurated through the Christ-event. But at the same time, Paul thinks that “this age” (Gal 1:4) with its negative powers is still operative and continually attempts to counter the effects of the inaugurated new age. Paul believed that the new age has already begun, but that its final consummation—the Parousia (1 Thess 4:15; 1 Cor 1:8) and the final transfer of Christ’s messianic sovereignty to God at the end of time—is yet to happen. Like Daniel and 4 Ezra, Paul deploys the apocalyptic devices of periodization of history and the motif of the two age to make critique of the Roman imperial ideology of a realized eschatology.

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<sup>39</sup> Loren T. Stuckenbruck, ““Overlapping Ages at Qumran and ‘Apocalyptic’ in Pauline Theology,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Pauline Literature*, ed. Jean-Sébastien Rey, STDJ 102 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 309–26. Stuckenbruck’s thorough reading of the doctrine of the two ages as conceptualized in Enochic tradition and the Qumran community shows that Jewish apocalyptic writers envisioned more continuity between the ages than is often recognized among Pauline scholars and that the continuity between the two ages is evident in Paul. See also J. P. Davies, *Paul among the Apocalypses?* 72–112; Emma Wasserman, *Apocalypse as Holy War: Divine Politics and Polemics in the Letters of Paul*, AYBRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 8-11.

#### 1.4.2 The Nature of Pauline Soteriology in Romans 5:12-21

The second argument of this study is that the nature of soteriology that Paul articulates in Rom 5:12-21 is participatory rather than imputative.<sup>40</sup> It is necessary to establish at the outset that the text is soteriological. The text is one of Paul's most extensive discussions of God's saving action in Christ. The passage contains explicit references to important soteriological terms, such as "eternal life," "grace," "justification," "righteousness," and "free gift" that are foundational for Paul's soteriology. These soteriological terms are contrasted with the language of "sin," "transgression," "death," and "condemnation" that characterized humanity living in the old age. That this passage is soteriological has remained largely undisputed among Pauline scholars. However, what has been disputed is the nature of the soteriology expressed therein. The most prominent readings of Rom 5:12-21 have emphasized an imputative justification that denies human agency in the economy of salvation.

Through a careful exegetical analysis of Rom 5:12-21, this study proposes a theological reading of the δίκαιο-word group that occurs in the text that explicates its

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<sup>40</sup> Participation as employed in this study is a theological concept that expresses how believers partake in the life and salvific mission of Christ in their everyday lives. The term "participation" does not occur in Rom 5:12-21, but the text speaks of the consequences of a life lived in imitation of either Adam or Christ, and so serves as the foundational text for understanding Paul's "in Christ," "union"/ participation languages that we see in Romans 6-16. Today, studies on Paul's participatory soteriology has been on the surge given the many monographs that have been published under the subject. Some important works in this regard includes: James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998); Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*, Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015); Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Michael J. Gorman, *Participating in Christ: Explorations in Paul's Theology and Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019); Richard Hays, "What Is 'Real Participation in Christ'? A Dialogue with E. P. Sanders on Pauline Soteriology," in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays in Honor of Ed Parish Sanders*, ed. Fabian E. Udén et al (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 336–51; Ben C. Blackwell, *Christosis: Engaging Paul's Soteriology with His Patristic Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016); Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012); Thomas D. Stegman, *The Character of Jesus: The Linchpin to Paul's Argument in 2 Corinthians*, AnBib 158 (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2005); Daniel G. Powers, *Salvation through Participation: An Examination of the Notion of the Believers' Corporate Unity with Christ in Early Christian Soteriology*, CBET 29 (Leuven, VA: Peeters, 2001).

participatory and transformative character. While affirming that justification (and ultimately salvation) is absolutely God's divine activity, it will be argued that Rom 5:12-21 is not Paul's rhetoric of how Christ saved the human sinner through a divine court verdict by which the righteousness of Christ is imputed to a sinner. Rather, the passage is Paul's explication of Jesus' faithfulness which he demonstrated in his faithful obedience towards God, an act by which Jesus reversed the reign of sin initiated through Adam's disobedience.<sup>41</sup> For Paul, Jesus is the one human being whose act of righteousness (δικαίωμα; Rom 5:17, 18, 19) has counteracted the sinful actions of Adam (both the historical Adam and humanity in general), and has established a new way of living and relating with God and others that leads to eternal life. Jesus ultimately demonstrated his righteousness in his perfect obedience to God through his self-giving death on the cross. God vindicated Jesus' act by raising him from the dead. Therefore, it is by imitation of the way of Jesus (his δικαίωμα) that believers apprehend a righteous status before God.

That Rom 5:12-21 is concerned with the ethical praxis of God's new community can be ascertained, first of all, by examining the social context within which the text emerged. As Anthony Padovano aptly submits, Paul is concerned with the reality of sin and death in the world, particularly in the socio-cultural context of his audience, the city of Rome, the capital of the Roman Empire. Paul was concerned "with the fact that sin was man's doing, that death (spiritual and/or corporal) issues from sin and not from God and that death pervades the human race both because Adam sinned and because we sin."<sup>42</sup> In other words, the socio-political/religious context that Paul is confronting is one in which human beings commit all sorts of wickedness, and refuse to offer true worship to God (Rom 1:18-32). It is the sinfulness and the injustice of his society that Paul is decrying in

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<sup>41</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 83.

<sup>42</sup> Anthony T. Padovano, *Original Sin and Christian Anthropology*, Corpus Papers (Washington: Corpus Books, 1969), 6.

the text. If Paul's argument is that sinful actions lead to death, therefore, what is needed for the reversal of death is right living.

Jesus inaugurated the new age, predicted by the prophets and apocalyptic visionaries, in which living righteously is made possible through the Spirit. Therefore, to participate in the life in Christ means fundamentally to share in the obedience and faithfulness of Jesus the Messiah. Based on the above theological reasoning, this study argues that the nature of Paul's soteriology in Rom 5:12-21 is participatory: recipients of salvation are not merely passive. Instead, the call to be a follower of Christ entails that members of the new covenant community should enact the righteousness of Christ, his self-giving love, in their everyday lives.

#### 1.4.3 The Implications of Paul's Soteriology for Theological Gender Discourse

The third part of this study examines the text of Rom 5:12-21 in light of women's experience of the sin of domination and violence. This reading is different from the predominant western reading of the text, especially by male theologians. The need for this gendered way of looking at the text arises because today there is a growing awareness that biblical hermeneutics must address real-life existential questions if they are to be relevant for contemporary Christians, just as Paul's letters and the gospel message he proclaimed addressed specific contextual needs of his communities. It is only when we begin to apply biblical theology to concrete human experiences that biblical theology will cease to be an abstract intellectual speculation and assume a liberative function. This is particularly true of Paul's theology of salvation/justification. Today, there is a real need to address the struggles and challenges that Christian women face, both in the Church and in the larger society, in the light of the gospel of God's salvation. In light of this reality, the last part of this study investigates the meaning and implications of Paul's participatory soteriology in Rom 5:12-21 for the lives of Christian women, both in the ancient Roman imperial context

and in the contemporary post-colonial Nigerian context. While not suggesting a direct equivalence of or identical experience between the two groups of women, one discovers similarities as one reads Romans through the lens of post-colonial Nigerian women experience.

Consequently, this study argues that when Rom 5:12-21 is read contrapuntally from women's experience, it becomes clear that the realities Paul addresses in his Adam-Christ narrative are the historical realities of sin and evil as they affect the lives of real people—in this instance, the lives of women and girls who have to face, on a daily basis, the socio-structural sins of their societies, especially the sins of gender inequality, violence, oppression, injustice, and exclusion. These are the social sins that characterize the “old age” set in motion by Adam. Rom 5:12-21 also speaks to the realities of the new way of life that the Christ-event, including the sending of the Spirit, has opened up for the flourishing of women's lives. This is particularly evident in Romans 16, which attests to the egalitarian and inclusive missional character of the Christian community in Rome to which Paul wrote.

The theology of salvation presupposes the reality of evil in the world. Evil is what real people experience in real time. It is what people inflict on one another, and in most cases, it is what the strong members of a society inflict on the weak ones, those on the margins of society. Paul begins his letter in 1:18-32 by addressing the reality and universality of sin and evil, and all sorts of corruptions that dominated the society of his time. Paul uses the language of impiety (ungodliness), unrighteousness, injustice, violence, and various acts of wickedness to describe these evils. Although the Roman Empire is not explicitly mentioned in the text, some scholars have recently argued that Paul's catalogue of sin and evil in Rom 1:18-3:20 calls to mind the evils and wickedness of the first-century Roman Empire. For instance, Neil Elliott argues that Paul's rhetoric of *adikia* and *asebeia*



in the Letter to the Romans functions as an indictment of the Augustan golden age,<sup>43</sup> an imperial system that paraded itself as the liberator and protector of the people, yet behind that appearance lay horrendous injustice, brutal violence, cruel crimes against the lower-class people. As in many other patriarchal and hierarchical socio-political orders, women and girls are mostly the victims of injustice and oppression. In most cases, they suffer the triple oppression of racism, sexism, and classism in the most violent ways. Read from women's experience, Paul's theology of justification/salvation should be seen as a theological critique of the social evils which women experience.

It is my position that Paul's theology of the "reign" and "domination" of sin/evil and death in the present evil age speaks to the experience of real women and girls who have to face, on a daily basis, the realities of the structural sins of their society, especially the sins of gender inequality, violence, and exclusion. For these women, Paul's message of salvation in Christ Jesus is not an abstract theological speculation; it is a message of liberation from the real evils that are inflicted on women. The theology of justification is about the reversal of injustice, and the righting and restoration of all relationships that have been deformed by injustice.<sup>44</sup> For the female members of the Roman Christian house churches and the Christian women in the Nigerian Church, the realities Paul describes as salvation or new life in Christ Jesus are simply the reversal of and the opposite of what life in the old age entails for these women. In Romans, Paul shows that the immediate purpose and result of God's salvific act in Jesus the Messiah was the creation of a new community of people (Jews and Gentiles, men and women) who will embody the righteousness of God in their everyday lives, a community that will be marked by holiness and justice. This

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<sup>43</sup> Neil Elliot, "Paul and the Politics of the Empire," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essay in Honor of Krister Stendahl*, ed. Richard Horsley (Harrisburg, PN: Trinity, 2000), 36–39.

<sup>44</sup> Sylvia C Keesmaat, *Romans Disarmed: Resisting Empire, Demanding Justice* (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2019), 12.

study will explore how Paul rhetorically developed this reality in Romans, particularly in chapters 6-16. I believe that Paul in this letter offers not only theological insights that are relevant and helpful for addressing the hegemonic forces and structural evils that still afflict women in many contexts, but particularly in the Nigerian context; his analysis also articulates theological principles that can help invigorate the active participation of women in both socio-political and ecclesial spheres.

Some important questions will lie behind the focus of this final section: (1) what experiences of sin, evil, and death does the theology of God's saving justice in Rom 5:12-21 speak to as it relates to women's experience? (2) What does life in the new age of grace and salvation entail for Paul's female audience in first-century Rome and for Nigerian women today? (3) How might Paul's participatory language help us understand the inclusivity and equality for women as integral in the mission of Christ? These are some of the relevant existential and contextual questions which this study will address.

## 1.5 Methodology

### 1.5.1 Empire and Postcolonial Criticisms

The nature of this study as an inquiry into the background and nature of Paul's soteriology and its implications for the lives of women requires that one employ a methodology that pays special attention not only to the texts, but also to the reader and to her/his contexts. Two frameworks that accomplish this need are empire and postcolonial criticisms. In New Testament biblical studies, empire criticism is a framework that seeks to examine how the biblical authors engaged the Roman Empire in their texts. It investigates how the biblical authors interacted with the Roman Empire either positively or negatively. With regard to Paul, empire critics argue that Paul was an anti-Roman imperial critic. His gospel message contains hidden or coded critique of the Roman Empire

which can be deciphered only through close and critical reading of his text. Empire critics argue that the biblical text can only reveal its counter imperial claims once one becomes sensitive to the historical situation of the community behind the text.<sup>45</sup> The approach presupposes the pervasive presence of the Rome Empire in the New Testament, especially those in the writings of Paul. I shall offer detailed examination of this approach in chapter four.

Postcolonial criticism is a reading strategy that emerged in the 1990s in the Global South—the former colonies and among their diasporal kin. It addresses the socio-cultural, historical, and political impact of Western colonialism on the non-West.<sup>46</sup> Postcolonial studies are relatively new compared to other interpretative methods. Consequently, there are still unresolved issues with respect to definitions. In fact, postcolonialism can mean different things depending on how one chooses to read the prefix “post” in postcolonialism. While the problem of definition remains, the twofold purpose of this approach is clear: “first, to analyze the diverse strategies by which the colonizers constructed images of the colonized; and second, to study how the colonized themselves made use of and went beyond many of those strategies in order to articulate their identity,

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<sup>45</sup> Scot McKnight and Joseph B Modica, eds., *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013), 15–23.

<sup>46</sup> R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 14. The emergence of the academic field of postcolonialism is traced to the works of three important scholars, Edward Said, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and Homi Bhabha. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313; Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994). Although the term “postcolonial” or “postcolonialism” did not appear in Said’s *Orientalism*, yet the book has been viewed as a magna carta for postcolonial studies in that it explores the politics of social construction of identity of minority people by those in power. Said uncovered how the concept of orientalism was constructed by the West to serve their imperialistic agenda of exploiting and dominating the Orient. Said argues that the West created the concept to define themselves in opposition to the Orient, representing the West as the center and civilized, and the Orient as the periphery and uncivilized. The result is that orientalism has functioned not only as a mechanism for the legitimization of Western colonization of the Eastern region but also as a consolidation of colonial hegemony. The importance of this book for postcolonial studies lies in the fact that it drew attention to the ideological prejudices inherent in western scholarship (challenging their claim to neutrality and objectivity), the violence of imperialism, and the need for the periphery to define themselves the way they see themselves, not as others perceive them.

self-worth, and empowerment.”<sup>47</sup> Postcolonial criticism is very complex, but R.S. Sugirtharajah has aptly articulated fourteen common concerns found in diverse postcolonial writings. What cuts across these studies is the interest in deconstructing the modern Western empire, its Eurocentric ideology, and colonial legacy by means of decolonizing and resistance readings.<sup>48</sup> Musa Dube concurs and adds that “postcolonial readings of the Bible must seek to decolonize the biblical texts, its interpretations, its readers, its institutions, as well as ways of reading for liberating interdependence.”<sup>49</sup> This deconstructive reading arises as a result of the recognition among the formerly colonized that “texts emanating from colonialist cultures—whether histories, travel narratives, or canonical works of literature... are enmeshed in elaborate ideological formations, and hence intricate networks of contradictions, that exceed and elude the consciousness of their authors.”<sup>50</sup>

In recent times, biblical scholars have begun to explore postcolonial theory and apply it to ancient biblical texts.<sup>51</sup> Although postcolonial biblical hermeneutics are diverse in scope, the scholarship is united by a common ideological interest, namely, to examine

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<sup>47</sup>R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Postcolonial Criticism and Biblical Interpretation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 11.

<sup>48</sup>Musa W. Dube defines the art of decolonization as the reader’s “awareness of imperialism’s exploitative forces and its various strategies of domination, the conscious adoption of strategies of resisting imperial domination as well as the search for alternative ways of liberating interdependence between nations, races, genders, economies and cultures.” Musa W. Dube, “Reading for Decolonization (John 4.1-42),” in *Voices from the Margins: Interpreting the Bible in the Third World*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (New York: Orbis Books, 2016), 354. See also Simon Shui-Man Kwan, “Postcolonial Theology and Mission,” in *Encyclopedia of Christianity in the Global South*, ed. Mark A. Lamport (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 654; Sugirtharajah, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism*, 14.

<sup>49</sup>Musa W. Dube, “Savior of the World but Not of This World: A Post-Colonial Reading of the Spatial Construction in John,” in *The Postcolonial Bible*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 133.

<sup>50</sup>Stephen D. Moore, *Empire and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament*, Bible in the Modern World 12 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2006), 6.

<sup>51</sup>I accept the definition and function of postcolonial biblical interpretation given by R. S. Sugirtharajah: “postcolonialism is roughly defined as scrutinizing and exploring colonial domination and power as these are embodied in biblical texts and in interpretations, and as searching for alternative hermeneutics while thus overturning and dismantling colonial perspective. What postcolonialism does is to enable us to question the totalizing tendencies of European reading practices and interpret the texts on our own terms and read them from our specific locations.” R. S. Sugirtharajah, “Biblical Studies after the Empire: From a Colonial to a Postcolonial Mode of Interpretation,” in *The Postcolonial Bible*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 16.

the relationship between empire, power, religion, and biblical interpretation.<sup>52</sup> Consequently, postcolonial biblical hermeneutics takes seriously the reality of empires, particularly the modern Western empires at the center of biblical studies.<sup>53</sup> It seeks to probe ways in which the politics of empire is embodied both in the biblical texts and in the history of their interpretation (particularly from the standpoint of the colonizers), and it endeavors to recover the suppressed voices of the colonized. Postcolonial studies take recognition of the powerful and intimidating impact of the dominating center on the subordinate periphery. As a result, postcolonial scholars aim at analyzing the periphery on its own terms (i.e., by its own experiences, cultural productions, structures, and social contexts).<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> In biblical scholarship, the Bible is one of the major texts that postcolonial critics have channeled their deconstruction of Eurocentrism in the recent time. Their deconstructive reading of the Bible and its history of interpretation have uncovered the bond between the biblical text, its western interpreters, and different empires.

<sup>53</sup> Gerald O. West, "Doing Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation @home: Ten Years of (South) African Ambivalence," *Neotestamentica* 42.1 (2008): 147. See also Brad Braxton, "Paul and Racial Reconciliation: A Postcolonial Approach to 2 Corinthians 3:12-18," in *Scripture and Traditions: Essays on Early Judaism and Christianity in Honor of Carl R. Holladay*, ed. Patrick Gray and Gail R. O'Day, NovTSup 129 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 413; David Jobling et al., eds., "The Postcolonial Bible: Four Reviews," *JSNT* 21.74 (1999): 117–19. Other scholars such as Stephen Moore, John W. Marshall and Kwok Pui-Lan and have addressed this important critique arguing that the fact that postcolonial hermeneutical framework emerged from the reality and impact of modern colonialism does not necessarily preclude the application of the framework to ancient texts and contexts. The evolution of postcolonial theory in our modern context does not set a limit on the theory's application. Moore is an ardent proponent of this view. While admitting that postcolonial studies confines itself to the study of texts produced in the process of western colonization, he argues that since "imperial-colonial formations represent long-standing and wide-ranging phenomena, present across historical periods and cultural contexts," that he sees "no reason why postcolonial analysis should be limited to the modern and capitalist formations of the West; I see comparative analysis as justified and in order." Fernando F. Segovia, "Mapping the Postcolonial Optic in Biblical Criticism: Meaning and Scope," in *Postcolonialism Biblical Criticism: Interdisciplinary Intersections*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Fernando F. Segovia (New York: T&T Clark International, 2007), 75. Marshall argues that postcolonial criticism can be applied to any context of hegemony and domination including the ancient ones since postcolonial theory provides strategies for recognizing and negotiating the discourses of oppression and subversion. See John W. Marshall, "Postcolonialism and the Practice of History," in *Her Master's Tools? Feminist and Postcolonial Engagement of Historical-Critical Discourse*, ed. Caroline V. Stichele and Todd C. Penner, GPBS 9 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2005), 93–108. Pui-Lan points out that biblical studies have always employed "modern" theories including the social scientific methods to illuminate biblical texts. Postcolonial theories add a critical dimension by focusing on the empire and colonization, the center and the periphery, the exiled and the diasporized." Pui-Lan Kwok, "Making the Connections: Postcolonial Studies and Feminist Biblical Interpretation," in *The Postcolonial Biblical Reader*, ed. R. C. Sugirtharajah (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006), 46–47. In addition, Moore underscores a point on how biblical texts which were produced in the margins of the empire later became texts that legitimized the imperial status quo in the hands of Western biblical interpreters. He argues that "empire studies is united with other forms of postcolonial biblical criticism in the task of disengaging the biblical texts from an imperial embrace that spans the centuries." Stephen D. Moore, "Paul After Empires," in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul Through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 22.

<sup>54</sup> Segovia, "Mapping the Postcolonial Optic in Biblical Criticism: Meaning and Scope," 68–69.

Since postcolonial biblical interpretation is an umbrella category that covers broad parameters of literary practices — issues of uneven power relations between centers and peripheries; of empires and colonies; of race, class, and gender; different forms of marginalization, and the relationship between knowledge and power—the subsets of postcolonial criticism that I apply to this study are postcolonial contrapuntal reading and postcolonial womanist criticism.

“Postcolonial contrapuntal reading” was coined by Edward Said, the historian and literary critic who pioneered postcolonial criticism. Said introduces the musical concept of “contrapuntal” in his study of western metropolitan history to describe the effort to counterbalance the singularized and unidimensional view of western imperial history and culture by means of resistant histories written by the colonized and subordinate groups. According to Said, to read contrapuntally entails “a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history that is narrated and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts.”<sup>55</sup> As in a musical activity, the aim of contrapuntal reading is not to achieve a false harmonious symphony, but rather polyphony. In other words, it aims towards the recognition of the uniqueness of each voice in contrast with other voices, and seeks to compensate for gaps in one interpretation by placing it in conjunction with another.<sup>56</sup> In other words, contrapuntal reading is a method of bringing various interpretive voices, such as the metropolitan center and the periphery/subaltern, the colonizer and the colonized, and the Western World and the Third World into conversation.

Some scholars, including R. S. Sugirtharajah, Fernando F. Segovia, Stephen Friesen, and Alissa Jones Nelson, have expanded on Said’s postcolonial contrapuntal

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<sup>55</sup> Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1993), 51.

<sup>56</sup> Darren Cronshaw, “A Commission ‘great’ for Whom?: Postcolonial Contrapuntal Readings of Matthew 28:18-20 and the Irony of William Carey,” *Transformation* 33.2 (2016): 111, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0265378815595248>.

reading strategy and applied it to biblical interpretation. According to Sugirtharajah, “to read contrapuntally means to be aware simultaneously of mainstream scholarship and of other scholarship which the dominant discourse tries to domesticate and speak and act against.”<sup>57</sup> Practically speaking, it means reading neglected texts side by side with mainstream texts, or juxtaposing western academic voices with vernacular voices from the global South in the process of biblical interpretation in order to ensure genuine dialogue between them. Although empire and postcolonial studies are designated as political perspectives and sometimes both are used interchangeably, it is important to note that the two approaches are not identical. Empire criticism makes critique of the ancient biblical empires, while postcolonial critics use the biblical text to make critique of contemporary colonialism and imperialism.

### 1.5.2 Postcolonial Womanist Approach

A postcolonial womanist approach is a reading strategy that is committed to the hermeneutics of social justice that aims at promoting the flourishing of women, particularly African women and women of African descent.<sup>58</sup> It takes the concerns of colonized, subordinated, disadvantaged, and marginalized grassroots African women as the starting point of biblical interpretation. While recognizing how the Bible has been used to legitimate the subordination and oppression of women in Africa as part of the colonial enterprise, postcolonial womanist scholars engage in decolonizing and reconstructive

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<sup>57</sup> R. S. Sugirtharajah, *The Bible and the Third World: Precolonial, Colonial, and Postcolonial Encounters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 281.

<sup>58</sup> Musa Dube expressed the reason for an urgent postcolonial feminist interpretation in her *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology*. Dube notes that “in their feminist practices of reading and writing, Two-Thirds World women call for the decolonization of inherited colonial educational systems, languages, literary canon, reading methods, and the Christian religion, in order to arrest the colonizing ideology packed in the claims of religious conversion, Western civilization, modernization, development, democratization, and globalization.” Musa W. Dube, “Postcoloniality, Feminist Spaces, and Religion,” in *Postcolonialism, Feminism, and Religious Discourse*, ed. Laura E. Donaldson and Pui-Lan Kwok (New York: Routledge, 2002), 115.

interpretive exercises in reading biblical texts.<sup>59</sup> They commit not only to a hermeneutic that resists and questions conventional modes of biblical interpretation, modes that neglect women in Africa or promote their oppression and subordination; they also propound a hermeneutics of social justice that promotes the holistic flourishing of African women, advocating for liberative, transformative, and gender-inclusive interpretation. Today, a postcolonial womanist biblical interpretation is urgently needed because most African postcolonial hermeneutics which have investigated the issues of systems of colonial domination hardly home in on women's experiences. They have failed to see the intricate relationship between colonialism and patriarchy and how these imperial structures have combined and become a strong force that perpetuates women's oppression and subordination. These male scholars have not been able to direct their biblical research to the harsh realities of inequality, oppression, and exploitation that postcolonial African women often experience.

### 1.5.3 Applying Postcolonial Contrapuntal Reading and Womanist Hermeneutics

This study will apply the postcolonial contrapuntal reading strategy in three significant ways. First, since Daniel, 4 Ezra, and Romans are texts that were written to marginalized communities under different foreign imperial domination, I will read these texts—particularly the theologies they postulate—as resistant discourses against the dominant groups. Second, in an effort to understand how Jewish apocalyptic eschatology informed Paul's Adam-Christ narrative, I bring the apocalyptic texts of Daniel and 4 Ezra, texts that could be considered “marginal,” into conversation with Rom 5:12-21, a crucial text of Romans.<sup>60</sup> These texts will be read contrapuntally in order to explore the inscribed

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<sup>59</sup> Dube, “Reading for Decolonization (John 4.1-42),” 362.

<sup>60</sup> Most apocalyptic texts (excluding Daniel) are Deuterocanonical, Apocrypha and Pseudepigraphical collections which did not make it into the final biblical canon. Consequently, the authority and integrity of these book are often questioned and even rejected in certain mainline quarters as less



historical situation that gave rise to the emergence of the dynamic understanding and periodization of history and the dualism of the two ages among Second Temple and post-Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic thinkers, as well as the rhetorical function of these texts. These texts will be read in their historical contexts as texts that both articulate a theology of resistance to oppressive imperial systems, and also set forth an ideology of hope in God's salvific power that calls for ethical and social responsibility on the part of the readers/audience. Daniel and 4 Ezra are important conversation partners of Paul in this reading, because they provide us with the views of Paul's predecessors and near contemporaries on Jewish eschatology and soteriology within the context of imperial domination. Second, the model of postcolonial contrapuntal reading will be applied in my reading of Rom 5:12-21 and the rest of the Letter to the Romans. This model allows for the juxtaposition of a western reading of Rom 5:22-21 with a postcolonial womanist reading of the text, thereby enabling the voices of marginalized women in the postcolonial Nigerian context to engage with Western voices.

## 1.6 The Scope of Study

This project is an inquiry into the background, nature, and implications of Paul's soteriology in Rom 5:12-21. Fundamentally, it is an attempt to explicate the relationship between theology and praxis in church and society, particularly in the Nigerian context.

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authentic or heretical books. As such the texts of apocalyptic genre are often described as marginalized texts in textual or manuscript tradition. See Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 274–75; Hindy Naiman, “The Inheritance of Prophecy in Apocalypse,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 38–40. Although the book of Daniel made it into the final canonical list, its reception history shows that it has actually shared in the marginalized fate of other apocalypses. First, there was an unresolved problem with regard to the placement of Daniel in the Bible. The location of the book Daniel varies in different textual traditions. See Lee Martin McDonald, *Forgotten Scriptures: The Selection and Rejection of Early Religious Writings* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 119. Secondly, some genre critics take the book as literary fiction whose predictions were either false or never fulfilled. Third, there are some Christians who reject the book of Daniel because the Jews did not recognize it among the prophetic books. Fourth, some circle of Jews rejects Daniel because part of it was written in Aramaic (a Chaldean language).

This project seeks to read Paul's soteriological discourse in light of two Jewish apocalyptic writings Daniel 2, 7-12 and 4 Ezra 3, 6-7, thereby showing Paul's conceptual affinity with and departure from other Jewish apocalyptic writers. The bulk of this study will be a combination of empire and postcolonial reading of Rom 5:12-21 that questions the dominant forensic imputation that has characterized the western interpretation of the text since the Reformation era. Through a historical and literary/exegetical study of Rom 5:12-21, with a focus on the Roman imperial context of the letter, the study will show how the theme of participation in Christ is central to Paul's theology in the preceding context of Romans 1-4, the immediately preceding context of Romans 5-8, and in the rest of the chapters of the letter that follow. Finally, this study will explore the meaning of salvation from the perspective of women in the post-colonial Nigerian context and the prospect Paul's soteriology in Rom 5:12-21 holds for them.

## 1.7 Explanation of Key Concepts

### 1.7.1 Soteriology

The English term soteriology is from the Greek words σωτηρία and σωτήριον which mean "salvation." The term is derived from two Greek words σωτήρ ("savior") and λογος ("word" or "study"), hence soteriology means the study of salvation. The Greek verb σώζω means to "save," "deliver," "protect," or to "make whole." Used in a theological sense, salvation connotes the idea of God saving humans from perilous or distressful situations that would have resulted in death, if it were not for divine salvific intervention. God saves human beings who are in danger of death and restores their lives. In this basic sense, salvation is the opposite of losing one's life. The one who saves is the σωτήρ ("savior"). Richard Middleton and Michael Gorman note that "the most fundamental meaning of salvation in Scripture is God's deliverance of those in a situation

of need from that which impedes their wellbeing, resulting in their restoration to wholeness.”<sup>61</sup> For the ancient Jews who found themselves in an environment where their lives were constantly under threat, what is most important for them was survival—the wish to live. Hence for the Jews, the exodus became the paradigm of salvation. The first thing to notice about the exodus, according to Middleton and Gorman, is that the exodus “constitutes the sociopolitical deliverance of a community from a real, concrete situation of oppression. Thus, the exodus resists any ‘spiritualizing’ of salvation, keeping it firmly rooted in life in this world.”<sup>62</sup>

For the Jews, what it means to be saved continues to evolve as they go through different phases in their history. By the time of the New Testament, various understandings of salvation have emerged, which include the notion of sin and forgiveness, reconciliation, and reward in eternal life (cf. John 3:15-16). Another development in this period is that salvation becomes inextricably linked to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Messiah. Jesus is believed to be the divine agent through whom God accomplishes his salvific plan of restoration, of setting right a humanity and a world that have gone awry.<sup>63</sup> Through his death and resurrection, Jesus liberates human beings from all forms of evil, inaugurates a new age of God’s reign, and forms a new covenant people that will participate in God’s mission of restoration and transformation of the world.

### 1.7.2 Participatory soteriology

From Paul’s perspective, salvation simply means to be “in Christ” and to participate in the divine mission. Participatory soteriology as employed in this study is a theological concept that expresses how believers partake or share in the life and salvific

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<sup>61</sup> J. Richard Middleton and Michael J. Gorman, “Salvation,” *NIB* (2009) 5: 45.

<sup>62</sup> Middleton and Gorman, “Salvation,” 46.

<sup>63</sup> Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*, 5.

mission of Christ in their everyday lives. The concept underscores a Pauline understanding of salvation that recognizes human beings as genuine agents who can actively participate in God's salvation by obediently living the new life as aided by the divine Spirit. It expresses the idea of divine-human synergy in the drama of salvation that is central to Paul's soteriology. Paul speaks of this divine-human synergism in several places in his letters. For instance, Paul speaks of this divine-human synergism as follows: "As we work together (συνεργέω) with him, we urge you also not to accept the grace of God in vain" (2 Cor 6:1). Paul usually expresses the idea of participation in Christ using the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ ("in Christ") and some other prepositions and prefixes such as ἐν, εἰς, σύν, and διὰ followed by Christ.<sup>64</sup> The phrase ἐν Χριστῷ does not occur in Rom 5:12-21 but other participatory terms such διὰ and εἰς, occur. But the most important point is that Rom 5:12-21 speaks of the consequences of a life lived in imitation of Christ the just man, and so serves as the foundational text for understanding Paul's "in Christ," "union" languages that we see in Romans 6-16. In Rom 5:12-21, Paul invites believers to embody the justice of Jesus the Messiah as a way of counteracting the injustice and domination that mark life in the old age which Adam represents. Paul thinks that it is possible for believers to practice the justice of Christ because God's gift of grace has been made available to them through Christ. In Paul's theology, the concept of participation and transformation go hand in glove. As such some scholars have argued that Paul's soteriology is inherently participatory and transformative.<sup>65</sup>

Although the theology of participation dates to the patristic period, it was only in the modern period that interest in the theme of participation received scholarly attention in

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<sup>64</sup> Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*, 8–12.

<sup>65</sup> Gorman, *Participating in Christ: Explorations in Paul's Theology and Spirituality*; Thomas D. Stegman, "Paul's Use of Dikaio Terminology: Moving Beyond N. T. Wright's Forensic Interpretation," *TS* 72.3 (2011): 496–524; M. David Litwa, *We Are Being Transformed: Deification in Paul's Soteriology*, BZNW 187 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2012); Blackwell, *Christosis*; Michael J. Gorman, *Inhabiting the Cruciform God: Kenosis, Justification, and Theosis in Paul's Narrative Soteriology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

the works of publication of two great Pauline scholars, Adolf Deissmann<sup>66</sup> and Albert Schweitzer.<sup>67</sup> In his groundbreaking work *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, Schweitzer argues that Paul's basic idea of soteriology is mystical and participatory in nature. In contrast to the Protestant Reformation's position that justification by faith is the heart of Paul's theology, Schweitzer contends that the main crater of Paul's theology is the mystical doctrine of redemption through "being-in-Christ", while the doctrine of justification is a subsidiary crater which was formed within the rim of the main crater.<sup>68</sup> Though Schweitzer is credited for bringing the apocalyptic and mystical elements in Paul's soteriology to the forefront, it was E. P. Sanders's work *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* that revived the contemporary interest in Paul's participatory soteriology. Much like Schweitzer, Sanders argues that the believers' participation in Christ, which he describes as "participationist eschatology," is at the heart of Paul's soteriology. According to him, "the main theme of Paul's gospel was the saving action of God in Jesus Christ and how his hearers could participate in that action."<sup>69</sup> Today, studies on Paul's participatory soteriology have been on the surge evidenced by the many monographs that have been published under the subject.<sup>70</sup> Michael Gorman has written extensively on Pauline soteriology, emphasizing the relationship between justification, participation, and transformation. It is on these foundations that this study builds.

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<sup>66</sup> Adolf Deissmann, *The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul* (New York: Doran, 1926).

<sup>67</sup> Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, Johns Hopkins. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). The German original of this work was titled *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus*, published in 1930.

<sup>68</sup> Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, 225.

<sup>69</sup> Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, 447.

<sup>70</sup> Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*; Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel*; Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul's Narrative Spirituality of the Cross*; Gorman, *Participating in Christ: Explorations in Paul's Theology and Spirituality*; Hays, "What Is 'Real Participation in Christ'? A Dialogue with E. P. Sanders on Pauline Soteriology"; Blackwell, *Christosis*; Campbell, *Paul and Union with Christ*; Stegman, *The Character of Jesus*; Powers, *Salvation through Participation*.

## 1.8 Outline of Study

The project has opened by setting forth the problems it will address, discusses methodological issues, and introduces the arguments to be used. This Chapter provides a survey of overly polarized approaches and positions to the study of the background and soteriology of Rom 5:12-21, showing my dependence on, and departure from, previous scholarship, and the unique contribution I hope to bring to the study of Paul's soteriology by using the postcolonial contrapuntal reading strategy and womanist framework. Chapters Two and Three analyze the apocalyptic concepts of periodization of history and the doctrine of the two ages in two Jewish apocalyptic texts (Daniel 2 and 7; and 4 Ezra 3, 6-7), respectively, showing how their imperial contexts shape their view of history and their desperate desire for divine salvation.

I argue that in their historical contexts, these texts make critique of the political powers of their time, while offering hope of God's unfailing salvific intervention to their audience in their time of crisis. Chapter Four deals with the central theme of the project, namely the periodization of history and the doctrine of the two ages in Rom 5:12-21 and how Paul used these apocalyptic devices to make critique of the Roman Empire. Through a detailed exegetical study of key terms and the rhetorical function of the narrative, I demonstrate that, in this passage, Paul was not concerned with the forensic imputation of God's righteousness upon individual sinners; rather, his narrative speaks to the reality of sin and death in our world especially as embodied by the Roman Empire. I argue that the text serves as an invitation to believers to embody the obedience and justice of Christ which leads to salvation. Finally, Chapter Five examines Paul's discourse of the domination of sin and death in light of women's experiences of systemic oppression and domination by men. The chapter explores what the concept of salvation might mean for women in the postcolonial Nigerian context who have to face on a daily basis the reality

of gender inequality, discrimination, subordination, injustice, violence, and exclusion as a result of patriarchal and colonial ideology of male superiority. Chapter Six concludes the work, offering practical implications of Paul's soteriology for the Postcolonial Nigerian Igbo communities.

## CHAPTER TWO

### PERIODIZATION OF HISTORY AND THE TWO-AGES MOTIF IN THE BOOK OF DANIEL

#### 2.1 Introduction

One of the arguments raised in the previous chapter is that the Jewish apocalyptic eschatology is the conceptual framework for understanding Paul's Adam-Christ soteriological discourse in Rom 5:12-21. In order to provide some textual support for this argument, this chapter offers a textual study of the Book of Daniel that deals with periodization of history. The focus of this chapter is Daniel 2 and 7 which contain Daniel's periodization of history using the four-kingdom schema and its implied eschatological doctrine of the two ages— "this age" (הָעוֹלָם הַזֶּה) and "the coming age" (הָעוֹלָם הַבָּא). Although this eschatological expression is not explicitly mentioned in the text of Daniel, it plays a fundamental role in Daniel's understanding of history.

The first periodization of history occurs in the context of Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a multipartite statue (Dan 2). The statue, which represents four successive world empires/kingdoms, would be replaced by a divine kingdom. The second periodization of history is found in Daniel's vision of four numbered animals: a lion, a bear, a leopard and an unnamed beast with eleven horns in Daniel 7. As in Daniel 2, the four beasts represent four kings whose kingship and dominion were taken away and given to the "one like a son of man" (Dan 7:14). Although the author did not specify the names of the four empires, it is now generally accepted that the four kingdoms are Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece.<sup>1</sup> In both visions, the author of the Book of Daniel

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<sup>1</sup> Horald H. Rowley, *Darius the Mede and the Four World Empires in the Book of Daniel: A Historical Study of Contemporary Theories* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2006); Paul J. Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 144.



schematically divided the political history of four gentile empires—Babylonian, Median, Persian, and the Macedonian-Seleucid empires—and then contrasts them with the eternal, eschatological kingship of God. According to Daniel, these imperial kingdoms are at the end of their course to be replaced by the divine kingdom.

This chapter engages in a detailed textual analysis of Daniel 2 and 7 showing how the author of the Book of Daniel schematized the history of his era, as well as the rhetorical function of such periodization for the immediate audience. It argues that in their original historical context, Daniel 2 and 7 function as textual resistance to the Seleucid imperial oppressive system, but particularly to its imperial ideology of time and temporality.<sup>2</sup> These texts participate in an ancient Near Eastern anti-imperial discourse (championed by those who have had the horrible and devastating experience of imperial domination) in so far as they envision an end of the gentile oppressive empires and the arrival of a divinely established kingdom that will be marked by justice and righteousness. Secondly, the chapter argues that Daniel's periodized schema of history provides a framework that illuminates the doctrine of the two ages found in Paul's letters. The chapter underscores that what Daniel saw in his vision at night in Daniel 7 was the bestial evil, demonic powers that lie behind the political world powers of his day. In Daniel, these evil political powers are the symbols of the present evil age that have been destined for destruction and

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<sup>2</sup> Christopher Rowland, "The Book of Daniel and the Radical Critique of Empire. An Essay in Apocalyptic Hermeneutics," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, *VTSup* 83 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 2:448–67; Anthea Portier-Young, *Apocalypse against Empire: Theologies of Resistance in Early Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011); Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*; Joseph W. Swain, "The Theory of the Four Monarchies: Opposition History Under the Roman Empire," *CL* 35.1 (1940): 1–21; David Flusser, "The Four Empires in the Fourth Sibyl and in the Book of Daniel," *IOS* 2 (1978): 148–75; Brennan W. Breed, "Daniel's Four Kingdoms Schema: A History of Re-Writing World History," *Int* 71.2 (2017): 178–89; Marvin A. Sweeney, "The End of Eschatology in Daniel?: Theological and Socio-Political Ramifications of the Changing Contexts of Interpretation," *BI* 9.2 (2001): 123–40; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, HMS 16 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 191–215; Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, "Prayer and Dreams: Power and Diaspora Identities in the Social Setting of the Daniel Tales," in *The Book of Daniel Composition and Reception*, ed. John J. Collins and Peter Flint (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 1:266–89; Jonathan Z. Smith, "Wisdom and Apocalyptic," in *Religion Syncretism in Antiquity*, ed. B Pearson (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1975), 131–56.

replacement. At God's own appointed time, a divine kingdom will emerge which will supplant these evil kingdoms. This is the central message that is imbedded in the doctrine of the two ages. As such, the two ages motif function as counter imperial discourse.

The chapter is divided into six sections. The first section offers a brief review of some important preliminary matters regarding the Book of Daniel, such as the authorship, date, provenance, and languages of the book. These will help to establish the proper background for this chapter, as well as guide us in interpreting the text. The second section examines the social setting, that is, the socio-religio-political context that shaped the author's perspective of time and history. The third section examines important literary elements of the Book Daniel with a focus on chapter 2 and 7. The fourth section offers a textual analysis of Daniel 2 and 7. The textual study pays close attention to the keywords, phrases, clauses, and verses that are most essential to understanding the logic of Daniel's periodization of history and the theological claims the author makes. The fifth section explores some important themes that emerge from our reading of Daniel 2 and 7. These include: the dynamic relationship between divine and human agency, the relationship between the two ages, and the soteriology of these narratives. Here we explore how all these elements are shaped by Daniel's understanding of history. Finally, the chapter explores the rhetorical function of periodization of history and its implied doctrine of the two ages, and the influence of Daniel 2 and 7 on New Testament (NT) theology.

## 2.2 Preliminary Issues

### 2.2.1 Authorship

As with many biblical texts, there is no superscription attached to the Book of Daniel that identifies the author. The book receives its name from the protagonist of the

story—Daniel—a Hebrew name that means “my Judge is El.”<sup>3</sup> Daniel is a fictional character who may have owed his name to a legendary figure who was mentioned together with Job and Noah in the Book of Ezekiel as models of righteousness (Ezekiel 14:14; 28:3). This is typical of many apocalyptic texts written during the Hellenistic period, which are usually pseudepigraphical works attributed to an ancient legendary figure, especially a biblical figure, in order to lend credence and authority to the work. The reality of pseudepigraphy poses great difficulty for many contemporary readers who usually see this practice as a fraudulent activity that should not be associated with Sacred Scripture.<sup>4</sup> However, the practice of anonymous writing in the ancient times was never considered a deceptive endeavor. In fact, it is possible that pseudonymous writing was perceived to be fulfilling an accepted purpose. John Collins notes that the device of pseudepigraphy offered many advantages to writers of the Hellenistic period, most obviously the prestige of antiquity.<sup>5</sup> Hindy Najman explains that apocalyptic writers continued the authority and legacy of older prophets through creative reinterpretation and appropriation of their works and names, a phenomenon she describes as “strategies of inheritance.”<sup>6</sup> By attributing their works to ancient biblical figures such as Moses, Ezra, Daniel, etc., the apocalyptists ground their works in established theological/ prophetic traditions.

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<sup>3</sup> It is also important to underscore the relevance of the name “Daniel” in relation to God’s own judgment— a major theme that runs through the chapters especially in chapters 2 and 7. “Dan” means “judgement” while the “el” is an ancient Near East Semitic word for God/god. In the Canaanite mythology, El is the highest deity of the Canaanite pantheon, the supreme divine creator, and ruler of heaven and earth. According to F. M. Cross, El is usually depicted as an enthroned deity presiding over the divine council giving judgement. El is said to reveal his will to humans through dreams, visions, and various intermediary agents. See F. M. Cross, Jr., “𐤁𐤏 ‘ēl,” in *TDOT* 1:242–46. By naming the book and the major character “Daniel”, the author highlights one of the major themes of this book, namely, the immediate and eschatological divine judgement over the corrupt and wicked rulers of this world and all who participate in their wicked schemes. The Book of Daniel opens with God’s judgement of exile on the Judeans (Dan 1:2) and ends with the hope of a favorable eschatological judgement for Daniel (Dan 12:13). In the apocalyptic texts, the divine judgement serves as the final antidote to the injustice in this world.

<sup>4</sup> Annette Yoshiko Reed, “The Modern Invention of ‘Old Testament Pseudepigrapha,’” *JTS* 60.2 (2009): 403–36.

<sup>5</sup> John J. Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy: On Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 219.

<sup>6</sup> Hindy Naiman, “The Inheritance of Prophecy in Apocalypse,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 36–51.

Not only is the Book of Daniel a pseudonymous work, its prophecy is also classified as *ex eventu* (“after the fact”). This view dates to Porphyry, a Neoplatonic philosopher and a pagan critic of Christianity in 3<sup>rd</sup> Century CE, in a work now lost, *Against the Christians*.<sup>7</sup> Porphyry argues that the detailed and accurate prophecies in the Book of Daniel can only be explained as *vaticinium ex eventu* (“prophecy after the event”). This is to say that the Book of Daniel was written after the events that the author portrayed as prophetic revelation had occurred. Stephen Young explains the purpose of *ex eventu* prophecies as follows: “by textually projecting details of past history—from the standpoint of the actual author and audience of a text—into the mouth or vision of a notionally ancient figure, the producer confers an extra degree of legitimacy on the product.”<sup>8</sup> But the most important element in considering the visions of the Book of Daniel as *ex eventu* is that it enables us to see this text as a work of historiography rather than a future-oriented composition devoid of existential impact on its immediate audience. Paul Kosmin highlights this point in his recent work that seeks to stress the anti-imperial rhetoric of apocalyptic writings within the Seleucid era. Kosmin clarifies that the major concern of apocalyptic texts is not the future, as many have supposed; rather, “they are attempts to narrate, order, and find meaning in the outplaying of centuries’ worth of historical events, with a focus on the central concerns of most ancient historiography—political change, military conquests, imperial rule, and the injustices of despotic kingship.”<sup>9</sup> This point does not attempt to negate the fact that there are apocalyptic writings that are primarily concerned with otherworldly or mystical experiences.

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<sup>7</sup> Bruce K. Waltke, “Date of the Book of Daniel,” *BSac* 133.532 (1976): 319.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Young, “Inerrantist Scholarship on Daniel: A Valid Historical Enterprise?,” in *Interdisciplinary Perspectives on the Authority of Scripture: Historical, Biblical, and Theoretical Perspectives*, ed. Carlos R. Bovell (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 209.

<sup>9</sup> Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 134.

### 2.2.2 Date, Provenance and Audience

Daniel scholarship is divided over the dating of the Book of Daniel. Most pre-modern scholars postulate a 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE date for the Book of Daniel and so assumes a Babylonian provenance for the book.<sup>10</sup> The major reason for this date is that the book purports to have been written by Daniel himself during the Babylonian exile. Many modern scholars consider the Book of Daniel to be a product of the third or second century BCE, thereby locating the work within the Hellenistic era. Although the final form of the book took shape in the second century BCE, John Collins has shown that the composition of Daniel has a complex and complicated history.<sup>11</sup> The two parts of Daniel were not written at the same time. There is still some debate with regard to the exact dating of the court tales of Daniel 1-6. However, it is generally agreed that the court tales are older than the visions and that they originate in the Eastern Diaspora and so reflect its imperial context. The visions (Daniel 7-12) are believed to have been composed shortly before the death of Antiochus Epiphanes IV, since they reflect the socio-political and religious crisis of the Jews under Antiochus IV Epiphanes. Collins asserts that even though the court tales (chs. 1-6) are older than the visions (chs. 7-12), the tales are not older than the Hellenistic period (third century BCE).<sup>12</sup>

As a result, critical scholarship has dated the final form of the book to 167-164 BCE, during the religious persecution of the Jews under the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, shortly before the death of Antiochus IV in 164 BCE<sup>13</sup> Many factors support

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<sup>10</sup> This view dates back to Josephus a first century renowned Jewish historian. See Josephus, *Ant.* 10.11.7, and was later defended by Jerome a famous fifth century biblical scholar. See Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel*. The sixth century date was first challenged in the third century CE by Porphyry a pagan philosopher who argued for a second century BCE date for the book based on internal evidence. The sixth century date was challenged in the modern period by historical critical scholarship.

<sup>11</sup> John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, HCHCB (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 24–38.

<sup>12</sup> John J. Collins, *Daniel, With an Introduction to Apocalyptic Literature*, FOTL 20 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 28.

<sup>13</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 38.

this late date. Among them is the fact that the Book of Sirach, written about 180 BCE, does not make any reference to the Book of Daniel, an indication that the text may not have been written during this time while another deuterocanonical book, 1 Maccabees (from a century later), makes ample references to Daniel, particularly Daniel 3 and 6.<sup>14</sup> Another consideration is that some scholars have cited the exclusion of the Book of Daniel in the Prophetic books as an indication that the book emerged after the Prophetic corpus was canonized and closed.<sup>15</sup>

How then did these composite works come together into a single book? Although no consensus exists for all the intricate details, many scholars accept the editorial history suggested by John Collins. According to Collins, the Aramaic court tales (chs. 2-6) were collected at some point by later editors who added Daniel 1 (originally in Aramaic) as introductory material in order to explain how Daniel came to Babylon.<sup>16</sup> Daniel 7 was written in Aramaic (which was probably the author's first language) early in the persecution of Antiochus IV, before the desecration of the Temple in 167 BCE, to maintain continuity with the tales. The section written in Hebrew (Dan 8-12) was composed between 167-164 BCE and added to the collection by the final editor who also translated Daniel 1:1-2:4a into Hebrew to provide a linguistic link for the revelatory section (chs. 8-12). These editorial changes helped to give the work the semblance of unity. Finally, the glosses in Daniel 12:11-12 were added prior to the rededication of the temple.<sup>17</sup> Since the final editing of the book happened in the 2<sup>nd</sup> BCE, within the context of the Seleucid

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<sup>14</sup> Angela Kim Harkins, "Daniel," in *The Paulist Biblical Commentary*, ed. José Enrique Aguilar Chiu et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 2018), 773.

<sup>15</sup> Leland Ryken and Tremper Longman III, *A Complete Literary Guide to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 325.

<sup>16</sup> Collins, *The Apocalyptic Vision of the Book of Daniel*, 17; Ernest C. Lucas

<sup>17</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 38; Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 291; James E. Miller, "The Redaction of Daniel," *JSOT* 52 (1991): 115-24.

Empire, it is therefore reasonable to say that the author intended the final form of the book for a second century audience.<sup>18</sup>

### 2.2.3 The Socio-political Context of the Audience

If the second century date for the final form of the text is accepted, then it becomes easier to decipher the socio-political situation of the writer and his audience that elicited the production of the text. This study proceeds on the assumption that the stories and visions in the Book of Daniel function as a narrative of resistance to the events of the Seleucid era.<sup>19</sup> Below is a review of the religio-political crisis to which the Book of Daniel responded in its historical context.

As a people, the Jews suffered terribly because of their subjugation under a series of empires (Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian) prior to Greek rule. With the victory of the Macedonian king Alexander the Great over the Persian King Darius III in 333/332 BCE, Judea came under Greek rule. This decisive victory inaugurated the Hellenistic period in the eastern Mediterranean world.<sup>20</sup> When Alexander the Great died in 323 BCE, his kingdom was divided among his four generals (the Diadochi): Cassander, Lysimachus, Ptolemy, and Seleucus. Palestine/Judah came under the rule of Ptolemy 1 of Egypt until about 200 BCE when the Seleucid dynasty (based in Antioch in Syria) took control of Palestine from the Ptolemies after the battle at Paneion. It was during this period of Hellenistic rule that most Second Temple apocalyptic texts, including the Book of Daniel, were written. According to Curtiss DeYoung, “empires enforce and maintain domination

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<sup>18</sup> The Book of Daniel existed in plural forms in the Second Temple period. This plurality can easily be seen in the difference between the MT, LXX and the *Kaige*-Theodotion texts of Daniel. Significant variations exist among these textual traditions. For instance, the LXX includes the Prayer of Azariah, the Son of the Three Jews, Susanna and Bel and the Dragon. These additions are not found in MT. In other words, Daniel is more extensive than what we have in the MT manuscript.

<sup>19</sup> Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 291.

<sup>20</sup> Norman R. C. Cohn, *Cosmos, Chaos, and the World to Come: The Ancient Roots of Apocalyptic Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 163.

on the subject peoples through military might, economic oppression, and ideological belief systems, no matter what era in history they emerged.”<sup>21</sup> This is particularly true of the Seleucid Empire. Anatheia Portier-Young has aptly captured the extreme economic crisis the Seleucid imperial rule brought on the Jews in the second century:

the fifth Syrian war had brought hardship to Judea, including the heavy cost of provisioning Seleucid armies, personal injury, captivity, loss of life, and damage to land and structure, likely including the temple in Jerusalem.... Military occupation brought loss of land, displacement, and more slavery. During this period, imperial administration increasingly encroached into the civic and cultic life within the provinces.<sup>22</sup>

The economic crisis described above was not the only problem that the Jews faced during this period. The second problem, a major one indeed, was the religious persecution that began when Antiochus Epiphanes IV ascended the throne of the Seleucid dynasty in 175 BCE. Prior to Antiochus, the Jews had enjoyed considerable religious freedom under the previous Seleucid kings. But under Antiochus, things changed. Antiochus’s religious policy that aimed at cultural and religious uniformity imposed a great threat to Jewish faith and tradition. The authors of 1 and 2 Maccabees provide us with a depressing account of this hideous persecution (1 Macc 1:41-46; 2 Macc 6-7). Daniel Schwartz summarizes the account of this persecution in 2 Macc 6:1-7 as follows: (a) defilement of the Temple (vv. 2-5), (b) prohibition of the practice of Jewish law (vv. 1, 6, illustrated in vv. 10-11), (c) and enforced worship of Dionysus (v.7).<sup>23</sup>

Among the horrors recounted in these texts, the extraordinarily cruel persecution Antiochus inflicted on Israelite women stands out: “according to the decree, they put to death women who had their children circumcised, and their families and those who

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<sup>21</sup> Curtiss Paul DeYoung and Allan Aubrey Boesak, *Radical Reconciliation: Beyond Political Pietism and Christian Quietism* (New York: Orbis Books, 2012), 13.

<sup>22</sup> Anatheia Portier-Young, “Jewish Apocalyptic Literature as Resistance Literature,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 150.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, CEJL (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2008), 274.



circumcised them; and they hung the infants from their mothers' neck." In 1 Macc 1:31-33, we read that Antiochus took women and children as captives, and seized livestock. This scenario shows that Jewish women were specifically targeted victims of Antiochus's politics of cultural imperialism and religious reform. Instead of succumbing to Hellenistic pagan culture, these women resisted and maintained faith in their God to the point of death. For instance, 2 Maccabees 7 narrates an agonizing experience of a Jewish woman who had to watch her seven sons killed in one day by Antiochus. She encouraged her sons to choose death rather than defile themselves and break the covenant. She herself was later martyred because of the same faith. She and her sons died with ardent faith and hope that God would raise them to new life someday. As such, they become models of faithfulness to God and resistance to Hellenistic imperialism.<sup>24</sup>

The problems created by the Seleucid imperial kings, especially Antiochus IV, were enormous. Among them, a major issue the author of Book of Daniel addresses has to do with temporality, that is, the Seleucid's quest to control time and history, what Kosmin refers to as "dynastic temporality." According to Kosmin, the Seleucids invented a new dating system called the Seleucid Era (SE)—a linear, transcendent, and progressive dating system with no terminus point, that impacted the conceptualization of time in the ancient Near East, particularly in Babylonia, Iran, and Judea. This imperial dating system was inaugurated in 305 BCE when Seleucus I Nicator (one of the Diadochi) proclaimed himself king after he returned to Babylon from exile, having defeated his rival Antigonus 1

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<sup>24</sup> With regard to the historicity of the Maccabean account, Schwartz submits that there can be no doubt about the main claim, that Antiochus issued and enforced decrees against the practice of Judaism. This is because the event stands at the very foundation of the festival of Hanukkah ("rededication" of the Temple). However, various intricate details are been disputed. Secondly the event is also corroborated by several other ancient sources such as *The Assumption of Moses* (Ch. 8), Josephus (*War* 1.34–35; *Ant.* 12.251–256), as well as pagan writers such as Diodorus 34–35.1.3–4 and Tacitus, *Histories* 5.8.2, etc. See Schwartz, *2 Maccabees*, 273. For scholarly presentation of this religious persecution see Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 283–92; Elias J. Bickerman, *The God of the Maccabees: Studies on the Meaning and Origin of the Maccabean Revolt*, SJLA 32 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 90–139; Otto Mørkholm, *Antiochus IV of Syria* (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1966), 142–49.

Monophthalmus (312/311 BCE). In 305, Seleucid 1 retroactively established 311 as year 1, making the current year as year 7, thereby marking the year he defeated his rival as his regnal year.

The Seleucid Era system represents a major rupture from the ANE dating system which measured time by important community events, taxation cycles, personages such as the reigning king, etc. Such time-recording systems are full of events and meaning. Under the Seleucid rule, time became an abstract phenomenon that was calibrated based on solar reckoning. Time no longer restarted with each new king; instead, it flowed continuously in a linear, numerically constant fashion, irreversible, without interruption or end, similar to our own dating system.<sup>25</sup> Kosmin argues that the Seleucids' concept of time had a pervasive impact on how people experienced time and history, transacted business, and interacted with the larger world.<sup>26</sup> But undergirding the Seleucids' abstract numerical time reckoning was an ideological supposition. The Seleucid impulse to start a generic clock time that is independent of any king was a calculated attempt to erase the legitimacy and memory of sacred past. Among the Jews, the past that the Seleucid rulers intended to obliterate extended from Moses through the Babylonian exile. Kosmin submits that the severing of the past from the present was the major goal behind the Seleucid invention of a new dating system. The dynasty was determined to erase all important political histories that preceded it.<sup>27</sup>

Kosmin's thesis is that the genres of historical writing, such as the historical apocalypses which emerged during this period, with emphases on periodization, future eschatology, agency, and justice were, in fact, direct responses to the Seleucid imperial

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<sup>25</sup> Kosmin argues that the Seleucid dating system became the model for subsequent dating systems including our own modern calendar era system and clock-time. Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 22, 45.

<sup>26</sup> Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 48.

<sup>27</sup> Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 88–92.

temporal ideology. Jewish apocalyptic writers resisted the Seleucid temporal ideology through the periodization of history, a process by which they posited that every period in history must one day come to an end, including the period of Seleucid rule. Some of these writings, including the Book of Daniel, went so far as calculating the time of the end with apparent mathematical precision. According to Kosmin, through periodization of history, which included the Seleucid era itself (the fourth empire), “the authors prospectively historicized it, and the historicization of political authority undermines its legitimacy and necessity.”<sup>28</sup> Kosmin writes:

the Seleucid kingdom, despite all of its efforts to establish a limit-horizon of historical reference, was dragged into the same space of experience as the empires that had preceded it. Apocalyptic periodization implied a similitude of fate and thereby encouraged typological thinking: the patterning of history guaranteed the fall of the Seleucids and the salvation of the righteous. Moreover, by promising a dramatic end of the Seleucid rule, these texts made it possible to imagine a liberated world beyond empire.<sup>29</sup>

The Jewish apocalyptic writers not only projected the end of the Seleucids’ imperial rule, they also revived past memories which the new dating system sought to erase. Many of the apocalyptic writers began to produce texts that sought to bring their past histories into the present, thereby establishing a connection with the past that might have otherwise been forgotten. We see this evidence in the Book of Daniel, which not only evokes the Israelite’s pre-Seleucid past using the device of *vaticinium ex eventu*, but also measures time by the regnal years as a way of rejecting the Seleucid new temporality and its ideological scheme. In fact, the Book of Daniel employs both the cyclic and linear notion of time. But unlike the Seleucid linear era system that is constantly moving without an end in view, in the Book of Daniel history and time are linear in that they are moving towards a final end. The statue of Daniel 2 represents a linear progression, but it is a progression that admits a

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<sup>28</sup> Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 184.

<sup>29</sup> Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 184–85.

decline. In this way, the author undermines the Seleucid Empire by recognizing the political kingdoms that came before it and, more radically, by intimating that another kingdom (the divine kingdom) would succeed it. This is the context that informs the author's prophecy of an end of the imperial kingdom and the inauguration of a divine kingdom in which God's holy and faithful people will thrive. This context enables us to understand the existential realities that the Book of Daniel deals with.

## 2.3 Some Literary Issues of the Book of Daniel

### 2.3.1 Literary Form

In the Hebrew canon, the Book of Daniel belongs to the section that is generally characterized as the Writings (*Ketûvîm*) rather than the prophets (*Nevi'im*).<sup>30</sup> In the

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<sup>30</sup> The reason for the exclusion of Daniel among the prophets in the Hebrew Bible are not very clear. One popular explanation is the late dating of the book. Hartman and DiLella suggest that the rabbis may have excluded the text from the prophetic canon "because the book appeared so late (second quarter of the second century B.C.) it could not be included in the prophetic corpus which the rabbis held to be closed with the death of the fifth century B.C. prophet Malachi." Louis Francis Hartman and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, AB 23 (New York: Doubleday, 1978), 25. Scholars who maintain this view argue that Daniel was excluded among the prophets because the prophetic books were already closed prior to the writing of the Book of Daniel. For this view, See Shnayer Z. Leiman, *The Canonization of Hebrew Scripture: The Talmudic and Midrashic Evidence* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1976), 26; John Barton, *Oracles of God: Perceptions of Ancient Prophecy in Israel after the Exile* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 25, 35-40, 99. Today, many question the above theory based on textual traditions from ancient sources. For instance, textual evidence from Dead Sea Scrolls point to the fact that Daniel was regarded as a prophet (4Q174:2:3). In fact, Barton has shown that the phrase, "as it was written in the book of the prophet Daniel" appears many times in the Dead Sea Scrolls. See Barton, *Oracles of God*, 40-42. Collins also agree that Daniel was considered a prophetic text in the Qumran *pesharim*. See John J. Collins, *Seers, Sybils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, JSJSup 54 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 14. The most authoritative attestation of Daniel as a prophet is found in the New Testament where Jesus refers to Daniel as a prophet (Matt 24:15; cf. Dan 11:31 and 12:11). Textual evidence from Flavius Josephus also suggests that the Book of Daniel was included among the Prophets rather than the Hagiographa (See Josephus, *Against Apion* 1: 37-43; Ant. 10:245-246, 249). According to Lee, some rabbis also counted Daniel among the prophets (cf. *Megilla* 15a). In fact, in light of these textual evidences, the question remains, why would these textual traditions continue to include Daniel in the prophetic collection if the canon of the prophets has already been closed when Daniel was written? It appears that the argument of late-date is not a sufficient factor for the exclusion of Daniel among the prophet in the Hebrew Bible. Consequently, other scholars have explored other factors that might be responsible for the phenomenon. Two of these factors are the pseudepigraphic and *ex eventu* character of the Book of Daniel which is considered incompatible with prophetic tradition. It has been observed that Daniel never uses the so-called messenger formula "Thus saith the Lord." Klaus Koch notes that Von Rad considers the absence of any directly divine "I" in the book as a significant factor for its non-prophetic character. Klaus Koch, "Is Daniel Also among the Prophets?," *Interpretation* 39.2 (1985): 126. Koch himself argues that the rabbis decided to relocate Daniel to the Writings after the defeat of Bar Kokhba because of the unfulfillment of some of the book's eschatological prophecies. Koch writes, "since Antiochus did not remain as the last enemy of the people of God..., the book lost its claim to be the final

Septuagint (LXX) and Christian canon, Daniel is classified as a prophetic book alongside the major prophets. In biblical scholarship, following the principle of form criticism, Daniel is grouped within the genre of apocalyptic literature and, in fact, represents a key example of this genre. In terms of genre, the Book of Daniel, especially chapters 2 and 7, is considered a “historical apocalypse.” Historical apocalypses are usually characterized by an interest in the unfolding of historical events. They contrast with the “otherworldly journey” type of apocalypse that is marked by the heavenly ascent of a hero figure, with keen interest in the working of the cosmos.<sup>31</sup> Like the other historical apocalypses, Daniel “contains an elaborate review of history, presented in the form of prophecy and culminating in a time of crisis and eschatological upheaval.”<sup>32</sup> The writer discerns patterns from past events in the life of the community to make sense of the present and to project a potential future. While the events in Daniel 2 and 7 are cast in the form of prophetic predictions, they are in reality concerned with the current state of affairs, that is, the political, social, and religious crises of their time. These two chapters present a historiographical schema that segments the history of the world into a series of sequences that are filled by a foreign empire. By means of this historiographical schema, the writer offers a critique of foreign political powers, “asserts the transience and finitude of temporal powers, affirms God’s governance of time and the outworking of God’s plan in history, and gives hope for a transformed future.”<sup>33</sup>

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revelation....Therefore, removing Daniel from the prophetic corpus and placing it among the narratives of late exilic and early post-exilic times like Esther and Ezra shifted the accent from eschatology to pedagogies. Koch, “Is Daniel Also among the Prophets?”, 127. The conclusion that we draw from this survey is that the Book of Daniel was viewed as a prophetic text up until the first and second century CE. Its exclusion in the prophetic corpus is a complex issue.

<sup>31</sup> John J. Collins, “Introduction: Towards the Morphology of a Genre,” in *Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre*, ed. John J. Collins, Semeia 14 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979), 1–20; Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 4–5; Andrew E. Hill, “Daniel,” in *Daniel-Malachi*, ed. Tremper Longman III and David E. Garland, vol. 8 of *EBC* 13 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 32.

<sup>32</sup> John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 7.

<sup>33</sup> Portier-Young, *Apocalypse against Empire*, 27.

### 2.3.2 The Language of the Text

The Book of Daniel is a bilingual composition. Daniel 1:1-2:4a and 8:1-12:13 were written in Hebrew, while 2:4b-7:28 were written in Aramaic. Various theories have been posited to explain this linguistic phenomenon.<sup>34</sup> The most popular explanation is that the linguistic transition from Hebrew to Aramaic and back to Hebrew is textual evidence that the text underwent series of textual redactions.<sup>35</sup> More recently, Portier-Young and Kosmin have endeavored to explain this phenomenon as a conscious rhetorical strategy that is part of the author's resistance discourse. According to Portier-Young, the linguistic movement enables the audience to recognize "a new context in which the claims of empire had dissolved and claims of covenant alone remained. In so doing, the author invited the audience to find their place within the world of the visions, forsaking a stance of collaboration with the reigning Seleucid empire in order to adopt a posture of resistance rooted in covenant."<sup>36</sup> Kosmin presents a similar view. According to him, "the sequence of languages, Hebrew-Aramaic-Hebrew, traces the shift from covenantal independence to imperial world empire and then to the eschatological reclaiming of that national autonomy."<sup>37</sup> This study agrees with the explanations of Portier-Young and Kosmin.

### 2.3.3 The Unity of the Book of Daniel

Although the Book of Daniel is a composite work, it is not an arbitrary collection of unrelated works. Some significant relationship in both form and content have been identified between the two parts. Sidney Greidanus notes that "the overarching unity of Daniel is shown by the narrative framework, which establishes Daniel's identity in

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<sup>34</sup> For a summary of the various theories that have been proposed to explain the bilingual element in the book of Daniel, see Collins, *Daniel*, 12–13.

<sup>35</sup> Norman W. Porteous, *Daniel: A Commentary*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 13; Choon-Leong Seow, *Daniel*, WBC (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2003), 7–8.

<sup>36</sup> Anthea Portier-Young, "Languages of Identity and Obligation: Daniel as Bilingual Book," *VT* 60.1 (2010): 98.

<sup>37</sup> Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 140.

chapters 1-6 and in chapter 12 tells him to seal up the book, as if it were all a single revelation.”<sup>38</sup> Still arguing in favor of a tight literary unity between the two parts, Portier-Young submits that “the first part prepares for the second, and the second looks back to the first. Thus, chapter 7 develops more fully what is introduced in chapter 2 as does chapter 8, yet neither 7 nor 8 is understandable without 2. Chapter 2 also prepares the way for the revelations in 9, 10, 11, and 12.”<sup>39</sup> While the Book of Daniel may not have authorial unity, the literary and thematic links between the two parts attests to the editorial unity of the book.

#### 2.3.4 Literary context of Daniel 2 and 7

Daniel 2:1-49 is a textual unit that begins with a chronological notice about the time when King Nebuchadnezzar had his dream (Dan 2:1) and ends with Daniel’s request to Nebuchadnezzar concerning his three Jewish friends which resulted in the elevation of their political status within the Babylonian court (2:49). Daniel 2 is preceded by the narrative of Daniel and his three friends in Daniel 1, which seeks to elucidate how four young Judeans were able to maintain fidelity to God and their Jewish identity in a foreign land. It is followed by the narrative of three Judean young men who were thrown in the fiery furnace in Daniel 3, a narrative that seeks to underscore God’s unflinching faithfulness to his loyal people in trying times. In the overall structure of the Book of Daniel, chapter 2 advances the narrative of the court tales (Dan 1-6), as well as prepares for the visions in Daniel 7-12.

Daniel 7 occupies a pivotal place in the Book of Daniel in that it functions as a transitional unit that connects the two halves of the book.<sup>40</sup> Linguistically, Daniel 7 is tied

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<sup>38</sup> Sidney Greidanus, *Preaching Christ from Daniel: Foundations for Expository Sermons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 19.

<sup>39</sup> Edward J. Young, *The Prophecy of Daniel: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 19.

<sup>40</sup> Scholars disagree on the exact place of chapter 7 in the structure of Daniel. Scholars such as Lenglet Adrien, Rainer Albert, and Reinhard Kratz argue that structurally ch. 7 belongs to the Aramaic

to the preceding chapters written in Aramaic that begins in 2:4b and ends in 7:28, and by genre it is tied to the Hebrew apocalyptic visions that run through chapters 7 and 12, written as a first-person account. In this way, the chapter functions as a literary bridge that connects both parts. Despite this function, Daniel 7 should be read as the beginning of the second part of the book (chs. 7-12).<sup>41</sup> It is the first of the four apocalyptic visions reported by Daniel in the second half of the book. From Daniel 7, the text moves from court tales to visions of eschatological events in which God intervenes in the political arena to defeat wicked and oppressive kings, and to inaugurate a new kingdom for his faithful ones.

#### 2.4 The Four-Kingdom Schema in Daniel 2 and 7: A Textual Analysis

This section engages in an exegesis of Daniel 2 and 7. It explores how the author carried out his periodization of history using the four-kingdom schema. The section does not present a detailed exegesis of Daniel 2 and 7; rather, it engages in an exegesis concerned with the overall layout of the two-ages schema in these texts while highlighting certain aspects that will facilitate our understanding of Paul's historical periodization in Rom 5:12-21. Daniel 2 contains Nebuchadnezzar's dream of a terrifying metal statue and its interpretation by Daniel. In the dream, Nebuchadnezzar saw a statue with a gold head, silver chest and arms, bronze belly and thighs, iron legs, and feet that were partly clay and partly iron. Then a stone not hewn by human hands from a mountain struck the feet of the

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section of the first half (chs. 2-7). This argument is based mainly on the linguistic relationship of these chapters. Adrien Lenglet, "La Structure Littéraire de Daniel 2-7," *Bib* 53.2 (1972): 169-90; Rainer Albertz, "The Social Setting of the Aramaic and Hebrew Book of Daniel," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, vol. 1 of *VTSup* 83, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint (Boston: Brill, 2001), 171-204; Reinhard G Kratz, "The Visions of Daniel," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, vol. 1 of *VTSup* 83, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint (Boston: Brill, 2001), 91-113. Other scholars such as John Collins and André Lacocque while recognizing the linguistic affinity between chapter 7 and the preceding chapters argue that chapter 7 belongs to the chapters that follows (8-12) on the basis of genre as well as social and historical setting of these chapters. This is the position maintained in this study. Beside linguistic affinity, Daniel 2 and 7 are often linked together because of their shared motif of four successive kingdoms which are replaced by the divine kingdom

<sup>41</sup> Harkins, "Daniel," 178-79.



statue, causing the entire structure to crumble. Daniel's interpretation of this dream is that the different metals represent four different kingdoms that would succeed one another. However, during the period of the last empire, a stone cut without human hands would smite the feet of the statue leading to its fatal collapse. Daniel interpreted the stone hewn without human hands as the kingdom that the God of heaven will establish, a kingdom that will last forever.

In Daniel 7, we find another interesting vision, which recapitulates the four-kingdom schema found in Daniel 2, but with different provocative images and symbols. In chapter 7, Daniel saw a vision of four great beasts: a lion, a bear, a leopard, and an unnamed horrific beast with iron teeth and bronze claws (representing four world empires) arising out of a great turbulent sea. These beasts, particularly the fourth one, spoke arrogantly against God and waged war against the "holy ones of the Most High." When the divine court convened, the four beasts were judged and punished, while the "one like a son of man" together with the "holy ones of the Most High," receive an everlasting kingdom. Although Daniel 2 and 7 are chronologically separated, they both share this common theme—four successive world empires will be supplanted by a divine kingdom.<sup>42</sup> Daniel 7 not only reintroduces this theme with more information about the nature of these kingdoms, it also paints "an image of God as a divine warrior, who judges earthly oppressors, brings them to their end, and establishes a new and righteous kingdom

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<sup>42</sup> Although Daniel 2 and 7 share a common motif of the four-kingdom that would be replaced by God's eternal kingdom, scholars have noted important differences between the two narratives. Alexander Frisch explores these differences and concludes that the two visions indicates two different understandings of empire in the Book of Daniel. The first which is found in Daniel 2 represents a Persian concept of homogenous empire. The statue is a body—a single image; although it is segmented, the parts are integrally connected and forms one single unitary edifice such that the smashing of its legs results in the falling of the entire sculpture. Frisch writes, "for Daniel 2, although there is recognition of imperial succession, the four parts are subsumed into one statue; while particular leaders and locale change, it is hardly noticeable, because it is all part of a constant in history—one ruler ruling one all-encompassing empire." Alexandria Frisch, *The Danielic Discourse on Empire in Second Temple Literature*, JSJSup 176 (Boston: Brill, 2017), 85. This is not the case with Daniel 7 which presents a perspective of multiple legitimate empires or kingdoms. This new perspective according to Frisch reflects the historical realities of the Seleucid era where multiple empires existed simultaneously. Frisch, *The Danielic Discourse on Empire in Second Temple Literature*, 101.

for God's people."<sup>43</sup> In both visions, history culminates with the inauguration of the kingdom of God.

#### 2.4.1 Textual Analysis of Daniel 2

Daniel 2 opens with a controversial reference to the regnal year (second) when King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon had a terrifying dream that disturbed his sleep (v.1).<sup>44</sup> Chronological references do not occur arbitrarily in ancient texts. There are always implicit or explicit reason for writers making such notices. The first thing to note in the chapter is the author's preference of cyclical dating (the regnal year of Nebuchadnezzar) to the Seleucid linear era dating. But this is not the only intended objective here. Moving back to Daniel 1:5, we hear that Daniel and his colleagues were supposed to receive Babylonian education for three years in order to become assimilated into that culture and so function as administrators in the royal court. What this means is that at the time of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2, Daniel was still a trainee. This point is substantiated by the fact that the king did not invite Daniel and his three friends to his meeting with the mantic experts. In light of this fact, Seow submits that the chronological notice in Daniel 1:1 highlights a comic irony in the narrative, namely, "a mere trainee in the Babylonian

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<sup>43</sup> Scott C. Ryan, *Divine Conflict and the Divine Warrior: Listening to Romans and Other Jewish Voices* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 61–62.

<sup>44</sup> The reference to Nebuchadnezzar's second year as king in Daniel 2:1 has been pointed out by many scholars as one instances of historical inaccuracy in the Book of Daniel. Daniel 2:1 seems to contradict 1:5 which states that Daniel had to undergo three years of training. Another tensions between Daniel 1 and 2 includes the fact that 1:18-20 seems to suggests that Daniel and his colleagues have completed their training and were brought before the king, while in Daniel 2:25-26 Nebuchadnezzar seems not to have known Daniel. Some scholars have tried to resolve this conundrum with the Babylonian accession-year theory. See Stephen R. Miller, *Daniel: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, NAC 18 (B&H, 1994), 76–77; Andrew Steinmann, *Daniel*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia, 2008), 111–12; Ronald W. Pierce, *Daniel*, TTCS, ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2015), 29. Others such as Collins think that chapter two was not initially composed to fit the context provided by Dan 1, and that the author did not notice or resolve the discrepancy. See Collins, *Daniel*, 155; Carol A. Newsom and Brennan W Breed, *Daniel: A Commentary*, OTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 66–67. For Donald Gowan, the tension between Dan 1 and 2 cannot be resolved easily because the pattern of the court story in Dan 2 requires Daniel to be an outsider. See Donald E. Gowan, *Daniel*, AOTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 52–53. Although Gowan stops at this point, Seow, provides interesting rhetorical and theological reasons to explain the problem and it is his view that this study adopts.

academy will outperform all the full-fledged experts; a lowly exile will enlighten his mighty captor.”<sup>45</sup> When Nebuchadnezzar wakes from the dream, he seeks to explore its meaning (vv. 2-3).<sup>46</sup> Consequently, he summons all his mantic experts (magicians, exorcists, sorcerers, and Chaldeans)<sup>47</sup> who were known for their wisdom and powers of interpretation of dreams. The king demands that they produce both the content of the dream as well as its interpretation.

The dialogue between the king and the mantic experts can be divided into three scenes: (1) in the first exchange, the mantic experts requested that the king should tell the dream while they proffer the explanation (v. 4).<sup>48</sup> But instead of yielding to their request, Nebuchadnezzar promises great rewards if they should tell both the content and the interpretation of the dream. However, if they were unable to do so, they will face the penalty of dismemberment of their bodies (“torn from limb to limb”) as well as the destruction of their houses (vv. 5-6). In the Old Testament, dismemberment and the destruction of houses were considered extreme forms of punishment (Ezek 16:40-41; 2 Mac 1:16). These practices have been attested in other ancient Near Eastern sources.<sup>49</sup> In

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<sup>45</sup> Seow, *Daniel*, 37.

<sup>46</sup> The cryptic phrase in verse 3, “to know the dream” has raised some interpretive difficulty. Josephus and Calvin hold that Nebuchadnezzar forgot the dream upon waking up and that explains the reason he asks his mantic experts to produce the dream as well as its interpretation. See Josephus, *Ant.* 10.195; John Calvin, *Commentaries the Book of the Prophet on Daniel*, trans. Thomas Myers (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1948), 1:117.

<sup>47</sup> The terms used for the mantic experts in Daniel 2:2: magicians (חֲרָטְמִים), exorcists (אֲשָׁפִים), sorcerers (מְכַשְׁפִּים), and Chaldeans (כַּשְׁדִּים) are terms drawn from several cultural and linguistic realms. Kosmin suggest a competition among various nations and their wisdom tradition is in view here. See Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 143. חֲרָטְמִים is an Egyptian loanword and represents a category of mantic experts that were imported from Egypt into the Neo-Assyrian court. The term also appears in Gen 41:24) in the story of Joseph as well in Exo 7-10 in the narrative of the ten plagues. אֲשָׁפִים is an Old Akkadian/ Babylonian term used for a class of experts who were skilled at diagnosing and combating evil powers that attacked a person. מְכַשְׁפִּים is derived from a Hebrew verb that connotes the idea of sorcery or conjuring, while כַּשְׁדִּים originally refers to the Chaldeans but latter came to be associated more often with Babylonian mantic experts.

<sup>48</sup> The switch from Hebrew to Aramaic happened in v. 4 when the mantic experts first addressed the king.

<sup>49</sup> Beatrice A. Brooks, *A Contribution to the Study of the Moral Practices of Certain Social Groups in Ancient Mesopotamia* (Leipzig: Drugulin, 1921), 17–20; Bruno Meissner, *Babylonien und Assyrien* (Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1920), 1:176–77.

the second exchange, Nebuchadnezzar insists (“my decision is firm”)<sup>50</sup> on his demand that his court diviners produce not only the interpretation but the dream itself. However, this time Nebuchadnezzar omits any possibility of reward; instead, he accuses them of “buying time” and of conspiracy, and so doubles down on his threat of death (vv. 7-9). In the final exchange, Nebuchadnezzar in a violent fit of rage issues a draconian decree that all the mantic experts be put to death (vv. 10-12). The dialogue between King Nebuchadnezzar and his court diviners underscores an important theme that is central not only in Daniel 2 and 7 but in the entire text, namely the power to control time (the future) and history.

Daniel 2:8-9 shows that the control of time and history is a major issue in this text. The dialogue here shows that the control of time is a major cause of Nebuchadnezzar’s anxiety. In v. 8, Nebuchadnezzar accuses his court diviners of עֲדָנָא אֲנִתִּין (“buying time”). In v. 9, Nebuchadnezzar strengthens his accusation using the word אֲנִתִּין again: “you have conspired to make false and lying speeches before me until the time change (עַד דִּי עֲדָנָא יִשְׁתַּחֲלִי)” (v. 9).<sup>51</sup> Later in v. 21, we shall see that “changing times and season” is parallel to “disposing and setting up kings.” This causes great anxiety for Nebuchadnezzar. Portier-Young aptly notes that the “reference to time’s changing foreshadows the interpretation of his dream: with the passage of time God will bring change. Empire will succeed empire until God effects the end of empire itself, shattering (2:44) the destructive powers (2:40) and filling the earth (2:35) with a new kingdom (2:44).”<sup>52</sup> In other words, Nebuchadnezzar

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<sup>50</sup> KJV translated the Aramaic word *azada* (v. 5) as “gone from me.” This translation supports the reading that Nebuchadnezzar forgot the dream. But contemporary scholars have come to understand that *azada* is a Persian loanword which means “firm, certain” and it is often used with regard to emperor’s public declarations. The entire statement is reminiscent of the Medes and Persians laws, “which cannot be revoked,” (Esth 1:19; 3:12-14; 8:8-14).

<sup>51</sup> Both Paul Kosmin and Anthea Portier-Young read the phrase “buying time” as an “idiom of temporal commodification” (a new commercial idiom that emerged during the Seleucid empire) in which time is perceived as an object to be bought or sold at will. Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 69; Portier-Young, *Apocalypse against Empire*, 180. Kosmin argues that such commodification in the voice of Nebuchadnezzar II, enunciates well the new logic of the dated Seleucid agora and it is this logic of time invented and maintained by the Seleucid kings that Daniel critiques with its emphasis on the divinely controlled full temporality.

<sup>52</sup> Portier-Young, *Apocalypse against Empire*, 180.

recognizes that he is not in control of time and that time itself sets a limit on his own power. Daniel 2 tactically exposes the Seleucids' claim of absolute control over time and history as false and illusory. Here we see that Nebuchadnezzar, despite his extravagant show of power, is actually helpless, powerless, and petrified about the future and what it holds for him. His quest to be in control is reflected in his desperation to know the meaning of his dream in order to avert the supposed future negative outcome. Here we see a king who is desperate to control the future by means of divination, but finds himself helpless.

Following Daniel's dialogue with Arion, the chief executioner on the eve of the execution (vv. 13-16), Daniel recruits his three Jewish friends and requests that they pray and "seek mercy (לְמַחֲנֶה) from the God of heaven concerning the mystery," so that their lives and that of the wise men may be spared. Without much elaboration, the narrator indicates that the mystery רִזְּה ("mystery") was revealed to Daniel at night. The Persian loan word רִזְּה (μυστήριον in the LXX and NT) is used eight times in Daniel 2 in reference to Nebuchadnezzar's dream. The term is also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls in reference to cosmological (1QH 1:11-12), eschatological (1QM 14:14; 1QS 11:3-4; 1QpHab 7:8), or prophetic mysteries (1 QpHab 7:4).<sup>53</sup> It is in this technical sense that the term should be understood here, especially in 2:19. Daniel's first response to the mystery granted to him is to praise God (vv. 20-23).

The surprising thing about Daniel's doxology is that it is not just a prayer of praise and thanksgiving; rather, it is an apt summary of the key theological themes of text. First, the author informs us that Daniel blessed "the God of heaven" (v.19b). This is a common title for God in post-exilic books. The title occurs four times in this text (vv. 18, 19, 37, 44). Parallel titles "King of heaven" and "Lord of heaven" are also found in Dan 4:37 and

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<sup>53</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 158–59; Samuel I. Thomas, *The "Mysteries" of Qumran: Mystery, Secrecy, and Esotericism in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, SBLJL 25 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 136–86.

Dan 5:23, respectively. These titles more or less explicitly acknowledge the transcendence, kingship, and sovereignty of God. In v. 20, the doxology expresses the immutability and eternity of God. In vv. 21-23, the doxology affirms God as the one who changes times and seasons, who deposes and sets up kings (v. 21), who reveals secrets (v. 22), and who is the source of all wisdom and understanding (v. 23). The phrase “he changes times and seasons” (v. 21) parallels “deposes kings and sets up kings.” The first clause “changes times and seasons” anticipates the little horn (Antiochus IV) who tries “to change the times and the law” (Dan 7:25), while the second clause anticipates the content of the dream, which symbolizes the rise and fall of kings and kingdoms.<sup>54</sup> The central point here is that “the sovereign God of Israel is in control of times and seasons, and of historical events, changing them as he wills.”<sup>55</sup> The God whom Daniel acknowledges in this doxology is none other than the God of his ancestors. In its historical context, this text would have been understood as an outright challenge of the Seleucid imperial ideology as has been discussed above.

When Daniel was brought before the king to recount the dream and its meaning, Daniel made it explicitly clear to the king that the dream is: (a) a “mystery” (vv. 27-28); (b) “about what will happen at the end of days” (v. 28); (c) “what would be hereafter” (v. 30). Daniel relates the dream to Nebuchadnezzar as follows:

<sup>31</sup>you were looking, O king, and lo! There was a great statue. This statue was huge, its brilliance extraordinary; it was standing before you, and its appearance was frightening. <sup>32</sup>The head of that statue was of fine gold, its chest and arms of silver, its middle and thighs of bronze, <sup>33</sup>its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. <sup>34</sup>As you looked on, a stone was cut out, not by human hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. <sup>35</sup>Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, were all broken in pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

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<sup>54</sup> William Nelson, *Daniel*, UBCS (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2013), 84.

<sup>55</sup> Nelson, *Daniel*, 84.

Some points need highlighting. First, the colossal statue that Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was common in the ancient Near East.<sup>56</sup> The Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian, and Greek emperors were known for erecting gigantic (terrifying) statues that represent either their gods or kings in conquered territories as symbols of imperial power and presence. According to Zdravko Stefanovic, “the intimidating size of these monuments, sometimes combined with splendor, served as effective imperial propaganda in the conquered lands.”<sup>57</sup> In many instances, these statues were cast in a combination of different precious metals, such as gold, silver or bronze.<sup>58</sup> The difference is that the statue seen by Nebuchadnezzar does not represent any deity or king, but rather the course of history.<sup>59</sup> But the use of four metals of declining value, gold, silver, bronze, and iron to represent successive stages of history is not foreign in the ancient Near East, especially during the Hellenistic period.<sup>60</sup> While we do not claim any direct dependence between these ancient texts (Daniel and Hesiod), it shows that the author of the Book of Daniel employs the cultural paradigms of the time to convey his message.

Second, the content of the dream can be divided into two parts, the first part describing the different metal components of the statue (vv. 31-33), and the second part depicting the stone and its destructive effects on the statue. Each of these parts begins with the same phrase “you were watching” (vv. 31, 34).<sup>61</sup> Nebuchadnezzar’s statue is composed of five parts with the materials diminishing in value. The head of the statue is made of gold, the chest and arms of silver, the thighs of bronze, while the feet are partly iron and

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<sup>56</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 163; Nelson, *Daniel*, 86–87.

<sup>57</sup> Zdravko Stefanovic, *Daniel: Wisdom to the Wise: Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Oshawa: Pacific, 2007), 101.

<sup>58</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 162.

<sup>59</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 162.

<sup>60</sup> Daniel’s four-kingdom schema finds parallel in an eight century BCE text (*Works and Days*) written by Hesiod which divides history into five periods using the sequence of metals of diminishing value: gold, silver, bronze, and iron. Collins, *Daniel*, 162–63.

<sup>61</sup> Jacques Doukhan, *Secrets of Daniel: Wisdom and Dreams of a Jewish Prince in Exile* (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2000), 42.

partly clay. The description of the statue takes the reader from its most noble part (the head) to the least (the feet), describing the composition of each part. This is also the movement of Nebuchadnezzar's gaze.<sup>62</sup> Pace notes that this "descending order of the value of the metals is significant, for the image quickly changes from being awesome to being weak."<sup>63</sup> Since obviously the clay is the least valuable material, one would suppose that the feet, which carry the weight of the huge sculpture, should be made with the strongest material. But ironically, the feet are not. Some scholars have noted an element of caricature here.<sup>64</sup> We can see that the author is actually mocking the poor judgment of these foreign empires for lacking wisdom and understanding.

Third, the second part of the dream describes the destruction of the magnificent statue by a stone (אֶבֶן) hewn without human hands. The idea of a stone hewn without hands (v. 34) contrasts with the idea of multi-metal statue that was apparently crafted by human hands.<sup>65</sup> More than that, it also signifies divine power and agency. The image of Yahweh as אֶבֶן (rock/stone) is common in the Old Testament (Gen 49:24; Isa 8:14). In fact, v. 34 parallels Daniel 8:25 where the little horn will be "broken not by human hands" (וְכָאֵסֶה יָד וְיִשָּׁבֵר), thereby asserting that its destruction will be accomplished by divine agency. The destruction of the statue through God's power is very significant in that it expresses one of the major themes found in Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic texts, namely God's direct agency and intervention in our world in order to transform it. While the stone becomes a great mountain that fills the whole world, the statue turns into a "threshing floor" swept away by the wind leaving no trace of it (v. 35). The imagery of a "threshing floor" (v. 35) is reminiscent of Isaiah's prophecy that the foreign empires that once

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<sup>62</sup> Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 144–45.

<sup>63</sup> Sharon Pace, *Daniel*, SHBC 17 (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 69.

<sup>64</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 69; William H. Shea, *Daniel: A Reader's Guide* (Nampa, ID: Pacific, 2005), 99.

<sup>65</sup> Desmond D. Ford, *Daniel* (Nashville, TN: Southern Publishing Association, 1978), 96.



oppressed and dominated Israel shall one day become like chaff and be blown away (Isa 41:15-16).

The imagery of a stone that becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth (v. 35) reminds one of two prophetic oracles about the establishment of Jerusalem as the symbol of God's abiding presence where all the nations shall stream and be taught the knowledge of God, as well as experience justice and peace (Isa 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-3). Later in Isa 28:16-17, the prophet speaks of a foundation stone, a tested stone in Zion which is associated with the institution of justice and righteousness. In Daniel 7, we also see a close association of God's kingdom with justice and righteousness. The Psalmist refers to this divine stone as a stone rejected by builders that became the chief cornerstone (Ps 118:22), an image that was later given Davidic/messianic meaning in the NT (Matt 21:42; Mark 12:10-11; Luke 20:17-18; 1 Pet 3). Here in Daniel 2, the purpose is to set a contrast between the formidable and infinite kingdom that God shall establish at the end of time, and the finite and perishable nature of earthly empires symbolized by the statue. But it also reminds us that justice is a major characteristic of the new kingdom that God is inaugurating for his people.

In Daniel's interpretation, the multi-component statue symbolizes four successive world kingdoms that will be destroyed and replaced by a divine fifth kingdom, symbolized by a stone cut without hands. Daniel identifies the various body parts of the statue with the succession of kingdoms: the head represented by a gold metal is Nebuchadnezzar (i.e., the Babylonian empire). After Babylon, another inferior empire represented by silver will arise (v. 31).<sup>66</sup> The second kingdom will be followed by another more inferior kingdom represented by bronze. The third kingdom according to Daniel will rule over the whole

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<sup>66</sup> Note that the text does not repeat that each kingdom is inferior to the preceding one, but this idea is implied in the declining value of the materials: gold, silver, bronze, and iron mixed with clay (vv. 39-43).

earth (v. 40). Yet, after the kingdom of bronze, a fourth kingdom as strong as iron will arise.

Shifting its gaze from the first three kingdoms, the text immediately fixes its focus on the fourth kingdom, describing its peculiar characteristics. First, it would be a kingdom that *מִהֵדֶק* (“breaks in pieces”) and *תִּשָּׁל* (“shatters”) everything (v. 40). Here attention is drawn to the fierce and destructive nature of the fourth kingdom. However, this unnamed empire, despite its valor, is destined to be divided (*פְּלִיגָה*): partly strong and partly brittle. This fragmentation is symbolized in the materials that the toes of the feet were composed of: iron mixed with baked clay of (vv. 33, 40-42). Still with a focus on the feet, Daniel points out another important element of the fourth kingdom as follows: it will *מִתְעַרְבֵּן* (“mingle”) with human seed.<sup>67</sup> But their attempt at cohesion or unity will be as impossible as is the mixing iron and clay together (v. 43). Another interesting thing is the suggestion in v. 44 that the (ten) toes are “kings.”<sup>68</sup> Daniel continues his explanation that “in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor shall this kingdom be left to another people. It shall crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end (*תִּסְרִי*), and it shall stand forever (*לְעֶלְמַיָּא*)” (vv. 44-45).

#### 2.4.2 Textual Analysis of Daniel 7

A political note is struck from the beginning as the chapter starts with a chronological alert that situates the dream within a political context—the first year of King Belshazzar of Babylon. The statement that Daniel “had a dream and vision of his head as he lay in bed” (v. 1) reminds one of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream which foreshadows the downfall of earthly empires and the inauguration of the kingdom of God (2:1; 4:5, 10, 13).

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<sup>67</sup> This is a reference to political alliance through intermarriage. See the NRSV translation here.

<sup>68</sup> Since the statue is clearly that of a human figure, it is reasonable to think that the toes of the statue were ten.

In his vision, Daniel sees the “four winds of heaven stir up the great sea” (v. 2). From the turbulent sea emerged four great beasts. Daniel was later informed that the four beasts represent four gentile kingdoms (v. 17). The first beast looks like a lion with an eagle’s wings and a human’s feet (v. 4). The second beast looks like a bear with three tusks (v. 5). The third beast is a four-winged leopard with four heads (v. 6), while the fourth beast is a monstrous horned beast with iron teeth (vv. 7-8).<sup>69</sup>

There are some important things to note about the description and function of these beasts/kingdoms. First, these beasts, and by analogy the gentile kingdoms, originated from the sea. Daniel 7:3 makes clear that the four beasts emerged from a turbulent great sea stirred by four winds of heaven. Although the mention of sea/water at the beginning of this text calls to mind God’s creative activity in Genesis 1, the imagery is also reminiscent of many chaos combat myths found in ancient Near Eastern creation myths, such as the Babylonian creation myth (*Enuma Elish*), where the warrior God Marduk defeated Tiamat, the goddess of the sea, with the help of the four winds and was then proclaimed king of all the gods.<sup>70</sup> In such texts, according to Pace, “the creation of the world is inextricably tied with certain gods’ triumphs over other deities of threatening seas, or, in the case of the Hebrew Bible, God’s victory over such symbols of evil, suffering, and death (Pss 74:12-17; 89:9-11 [89:10-12 MT]).”<sup>71</sup>

Second, by representing these animals as sea beasts, the author associates them also with the mythic sea monsters used in the Old Testament to portray gentile kings as

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<sup>69</sup> Although the identity of these beasts has been perennially disputed, there is a general consensus among contemporary scholars that the four kingdoms here correspond to the four kingdoms of chapter two, namely, Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek. See Collins, *Daniel*, 312; John Goldingay, *Daniel*, WBC 30 (Dallas: Words Books, 1989), 174–75, 180, 187; Newsom and Breed, *Daniel*, 216–17.

<sup>70</sup> Newsom and Breed, *Daniel*, 217. Nelson submits that “the ancient Israelites knew these myths or one like them and selectively appropriated some of their motifs, themes, and shared worldview for Israel’s theology. However, in doing so, they also transformed the myths in order to undermine the foreign religions and to adapt the content to Yahwism.” Nelson, *Daniel*, 181. This is particularly true of this text where the author breaks away from the typical ancient Near Eastern chaos combat myth pattern by portraying the victory of God over the forces of chaos as effortless, and as judicial rather than military.

<sup>71</sup> Pace, *Daniel*, 231.

the embodiment of evil (cf. Deut 8:15; Ps 74; 89). The allusion to Psalms 74 and 89 in this passage is very important for our understanding of the theological message of this text: in both Psalms, “the theme of God’s creating the world through the defeat of chaos monsters is used to urge God to re-create the world in which the psalmist lives in order that it might conform to the good order established at that primordial beginning.”<sup>72</sup> By alluding to these psalms, the author underscores a major focal point of the book, namely the hope for a new creation through the defeat of chaos sea monsters. For the author, these horrible sea monsters—the symbols of gentile rulers—must be defeated before the arrival of God’s new kingdom or the new age where God himself will reign as King, restoring justice and peace to the righteous.

Third, it is important to note both the descriptions and functions of these four sea monsters in the text. The narrative begins with a description of the physical appearance of each beast, followed by a description of the beast’s activities. This text does not depict the beasts (gentile kings) as regular beasts or normal animals; instead, they are depicted as grotesque and unnatural sea monsters.<sup>73</sup> The first beast was a tribrid (a lion-eagle-human) that appeared to be in a struggle but in a way is humanized (v. 4). Its wings were plucked, it was lifted up on its two feet, and given a human heart. The second looks like a bear, but one having three tusks and elevated on one side (v. 5). This beast was given an injunction to devour many bodies. The third beast is a hybrid (a four-headed, four-winged, leopard-bird) to whom dominion was given (v. 6). The fourth is not compared to any specific known animals but is clearly another gruesome monster. It has “ten horns” (vv. 7, 20, 24), “iron teeth” (vv. 7, 19), and “bronze claws” (v. 19).<sup>74</sup> These three beasts share two

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<sup>72</sup> K. M. Schifferdecker, “Creation Theology,” in *DOTWPP*, 2008, 64.

<sup>73</sup> Goldingay, *Daniel*, 158.

<sup>74</sup> In a study which explores the use of the grotesque in Christian literature, István Czachesz argues that the purpose of grotesque images such as the ones in Daniel’s dream is to activate not only fear but also repulsion for such images. This is obviously one of the reasons the gentile kings are portrayed as grotesque animals. István Czachesz, *The Grotesque Body in Early Christian Discourse: Hell, Scatology, and*

important elements: each of them received a very brief description; and there is an unidentified voice commanding their actions.

The fourth beast, although similar with the preceding beasts by the fact of being a gruesome, is in fact different from the others (v. 7) and receives an elaborate description which suggests Daniel's special preoccupation with it. This beast is said to be "dreadful," "frightening," and "exceedingly powerful" (v. 7). The text uses three active verbs, "devouring," "breaking into pieces" (הִקְדָּשׁ), and "stamping" (v. 7), to describe its activity.<sup>75</sup> These verbs underscore the destructive nature of the fourth beast. Finally, the author makes quick reference to its ten horns (these ten horns are later identified as ten kings; v. 24), and then focused on the "little horn" that grew out of these ten. Three horns were plucked up to make room for the little horn. Like the beasts themselves, the three horns represent kings or kingdoms. Further description is given about the little horn: "it has human-like eyes" and an "arrogant mouth." (v.8).

Like the identity of the kingdoms represented by the multivalent statue, contemporary scholars interpret the four-kingdom schema represented by the four beasts as the Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek kingdoms. Following this view, the fourth beast with ten horns and a little horn represents the Greek empire, with a special emphasis on its development into the Seleucid kingdom. The little horn (or the eleventh) clearly refers to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, "who spoke with great arrogance" (v. 8)

The horrifying description of the four beasts symbolizing four kingdoms (vv. 2–8) is followed by a poetic account of the divine courtroom scene in which the "Ancient of

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*Metamorphosis* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012). Other reasons for the deployment of these unnatural animals will be explored later in this chapter.

<sup>75</sup> The word הִקְדָּשׁ ("break into pieces") is also used in reference to the fourth kingdom in Dan 2:40, thereby suggesting some correspondence between the two. The use of the active verb to describe the activities of the fourth beast contrasts with the passive voice used in initiating the activities of the first three beasts. This might suggest that the author(s) perceive hubris in the activities of the fourth beast.

Days” is seated on his throne as the supreme judge (v. 9) to make legal pronouncement against the four beasts (v. 10). This divine court features a number of images related to kingship. These kingship images should be understood within the context of Jewish kingship tradition.<sup>76</sup> Michael Stone notes that “in the Hebrew Bible, the judgement seat is often specifically connected with the king’s judicial function.”<sup>77</sup> For instance, in 1 Kings 7:7, Solomon is said to have built “a hall of the throne” (אֵלֶּם הַכִּסֵּא), the hall of justice (אֵלֶּם הַמִּשְׁפָּט),” and that he gives “judgment there” (יִשְׁפֹּט שָׁם). Mark Surburg comments, “since God is often described with the imagery of ‘king’ (Ps 5:2; 10:16; 24:7–8; 47:2), it is not surprising to find him seated on a throne surrounded by the heavenly court (1 Kgs 22:19; 2 Chr 18:18; Isa 6:1–3).”<sup>78</sup> Like the human throne that serves as a symbol of a king’s authority, here God’s throne represents God’s eternal judicial authority (Ps 93:2; Ezek 43:7).

The text contains very impressive and rich symbolism in its description of the heavenly court, with details about (a) the appearance of the Ancient of Days (having white clothing and hair like wool), (b) the thrones (engulfed with fiery flames and wheels burning with fire, vv. 9-10), and (c) the myriads of heavenly court attendants (“a thousand thousand,” “ten thousand times ten thousand”). As soon as the divine court was seated, the judgment began with books being opened (וְסִפְרִין פְּתִיחוּ v. 10b).<sup>79</sup> Next, the beasts were sentenced. The fourth beast was slain and its body destroyed and thrown into a blazing fire (v. 11). Though the first three beasts were spared for a period of time, authority

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<sup>76</sup> The root מָלַךְ (“king,” “kingdom,” or “reign”) occurred about 261 times in the book of Daniel showing that the theme of divine kingship or sovereignty is a major theological concern of the text. See Winfried Vogel, *The Cultic Motif in the Book of Daniel* (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), 212.

<sup>77</sup> Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 220.

<sup>78</sup> Mark P. Surburg, “Rectify or Justify? A Response to J. Louis Martyn’s Interpretation of Paul’s Righteousness Language,” *CTQ* 77.1–2 (2013): 57.

<sup>79</sup> Collins comments, “the books in question are the records for judgement. The motif of a heavenly record is well attested in the Hebrew Bible: Ps 56:9; Isa 65:6; Mal 3:16.” Collins, *Daniel*, 303. Jewish tradition maintains that God keeps records of one’s deeds both good and evil (Ps 130:3), and divine judgement is based on what one has on record.

and dominion were also taken away from them (v. 12). At this point, the reader is assured of the finitude, the temporality of oppressive imperial powers. The vision inspires hope that the rule of these violent beasts has been ordained to end and that God will bring about a new kingdom of justice and peace for the holy ones. The end of the four violent beasts is an intrinsic part of the divine plan that results in the restoration of the divine kingdom and culminates in the salvation of God's people. Note that it was not until after the demise of these earthly empires that God's own kingdom was inaugurated.

This vision of the judgment scene of the four beasts culminates in a vision of the inauguration of a new kingdom of God through a divine agent—"one like the son of man" (vv. 13-14). Daniel sees a heavenly figure whom he described as "one like the son of man" coming from the clouds of heaven. This divine figure approaches the Ancient of Days and is led into his presence (v. 13), is presented before the "Ancient of Days," and is given (Hebrew) "dominion (מְלָכָה), glory (כְּדָר), kingship (מְלִכּוּת), and worship (פְּלִיחָה)." (vv. 13-14). The identity of the "one like a son of man" has generated increasingly heated debates among contemporary scholars. Some see this humanlike figure as a referent to (a) an exalted human being;<sup>80</sup> (b) the collective Israel;<sup>81</sup> (c) an angelic figure such as Michael or Gabriel;<sup>82</sup> (d) "the holy ones" mentioned in vv. 18, 21, 27;<sup>83</sup> (e) a messianic/divine figure;<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Georg Behrmann, *Das Buch Daniel, HKAT 3* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1894), 2:48.

<sup>81</sup> A major proponent of this view in our contemporary period is Alexander Di Lella, whose basic position is that the mysterious figure is a human being who represents Israel. See Alexander A. Di Lella, *Daniel: A Book for Troubling Times*, Spiritual Commentaries (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1997), 145. For further detail on this position see, Collins, *Daniel*, 309.

<sup>82</sup> Nathaniel Schmidt was the first to propose angel Michael as the possible identification of the Danielic human figure. See Nathaniel Schmidt, "The Son of Man in the Book of Daniel," *JBL* 19 (1900): 22–28. In our contemporary period, this view is being advocated especially by John Collins. See Collins, *Daniel*, 318; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 126–30. Contra Collins, Ziony Zevit proposes the angel Gabriel. See Ziony Zevit, "Structure and Individual Elements of Daniel 7," *ZAW* 80.3 (1968): 394–96; Ziony Zevit, "The Exegetical Implications of Daniel Viii 1, Ix 21," *VT* 28 (1978): 488–92.

<sup>83</sup> Hartman and Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, 218–19.

<sup>84</sup> This is position of many Church Fathers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Cyril of Jerusalem, medieval scholars, and modern authors before the nineteenth century. For them, "one like a son of man" designates a messianic eschatological figure (in this instance, Jesus Christ). This view is also shared by some early Jewish Rabbis who interpret the "one like a son of man" as a messianic figure (though not Jesus). For many Jews, Daniel 7: 9-10 points to the reality of two divine figures though they undoubtedly acknowledge the superiority of God (Yahweh). Maurice Casey has uncovered ample textual evidence that shows that

and (f) a divine figure. While the fact remains that there is no consensus on the identity of this figure,<sup>85</sup> we affirm that the one whom Daniel sees is actually a divine being in a human form, as he was “coming with the clouds of heaven” (v. 13). In this text, the construction is intended as a contrast with the three beasts who “looked like a lion” (v. 4); “looked like a bear” (v. 5); and “looked like a leopard (v. 6). Unlike the beasts that come from below, from the deep chaotic sea, the human figure comes from above. While dominion and authority are taken away from the beasts, the humanlike figure receives authority, glory, and sovereignty; moreover, his dominion is everlasting and his kingdom (מְלִכְיָהוּ) is one that will not pass away (v. 14). However, what is most important for our discussion is that “in the context of the vision of the beasts..., this heavenly scene speaks to the eventual everlasting kingdom that arises after the destruction of the previous four earthly kingdoms represented by the four terrifying beasts.”<sup>86</sup> In a nutshell, the vision tells the story of the violence of imperial powers, their total defeat by the supreme God, and the establishment of an everlasting kingdom through a divine agent.

In this final pericope (vv. 15-28), the terrified Daniel seeks elucidation of the meaning of the beasts in his vision from one of the angels. The angel informs Daniel that the four beasts represent four kings or four world empires that will rise to power on the

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Jewish Rabbis interpreted “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7:13 as a Messiah figure. These textual evidences include: b. Sanh. 98a; *Num. Rab.* 13:14; *Aggadat Bēr’ēšīt* 14:3; 23:1 and *Midr. Haggadol* Gen 49:10. See Maurice Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: SPCK, 1979), 80–83. In contrast, there are other Jews who opposed the notion of two divinities or two divine powers in heaven based on the same text. See Alan F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University Press, 2012), 33–67. Among our contemporary interpreters, Daniel Boyarin has defended this argument more strongly. According to him the “one like the son of man” refers to a second divine figure rather than a human figure and makes a connection between this figure and the divine anthropic figure in Ezek 1:26. See Daniel Boyarin, “Daniel 7, Intertextuality, and the History of Israel’s Cult,” *HTR* 105.2 (2012): 158.

<sup>85</sup> Note that the Hebrew equivalent of the expression בֶּן־אָדָם (son of man) actually means “man,” or “a human being,” or “mortal.” This is the basic meaning of the expression in the Old Testament (cf. Ezek 3:17). See also Dan 8:17 where the angel Gabriel addresses Daniel as “son of man.” But the construction here is not בֶּן־אָדָם (“son of man”) but קִבֵּר אֶנְשִׁי (one like a son of man). Nelson comments that “if ‘son of man’ means ‘human being,’ then ‘one like a son of man’ means one who looks like a human being, in this case a heavenly being who looks like a human.” Nelson, *Daniel*, 188.

<sup>86</sup> Harkins, “Daniel,” 789.



earth (v. 17), but the angel quickly adds, “but the holy ones of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever—forever and ever” (v. 18). Note that the one who receives kingship and dominion in v. 13 is an individual—the “one like a son of man”—but in v. 18, the recipient is a group of people, the “holy ones of the Most High.” The close association of the kingdom of God to both “one like the son of man” and the “holy ones of the Most High” has led to some questions regarding the relationship between the two.<sup>87</sup> This study accepts the argument that the “one like a son of man” is a symbol or a representative of the “holy ones of the Most High,” and that both should be interpreted as heavenly rather than as earthly beings.

A strong objection to this view is the fact that in 7:21 the little horn (Antiochus IV Epiphanes) defeated some of the holy ones. This might appear absurd to many if the “holy ones” are actually heavenly beings. But as Collins clarifies, historically, the attack of the holy ones by the little horn (7:21, 25) represents “the persecuted Jews,” but it is implicitly an attack on the Jewish God and his heavenly hosts. Collins refers to Daniel 8:10-12 where the attack is clearly on the heavenly host, symbolized by the stars. Again, in Daniel 11:36, the attack is on God himself. Collins concludes that “in all of these passages, of course, the empirical data lie in the persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes, but in the apocalyptic imagination of the author these events are understood as an assault on the heavenly host and ultimately on God himself.”<sup>88</sup> What this text envisions is a spiritual warfare between the evil powers below and the heavenly powers above, a warfare in which the evil powers had a temporal victory until the Ancient of Days arrived. God and his heavenly host ultimately triumph at the end and all oppressive empires are stripped of their

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<sup>87</sup> The contention is whether the “one like a son of man”, and the holy ones of the Most High are both humans, or angelic/divine beings. See Alexander A Di Lella, “One in Human Likeness and the Holy Ones of the Most High in Daniel 7,” *CBQ* 39.1 (1977): 1–9; Hartman and Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, 218–19; Casey, *Son of Man*, 24–25; Nelson, *Daniel*, 190–91; Collins, *Daniel*, 319–20.

<sup>88</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 320.

powers. The “holy ones of the Most High” received kingship, and dominion of all the kingdoms under heaven because of their fidelity to the covenant. In essence, the heavenly scene where the “one like a son of man” and the “holy ones of the Most High” receive the kingdom is a symbol of the author’s expectation, an age where the people of Israel will enjoy God’s kingdom and its consequent benefits of peace in this world.

As the interpretation of the vision progresses, the fourth beast (the most violent beast) becomes the focus of the text. Daniel is curious to understand the meaning of the fourth beast, which was different from the three others (v. 19), of its ten horns (v. 20), and of another little horn (eleventh one) which displaced three other horns in order to secure its place (v. 20). At this time, the text adds further crucial information about the little horn and its activities related to the “holy ones of the Most High”: (a) it spoke arrogantly against the Most High (vv. 20, 25); (b) it made war with the “holy ones and was prevailing over them” (v. 21); (c) it “made the holy ones of the Most High weary” and attempted “to change the set times and the laws; and they shall be given into his power for a time, and times, and half a time” (v. 25). Kosmin has argued that the little horn’s attempt to change times and law “refers not just to Antiochus IV’s abolishing of the divinely ordained Jewish cult and sacrifices but also, more pointedly, to an enforced replacement of the Temple’s solar, 346-day, sabbatical calendar with the empire’s luni-solar 360 days, Babylonian intercalatinal calendar.”<sup>89</sup> This might also be the event been referred to in a Qumran document (4Q390). Daniel was told that the ten horns, including the little horn, represent future kings (v. 24).

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<sup>89</sup> Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire, 152-153*. For similar views that Dan 2:25 refer to the changing of the Temples sabbatical calendar under Antiochus IV, see Annie Jaubert, “Le Calendrier Des Jubilés et La Secte de Qumran: Ses Origines Bibliques,” *VT* 3 (1953): 263; James C VanderKam, “2 Maccabees 6:7a and Calendrical Changes in Jerusalem,” *JSJ* 12 (1981): 60; Gabriele Boccaccini, “The Solar Calendars of Daniel and Enoch,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, ed. John J. Collins and Peter Flint, *VTSup* 83 (Leipzig: Brill, 2001), 2:311–28.

The activities of the fourth beast, but particularly that of the “little horn,” correspond to the socio-political and religious events of the Greek empire under Alexander the Great and his successors. While Antiochus IV Epiphanes has been identified as the little horn (the eleventh king), the identity of the other ten kings and especially the three dethroned kings, remains debated.<sup>90</sup> The reference to the eyes of the little horn is seen as an allusion to Antiochus IV’s covetousness for the throne, while the reference to its mouth speaking arrogantly points to the infamous blasphemy of Antiochus’s self-designation as “God Manifest.” The activities of the “little horn” in this text point to the political machinations of the Seleucid Empire under Antiochus IV Epiphanes who unleashed an unprecedented persecution against the Jews. It has been noted that Antiochus pushed further Alexander the Great’s program of Hellenization (1 Macc 1:11-15), sold the high priesthood (2 Macc 4:7-10), desecrated the Jerusalem temple, and forced the Jewish community to worship foreign gods at the threat of death (1 Macc 1:54-61). This vision narrates the story of Antiochus and the Seleucid era with coded terms and symbols. It is a story in which the evil and cruel empires of this world had a temporary triumph in their wickedness. But it is also a story that tells about their disintegration and end, as they are destined to be replaced by the eternal and righteous reign of God. The author entertains the hope that God will certainly replace the earthly and beastly regimes with God’s kingdom of justice and peace.

#### 2.4.3 The Identity of the Fourth Empire (Kingdom)

The identity of these empires has generated much debate in Daniel scholarship. The only kingdom that was explicitly identified in this chapter is the first kingdom —the

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<sup>90</sup> Most scholars interpret the ten horns as ten successive kings of the Hellenistic Empire from Alexander the Great to Seleucus IV, and the three horns that were removed as Seleucus IV and his two sons Seow, *Daniel*, 111; Nelson, *Daniel*, 185–86; Collins, *Daniel*, 321.

Babylonian empire. As a result, there has been varied speculation about the identity of the three unnamed kingdoms, including the fifth kingdom. There are three major proposals. The first proposal (usually referred to as the traditional view), which dates from the first century CE. and was championed among Jewish writers and patristic fathers, has the four empires as Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome.<sup>91</sup> The identification of the fourth empire as Rome is largely due to Rome's unprecedented size and power, as well as its destruction of the Jerusalem temple.<sup>92</sup> The second proposal argues that the kingdoms represented by the statue are the last four Babylonian kings. A major proponent of this view is John Goldingay, who argues that "the statue represents the empire led by Nebuchadnezzar, and is thus confined to Babylonian kings. It is a single statue, a single empire, passed on from one king to another."<sup>93</sup> The third proposal, which is the position of most contemporary scholars and the position of this study, is that the four kingdoms represent the empires of Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece.

I think that the text provides a reasonable clue regarding the identity of the fourth as the Greek kingdom. First, this is obvious from its division of the kingdom into two segments: iron, and iron mixed with clay (Dan 2: 33, 40-42). The first segment (the iron legs) represents the era of Alexander the Great when the Greek empire was united and strong as iron. The statement in Daniel 2:40 about an iron kingdom which shall "crush and shatter all these" corresponds with Alexander's conquest. The second segment (the iron mixed with clay toes) represents the Seleucid era after the death of Alexander the Great when the Greek empire was divided among Alexander's generals (the Diadochi). At this

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<sup>91</sup> According to Miller "Josephus and 2 Esd 12:10-51 identified the fourth empire as Rome. Childs acknowledges that the writers of the New Testament Gospels considered the Roman Empire to be the fourth kingdom, and Walton comments, 'The evidence in the writing of the Church fathers is massive and in unison in favor of the Roman view.'" Miller, *Daniel: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture*, 96. See also Swain, "The Theory of the Four Monarchies: Opposition History Under the Roman Empire," 18.

<sup>92</sup> Newsom and Breed, *Daniel*, 85-86.

<sup>93</sup> Goldingay, *Daniel*, 57.

time, the Greek empire became weaker due to constant internal fracture and rivalry among the satraps. In this case, the iron-clay feet or toes represent the Seleucids and the Ptolemies—two of the successor dynasties. It speaks to the “fracturing of Seleucid authority across the early second-century Near East and the Hellenistic breakup of universal empire into a self-consciously peer-kingdom system.”<sup>94</sup>

Another important clue is the allusion to marriages arranged for diplomatic reasons in v. 43, which many scholars interpret as the marriage alliance between the Seleucids and Ptolemies (cf. Dan 11:6, 17). History shows that Antiochus II married Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, in 252 BCE, and Ptolemy V Euphrosyne married Cleopatra I, daughter of Antiochus III, in 193/192 BCE.<sup>95</sup> These royal marriages were intended to reunify the empire. However, as Hartman and DiLella note, “the marriages between the Seleucids and the Ptolemies...failed to achieve lasting peace between these two rival houses.”<sup>96</sup> Further and even stronger evidence in favor of Greece as the fourth empire is found in other parts of Daniel, but in Daniel 7, the desecration of the temple and the persecution of the Jews by the little horn (Dan 7:8, 11, 20-22, 24-25) correspond to the oppressive activities of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-163 BCE). Read in light of this textual evidence, one finds that the fourth kingdom fits Greece perfectly well.

## 2.5 The Four-Kingdom Schema and Doctrine of the Two Ages

In this section, we show that the concept of the two ages underlies Daniel’s periodization of history. The present evil age is symbolized by the four world kingdoms in Daniel 2 and 7. These are the evil kingdoms ruled by evil and violent kings which are succeeded by an eternal divine kingdom (the symbol of the age to come). In the Book of

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<sup>94</sup> Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 145.

<sup>95</sup> Nelson, *Daniel*, 91.

<sup>96</sup> Hartman and Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, 149.

Daniel, the reign of God ensures the vindication of God's holy and righteous people and the punishment of evil and wicked people, particularly the rulers of this world. In these texts, the replacement of the evil kingdoms of this present age by the kingdom of God is part of God's eternal design.

#### 2.5.1 Periodization of History and the Notion of Two Ages

A common apocalyptic concept that developed from historical periodization is the concept of the two ages—“this age” (הַעוֹלָם הַזֶּה) and “the coming age” (הַעוֹלָם הַבָּא). Although these eschatological expressions are not explicitly mentioned in the text of Daniel, it does play a fundamental role in Daniel's understanding of history. The concept finds symbolic expression in Daniel's division of history into four world kingdoms (Babylonian, Median, Persian, and Greek) which are destroyed and replaced by a divine stone representing the kingdom of God (Daniel 2). Again, the concept also finds expression in the contrast between the four sea monsters representing the gentile kingdoms and “the one like a son of man” through whom God ushers in a new kingdom (Daniel 7).

With respect to the vision of the multivalent statue in Daniel 2, the present evil age and its determined structure are represented by four successive world empires. By portraying these empires as a segmented structure that would eventually be destroyed by a divine stone, the text underscores the temporality and finitude of this present age and its rulers. Second, the sequence of metals of declining values suggests the deteriorating nature of the present age. Third, the doctrine of the two is often marked by the contrast between the two ages. Kosmin summarized this contrast as follows: “the kingdom of God is opposed to gentile empire as a whole—just as an unworked, natural stone, not cut by human hands, eternal, and unchanging, is aesthetically, materially, and temporally antithetical to the artificial, processed metals and burned clay of this transitory,

destructible, unstable, idol-like image.”<sup>97</sup> Finally, the hidden thing (Dan 2:18-19, 28-30, 47) that God revealed to Daniel with regard to Nebuchadnezzar’s dream is that there is an end to history, an end to the evil ruling powers of this present era. The central message of Daniel 2 is that at the end time, God would destroy the kingdom of evil and establish his own eternal kingdom. This is the basic message of the doctrine of the two ages that we see in later apocalyptic writings.

The above theme is repeated in Daniel 7, but with more details and insights into the nature of the present age and their rulers, as well as the reason why God intervened, judged them, and ended their power and dominion. Daniel 7 also provides significant information about the new coming kingdom of God. When read in light of the sociopolitical context in which this text emerged, as discussed above, a few things become obvious about the author’s characterization of the gentile kings, particularly Antiochus IV, that call for their destruction. First, they are portrayed as beasts that emerged from below, from a chaotic sea. Andrew Rillera submits that “depicting the gentile kingdoms as originating from the sea conveys that they have a violent quality to their reign.”<sup>98</sup> Second, each of the beasts is a predatory monster: “lion-eagle (v. 4); bear (v. 5); leopard-bird (v. 6); ‘extremely strong’ beast with ten horns, iron teeth, and bronze claws (vv. 8,19-20).”<sup>99</sup> Third, these points are further collaborated by the fact that each of the beasts is associated with a violent act (Dan 7:5, 7, 19, 21, 23, 25). Not only are these beasts violent, they are also considered unclean/unholy animals by the fact of being predators (cf. Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 11).

In Daniel 7, these violent and unclean beasts—the symbols of this present evil age and its violent and wicked rulers— are contrasted with “the one like a son of man,” the

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<sup>97</sup> Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 145.

<sup>98</sup> Andrew Remington Rillera, “A Call to Resistance: The Exhortative Function of Daniel 7,” *JBL* 138.4 (2019): 768.

<sup>99</sup> Rillera, “A Call to Resistance,” 768.

one through whom God establishes his divine kingdom. Unlike the beasts that emerged down from the sea, “the one like a son of man” is from above, he comes with the cloud of heaven (Dan 7:13). Unlike the beasts, “one like a son of man” is not “beast-like.” Although “the one like a son of man” is clearly a divine figure, he is more “human-like.” While power and dominion are taken away from the beasts, “the one like a son of man” receives power, glory and eternal dominion (Dan 7:14). Rillera notes that “a major difference between the beasts and the humanlike figure centers on violence. The beasts are perpetrators of violence and acquire their reigns through it, whereas those who ultimately receive the everlasting kingdom from God are depicted as vulnerable to the beast’s violence through the use of the image of a lowly “one like a son of man” (כבר אנוש) (Dan 7:13) and the explicit description of the holy ones being overcome and worn down (Dan 7:21, 25).<sup>100</sup> Rillera’s point is substantiated by the fact that “the one like the son of man” and “the holy ones of the Most High receive their kingship through the court verdict given by the ‘Ancient of Days’” (Dan 7:10). They are not like the other upstarts, particularly the little horn who gained power and kingship through conquest.

This contrast between the beasts representing the evil and violent rulers of the gentile world and “the one like a son of man” and the holy ones he represents also informs the eschatological dualism of the “two ages” in later apocalyptic texts. The present age, that is, Daniel’s own age, is characterized by violence. It is an age in which the people of God are oppressed and persecuted. On the other hand, the coming “new age” will be different in that it will be characterized by peace and justice. It is an age that will come about when the evil kingdoms of this present world are confronted by God’s reign. For the immediate audience, the rhetorical function of such dualistic characterization is to underscore a major point, namely that God’s people are experiencing suffering and

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<sup>100</sup> Rillera, “A Call to Resistance,” 774.



oppression in this present age because the evil kings are in power. However, in due time, God will intervene to deliver those who remain faithful. In other words, the ones who will reign in glory with “the one like a son of man” are those who remained “holy,” “uncontaminated” and faithful to the Law in the face of the social and moral evils of their day—in this instance, the seduction of the Hellenism of the Antiochene era.

### 2.5.2 The Relationship between the Two Ages in Daniel 2 and 7

In contemporary studies of the doctrine of the two ages in Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic texts, there has been a serious debate with regard to how to conceive the relationship between the two ages. As I have already stated in chapter one, many scholars of the “apocalyptic” school, such as Käsemann, L. Martyn, de Boer, and Gaventa, believe that Second Temple Jewish apocalyptic eschatology draws a sharp line of discontinuity between the present age and the future age, between this present world and the eschatological world to come. Consequently, these scholars maintain that the relationship between the old age and the new age should be understood in terms of radical disjuncture. This view is excellently expressed by Philip Vielhauer who writes, “the dualism of the Two-ages doctrine recognizes no continuity between the time of this world and of that which is to come: ‘For behold, the days are coming when everything that has come into being will be given over to destruction, and it will be as if it had never been’ (syr, Bar. 31:5).”<sup>101</sup> More recently, de Boer adds even a stronger voice:

The expected new order of reality will not be a rehabilitation or a reconfiguration of the present (social and political) order of reality (“this age”), as is generally the case in OT prophetic eschatology, but its termination and replacement by something completely new (“the age to come”). The new Jerusalem will replace the old Jerusalem. The new order of reality will replace the old order of reality, and it will do so definitively, finally, and irrevocably, i.e., eschatologically. This act of replacement will be initiated and brought

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<sup>101</sup> Philip Vielhauer, “Apocalypses and Related Literature: Introduction,” in *New Testament Apocrypha*, ed. Wilhelm Schneemelcher, trans. R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1964), 2:550.

about by God and God alone, which is to say that it cannot be initiated by human beings or effected by them.<sup>102</sup>

Since the Book of Daniel provides us with the framework for understanding the doctrine of the two-ages, it is imperative for us to examine how the author understands the relationship between the present sinful age of imperial rule and the glorious age of God's kingdom in chapters 2 and 7. When it comes to the relationship between the two ages in the Book of Daniel, Kosmin aligns with scholars who argue in favor of a strict dualism that does not recognize any form of overlapping between the two ages. Kosmin notes, "indeed, the eschatological redemption, whether conceived as a final period of eternal rule or as the transcendence of time itself, has no clear causal relationship to previous history: it is a breaking in upon the Seleucid world, a leap out of history, 'an intrusion in which history itself perishes.'"<sup>103</sup> In fact, Kosmin appeals to a principle formulated in a rabbinic text *Seder 'Olam* 28 which reads, "The rule of one people does not overlap with that of another people, nor the rule of one government with that of another; but a government whose time has expired during the night will fall during the night" as support for his reading.<sup>104</sup> The question then is whether we can find textual support for a radical dualism between the two ages in the Book of Daniel, particularly in chapters 2 and 7, as these scholars claim. Or is there something else going on? It is true that the images and metaphors used in Daniel 2 to depict the destruction of the statue seem to support the view of a "cataclysmic end," "a total erasure," or "a radical/total disjunction" between the two temporal periods represented by the statue and the unhewn stone. For instance, we are informed that not only was the statue struck and broken into pieces, but that the statue

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<sup>102</sup> Martinus C. de Boer, *Paul, Theologian of God's Apocalypse: Essays on Paul and Apocalyptic* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2020), 205.

<sup>103</sup> Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 182.

<sup>104</sup> Kosmin, *Time and Its Adversaries in the Seleucid Empire*, 182. See also Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, *Seder Olam: The Rabbinic View of Biblical Chronology ; Translated and with Commentary* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1998), 240.

“became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that no trace of them could be found” (Dan 2:35). Then what emerged was a permanent mountain which replaces the obliterated statue.

The first thing to note here is that Dan 2:34-35 does not project a cataclysmic end of this material world, as scholars such as Vielhauer have supposed; rather, the imagery used in depicting the destruction of the statue points to divine judgement. In the Old Testament, the imagery of chaff being blown away by the wind is an agricultural metaphor that is used as a symbol for divine judgement (cf. Pss 1:4; 2:9, Isa 41:15-16; Jer 51: 33; Hos 13:3). The metaphor is derived from the practice of threshing.<sup>105</sup> In the prophetic books, the imagery of “threshing of floor” is almost always used as a symbol of divine judgement. For instance, the prophet Hosea likens an idolatrous Ephraim to “chaff that swirls from the threshing floor or like smoke from a window” (Hos 13:3). Just like chaff, Ephraim will be insubstantial before the judgment of God. In Mic 4:11-13, the prophetic oracle against the foreign kingdoms that conspire against Zion states that “they do not know the thoughts of the LORD; they do not understand his plan, that he has gathered them as sheaves to the threshing floor.” Here, the point is not only the insignificance of these foreign kingdoms before the divine judge, but also the fact that Israel will be divinely empowered to destroy their enemies like oxen trampling grain on the threshing floor (cf. Isa 41:15-16). Therefore, the imagery in Dan 2:34-35 points to the severity of divine judgment against the four kings, a phenomenon that actually will take place in Daniel 7.

Although Daniel 2 and 7 envisage an end of gentile domination through the inauguration of a divine kingdom in which God’s people shall rule, there is nothing in these two chapters, or even in the entire Book of Daniel, that suggests that the author was concerned about the end of the space-time universe or cosmos. Nelson comments, “the

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<sup>105</sup> Ringgren Helmer, “רֶבֶב (Mōs),” *TDOT* 8:464–65.

book does not describe the destruction of the earth and heavens as do other apocalyptic passages (Isa 66:22; 2 Pet. 3:10). It seems rather that what is described is the rule of God on this present earth. The writer may have imagined things continuing mostly as before, except that the oppressive human kingdoms would be replaced with the just rule of God.”<sup>106</sup> Nelson’s comment is very insightful, especially given the fact that, in Daniel 7:11-12, we are informed that only the fourth beast was destroyed, the three other beasts were actually allowed to live for “a season and a time.” It is therefore important to understand Daniel 2 and 7 as a transfer of dominion to God’s people. In other words, the demonic or evil powers behind the gentile kingdoms continue to live into the age of the divine kingdom, but without power to exercise authority over “the holy ones of the Most High.”

### 2.5.3 Periodization of history and eschatological calculations

There is an end-time component to the periodization of history in both Nebuchadnezzar and Daniel’s dreams. In fact, in the Book of Daniel, periodization of history, together with its linear development towards a fixed end, gave rise to yearnings for the end time as well as the effort to calculate when the transition to the new age will occur.<sup>107</sup> We find textual support for this claim in the Book of Daniel, particularly in chapters 2 and 7. Both chapters point to the fact that the end of this evil age ruled by evil kings is near. For instance, in the context of Daniel’s interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream, Daniel explicitly states that the overall focus of the dream is for *בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים* (“the latter days”) (2:28-29). The Hebrew equivalent of this phrase is also found in Dan 10:14.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Nelson, *Daniel*, 94–95.

<sup>107</sup> Mladen Popović, “Apocalyptic Determinism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 260.

<sup>108</sup> Collins submits the phrase *בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים* (latter days) is originally understood as a temporal term that designates “in the course of time, in future days” in an unspecified but limited way but later on in the postexilic period, the term was reinterpreted and given eschatological sense such that it was now understood to refer to final, definitive phase of history. The term is usually used in reference to the time of salvation or

There are other synonymous expressions in the Book of Daniel, such as עֵת־קֵץ (“the time of the end”) (Dan 8:17; 11:35; 11:40; 12:4; 12:9), לְמוֹעֵד קָץ (“the appointed time of the end”) (Dan 8:19), and קֵץ הַיָּמִין (“end of the age/days”) (Dan 12:13).

Scholarly opinion with respect to the actual meaning of these end-time expressions in the Book of Daniel is divided. Some accept these end-time expressions as eschatological in reference to the time of Antiochus IV, while others read them as reference to an absolute eschatological end—the Parousia. While not denying the eschatological implications of these texts, this study agrees with the first view. The “end” in view, at least from the perspective of the author, is the Seleucid empire (the time of Antiochus IV). Paul Niskanen explains that end-time expressions such as בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים (“the latter days” or “at the end of days”) can simply mean “at the end of the days.” According to Niskanen, this expression does not necessarily “imply that no further days will follow those being described. The visions in Daniel are undoubtedly speaking about a significant moment in history when they describe God’s establishment of a definitive kingdom ‘at the end of days.’ But this need not imply an event at the end or outside of history.”<sup>109</sup> It makes more sense to read the cataclysmic upheaval described in the Book of Daniel, particularly chapters 2, 7 and 12, as a reference to the end of foreign domination and the end of exile, which are the immediate concerns of the Book of Daniel, rather than to the end of the world or the end of time.<sup>110</sup> In the Book of Daniel, as in many Old Testament texts (e.g., Deut 4:30; 31:29; Jer 30:24; 48:47), the end time is often associated with “persecution,” “tribulation,”

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a time of distress which will culminate in a divine intervention. John J. Collins, “The Expectation of the End in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 75; Carol A. Newsom, “‘Sectually Explicit’ Literature from Qumran,” in *The Hebrew Bible and Its Interpreters*, ed. William H. Propp, Baruch Halpen, and David N. Freedman (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 167–87.

<sup>109</sup> Paul Niskanen, *The Human and the Divine in History: Herodotus and the Book of Daniel* (New York: T and T Clark International, 2004), 112–13.

<sup>110</sup> Niskanen, *The Human and the Divine in History: Herodotus and the Book of Daniel*, 113.

“distress,” and “desolation,” which usually occur before the definitive divine salvific intervention.

The idea of an end is integrally tied to the calculation of its time.<sup>111</sup> In the Book of Daniel, we see the author’s quest not only to know the time of the end (Dan 12:6), but also to calculate exactly the duration of time it will take from the author’s own day to the end of time. The first attempt to calculate the end-time event is found in Dan 7:25, which projected “a time, times and half a time” (three and half years) as the duration when “the holy ones of the Most High will be given over to the powers of the little horn.” According to Collins, “the period of time in question here is clearly the length of the persecution. At the end of this period the little horn will be condemned to ‘destruction and perdition until the end’ (עד סופא).”<sup>112</sup>

There are other attempts to calculate the time of the end in Daniel 8-12, such as the 2,300 evenings and mornings (or 1150 days) in Dan 8:14-17, the seventy “seven” (490 years) in Dan 9:24-27, and the 1290 days in Dan 12:11-13. With these end time calculations, the author makes a bold theological claim that the times of the evil rulers of this world are numbered and that the day of their judgment has been precisely located in history and marked in time. The purpose is to encourage the audience to persevere and remain faithful to the covenant, even if the prediction did not happen as projected. In fact, it is from this perspective that one can understand the author’s allusion to Hab 2:3—a text that speak about the reliability of end-time vision—in Dan 8:17; 12:12. Habakkuk 2:3 reads:

For there is still a vision for the appointed time;  
It speaks of the end, and does not lie.  
If it seems to tarry, wait for it;  
It will surely come, it will not delay.

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<sup>111</sup> Collins, *Seers, Sybils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, 158.

<sup>112</sup> Collins, *Seers, Sybils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, 158.

The text of Habakkuk is addressed to a Jewish audience who, like the audience of Daniel, lived in a time of apprehension and distress. This audience was at the point of losing hope as a result of a perceived delayed divine intervention, and worried that God may not fulfill his promise of salvation. Habakkuk 2:3 calls for patience on the basis of God's faithfulness, even if there appears to be a delay. The vision of the end must at some point come true. For both Habakkuk and Daniel, the perceived delay was not an indication of God's abandonment; rather, it only meant that God does not calculate time the way humans do. God will certainly intervene at the appointed time to restore his people, but in the meantime the people must remain faithful to the covenant.

## 2.6 The Soteriology of Daniel 2 and 7

Another important issue that we address here is the nature of salvation inscribed in these narratives of Daniel 2 and 7. For many scholars these chapters reveal a perspective of soteriology in which salvation is entirely a divine act that excludes any human participation or involvement. Oftentimes, Daniel 2:34 is cited as a textual support for the lack of human agency in divine salvation. It is argued that this text alludes to divine rather than to any human agency that will bring about the end of the four kingdoms. Another textual support is found in Daniel 7, where the text is explicit that it is through divine judgement that salvation—in the form of a kingdom that will never end—comes to “the holy ones of the Most High.”<sup>113</sup> In Daniel 7, the salvation of “the holy ones” comes about through divine verdict (Dan 7:22, 25-27). For instance, in his commentary on Dan 2:31-35, Nelson argues that “the apocalyptic message of the book of Daniel is that deliverance will come not from below, from human hands, but from above, directly from God.”<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 330.

<sup>114</sup> Nelson, *Daniel*, 88.

Nelson cites Dan 11:34 and 8:25 as further textual support for this view. Rillera makes a similar statement: “Divine-human synergism (let alone militaristic synergism) is not an option presented in Daniel.”<sup>115</sup> By this statement, Rillera denies any human participation in God’s salvific work in the Book of Daniel.

While this theological reasoning may sound promising, at first glance, as it relates to divine salvific intervention in Daniel 2 and 7, it does not present a complete soteriological argument of these texts, especially when read in light of the ethical praxis that these chapters and the entire Book of Daniel call for in the present. Contra Rillera, the Book of Daniel presents a view of salvation that affirms the synergism of divine and human actions in the unfolding of historical events.<sup>116</sup> Although in Daniel 2 and 7 the author tells a story in which God is portrayed as the one who determines what will happen at the appointed times, and God’s kingdom is established without human hands, yet human beings such as Daniel and Nebuchadnezzar are also shown to be active participants in the shaping of this divine story. For instance, there is a clear intention on the part of Daniel to co-operate in God’s salvific purpose through prayer and fasting (Dan 2:18) for the unveiling of the divine mystery contained in Nebuchadnezzar’s dream.<sup>117</sup> It was in the course of Daniel’s prayer that “the mystery” was revealed to him. Here, Daniel is the human agent through whom the revelation about the incoming divine kingdom was mediated.

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<sup>115</sup> Rillera, “A Call to Resistance,” 766.

<sup>116</sup> Paul Niskanen has powerfully defended this argument. According to him, the Book of Daniel (just like Herodotus) sees all historical events including the establishment of the fifth kingdom as the interplay between divine and human causation. See Niskanen, *The Human and the Divine in History: Herodotus and the Book of Daniel*, 107.

<sup>117</sup> The Aramaic text is unclear on the meaning of “seek mercy.” But the OG makes it clear that Daniel “proclaimed a fast and prayer of supplication.” Angela Harkins points out the intention of the Greek translators as follows: “Here the Greek tradition presents Daniel as fasting and praying, perhaps anticipating the strategy that he will take up in chapter 9, one that has been proven to be effective in similarly dire matters (e.g., 2 Chr 20:3).” Harkins, “Daniel,” 783.



Second, the kingdom of God that was revealed in Daniel 2 will only be received by those who are designated with the adjective קדש (“holy”) (Daniel 7). No matter how we interpret the identity of “the holy ones of the Most High,” what is apparently clear is that “holiness” (either ritual or ethical) is predicated of them. We can even detect an ethical exhortation in this text when read in light of Daniel 12 which promises everlasting life (salvation) to the maskilîm, “who turn the many to righteousness” (Dan 12:3). In other words, these texts adopt a Deuteronomic theology of history that emphasizes salvation that is contingent on covenant fidelity, one in which the human response to God’s covenant plays an essential role in determining the future of the individual person or the Israelite community as whole (Deut 30:19-20). In Dan 11:28, 30, we see the author’s concern for fidelity to the covenant.

Collins’s statement that “Daniel’s revelation explained how fidelity still made sense”<sup>118</sup> is on point. It makes sense therefore to say that an important rhetorical function of Daniel 2 and 7 is to encourage the readers/hearers towards covenant fidelity, even in the face of death, because such fidelity results in eternal salvation or sharing in the reign of God. There is no doubt that the author of Daniel believes that human beings through their actions can contribute to the shaping of historical realities in this present world and hereafter. While salvation, or entrance into the kingdom of God, is of course ultimately God’s action in so far as it is God who offers it, human beings can exercise their free will by accepting this gift through obedience or by rejecting it through disobedience. In other words, human agency in the salvific drama is not diametrically opposed to divine agency. Both are two sides of the same coin. In fact, Niskanen has argued that the traditional covenant dynamic of divine retribution of free human actions is fully embedded within the

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<sup>118</sup> Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy*, 282.

larger framework of God's preordained plan for history.<sup>119</sup> The two are not mutually exclusive.

## 2.7 The Rhetorical Function of Periodization of History in Daniel 2 and 7

While there is a great deal of research with respect to the identities of the four kingdoms and kings in Daniel 2 and 7, the theological and rhetorical reasons why the author of the Book of Daniel carried out this textual periodization of imperial history remain largely under explored. In this section, we pay attention to some important theological and rhetorical functions of Daniel's division of history into four segments.

First, we will look at the theme of God's sovereignty and the faithfulness of God's people. For the subjugated and marginalized Jews who lived in the harsh socio-economic, political, and religious realities of imperial domination, Daniel's periodization of history first of all offers a counterimperial discourse of world history from the perspective of the marginalized Jews—a theo-political perspective which accentuates God's ultimate kingship and sovereignty over creation and history. Daniel 2 and 7 make a powerful theological assertion about God's sovereignty to direct the course of world history. For the author, God is the primary cause of historical events, and it is God who shapes and directs all historical processes. The political power of the foreign empires is temporary, transient, and subject to God. These texts assure the readers that when the mighty empires of this world have run their course, God will establish an infinitely superior kingdom. Using the device of periodization of history, the author calls the audience to covenant fidelity in view of God's saving action. In fact, this appears to be the major objective of the author.

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<sup>119</sup> Niskanen, *The Human and the Divine in History: Herodotus and the Book of Daniel*, 112.

Second, as we have discussed earlier, the author adopts a linear movement in which history is climaxing towards an end.<sup>120</sup> But history as presented in Daniel 2 and 7 is not rushing towards a disastrous end; rather, the four successive kingdoms have their end with the inauguration of God's kingdom. Collins notes that periodization of history served two purposes in the apocalypses: (1) it enhanced the deterministic sense that history was measured out and under control; and (2) it enables the reader to locate his own generation near the end of the sequence.<sup>121</sup> With regard to the first point, historical determinism in the Book of Daniel, especially in Daniel 2 and 7, is not an apocalyptic historical fatalism; rather, it attests to God's sovereignty. God directs and controls historical events, including the establishment and removal of kings. In Daniel 2 and 7, the rise of gentle kingdoms and their termination are described as part of God's predetermined plan in history that culminates in the inauguration of a new kingdom and the salvation of God's people. This historical determinism not only proffers explanations that disclose the otherwise concealed meanings behind historical events and human experiences; it also reassures the audience that the horrible experiences they are undergoing are part of an end-time scenario that is already designed by God. Here the story of Israel and the empires that subjugated them is told as events that were purposeful in so far as it will result in the restoration of a glorious age for God's people. With regard to the second point by Collins, Daniel's periodization of history brings new hope that those who remained faithful to the covenant will participate in God's new kingdom that is in sight, a kingdom that transcends any known kingdoms of this world.

Third, not only does the author use the mechanism of periodization to delegitimize foreign kings and to promote the sovereignty of God, he also uses this device to highlight

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<sup>120</sup> Michael E. Stone, *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 59–60.

<sup>121</sup> Collins, "The Expectation of the End in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 74–90.

the evil and injustice of the gentile empires. Klaus Koch notes in this regard that the fundamental hope of the author “is the eschatological promise of a coming end of unjust political structures, and the rise of a new aeon with eternal justice and a supreme holiness that will guarantee an unchangeable and everlasting relation between divinity and humanity (9:24).”<sup>122</sup> For the audience, the message of a forthcoming divine kingdom that will put an end to the evil and injustice of this world’s empires offers hope and assurance of divine justice, as well as propels God’s people towards just deeds.

## 2.8 The Influence of Daniel 2 and 7 in the New Testament Theology

There is no doubt that the Book of Daniel particularly, chapters 2 and 7, played an influential role in the shaping of later Jewish and NT theologies. Textual evidence from Qumran, Josephus, and 4 *Ezra* indicates that the Book of Daniel circulated among some Jewish groups who entertained the eschatological hope of a unified and restored Israel, and as well as hope in the transformation of the world. There were already two complete translations of Daniel into Greek by the time the New Testament texts were written: the LXX and Theodotion (Θ) versions. These early translations of Daniel from Hebrew and Aramaic into Greek attest to the enthusiastic reception of the book among Greek-speaking Jews and Christians. There is also clear evidence of Danielic influence in the NT, especially in the Gospels, the Pauline letters, and the Book of Revelation.<sup>123</sup> Some scholars have even demonstrated that the Book of Daniel played a significant role in the development of the New Testament’s thought—such as in Christology, the notion of

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<sup>122</sup> Klaus Koch, “Stages in the Canonization of the Book of Daniel,” in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, ed. John J. Collins and P. W. Flint (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 445.

<sup>123</sup> For further discussion on the influence of Daniel on the NT see, Collins, *Daniel*, 3–9; Hartman and Di Lella, *The Book of Daniel*, 80–81. For the use of Daniel in Pauline letters see, Daniel J. R. Kirk, “Mark’s Son of Man and Paul’s Second of Adam,” *HBT* 37.2 (2015): 170–95; H. H. Drake Williams, *The Wisdom of the Wise: The Presence and Function of Scripture within 1 Cor. 1:18-3:23*, AGJU 49 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 167; Gregory K. Beale, *Hidden but Now Revealed: A Biblical Theology of Mystery* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, an imprint of InterVarsity Press, 2014).

mystery of the kingdom of God, the day of judgment, the desolating abomination, suffering, etc.<sup>124</sup> In chapter four, we shall offer a detailed discussion of the influence of Daniel in Paul's Adam-Christ Christology and his periodization of history in Rom 5:12-21. In this section, we shall limit the discussion to a few other important aspects of NT theology that were shaped by the Danielic narrative.

The most conspicuous influence of Daniel on Christian tradition is seen in NT Christology, where Jesus appropriates for himself the Danielic "one like a son man" figure.<sup>125</sup> In the Gospels, Jesus often refers to himself as the "Son of Man." The expression occurs about eighty times in the four Gospels, making it the most common self-designation and favorite title of Jesus.<sup>126</sup> For instance, twice in Mk 2:1-12, Jesus uses this title for himself to speak of his divine authority (his authority to forgive sin and his authority over the Sabbath). In Mark 8-10 and 13-14, Jesus uses the title more frequently to speak about his suffering, death, and resurrection. In Mk 13:24-27, Jesus uses the title in an apocalyptic scenario to speak about his coming on cloud as the glorious and eschatological judge. In Mk 14:62, Jesus employs the title to speak of himself as the one whom the people "will see seated at the right of the power and coming with the clouds of heaven." Most scholars agree that these last two uses are clear allusions to Dan 7:13-14. Benjamin Reynolds notes that "since these sayings reflect a clear connection to Daniel's 'one like a son of man', it

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<sup>124</sup> John J. Collins, "The Son of Man in First-Century Judaism," *NTS* 38.3 (1992): 183-98; Adela Yarbro Collins, "The Influence of Daniel on the New Testament," in *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, ed. Frank M. Cross, HCHCB (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 90-123; James D. G. Dunn, "The Danielic Son of Man in the New Testament," in *The Book of Daniel*, 2:528-49; Craig A. Evans, "Daniel in the New Testament: Visions of God's Kingdom," in *The Book of Daniel*, 2:490-527.

<sup>125</sup> The origin and meaning of the phrase "Son of Man" have constituted one of the liveliest debates in New Testament scholarship with scholars arguing either in favor of a Danielic origin/influence with a messianic undertone or against it. Scholars who argue against a Danielic origin see the phrase as a Semitic idiom that simply means a 'human being' with no divine or messianic connotation. For a recent discussion of the Son of Man debate, see Benjamin E. Reynolds, *The Son of Man Problem: Critical Readings* (New York: T&T Clark, 2018); David F. Mitchell, *The Son of Man in Mark's Gospel: Exploring Its Possible Connections with the Book of Ezekiel* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2019).

<sup>126</sup> Benjamin E. Reynolds, "Introduction: 'The Son of Man' Problem and Debate," in *The Son of Man Problem: Critical Readings*, ed. Benjamin E. Reynolds (New York: T&T Clark, 2018), 2.

is thought that either Jesus associated himself with this figure as ‘the Son of Man’ or that the early Jesus followers made this association. The meaning of the phrase is then considered by most—but not all—who hold this view to be making some sort of messianic claim.”<sup>127</sup>

What is of uttermost importance in Jesus’ use of the “Son of Man” phrases in the Synoptic Gospels, particularly in Mark’s Gospel, is that it expresses Jesus’ divine identity and his messianic mission of inaugurating the kingdom of God through perfect obedience to God, even to the point of death (Mk 3:23-30). Like the Danielic “son of man,” Jesus receives the divine authority to bring about the reign of God on earth, thereby upsetting the rule of evil forces/empires that are hostile to God and human flourishing. Jesus overturns the reign of evil through his teaching, healings, and exorcisms, but ultimately through his self-giving death on the cross and his glorious resurrection. The kingdom of God that Jesus inaugurates is not only an eschatological/futuristic event; it is also a present, ongoing, dynamic, and experiential reality in the lives of the men and women who had transformative and liberating experiences of Jesus.

In fact, the various healings and exorcisms effected by Jesus are set forth as narratives which demonstrate that the fundamental significance of God’s reign is the physical, spiritual, and social well-being of God’s people, not an abstract reality. I agree with George Ladd that the fundamental element of Jesus’ message about the kingdom of God is that the powers of the future eschatological reign have entered into human history in advance of their apocalyptic manifestation and are at work now in the world among people. The powers of the age to come have invaded the present evil age. God has manifested his kingly power in the present for human salvation, to bring to us in advance the blessings of the future kingdom. God’s kingdom is present and active in history, in and

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<sup>127</sup> Reynolds, “Introduction: ‘The Son of Man’ Problem and Debate,” 6–7.

through the new people of God who experience the power of the kingdom.<sup>128</sup> Through Jesus' earthly life, death, and resurrection, he inaugurates the kingdom of God foretold in Daniel 7. For Christ's followers, the reign of God that is radically breaking-in demands an immediate human response, namely repentance (a turning away from sin and evil) and faith in order to enter and participate in it. The kingdom that Jesus announces invites us not only to ethical decisions but also to an experiential relationship with God.

It is not only the Gospel writers who understood Jesus in the role of the Danielic "one like a son of man" figure. Paul, who penned his letters before the canonical Gospels were written, also does. The only difficulty when it comes to Paul's use of the "Son of Man" tradition is that there is no explicit reference to the "Son of Man" in the Pauline letters. Paul addresses Jesus as Lord, the Messiah, and Son of God, but never as Son of Man. Consequently, many scholars conclude that Paul has no Son of Man Christology.<sup>129</sup> However, in recent times, some scholars have begun to see the connection between Paul's Adam Christology in light of the Son of Man tradition, with Daniel 7 lurking in the background.<sup>130</sup> Since the Hebrew term for "son of man" is *ben Adam* (Pss 8:5; 80:19), the possibility of connecting it with Paul's reference to Jesus as the second Adam becomes legitimate. A detailed investigation of Paul's Adam-Christ Christology and its Danielic connection has to wait until chapter four of this study. In that chapter, we shall see that Paul's understanding of Christ as the "second", "last," or "new" Adam conveys the same theological points that the Gospels writers make with the "Son of Man" Christology. Besides the "Son of Man" Christology, Daniel 2 and 7 provide the NT writers with another

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<sup>128</sup> George E. Ladd, "Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 76.1 (1957): 199-200.

<sup>129</sup> Bengt Holmberg and Mikael Winninge, *Identity Formation in the New Testament*, WUNT 227 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 118.

<sup>130</sup> Kirk, "Mark's Son of Man and Paul's Second of Adam," 170-95; Yongbom Lee, "The Son of Man as the Last Adam: The Early Church Tradition as a Source of Paul's Adam Christology" (Pickwick, 2012); James D. G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making: A New Testament Inquiry into the Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996).

important Christological metaphor, namely Christ as “the stone.” For instance, Jesus concludes the parable of the wicked tenants with the following statement: “the stone that the builders rejected will become the cornerstone. Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to piece, but he on whom it falls will be crushed” (Lk 20:18). This text alludes to three textual traditions, namely Ps 11:22; Isa 8:14-15; and Dan 2:34-35, 44-45. Collins argues that Jesus’ appropriation of the metaphor of the crushing stone for himself in Luke is a clear allusion to Dan 2:34-35.<sup>131</sup> In both Daniel and Luke, the crushing stone is a symbol of divine judgment against the wicked and unjust rulers/people of this world.

Another important influence of Daniel 2 and 7 on the NT can be seen in the phrase “the mystery of the kingdom of God.” Note that the *ἔκρη* (“mystery”) that was revealed to Daniel concerns the kingdom of God. In Daniel 2, the “mystery” explains the dream of the king which contains some crucial information concerning God’s future plans for human history at the end of days (Dan 2:28-29).<sup>132</sup> The Greek equivalent, *μυστήριον* (“mystery”), occurs frequently in the NT in reference to the kingdom of God or the divine salvific plan. The phrase “the mystery of the kingdom of God” is used by the Evangelists (Matt 13:10-13; Mk 4:10-12; Lk 8:9-10) as a symbolic expression of God’s eternal salvific plans that Jesus reveals and embodies through his words and deeds. Paul uses the term *μυστήριον* as a Christological and epistemological category to underscore the special revelation that God discloses to believers regarding the divine economy of salvation. Since believers are granted access into the divine *μυστήριον*, they now possess deeper understanding into the nature of divine reality—a mystical knowledge that enables them to conduct their lives accordingly.<sup>133</sup> Paul regards himself as a steward of these divine mysteries (1 Cor 4:1), mysteries that were hidden from the rulers of this present age (1 Cor 2:6-8), but are now

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<sup>131</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 106.

<sup>132</sup> Pace, *Daniel*, 58.

<sup>133</sup> Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (New York: Crossroad, 1982), 11.



revealed to Christ's believers (Col 1:26). One of the apocalyptic mysteries which Paul is privileged to have received is God's own salvific plan for the Gentiles (Rom 16:25). The understanding of God's salvific plan (the kingdom of God) as μυστήριον in the NT echoes Daniel 2.<sup>134</sup> In the NT, as with the Book of Daniel, the revelation of the mystery of the kingdom of God is God's prerogative.

But as Evans has shown, the principal influence of Daniel 2 and 7 on the NT can be seen in the Book of Revelation. Evans points to the following parallels between Daniel and Revelation. Just as in Dan 7:9 where God sits on his throne and the books of judgment are opened, so in Rev 20:11-12 God sits on his throne and the books are opened. Just as in Dan 7:10 myriads of angels stand before God, so in Rev 5:11 myriads stand before God. Just as in Dan 7:22 judgment for the saints is promised, so in Rev 20:4 judgment for the saints finally takes place.<sup>135</sup> The many Danielic allusions and parallels in the Gospels, Pauline letters, and the Book of Revelation attest to the prevailing influence of the Daniel on the early Christian tradition.

## 2.9 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrates that the periodization of history in Daniel 2 and 7 and the implied doctrine of the two-ages are concretely rooted in the socio-economic, political, and religious crises that struck the Jewish people in the 2nd century BCE under the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes. As Kosmin correctly highlighted, the Seleucids' invention of a new dating system that aims at erasing memories of the sacred past, and Antiochus IV's attempt to erase the distinctive Jewish identity by altering the fundamental order and nature of their religious system, elicited the response of the Book of Daniel. In

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<sup>134</sup> Collins, *Daniel*, 105–6.

<sup>135</sup> Evans, "Daniel in the New Testament: Visions of God's Kingdom," 525.

this chapter, we argued that in their original historical context, Daniel 2 and 7 function as resistance literature to the Seleucid oppressive system, and particularly to its imperial ideology of time and temporality. For the author, the four-kingdom schema functions as a critique of the powerful empires that dominate and oppress the weak, but it also offers hope of God's intervention and salvation to Jews who are being oppressed and marginalized. The author portrays the political rulers of his era as symbols of this present evil age that has been destined for destruction by God, as well as offers hope of a new age—the inauguration of God's kingdom that will be marked by justice. The central message of both Daniel 2 and 7 is God's sovereignty, God's power not only to direct the course of world history, but also his power to save his own people who maintained fidelity and loyalty to the covenant (Dan 9:4). God's people are called not only to remain faithful to God in the crisis that issues from the Seleucids' rule, but also to "take action" (Dan 11:32), that is, to resist the evils of the Seleucid empire.

## CHAPTER THREE

### PERIODIZATION OF HISTORY AND THE TWO AGES MOTIF IN 4 EZRA

#### 3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I explored the notions of history and time in the Book of Daniel under the categories of the periodization of history and the dualism of the two-ages. I argued that Daniel's periodization of history and its implied dualism of the two ages function politically as textual resistance to the Seleucid imperial ideology of time. I concluded the chapter by noting that the Book of Daniel has been very influential in the shaping of later Second and Post-Temple Jewish and Christian theologies, including those of Paul the apostle. In the present chapter, I continue the investigation of the meaning and function of the periodization of history and the two-age motif in 4 Ezra, a first century Jewish text that postdates both Daniel and Paul. Like many other Jewish apocalyptic texts written during the Second and Post Temple periods, the author of 4 Ezra reflects upon history and time under the components of periodization of history and the two ages.<sup>1</sup>

In 4 Ezra we see another application of periodization of history and the motif of the two ages in a different social context, namely the Roman Empire. At a time when the Jewish community was experiencing a sense of disorientation and meaninglessness caused

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<sup>1</sup> Matthias Henze, "Dimensions of Time in Jewish Apocalyptic Thought: The Case of 4 Ezra," in *Figures of Ezra*, ed. Jan N. Bremmer, Veronika Hirschberger, and Tobias Nicklas (Leuven: Peeters, 2018), 13–15. For more study on notion of periodization of history, as well as the motif of the two ages in 4 Ezra, see "Features of the Eschatology of IV Ezra" (Scholars Press, 1989), 44–77; Jonathan A. Moo, *Creation, Nature and Hope in 4 Ezra*, FRLANT 237 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), 96–111; John Collins, "Not One World but Two: The Future in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature," *Religions* 10.4 (2019): 1–11; Devorah Dimant, "4 Ezra and 2 Baruch in Light of Qumran Literature," in *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction after the Fall*, ed. Matthias Henze and Gabriele Boccaccini (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 31–61; Henze, "Dimensions of Time in Jewish Apocalyptic Thought: The Case of 4 Ezra," 13–34; J. P. Davies, *Paul among the Apocalypses?: An Evaluation of the "Apocalyptic Paul" in the Context of Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature*, LNTS 562 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 87–92; Karina M. Hogan, "Pseudepigraphy and the Periodization of History in Jewish Apocalypses," in *Pseudepigraphie Und Verfasserfiktion in Frühchristlichen Briefen*, ed. Jörg Frey et al., WUNT 246 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 61–83.

by the loss of the Second Temple and the city of Jerusalem, the author deploys these apocalyptic devices to articulate a deterministic view of history, a theological position that affirms the absolute sovereignty of God over human history. Apocalyptic determinism affirms God's foreknowledge and control of history. The fundamental idea behind the author's use of the periodization of history is that God is in charge of history, there is nothing that happens in history (including the rise of the Roman Empire and its activities) without God's foreknowledge. The evidence that God knows in advance and controls historical events is that God could reveal hidden things or future events through visions and dreams to seers such as Ezra. In this way, the author gives divine purpose and meaning to the unfolding of time. He assures his audience that everything that happens, including the tragic destruction of the Temple, occurred because God allowed it for the divine purpose. This view finds explicit articulation in the vision of the eagle (4 Ezra 11:1-12:34) which contains a periodization of the history of the Roman Empire as a sequence of successive kings that will be replaced by an everlasting divine rule through a Davidic Messiah. By means of *vaticinium ex eventu* (4 Ezra 11:1-12:34), the author sees the rise and fall of the Roman Empire as events that have been determined by God. But the primary interest of the author is not the rise of the Roman Empire *per se*, but its end. The message is that the end of Roman imperial dominance is near.

It is important to note that 4 Ezra's periodization in chs. 11:1-12:34 is based on Daniel's four kingdom schema (Daniel 7). By alluding to the text of Daniel 7, the author invites his audience to reflect on their current circumstance in light of the experiences of their forebears during the time of Daniel, when God acted to save and restore his faithful ones from an oppressive imperial power. The lesson intended through this retrospective look at the past is that, just as God intervened to save his faithful ones from the oppression and domination of the Seleucid kings, so would God do in their present circumstance of

Roman imperial domination. Besides drawing from Daniel's periodization of history, the author also develops more fully the concept of the two ages that is only implicit in the Book of Daniel. Most Jewish apocalypses, including 4 Ezra, underscore the fact that "the course of human history, and especially the time of the end, has been set from the beginning."<sup>2</sup> There are many explicit and implicit statements about "this age" and "the age to come" in the text. This includes the famous statement: "For this reason, the Most High has not made one world but two" (4 Ezra 7:50), considered to be a classic expression of the worldview in question. In 4 Ezra, the dualism of the ages is construed as the contrast between the present evil age and the glorious age to come when God will eliminate all evils and put all things right.

This chapter engages in the study of periodization of history in 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34,<sup>3</sup> and the motif of the two ages as articulated in two passages: 4 Ezra 4:26-32; 7:45-61.<sup>4</sup> This chapter argues that the periodization of history and the doctrine of the two ages in 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34; 4:26-32; 7:45-61 reflect a deterministic sense of history in which events have been planned out according to God's sovereign will. The message is that God is in control and that the time of salvation is imminent. Using these apocalyptic devices, the author invites his audience to look at their current situation from the divine perspective. He encourages them to align themselves to God through obedience to the Torah, since the unfolding of history of the world is leading to the ultimate triumph of God. In 4 Ezra 11:1-

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<sup>2</sup> Hogan, "Pseudepigraphy and the Periodization of History in Jewish Apocalypses," 64.

<sup>3</sup> 4 Ezra attests to another form of periodization in chapter 14:11-12. Here the author divides the progression of history into twelve parts/period of which ten and half of the total period had already passed. Henze note that in many Jewish apocalyptic texts, multiple division of history can co-exist, even if they seem not to be compatible with each other. This is perhaps true of 4 Ezra where two different historical periodization (4 Ezra 11-12, and 14) occur. Matthias Henze, "This Age and the Age to Come in 2 Baruch," in *Dreams, Visions, Imaginations: Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Views of the World to Come*, ed. Jens Schröter, Tobias Nicklas, and Armand P. Tärrech, BZNW 247 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 124.

<sup>4</sup> Obviously, chapters 4 and 6 of 4 Ezra come before 4 Ezra 11-12. However, because of the thematic approach of this study whereby we explore periodization of history before the motif of the two ages as seen in the previous chapter, we shall study 4 Ezra 11-12 which deals with periodization of history before the motif of the two ages in 4 Ezra 4 and 6.

12:34 the author employs the technique of periodization similar to Daniel 7, a technique that uses animal symbolism to number and represent foreign powers,<sup>5</sup> to periodize the entire Roman history and cryptically describe it as a monstrous eagle (with three heads, multiple wings) whose days are already numbered.<sup>6</sup> Through this symbolic vision, the author assures his audience that “the network of evil that had ensnared their world and had brought persecution and suffering would be overcome by a mighty power, and that the faithfulness of the righteous would not go unnoticed by the God who reigns supremely over this this world.”<sup>7</sup>

Not only does the author of 4 Ezra deploy the device of periodization of history to assure his audience of God’s unfailing salvation and the end of the Roman Empire; he also uses the motif of the two ages to reinforce this point (4 Ezra 4:26-32; 7:45-34).<sup>8</sup> Fourth Ezra consistently identifies the socio-political context of Roman rule as the present evil age which must give way to a new age of justice and righteousness when God’s faithful ones will flourish. The present age is an era marked by “pervasive corruption” (*saeculum corruptum*; 4 Ezra 4: 11; 7:48, 96, 111; 8:31; 14:13). Jonathan Moo notes that in 4 Ezra, “corruption” (understood here as moral corruption) is a central characteristic of this age which will be done away with in the age to come (4 Ezra 6:28; 7:32, 97, 113; 8:53).<sup>9</sup> The author recounts his visual experience of this social evil as follows: “for when I came here, I saw ungodly deeds without number, and my soul has seen many sinners during these thirty years. And my heart failed me” (4 Ezra 3:29). This visual experience of evil traumatized Ezra and consequently forms the crux of his lament throughout this narrative.

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<sup>5</sup> George W. E. Nickelsburg and Michael E. Stone, *Early Judaism: Texts and Documents on Faith and Piety* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009), 163.

<sup>6</sup> Nickelsburg and Stone, *Early Judaism*, 163–64; Karina Martin Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra: Wisdom, Debate, and Apocalyptic Solution*, JSJSup 130 (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 181.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce W. Longenecker, *2 Esdras* (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1995), 72.

<sup>8</sup> There are many explicit and implicit reference to the theme of the two age in E 4 Ezra (cf. 4 Ezra 4:26-32; 6:7-10, 20, 25-34; 7:12-13, 29-31; 7:50, 112-113; 8:10). But in this chapter, only two of these texts shall be studied

<sup>9</sup> Moo, *Creation, Nature and Hope in 4 Ezra*, 88.

The socio-political reality that Ezra describes throughout the text is one in which corruption and wickedness reign. In 4 Ezra 4:26-32, the author denounces this present evil age and predicts its end.

Although the outlook of 4 Ezra's apocalyptic eschatology might appear futuristic, when read in its historical context, it is intrinsically concerned with the current socio-political predicament of Jews under the Roman Empire. In fact, early in the dialogue, Ezra explicitly declares that he is not interested in otherworldly matters but in "those things we daily experience: why Israel has been given over to the Gentiles as a reproach; why the people whom you loved has been given over to the godless tribes, and the Torah of our Fathers has been made of no effect and the written covenants no longer exist" (4 Ezra 4:23). Throughout the dialogue, Ezra is resolutely concerned with the ongoing oppression and injustice being inflicted on God's people by Rome. However, the only assurance the author gives his audience in their present predicament is that the end is imminent. God would soon intervene in the socio-political order to execute justice. Fourth Ezra offers hope for an earthly deliverance, a this-worldly fulfillment of God's salvific plan through the Messiah at the end time.<sup>10</sup> When God arises to judge the wicked for their crime, the faithful remnant of God's people will experience divine salvation. Therefore, integral to the author's denunciation of this present evil age is an appeal to remain faithful and embody righteousness through obedience to the law, which is the only assured means to eschatological life.

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section offers a brief overview of important preliminary matters regarding the text of 4 Ezra, such as the issues of authorship, date, and provenance, unity, and the authorial voice. The second section examines the socio-political context in which the text emerged, arguing that it is the Roman

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. 4 Ezra 7:28-29; 11:37-12:1; 12:31-34; 13:3-13; 13:25-52; 14:9.

ideology of power (*imperium sine fine*) which finds its definitive instantiation in the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, and the subsequent dispersion of the Jews from their ancestral territory that informs the author's theological reflections. Sections three and four explore the notion of periodization of history in 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34, and the motif of the two ages in 4 Ezra 4:26-32; 7:45-61. In both sections, we argue that the author deployed these two apocalyptic devices to offer the assurance of God's sovereignty and his salvific intervention, as well as to address the various manifestations of evil under the Roman Empire. Section five explores 4 Ezra's soteriology, arguing that the author expounds a participatory soteriology. The final section explores the rhetorical function of 4 Ezra, followed by a conclusion. Fourth Ezra's periodization of history, its doctrine of the two ages—particularly the way the author conceives the relationship between the two ages, the way he depicts interplay between divine sovereignty and human agency within the economy of salvation—offers powerful illumination of Paul's thought in Rom 5:12-21.

### 3.2 Some Important Preliminary Matters in 4 Ezra

#### 3.2.1 Name/Authorship

Like many Jewish apocalyptic texts written around the turn of the Common Era, 4 Ezra is a pseudonymous work. It was written by an anonymous Jew who was reflecting on the theological and socio-political implications of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple. The text is pseudonymously attributed to a biblical figure, Ezra, a scribe of the early postexilic period who was at the vanguard of the return of the Torah to Jerusalem. An important question to consider is why the author attributed this text to Ezra rather than to another biblical figure. This question arises first of all because of the obvious



disparity between the character of the canonical and pseudepigraphic Ezra.<sup>11</sup> Many scholars have observed that the pseudepigraphic Ezra is reminiscent of the biblical Job rather than the canonical Ezra.<sup>12</sup> The second challenge in attributing the work to the biblical Ezra, according to Juan Widow, is that the portrait of the pseudepigraphic Ezra as an apocalyptic seer and a mediator of divine revelation does not match the portfolio of the biblical Ezra, a reputed traditional scribe and teacher of the Torah.<sup>13</sup> These points make the new Ezra (4 Ezra) somewhat irreconcilable with the biblical (old) Ezra.

It is important to note that, for the author to model his protagonist on the figure of the biblical Ezra, the figure of Ezra must support the author's project. Theodore Bergren argues that the major reason why the author chose the biblical Ezra as his protagonist is because of the important role Ezra played in the reconstruction or restoration of Judaism through renewal of the law after the Babylonian exile.<sup>14</sup> For the first century Jewish audience who was dealing with the trauma of the destruction of the 67-70s, the figure of Ezra "was a reminder that even in the wake of a dire national catastrophe such as the destruction of the Second Temple, God's people can, and will rebound to a state of favor and salvation such as existed before the catastrophe."<sup>15</sup>

In a manner reminiscent of the Book of Daniel where the protagonist is identified by two names, Daniel and Belteshazzar, Ezra the protagonist of 4 Ezra is also identified

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<sup>11</sup> John J. Collins, "Enoch and Ezra," in *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction after the Fall*, ed. Matthias Henze and Gabriele Boccaccini, JSJSup 164 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 83–97; Hindy Najman, "Traditionary Processes and Textual Unity in 4 Ezra," in *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction after the Fall*, ed. Matthias Henze and Gabriele Boccaccini, JSJSup 164 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 99–117; Juan Carlos Ossandón Widow, *The Origins of the Canon of the Hebrew Bible: An Analysis of Josephus and 4 Ezra*, JSJSup 186 (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 162–66; Robert A. Kraft, *Exploring the Scripturesque: Jewish Texts and Their Christian Contexts*, JSJSup 137 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 129–47.

<sup>12</sup> Michael A. Knibb, "Apocalyptic and Wisdom in 4 Ezra," *JSJ* 13 (1982): 56–74; Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra*, 102.

<sup>13</sup> Widow, *The Origins of the Canon of the Hebrew Bible*, 162–68.

<sup>14</sup> Theodore A. Bergren, "Ezra and Nehemiah Square off in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," in *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible*, ed. Michael E. Stone and Theodore A. Bergren (Harrisburg, PA.: Trinity, 1998), 360.

<sup>15</sup> Bergren, "Ezra and Nehemiah Square off in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," 360.

by another name, Salathiel (4 Ezra 3:1)<sup>16</sup> The name occurs once and is never mentioned in the rest of the text. Salathiel appears in 1 Chr 3:17-19 as the son of king Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) who was taken as captive to Babylon in 597. In Ezra 3:2, Neh 12:1, and Hag 1:1, 2:2, Salathiel is identified as the father of Zerubbabel — a Judean governor who led the reconstruction of the Second Temple. Salathiel's pedigree roots him to the Davidic royal family (cf. 1 Esd 5:5; Luke 3:27-33; Matt 1:3-12). As the author makes no further reference to his name in the rest of the text, the reason why it was mentioned at all and why it was identified with Ezra remains a hard nut to crack. Various explanations have been suggested.<sup>17</sup> Given the fact that none of these views has proven a sufficient explanation, some scholars have chosen to accept the identification as a conundrum or “mystery” too difficult to resolve.<sup>18</sup>

I think that there is a political dimension to Salathiel's identification with Ezra that has remained underexplored. First, since Salathiel is a figure that is consistently linked to the Davidic dynasty, it is possible that the author intentionally refers to Salathiel in 4 Ezra 3:1 in order to link Ezra with the hope of the restoration of not just of Judaism but, even

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<sup>16</sup> Salathiel is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew name שְׁאֲלִיִּאל (Shealtiel) which means, “I asked God.” There are scholars who see the author's motivation in using the name Salathiel (Shealtiel) in relation to this etymological meaning which certainly captures the questioning character of Ezra in the dialogue. See Bruce W. Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant: A Comparison of 4 Ezra and Romans 1-11* (Sheffield: JSOT, 1991), 51; W.O.E Oesterley, *II Esdras (The Ezra Apocalypse)* (London: Methuen & Co., 1933), xiv; Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra: A Commentary on the Book of Fourth Ezra*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 56.

<sup>17</sup> For Source Critics, the names “Salathiel” and “Ezra” are indication that the author used independent sources—“Salathiel,” and “Ezra” sources. See Richard Kabisch, *Das vierte Buch Esra auf seine Quellen untersucht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1889), 6–10; G.H. Box, *The Ezra-Apocalypse* (London: Pitman, 1912), xxii; F.C. Burkitt, *Jewish and Christian Apocalypse* (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), 14. This view has run out of favor as little has emerged in subsequent source criticism to support it. Today, most scholars argue in favor of the unity of the text, as we shall see below. There are also scholars who see the close identification between Ezra and Salathiel as the author's device for resolving the chronological problem between the biblical Ezra and the new Ezra. See R. J. Coggins and Michael A. Knibb, *The First and Second Books of Esdras*, CBC (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 115–16. Collins too tends to support the above position that the identification of Ezra with Salathiel was actually an attempt to resolve a chronological problem in the text. See John J. Collins, *Apocalypse, Prophecy, and Pseudepigraphy: On Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 143.

<sup>18</sup> Michael E. Stone, “The Metamorphosis of Ezra: Jewish Apocalypse and Medieval Vision,” *JTS* 33 (1982): 3; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 197.

more, of Israel's political sovereignty. The first textual support for this reading is found in the fifth and six visions (4 Ezra 11-13), where Ezra sees the vision of a Davidic Messiah. In these visions, we are told that the Messiah of David not only destroys the eagle, a symbol of Rome, the archenemy of Israel, but also liberates and restores God's people. In these passages, the defeat of Rome necessarily implies the establishment of the Davidic messianic kingdom. While Ezra never functioned as the Messiah himself in 4 Ezra, he might be called the rightful precursor for the Messiah. Ezra's visions and messages present hope for a Davidic Messiah for the post-70 Jewish community. Another textual support is found in 4 Ezra 14 where Ezra functions as the new Moses the lawgiver.<sup>19</sup> The divine law that Ezra embodies represents hope for a glorious future when the people of God will be completely delivered from their present predicament of Roman imperial domination. Ezra thereby models the hope of rebuilding a nation (a Davidic kingdom) through fidelity to the Torah. If this linkage is correctly understood, then the identification of Ezra with Salathiel at the beginning of the chapter would no longer be considered artificial or arbitrary but an important key that binds the two sections together.

### 3.2.2 Date and Provenance of 4 Ezra

Although the book is set in the thirtieth year after the destruction of the first temple (4 Ezra 3:1), Collins warns that neither the date nor the provenance should be taken literally.<sup>20</sup> Today, many agree that 4 Ezra was written a few decades after the destruction of the Second Temple, probably between the late first century or early second century CE. Collins dates the book to the reign of Domitian (81–96 CE).<sup>21</sup> The dating is largely based on evidence from the Eagle Vision of 11:1–12:34. Most scholars identify the three heads

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<sup>19</sup> On Ezra as a second Moses and also on Ezra as an emotional character, see Angela Kim Harkins, "The Pro-Social Role of Grief in Ezra's Penitential Prayer," *BibInt* 24 (2016): 482–90.

<sup>20</sup> Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 242.

<sup>21</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 10.

of the Eagle as the Flavians—Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, while the twelve wings represent the various emperors from Caesar to Domitian.<sup>22</sup>

The Babylonian setting of the text is a coded reference for Rome. According to Frederick Murphy, the Babylonian experience was so traumatic for the Jews that it became a paradigm for Roman catastrophe, which was equally traumatic.<sup>23</sup> So, 4 Ezra explores the Roman destruction of Jerusalem through reflection on the Babylonian destruction. By equating Rome with Babylon, the author offers a hope of restoration for the audience since the first destruction was also followed by a restoration. While Babylon provides a fictional narrative setting of the text, there is a consensus that 4 Ezra was written in Judea.

### 3.2.3 The Language of 4 Ezra

It is generally agreed that the original language of 4 Ezra was Hebrew but was later translated into Greek in the second century CE.<sup>24</sup> Neither the Hebrew original nor the Greek version has survived. What survived are various translations into other languages, such as Latin, Syriac, Ethiopic, Georgian, Armenian, Coptic, and two independent Arabic versions. Among these later versions, the Latin version is considered the oldest, and the most important extant manuscript of 4 Ezra. The English translations of 4 Ezra provided in this chapter are taken from the translations offered by Michael Stone and Matthias Henze,<sup>25</sup> as well as the translation provided in NRSV.

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<sup>22</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 10–12; Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 242. See Lorenzo DiTommaso, “Dating the Eagle Vision of 4 Ezra: A New Look at an Old Theory,” *JSP* 20 (1999): 3–38 who suggests that the symbolism in the Eagle vision fits the events of the Severans than the Flavians and so dates 4 Ezra to 218 CE. n

<sup>23</sup> Frederick J. Murphy, *Apocalypticism in the Bible and Its World: A Comprehensive Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 142.

<sup>24</sup> Jacob M. Myers, *I and II Esdras*, AB 42 (New York: Doubleday, 1974), 113–19, 129–31; Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 9–10.

<sup>25</sup> Michael E. Stone and Matthias Henze, *4 Ezra and 2 Baruch: Translations, Introductions, and Notes* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013).

### 3.2.4 Literary Unity

Fourth Ezra consists of seven visions. The first three are dialogues between Ezra and Uriel, his angelic interlocutor (4 Ezra 3:1-5:20; 5:21-6:34; 6:35-9:25). The three dialogues revolve around the questions of theodicy and soteriology. The next three visions are apocalyptic visions about the desolation and rebuilding of Zion (9:26-10:59), the fate of Babylon (Rome) (11:1-12:52), and the advent of the Messiah (13:1-58). The seventh and last vision relates Ezra's reception and transmission of the revelation of the Torah and seventy secret books. The major difficulty in reading 4 Ezra is how to make sense of its literary unity. For instance, in the dialogues (the first three visions), Ezra and Uriel appear to take different positions on the fundamental theological issues raised in the text, and their differences remain largely unresolved.

Secondly, there is the challenge of where to locate the voice of the author within the text. Does the author speak through Ezra or Uriel? Does he speak through both? Or is the author's view different from any expressed by either Uriel or Ezra? The obvious disparity in the character of Ezra in the dialogues and in the visions is another major problem that confronts readers. In the dialogue, Ezra is portrayed as a distressed skeptic who wrestles with what he perceives to be God's injustice (4 Ezra 3:1-36; 5:21-30; 6:38-59). But in the visions, Ezra undergoes a complete transformation and becomes more submissive and more understanding of God's mysterious ways in the world. The transformed Ezra stands before God in reverent fear (4 Ezra 10:25-37; 12:3-9; 13:13-20), and raises his voice in praise of God's justice (4 Ezra 13:57-58).<sup>26</sup> Another problem regarding the literary unity of 4 Ezra is that the last episode (4 Ezra 14) is clearly different from the rest of the book. Here, God becomes the dominant speaker, while Ezra became a

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<sup>26</sup> Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 21.

new Moses, a community leader, and a teacher of the law. All of these factors have caused scholars to question the unity of the text.

The earliest solution to the literary unity of 4 Ezra was undertaken by source critics of the nineteenth and twentieth century, championed by Richard Kabisch and G. H. Box. According to source criticism, the disparities in 4 Ezra are due to different sources that the author welded together. In their study of 4 Ezra's eschatology, source critics argue that the author combined two conflicting sources that were at variance with each other, namely a particularistic/nationalistic theology with its messianic eschatology, and a universalistic theology with a cosmic eschatology. They argue that the combination of these divergent eschatological views in 4 Ezra produced irresolvable inconsistencies.<sup>27</sup> A major difficulty with source criticism is that it fails to explain why the final editor should retain these conflicting worldviews in his work without any effort to reconcile them. Michael Stone's incisive observation that logical consistency is not always to be expected of apocalyptic texts,<sup>28</sup> coupled with the fact that 4 Ezra does exhibit a well-structured artistry, has convinced many to abandon the multiple source theory and accept the text as the work of a single author.

Today, two major solutions: the psychological and the theological perspectives, have become popular. The first, the theological approach—which was developed first by

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<sup>27</sup> Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 22; Mark Elliott, *The Survivors of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 561.

<sup>28</sup>For a critical evaluation of source-critical interpretation of 4 Ezra, see Michael E. Stone, "Coherence and Inconsistency in the Apocalypse: The Case of 'The End' in 4 Ezra," *JBL* 102 (1983): 229–43; Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 204–7. In the essay on "Coherency and Inconsistency," Stone addresses the question of "coherence" and "inconsistency" in 4 Ezra which was the major factors for the different sources hypothesis. Stone explains that consistency is not an inherent property of apocalyptic texts. He reminds scholars that "the documents of apocalyptic literature are religious compositions of a non-Aristotelian type, and consequently the application of a criterion of rigid logical consistency within them is not appropriate." Stone, "Coherence and Inconsistency in the Apocalypse: The Case of 'The End' in 4 Ezra," 242. Longenecker affirms, Stone's essay shows that "inconsistencies in 4 Ezra are not an embarrassment to the quality of the text, nor are they necessarily due to the existence of underlying sources. Instead, they are the natural result of variations in the context or subject matter." Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 24. Another problem that Stone finds in source critical interpretation of 4 Ezra is the tendency to conclude that a text is incoherent because it fails to meet the scholar's logical reasoning.

Ergon Brandenburger, and later propagated by Wolfgang Harnisch—argues that the conflicting ideas in 4 Ezra reflect continuing conflicting theological debate among first century Jews. For these scholars, the dialogue is therefore seen as an intra-Jewish debate over theological issues in which Uriel represents the voice of the author while Ezra represents a heretical/gnostic voice.<sup>29</sup> A. P. Hayman has questioned why the author of 4 Ezra should choose “the venerable Ezra, the great scribe, restorer of the Law, and the founder of the Great Synagogue as the mouthpiece of a heretical viewpoint.”<sup>30</sup> First of all, Hayman argues that there is nothing heretical or gnostic in Ezra’s views. For him, the views expressed by Ezra fit perfectly well within the long tradition of Jewish orthodoxy.<sup>31</sup> Secondly, Hayman points out that there is some overlap between the views expressed by Ezra and those expressed by Uriel. As such, it makes no sense to think that Ezra and Uriel represent two radically opposed theological views.

Karina Hogan has proposed what might be considered a modified view of this approach. Hogan explains that Ezra and Uriel represent two competing theological schools of thought: (a) the covenantal wisdom (found for instance in Sirach and Baruch) that exhibits a strong ethnocentrism and, (b) the eschatological wisdom (found in 4QInstruction). These two schools of thought are juxtaposed with each other in the dialogues in order to reveal the inadequacy of both, as neither was helpful for coping with the predicament of the Jewish community in the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem to Rome.<sup>32</sup> Hogan maintains that neither Ezra nor Uriel, nor a conflation of their points of view, represent the author’s voice.<sup>33</sup> For Hogan, the problem of theodicy in the dialogues finds its solution only in the apocalyptic visions which Hogan refers to as a third theology.

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<sup>29</sup> Lydia Gore-Jones, “The Unity and Coherence of 4 Ezra: Crisis, Response, and Authorial Intention,” *JSJ* 47 (2016): 214.

<sup>30</sup> A.P. Hayman, “The Problem of Pseudonymity in the Ezra Apocalypse,” *JSJ* 6.1 (1975): 50.

<sup>31</sup> Hayman, “The Problem of Pseudonymity in the Ezra Apocalypse,” 52.

<sup>32</sup> Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra*, 37.

<sup>33</sup> Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra*, 37.

The solution offered by 4 Ezra to the wisdom debate of his time is not an intellectual one but rather an apocalyptic one, “an illustration of the power of mystic symbolism to restore faith.”<sup>34</sup> It is easy to see Hogan's creative contribution in solving the problem of the literary unity of 4 Ezra. However, as Henze points out, Hogan's strict division of 4 Ezra into exclusive “theologies” raises some important methodological questions. According to Henze, it is difficult to assume that behind each text in Second Temple Judaism lurks a distinct “school of thought” as Hogan would claim.<sup>35</sup>

A third solution to the problem of disparity between the two major parts of 4 Ezra is the internal conflict or psychological model first proposed by Hermann Gunkel and later developed by Michael Stone. Gunkel defends the single authorship of 4 Ezra and argues that the textual tension or disparities in the various parts of 4 Ezra reflect the author's conflicted state of mind (complex personality) due to the destruction of Jerusalem which created emotional vicissitudes for the Jewish community.<sup>36</sup> According to Gunkel, the author identifies with the characters of Ezra and Uriel.<sup>37</sup> Ezra represents the author's skeptic mind regarding God's justice, while Uriel represents the author's faith in God despite all odds. Michael Stone adopts Gunkel's thesis but slightly modifies it. Stone's principle assumption is that 4 Ezra is not a theological debate external to the author, but a reflection of the author's spiritual pilgrimage from a conflicted state of mind (as reflected in the dialogue) to a more confident and trustful state, through religious experience (as reflected in the visions).

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<sup>34</sup> Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra*, 229.

<sup>35</sup> Matthias Henze, “Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra: Wisdom Debate and Apocalyptic Solutions: A Review Article,” *JR* 90.1 (2010): 66.

<sup>36</sup> Hermann Gunkel, “Review of Kabisch,” *TLZ* 16.1 (1891): 7, 10; Hermann Gunkel, “Das Vierte Buch Esra,” in *Die Apokryphen Und Pseudepigraphen Des Alten Testaments*, ed. E. Kautzsch (Tübingen: Mohr, 1900), 331–401.

<sup>37</sup> Gunkel, “Das Vierte Buch Esra,” 335–39.



More recently, Hindy Najman offers a refreshing new reading of 4 Ezra in her book, *Losing the Temple and Recovering the Future*. Najman looks at the textual unity of 4 Ezra through a constellation of four elements: (a) locus; (b) figure; (c) interpretation; and (d) the renewal of hope. Najman's purpose is to use 4 Ezra as a case study to illustrate a literary tendency among Second Temple known as "revelation inflected by destruction,"<sup>38</sup> a concept Najman uses to demonstrate the persistence of divine encounter through angelic mediation, dreams, visions, and the act of interpretation of sacred texts, despite the common assumption of the cessation of prophecy in the postexilic and Second Temple period, especially in the face of the destruction of the Second Temple.

Building on the work of Najman, Ari Mermelstein, in *Creation, Covenant, and the Beginnings of Judaism: Reconceiving Historical Time in the Second Temple Period*,<sup>39</sup> reads 4 Ezra as a text that seeks to counter a prevalent view of history and time among post-exilic Jews which sees the exile as a temporal rupture. Mermelstein argues that, for many post-exilic Jews, the tragic destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE and the subsequent exile of the Jews represents a breach in the covenant and as a temporal rupture.<sup>40</sup> This feeling of temporal rupture was exacerbated by the destruction of the Second Temple. So, for many Jews, the challenge was how to restore temporal continuity between the present and the past. Mermelstein argues that one of the strategies deployed by some Jews was to place the Sinai covenant in the context of creation in order to accentuate the continuity of God's faithfulness. This strategy maintains that the exile does not represent a break or a rupture in the covenant.<sup>41</sup> Mermelstein finds this strategy in 4

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<sup>38</sup> Hindy Najman, *Losing the Temple and Recovering the Future: An Analysis of 4 Ezra* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 25. See also Hindy Najman, "The Inheritance of Prophecy in Apocalypse.," in *The Oxford Handbook of Apocalyptic Literature*, ed. John J. Collins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 36–51.

<sup>39</sup> Ari Mermelstein, *Creation, Covenant, and the Beginnings of Judaism: Reconceiving Historical Time in the Second Temple Period*, JSJSup 164 (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 154–79.

<sup>40</sup> Mermelstein, *Creation, Covenant, and the Beginnings of Judaism*, 1.

<sup>41</sup> Mermelstein, *Creation, Covenant, and the Beginnings of Judaism*, 11–13.

Ezra, especially in the second dialogue where the author locates Israel's election at creation. By situating 4 Ezra within the context of the destruction of the First Temple, the author makes the case that just as the destruction of the First Temple did not constitute a "temporal rupture," so also their current crisis (the destruction of the Second Temple), does not constitute a "temporal rupture," rather it is one of the "illustrations of the general principle of sin and punishment through which God governs humanity in general."<sup>42</sup>

This chapter adopts the position that sees 4 Ezra as the work of a single author who made use of other existing traditions, either oral or written, in the composition of the text.<sup>43</sup> While I accept the fact that the external theological debate model and the internal conflict (psychological) model discussed above have contributed immensely to our understanding of the text of 4 Ezra, I do not approach 4 Ezra from either of these perspectives. Rather, I read 4 Ezra as a text that addresses the plight of the Jewish community under Roman imperial domination in light of God's overarching divine plan, using the literary device of periodization and the motif of the two ages.

### 3.2.5 The Social Context of 4 Ezra

Since 4 Ezra is one of the Jewish responses to the Jewish Revolt of 66-70 CE, it is important to review some of the factors that led to the Jewish war and its impact on Jews a few decades later, when 4 Ezra was written. Unfortunately, there is no consensus among scholars on what actually caused the Jewish revolt. Titus Flavius Josephus was the first to offer a detailed account of the Jewish revolt against the Romans in his seven-volume work, *The Jewish War*. As a result, much of what is known today concerning this war comes from Josephus. From Josephus, we learn that the war was triggered by three major factors:

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<sup>42</sup> Mermelstein, *Creation, Covenant, and the Beginnings of Judaism*, 178.

<sup>43</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 21-22.

(a) social disturbances in Caesarea; (b) Gessius Florus's (the Roman Procurator of Judea, 64-66 CE) appropriation of the 17 talents of gold from the Temple treasure; and (c) the interruption of the daily sacrifice for the Roman emperor in Jerusalem.<sup>44</sup> Elsewhere, Josephus also admits that other factors, such as the killing of the Roman garrison in Herod's palace and the massacre of both Jews and non-Jews in the Hellenistic cities in Palestine, accelerated the war.<sup>45</sup> Throughout his account, Josephus denies that Rome was responsible for the war and its tragic consequences. In Josephus's account, the Jews were to be blamed for the war: "since the blame lay with no foreign nation... but with the Jews themselves."<sup>46</sup> In another account Josephus wrote that the country "owed its ruin to civil strife" within the Jewish community,<sup>47</sup> an indictment that Josephus makes more explicit in another context: "the flames however, owed their origin and cause to God's own people."<sup>48</sup> For Josephus the Jews themselves, particularly the Jewish rebels (members of the Fourth Philosophy, and the *Sicarii*), whom Josephus often describe as robbers and imposters, were to be blamed for inciting the war and its tragic result.<sup>49</sup>

Besides blaming his own Jewish people for the war, Josephus also thinks that God willed the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple because of the sins and infidelity of the Jews: "God has indeed long since condemned the Temple to the flames, and the fated day arrived in the cycle of time."<sup>50</sup> As such, the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple were just punishment for the sins of the Jews. Rome only served as the divine instrument to carry out the divine plan. Not only did Josephus see Rome as God's instrument of judgment against the Jews, he also sees Roman rule as having been sanctioned and blessed

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<sup>44</sup> Josephus, J.W. 2. 284-296, 305-308, 409-410 (Thackeray, LCL).

<sup>45</sup> Josephus, Vita 24b-27.

<sup>46</sup> Josephus, J.W. 1.2; 5:257; 6.251 (Thackeray, LCL).

<sup>47</sup> Josephus, J.W. 1.10 (Thackeray, LCL)

<sup>48</sup> Josephus, J.W. 6.251 (Thackeray, LCL)

<sup>49</sup> Josephus, J.W. 1:10, 27; 7.253-255; Ant. 18.1-10, 23-25.

<sup>50</sup> Josephus, J.W. 6:250 (Thackeray, LCL)

by God. According to him, “without God’s help so vast an empire could never have been built up.”<sup>51</sup> Consequently, Josephus thinks that since God has authorized the Roman rule and favored it, in fighting against Rome, the Jews unwittingly took up arms against God; hence their defeat.<sup>52</sup>

Underlying Josephus’s view of the Roman Empire, especially in light of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, is the Roman imperial ideological metanarrative of *imperium sine fine* (an “empire without end”), to which Josephus subscribed to in order to save his life from the wrath of Rome. Rome indoctrinates her subjects that Roman rule would be timeless, because it had been ordained and endorsed by the gods. Peter Brunt notes that “what was most novel in the Roman attitude to their empire was the belief that it was universal and willed by the gods.”<sup>53</sup> This view finds explicit articulation in the work of the Roman poet Virgil, the *Aeneid*, a poem that celebrates the founding of the Roman Empire. In the *Aeneid*, Virgil declares that Rome has been chosen by the gods to “rule without end.” Virgil was unapologetic in his political propaganda of a universal and infinite Roman rule, as can be seen in Book 1 where Jupiter promises the descendants of Romulus a timeless empire: “For these I set neither bounds nor periods of empire; dominion without end have I bestowed” (*his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono: imperium sine fine dedi*).<sup>54</sup> What Virgil projects in his poem is a boundless Roman Empire without temporal and spatial limit. The same view with more intensity is also expressed in the work of a second century poet, Silius Italicus. Envisioning the perpetuity of the Roman Empire, the poet writes, “so long as sea-monsters shall swim the deep and stars shine in the sky and the sun rise on the Indian shore, Rome shall rule, and there shall be no end to

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<sup>51</sup> Josephus, J.W. 2. 390 (Thackeray, LCL).

<sup>52</sup> Josephus, J.W. 5.378.

<sup>53</sup> Peter A. Brunt, “Laus Imperii,” in *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA.: Trinity, 1997), 25.

<sup>54</sup> Virgil, *Aen.* 1.279 (Fairclough, LCL)

her rule throughout the ages” (*hic regna et nullae regnis per saecula metae*).<sup>55</sup> In the mind of these writers, Roman rule has a boundless, universal, and timeless quality.

On the contrary, newer studies show that it was through conquest, exploitation, annexation, expansion, and consolidation that Augustus and his successors accomplished this Roman ideological agenda.<sup>56</sup> These studies have offered different evaluations of the interaction between imperial Rome and her subjects, particularly Judea, locating the reasons for the Jewish revolt against Rome mainly in the socio-economic condition of Judea,<sup>57</sup> the administrative incompetence of the Roman prefects and procurators,<sup>58</sup> and the Judean quest for political independence.<sup>59</sup> From these studies, we learn that the Jews resisted an imperial rule they perceived as economically and politically oppressive and ungodly, a major factor that bred Jewish discontent and led to the eventual Jewish revolt. That war culminated with the deaths of many Jews, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the burning of the Second Temple by Titus Flavius Vespasianus and his army during the reign of his father Caesar Vespasianus Augustus. This is the socio-historical context that informed the production of 4 Ezra. This is particularly evident in 4 Ezra 10:19-24, where the seer visualizes some aspects of the tragedy. The text is generally perceived as a

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<sup>55</sup> Silius, *Pun.* 175-179 (Duff, LCL.).

<sup>56</sup> Klaus Wengst, *Pax Romana: And the Peace of Jesus Christ*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987); Richard A. Horsley and John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets & Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985); Richard J. Cassidy, *Society and Politics in the Acts of the Apostles* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1987); Bart D. Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (Oxford: Oxford University press, 1999); Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide*, Abingdon Essential Guides (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2006).

<sup>57</sup> Frank M. Loewenberg, *From Charity To Social Justice* (London: Transaction, 2001), 51–70; Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets & Messiahs*, 48–59; Richard A. Horsley, “Popular Prophetic Movements at the Time of Jesus: Their Principal Features and Social Origins,” *JSNT* 8.26 (1986): 18–22; S. Applebaum, “Economic Life in Palestine,” in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, ed. Menahem Stern and Shmuel Safrai (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1976), 661–64.

<sup>58</sup> E. M. Smallwood, *The Jews under Roman Rule: From Pompey to Diocletian* (Leiden: Brill, 1976), 256–57; M. Stern, “The Herodian Dynasty and the Province of Judea at the End of the Herodian Period,” in *The Herodian Period*, ed. Michael Avi-Yonah, *WHJP* 7 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1975), 150–61.

<sup>59</sup> Richard A. Horsley, “Popular Messianic Movements Around the Time of Jesus,” *CBQ* 46 (1984): 471–95; Anthony J. Tomasino, *Judaism before Jesus: The Ideas and Events That Shaped the New Testament World* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003), 288–91; Shaye J.D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 23–24.

theological response to this catastrophic national experience. Understanding this social context of 4 Ezra enables us to appreciate the theological and political critique of imperial domination that the text makes.

The author's response serves to counter Josephus's and other pro-Roman perspectives. *Contra* Josephus, 4 Ezra begins by questioning the divine justice that allows the vandalization of Jerusalem and its temple by the Roman military. The author challenges the view that "Israel has sinned" justifies and validates the massacre of the Jews, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, as well as the looting of its sacred objects (4 Ezra 3:28-30). In the author's own evaluation, Israel's sin is not commensurate with that of the Romans (4 Ezra 3:31, 34-36). Consequently, the author protests the destruction of Jerusalem, not because of Israel's righteousness, but because the so-called agents of God's punishment are morally worse than Israel. *Contra* Virgil and other imperial writers, the author challenges the ideological claim of Rome's *imperium sine fine* by declaring that its end is imminent. In 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34, the author sees Rome as the fourth evil empire of the Book of Daniel whose end has already been determined by God. Indeed, the fifth and sixth visions present a damning assessment of the Roman Empire. Both visions predict the end of the oppressive Roman Empire through God's agent, the Messiah, who will judge the wicked Roman rulers, liberate God's people from their oppression, restore the lost tribes of Israel, and inaugurate a blessed and glorious new age for Israel. As noted by Stone, the vision of a restored Jerusalem is the pivot on which the whole book turns.<sup>60</sup> Understanding this social context of 4 Ezra enables us to appreciate the theological and political critique of imperial domination that the text makes.

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<sup>60</sup> Michael E. Stone, "Reactions to Destructions of the Second Temple: Theology, Perception and Conversion," *JSJ* 12.2 (1981): 203.

### 3.3 Periodization of History: An Exegetical Analysis of 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34

In this section we will engage in a textual analysis of 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34. Here we explore how Roman domination and oppression of the Jews in the first century CE provides the background for the author's periodization of history. The author carried out his periodization of history by using a similar four-kingdom schema as found in the Book of Daniel. By means of the periodization of history, the author articulates a deterministic, linear, and theological understanding of history, one in which human history has a terminus point. In 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34, this end is imminent. The eschatology which the author imagines will begin with the arrival of the Messiah (represented by the lion), who will not only judge the arrogant Roman Empire (the eagle) (4 Ezra 12:32) and annihilate it (4 Ezra 12:33), but also rebuild Zion and liberate the remnant of Israel (4 Ezra 12:32-34). In this way, the author assures his audience that their current plight is still within God's purview. God has not abandoned his people. In fact, the text offers hope of an imminent messianic deliverance from Rome. This section does not present a detailed textual analysis of these two chapters. Rather, it engages in an exegesis concerned with showing the overall meaning and function of periodization of history in 4 Ezra.

#### 3.3.1 The Literary Context of 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34

The vision of the eagle and the lion in 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34 comes immediately after the vision of the mourning woman who is transformed into a magnificent and glorious city, a vision that Uriel interprets as the new Zion (4 Ezra 9:26-10:58). The vision of the transformed woman ends with God telling Ezra that God will reveal to him what God "will do to those who dwell on earth in the last days" (4 Ezra 10:58-59). Having undergone a transformation and a change of perspective in episode four, Ezra is privileged with revelatory insights about current and future events. Fourth Ezra 11:1-12:34 (the vision of

an eagle and a lion) is the first of the two visions that God shows to Ezra. In 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34, Ezra sees a vision of a monstrous multi-headed and multi-winged eagle that emerges from the sea and rules the whole world with great oppression. Then, a lion-like creature who speaks for the Most High rebukes the eagle and passes judgement on it for its wickedness. The eagle bursts into flames and is consumed.

In Uriel's interpretation, the eagle, which is identified as the fourth beast of Daniel's four-kingdom scheme, now stands for Rome, and its final flaming destruction represents the collapse of the Roman Empire at the end of time.<sup>61</sup> The lion who rebukes the eagle is identified as the Messiah. The interpretation of the vision connects it to the fourth beast of Daniel 7. The pericope is followed by the vision of the Man from the Sea (4 Ezra 13). Both visions (the eagle and the man from the sea) predict the destruction of Rome, along with all the wicked. Both relate the inauguration of the messianic age through a Davidic Messiah and the rewarding of God's people who have maintained faithfulness. Stone divides the pericope into three parts: (a) the vision of the eagle (4 Ezra 11:1-35); (b) a judgement scene (4 Ezra 11:36-12:3); and (c) the interpretation of the vision (4 Ezra 12:4-39).

### 3.3.2 Textual Analysis of 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34

The pericope opens with Ezra recounting his dream: "there came up from the sea an eagle that had twelve wings and three heads" (*et ecce ascendebat de mari acuila*; 11:1). As Ezra stares at the eagle, "the eagle spreads his wings over all the earth, and all the winds of heaven blew upon him, and the clouds were gathered about him" (11:2). This initial description of the origin of the eagle from the sea, as well as the reference to "the winds of heaven," immediately takes the reader to Daniel 7 where similar imagery occurred.

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<sup>61</sup> Marius Reiser, *Jesus and Judgment: The Eschatological Proclamation in Its Jewish Context*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 120.



Frisch points out notable differences between the two accounts in their opening verses. According to him, in Daniel 7:1, “the four winds of the heaven stirred up the great sea” in order to produce the four beasts ... while in 4 Ezra 11:1, the eagle “came up from the sea” by itself. Secondly, in Daniel 7, the cosmic winds control nature, while in 4 Ezra 11, the eagle controls the elements.<sup>62</sup>

Stone interprets the act of the spreading of wings as a symbolic expression of rulership. “The idea is that the eagle casts the shadow of its rule over the whole earth.”<sup>63</sup> Verses 5 and 6 support Stone’s interpretation in that the eagle is said “to reign over the earth and over those who dwell in it” (11:5), “and I saw how all things under heaven were subjected to him” (11:6a). The language of “reigning” and “wielding power” dominates verses 12-21. The intimidating, terrorizing nature of the eagle’s reign is also intimated in 6b: “no one spoke against him, not even one creature that was on the earth.”<sup>64</sup> This vision confirms the universal or global scope of the Roman kingdom (11:2, 5-6, 12, 16, 32, 34, 40-41, 46; 12:3).

In both Daniel and 4 Ezra, the activities of the fourth beast are initiated without a commanding voice.<sup>65</sup> The eagle of 4 Ezra reflects this autonomy from the outset. It rises up from the sea without the help of any external force and begins its oppressive rule. In verses 3-11 the author provides further information about the eagle: (1) the eagle has twelve wings, eight winglets, and three heads. Thus, the author schematizes the entire

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<sup>62</sup> Alexandria Frisch, *The Danielic Discourse on Empire in Second Temple Literature*, JSJSup 176 (Boston: Brill, 2017), 193–94.

<sup>63</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 349.

<sup>64</sup> The idea that Rome ruled through intimidation and conquest has been collaborated in many studies. For further studies on Roman imperial rule see Peter Sarris, *Empires of Faith: The Fall of Rome to the Rise of Islam, 500-700* (Oxford: University Press, 2011), 5–7; Allen M. Ward, Fritz M. Heichelheim, and Cedric A. Yeo, *A History of the Roman People* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 129–31; Bruce W. Longenecker, “Peace, Prosperity, and Propaganda: Advertisement and Reality in the Early Roman Empire,” in *An Introduction to Empire in the New Testament*, ed. Adam Winn (Atlanta: SBL, 2016), 41-42.

<sup>65</sup> Note that in Daniel 7, the activities of the first three beasts are commanded by an unidentified passive voice. In fact, Daniel 7:6 states explicitly that “dominion was given” to the third beast. Sharon Pace, *Daniel*, SHBC 17 (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 233–35.

Roman imperial history. Out of his winds emerge two opposing wings but they become small (11:3); of the three heads, the middle head is said to be greater than the other two (11:4). The three heads are said to be at “rest” even as the eagle is soaring, and exert great influence over all the earth with no one opposing him (11:4-6). As Ezra stares, a voice speaks from the middle of the eagle’s body to the heads and wings saying, “do not all watch at the same time; let each sleep in his own place, and watch in turn; let the heads be reserved for the last” (11:8-10). Knibb comments that the sound comes not from the head but from the middle of the body, “because the Roman Empire itself is speaking, and not one of the emperors.”<sup>66</sup> But the important point here is that the empire’s plans for its self-preservation or maintenance come from within it, not from outside.<sup>67</sup> And the plan is that the heads of the eagle are preserved for the very end of the eagle kingdom.

Like the kingdom of the four beasts of Daniel, the eagle’s reign is temporary. The temporality is first indicated in 4 Ezra 11:12-22, where the eight wings of the eagle rule for a period of time and then disappear. None of the kingdoms of the wings appears to have had a natural end; rather, they manipulate and eliminate one another in order to be in power. This is made explicit in verse 11, where the wings are described as “opposing wings.” According to the text, the second wing ruled longer than the first before vanishing (11:12-14). And while the second wing was still reigning, a voice declares that no other will rule as long as the second wing does, or even half as long (11:15–17). The reign of the wings follows the same pattern of “rise” and “fall”: “They wielded power one after another and then were never seen again” (11:19). In 4 Ezra 11:20-22 the author offers a summary of the first part of the dream, stating that of the wings that rose up, there were some that ruled but disappeared suddenly, while others did not rule at all (11:20–21). By

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<sup>66</sup> Coggins and Knibb, *The First and Second Books of Esdras*, 240.

<sup>67</sup> Frisch, *The Danielic Discourse on Empire in Second Temple Literature*, 197.

the time we get to verse 22, we have learned that all twelve wings and two winglets have disappeared (11:22). What remains now are the three heads that are at rest and six winglets (11:23).

Of the six little wings, two winglets separate from the rest and take up a position under the head on the right, but they too disappear (211:4-27). The other four winglets later conspire to hijack political power (11:25). The first winglet rules but immediately disappears (11:26). The same happens with the second (11:27). As the two remaining winglets are planning to rule together, the middle head awakes and joins the other two heads and they devour the winglets (11:28-30). Then the middle head rules the earth with great power and oppression, but then also disappears like the other ones that ruled before it (11:31-33). The two heads that remain rule over the earth until the right head devours the left head (11:34-35).

After this, Ezra sees a creature like a lion appear from the forest, and the lion rebuked the eagle in a manner echoing Jewish prophetic decrees: “Listen and I will speak to you. The Most High says to you: Are you not the one that remains of the four beasts which I had made to reign in my world, so that the end of the times might come through them?” (11:38-39). By using the divine title “Most High” for God here, the author reaffirms God’s sovereignty over Roman imperial power (the eagle). Like the Book of Daniel, the issue of God’s sovereignty is at the core of 4 Ezra’s narrative. The contest here is between God and the Roman emperors. The lion-like creature whom the Most High has delegated to challenge the reigning evil eagle is later identified as “the Messiah whom the Most High has kept secret until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David” (12:32). In this contest, the powerful Roman Empire is portrayed as lesser and subordinate to the greater divine power who “rebukes,” “corrects,” and “judges” it. Although it was not explicit in 4 Ezra 11:1 that any external power was behind the emergence of the eagle

and its activities, this fact becomes clear in the first statement from the divine lion. We hear that the eagle was the last of the four beasts that the Most High “made to reign in my world so that the end of the times might come through them.” What this means is that the eagle’s reign was designed by God as a means of accomplishing a divinely ordained teleological plan. In the mind of the author, the Most High has power over the eagle: the Most High is in direct control of the world, including the Roman Empire. At the end of the sixth episode, the author acclaims in his praises that the Most High “governs the times and whatever things come to pass” (13:58), a reference to Dan 2:21.

An important focus of this of this vision is the messianic response to the injustice and violence of the eagle’s kingdom which reflects the divine courtroom we saw in Daniel 7. In this court setting, the lion indicts the eagle for its injustice, violence, oppression, and insolence (11:40-42), confirms God’s wrath against it (11:43-44), pronounces its complete destruction (11:45-46; 12:3), and assures divine liberation and mercy for the oppressed who have been under the eagle’s terror (11:46). Before pronouncing judgement on the eagle, the lion offers a graphic description of the eagle’s reign:

40 You, the fourth that has come, have conquered all the beasts that have gone before; and you have held sway over the world with much terror, and over all the earth with grievous oppression; and for so long you have dwelt on the earth with deceit. 41 And you have judged the earth, but not with truth; 42 for you have afflicted the meek and injured the peaceable; you have hated those who tell the truth, and have loved liars; you have destroyed the fortifications of those who brought forth fruit, and have laid low the walls of those who did you no harm. 43 And so your insolence has come up before the Most High, and your pride to the Mighty One.

According to Leo Perdue, the catalogue of the empire’s evils “concerns the corruption of social interaction and justice.... The eagle’s rule has ‘afflicted’ many. And such rule that damages social well-being is deemed offensive to the Most High.”<sup>68</sup> The

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<sup>68</sup> Leo G. Perdue, *Israel and Empire: A Postcolonial History of Israel and Early Judaism* (London: Bloomsbury T & T Clark, 2015), 289. 4 Ezra is not the only apocalyptic text that describes the cruelty of the Roman Empire using the Danielic four-kingdom schema. A similar critique with different imagery is found in 2 Baruch 36:2-37:1. In this vision, Baruch sees a vision of an evil forest with tress, and a vine with a fountain under it. The fountain engulfed the evil forest until only one cedar is left standing. The one standing cedar was latter uprooted and burnt up. Then the vine and it surrounding become “a valley full of unfading flowers.” Baruch receives an explanation that the forest with tress is the fourth kingdom (Rome). The cedar

major crimes of the Roman Empire, according to this text, are excessive violence and injustice coupled with insolence and pride. It is an empire that plunders the territories of weak and innocent nations. The cruelty described above counters the imperial view of Roman peace and prosperity. The catalogue serves as a parody of the Roman imperial's self-acclaimed *Pax Romana*. From the perspective of 4 Ezra, a Judean scribe, the Roman Empire of his time and its emperors are nothing but an embodiment of evil. Although Rome's claim is to maintain stability and order, the author perceives its reign as the means by which chaotic forces of evil are perpetuated throughout the world.<sup>69</sup> In 4 Ezra, as in other Near Eastern parallels, the four-kingdom schema is employed to represent the increasingly wicked successive empires of the world up to the worst, the final kingdom, which will be followed by divine intervention. This means that the author sees the political events he describes as the climax of evil just before the end, when God will reveal his justice and put all things right. In light of these crimes, the lion-like creature pronounces his verdict of indictment in 11:45-47:

And the Most High has looked upon his times, and behold, they are ended, and his ages are completed! Therefore, you will surely disappear, you eagle, and your terrifying wings, and your most evil little wings, and your malicious heads, and your most evil talons, and your whole unjust body, so that the whole earth, freed from your violence, may be refreshed and relieved, and may hope for the judgment and mercy of him who made it.<sup>70</sup>

The central point of the lion's verdict is the "end" of the eagle's empire. Following the lion's rebuke, the final head and the two remaining winglets disappear (12:1-2) and the body of the eagle bursts into flames so much so that the whole earth was exceedingly terrified (12:3). Although this vision ends abruptly with the burning of the eagle by an

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left standing is the last hostile ruler of Rome. The fountain and the vine represent the kingdom of the messiah. The vine will uproot the evil forests, and the cedar—the last standing tree of evil forest will be taken to Mount Zion where it will be judged and executed by the messiah.

<sup>69</sup> Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 74.

<sup>70</sup> Longenecker, *2 Esdras*, 72.

unspecified agent (12:3), the interpretation given in 12:32-33 suggests that the destruction of the eagle by means of burning is part of the judgment carried out by the Messiah. This becomes even more evident in the next vision (4 Ezra 13:1-58), known as the vision of the man from the sea, where the Messiah takes up a similar executing function. While the final end of the eagle happens as a result of divine judgment, Longenecker notes that a further indication that the eagle is on course for destruction can be ascertained from the fact that in the last stage of the eagle's reign, it began to destroy itself:

As the reign of evil becomes more powerful (11:32; 12:24-25), so instability is shown to infiltrate its structures. This instability is represented in the later stages of the eagle's reign by the devouring of one part of its body by another part (11:28-35), a veiled reference to Roman leaders usurping other leaders in efforts to increase their own stature and power. The successive rise of evil rulers is not an indication that evil reigns supreme but, instead, depicts the existence of a cancerous, self-destructive impulse within the structure of evil itself. If Rome advertised itself to be a force for peace and order within this world, the vision of episode V has revealed it to be a manifestation of the chaotic forces of evil whose own power-base is being eroded by the cancerous effects of chaos.<sup>71</sup>

For the author, the empire represented by the eagle is already on a course of self-destruction prior to the ultimate divine judgement. The empire's claim of *imperium sine fine* is only an illusion. Like other empires before it, the eagle empire too will soon collapse and be replaced by a messianic kingdom.

When Ezra asks for the interpretation of the dream, he is told, "the eagle which you saw coming up from the sea is the fourth kingdom which appeared in a vision to your brother Daniel. But it was not explained to him as I now explain it to you" (12:11-12). In this way, the author connects the eagle to the fourth beast in Daniel 7, whose identity was not clearly defined. Explaining the symbolism of the dream, the angel tells Ezra that the eagle represents a kingdom whose various wings, winglets, and heads represent various kings. The twelve wings represent twelve kings who will rule in succession, with the

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<sup>71</sup> Longenecker, *2 Esdras*,

second ruling longer than the others (12:13-16). The eight winglets represent another set of eight kings that will rise up within the eagle kingdom, whose reign will be very short (12:19-21). The three heads represent three kings who will rule last in the eagle kingdom (12:22-25). The lion-like creature represents the Messiah from the family of David whom the Most High has kept until the end of days.

Most scholars agree that the eagle represents Rome. The identification of the eagle as Rome has been based mainly on the Roman appropriation of the eagle as the official symbol of itself.<sup>72</sup> The eagle symbol is found on the standards of the Roman Legions representing Rome's political and military power. According to Warren Carter, the eagle is also the symbol of Jupiter, the empire's religious legitimation.<sup>73</sup> There are other representations of the eagle, such as those found on Roman buildings, coins, etc., which evoke and create awareness of Roman military power. Besides being the symbol of Roman identity and military might, later Jewish hermeneutics tend to identify the fourth kingdom of Daniel as Rome. For instance, by the late first century CE, Josephus in his interpretation of Daniel 2 and 7 implies that Rome is the evil fourth kingdom although he declines to make this association explicit.<sup>74</sup> *Targum* of Habakkuk (150-350 CE), in its interpretation of Daniel's four kingdoms, identifies Rome as the fourth kingdom that must come an end (*Tg. Hab.* 3:17). The third century CE Christian, Hippolytus of Rome, in his commentary on the Book of Daniel, identified Daniel's fourth kingdom as Rome.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 348, 366. See also Hogan, *Theologies in Conflict in 4 Ezra*, 179; Collins, "The Use of Apocalyptic Eschatology," 265–66.

<sup>73</sup> Warren Carter, "Are There Imperial Texts in the Class? Intertextual Eagles and Matthean Eschatology as 'Light Out' Time for Imperial Rome (Matthew 24:27-31)," *JBL* 22.3 (2003): 474. See also Ovid, *Met.* 10.158-160).

<sup>74</sup> Josephus, *Ant.* 10.206-210. See also Kenneth R. Jones, *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha*, JSJSup 151 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 33; Kylie Crabbe, *Luke/Acts and the End of History*, 99–106.

<sup>75</sup> John J. Collins, *Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of Daniel*, HCHCB (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 113. For further reading on late Jewish and early Christian reinterpretation of Daniel's fourth kingdom as Rome, see

While it is generally agreed that the eagle represents the Roman Empire, the identity of the kings represented by the eagle's three heads and the multiple wings and winglets has been vigorously contested. Lorenzo DiTommaso and Kenneth Jones have offered an excellent critical analysis of the various scholarly proposals regarding the identities of the emperors and kings suggested in the text.<sup>76</sup> Among the competing views, the Flavian theory, which argues that the eagle's three heads represent the Flavian emperors, Vespasian (69-79 CE) and his two sons, Titus (79-81) and Domitian (81-96), has gained more popularity.<sup>77</sup> I adopt this position in this chapter.<sup>78</sup> While no consensus exists with regard to the specific identities of the emperors in the symbolism, many scholars accept that the wings and winglets represent the emperors and pretenders to the throne who lived from Caesar to Domitian (the emperor from 81-96 CE), while the first two wings represent Julius Caesar and Augustus.<sup>79</sup> Like the author of Daniel, the author envisions an apocalyptic judgment of the "fourth kingdom", Rome, which inflicted the disastrous destruction of Jerusalem.

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<sup>76</sup> DiTommaso, "Dating the Eagle Vision of 4 Ezra," 3-38; Jones, *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70*, 48-56.

<sup>77</sup> K. Wieseler, "Das Vierte Buch Esra, Nach Inhalt Und Alter Untersucht," *TSK* 43 (1870): 263-304; James Drummond, *The Jewish Messiah: A Critical History of the Messianic Idea among the Jews from the Rise of the Maccabees to the Closing of the Talmud* (London: Longmans, 1877), 107-10; Richard Kabisch, *Das vierte Buch Esra auf seine Quellen untersucht* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1889); Hermann Gunkel, "Das Vierte Buch Esra," in *Die Apokryphen Und Pseudepigraphen Des Alten Testaments*, ed. E. Kautsch (Tübingen: Mohr, 1900), 331-401; J.M. Meyer, *I and II Esdras*, AB 42 (Garden City: Doubleday, 1974), 299-302; R. J. Coggins and Michael A. Knibb, *The First and Second Books of Esdras*, Cambridge Bible Commentary: New English Bible (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 240-44; Michael E. Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 10-11; John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 242; Kenneth R. Jones, *Jewish Reactions*, 48-57.

<sup>78</sup> Another strong proposal is the "Severan theory" which argues that the eagle's three head represent the Roman emperor Septimius Severus (193-211) and his two sons, Geta (211-212) and Caracalla (211-217). Major proponents of this view includes: A. von Gutschmid, "Die Apokalypse Des Esra Und Ihre Spätere Bearbeitungen," *ZWT* 3 (1860): 33-52; L. Vaganay, *Le Problème Eschatologique Dans Le IV<sup>e</sup> Livre d'Esdras* (Paris: Alphonse Picard et fils, 1906), 21-23; P. Barry, "The Apocalypse of Ezra," *JBL* 32 (1913): 261-72. More recently, DiTommaso has revived this view arguing that Ezra's eagle vision has been redacted and updated from an earlier composition. According to him, the present eagle vision "is a drastic Severan-era reworking of a Flavian-era original." DiTommaso, "Dating the Eagle Vision of 4 Ezra," 6. Consequently, DiTommaso posits that the final composition of the text took place around 218 CE.

<sup>79</sup> Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 242.



### 3.4 The Doctrine of the Two Ages in 4 Ezra

Fourth Ezra is marked by eschatological dualism. The text's eschatology is primarily based on the two-age schema in its temporal and spatial dimensions. The statement "the Most High has made not one world but two" (4 Ezra 7:50) is generally considered a classic expression of this world view. In 4 Ezra, spatial dualism is primarily construed as the contrast between heaven and earth, while temporal dualism is construed as the distinction between the present evil age and the age to come, when God will eliminate all evil and put all things right. Throughout the narrative, the author assures his audience that the present world in which evil reigns in the political, economic, social, and religious spheres is not all that exists. There is a new age (a new world order, a new Jerusalem) already preordained by God for the few righteous people. Throughout the narrative, the author envisions a time when God will intervene to end this old and corrupt age, marked by the reign of sin and evil powers, and usher in the new age.

In order to have a better understanding of the doctrine of the two ages in 4 Ezra, we will carry out a textual analysis of two important passages, 4 Ezra 4:26-32 and 7:45-61, where this theme manifests itself most explicitly.<sup>80</sup> Our purpose is to explore the meaning and rhetorical function of this motif in 4 Ezra. As we argued in our discussion of the periodization of history, here we argue that the schema of two ages presupposes divine determinism. The two ages were preordained by God. This present evil age only had to run its course and give way to the new age of justice and peace. This assurance of a new age, a future when God will vindicate the faithful ones, offers hope to Ezra's oppressed Jewish audience. Since 4 Ezra 4:26-32 and 7:45-61 occupy different literary locations in 4 Ezra, we shall study each passage within its literary context. An important question that

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<sup>80</sup> Although there are many explicit and implicit references to the two-ages motif in 4 Ezra, for want of space only two passages will be discussed.

will guide this study is, why does the author of 4 Ezra engage in two-age discourse in an era already established as the Golden Age of Rome or the *Pax Romana* (27 BCE- 180 CE)? What does he hope to achieve by this discourse?

### 3.4.1 4 Ezra 4:26-32

#### 3.4.1.1 Literary Setting of 4 Ezra 4:26-32

4 Ezra 4:26-32 is located within the larger context of 4 Ezra 3:1-5:20. This long section deals with Ezra's wrestling with God's justice in light of the devastation of Jerusalem and its temple by sinful Babylon (Rome).<sup>81</sup> The vision is said to have taken place thirty years after the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by Babylon (Rome). Here, Ezra is distressed over the continued prosperity of ungodly Rome despite its wickedness, and the desolation of the less sinful Zion. These unfortunate historical realities of the 70 CE catastrophe trigger the broader questions the author explores.

The section begins as Ezra lies on his bed in Babylon, greatly troubled over what he perceives as gross divine injustice in relation to God's action in history, but especially with the way that God has dealt with Israel, his covenantal people. In his prayer, Ezra poses some intriguing questions to God: "why Israel has been given over to the Gentiles as a reproach; why the people whom you loved has been given over to godless tribes, and the Torah of our fathers has been made of no effect and the written covenants no longer exist; and why we pass from the world like locusts, and our life is like a mist?" (4 Ezra 4:23-24). Ezra has seen the evil of Babylon, their "ungodly deeds without number" (4 Ezra 3:29), and knows that Babylon is not better than Zion (4 Ezra 3:29, 33). In fact, Ezra has not seen any nation that keeps God's command better than Israel (4 Ezra 3:32-36)! So, why then would God choose to destroy God's own people while preserving or even

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<sup>81</sup> David A. DeSilva, "Biblical Theology and the Apocrypha," in *The Oxford Handbook of the Apocrypha*, ed. Gerbern S. Oegema (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 541.

prospering their godless enemies (3:28-36)? This is the major problem that causes severe distress for the author (4 Ezra 3:1-2). In Ezra's view, for God to punish Israel while allowing the morally worse nations to enjoy prosperity highlights a fundamental case of injustice on God's part. In this episode, as in the rest of the text, Ezra's questions are more pointedly directed towards Yahweh's covenant fidelity to Israel. Has God's covenant faithfulness failed? David DeSilva frames the question clearly, "what is the meaning of 'election' if Israel does not enjoy the good things of this world while Gentile nations devour Israel for their benefit (5:23-30; 6:55-59)?"<sup>82</sup>

God does not answer Ezra's questions directly; rather, the angel Uriel is sent to him. By posing three riddles which Ezra is unable to solve, Uriel tries to convince Ezra that his cognitive capacity is too limited to comprehend the ways of God (4:1-21). Ezra objects that he is not interested in understanding heavenly things, but the mundane things—the daily experiences of his people as a subjugated nation. For Ezra, the current experience of the people is "the paradoxical humiliation of the people God loved and the exaltation of the 'godless tribes.'"<sup>83</sup> Ezra wants to know "why Israel has been given over to the Gentiles as a reproach ...?" (4 Ezra 4:23). But more importantly he wants to know what God will *do* to vindicate "his name by which we are called"? (4 Ezra 4:22-25). It is this last question that shifts the discussion in the direction of eschatology in 4 Ezra 4:26-32. Here Uriel begins to talk to Ezra about the end of this present world as the only solution to the problem that Ezra raises.<sup>84</sup> The pericope presents us with the author's understanding of history and time shaped by his socio-political context.

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<sup>82</sup> DeSilva, "Biblical Theology and the Apocrypha," 541.

<sup>83</sup> Robbie Griggs, "Apocalyptic Experience in the Theodicy of 4 Ezra," in *Evil in Second Temple Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Chris Keith and Loren T. Stuckenbruck, WUNT 412 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 290.

<sup>84</sup> George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 271.

### 3.4.1.2 Textual Analysis of 4 Ezra 4:26-32

Fourth Ezra 4:26-32 is indispensable in any discussion of the text's eschatology and soteriology for two important reasons. First, the apocalyptic dualistic conceptualization of time is first introduced here, signifying the idea of the two ages in which the present age is coming to an end, to be succeeded by a new age. It also sets the stage for subsequent discussion of this theme in the rest of the book by presenting the reasons why the present age (world) must eventually come to an end. Secondly, in 4:26-32 we see the idea of a linear, quick progression, and the teleological understanding of time that we saw in the Book of Daniel, thereby attesting to another Danielic influence.

The section opens with Uriel telling Ezra, "If you are alive, you will see, and if you live you will often marvel, because the world is hastening swiftly to its end (*quoniam festinans festinat saeculum pertransire*; 4 Ezra 4:26). Before proceeding with our analysis, it is important to determine the meaning of the word *saeculum*, which is the subject of this passage.

The term *saeculum* is the Latin translation of the Hebrew word עולם and the Greek αἰών. The Greek αἰών always carries temporal ("age", "time") and spatial ("world") meanings. Stone notes that in the Hebrew Bible, עולם was originally used in reference to time, for instance, "a most distant time," either past or future, and was used almost exclusively adverbially, such as "forever."<sup>85</sup> As a temporal reference, it conveys the sense of "age," "time," or "world-age." But by the first century CE, when 4 Ezra was written, the meaning of the term has expanded to include a spatial aspect. When used as a spatial reference, עולם conveys the meaning of "world," in the sense of a "physical realm" or the universe. Stone argues that 4 Ezra attests to both temporal and spatial senses, thereby creating a translation challenge for present-day readers. According to Stone, there is no

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<sup>85</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 218–19.

clear external indicator to alert us which of these meanings is in use; only context provides the clue.<sup>86</sup> Fourth Ezra 4:26 is one of those instances where both the spatial and the temporal senses may be intended.<sup>87</sup>

The opening statement conveys a sense of the urgency with which this present age is coming to an end, though the urgency is lessened by the conditional indicator “if.”<sup>88</sup> The idea that the present age is hastening to pass away, or coming to an end, is a common theme found in many Second and Post-Temple Jewish texts. For instance, the idea is found in 2 Bar 20:1-2; 83:1. In these passages we see that not only is this world running toward its end, but that God is also accelerating the progression of time in order to advance the time of redemption.<sup>89</sup> The same idea is found in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (1 Cor 7:31), where Paul grounds his admonition concerning marriage, divorce, and celibacy on the belief that this present age is passing away. The idea that the present age is passing away is anchored in the author’s understanding of time as a sequence of periods or events already pre-determined by God. For the author of 4 Ezra, the period of time already allotted to the present age is nearing its end, and a new age is about to begin its course.

In 4 Ezra 4:27, Uriel reveals two reasons why this present age will surely pass away. First, the present age “is unable to bring the things that have been promised to the righteous in their appointed time.” Secondly, “it is full of sadness and infirmities (*plenum mesticia et infirmitatibus*).” Here we have the first hint of the dualism of the two ages according to which this age is construed as an imperfect age “full of sadness and infirmities” and “unable to produce the reward of the righteous.” Later in 4 Ezra, the author provides the reader with more insight into the deteriorating condition of this age. The

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<sup>86</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 219.

<sup>87</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 219.

<sup>88</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 93; Moo, *Creation, Nature and Hope in 4 Ezra*, 108.

<sup>89</sup> Matthias Henze, “‘4 Ezra’ and ‘2 Baruch’: Literary Composition and Oral Performance in First-Century Apocalyptic Literature,” *JBL* 131.1 (2012): 187.

present age is wearing out with age: “it has lost its youth... and begins to grow old” (4 Ezra 5:55; 14:10. From Uriel’s perspective, “the weaker the world becomes through age, the more shall evils be multiplied among its inhabitants” (4 Ezra 14:17).

In 4 Ezra 4 27-32, as in 4 Ezra 3:20-26, the author addresses the problem of the origin of evil within the context of Adam’s sin. Although the very cause of Adam’s sin is unclear in 4 Ezra, the text suggests a correlation between Adam’s sin and his being burdened by an evil heart (*cor malignum/malum* in 4 Ezra 3:21, 26; 4:4; 7:48), and the grain of evil seed (*granum seminis mali*, 4:30; 8:6; 9:31) sown in his heart. The statement, “For the first Adam, burdened with an evil heart, transgressed and was overcome” (4 Ezra 3:21), may suggest that the evil heart was the cause of Adam’s sin, not the result of it. Stone explains that in 4 Ezra, the author tries to avoid a direct attribution of the origin of the evil heart to God, even though a divine origin may be implied in some instances, such as in 4 Ezra 7:92 and 3:20.<sup>90</sup> This is particularly true since in 4 Ezra there is no reference of any cosmic or rival power against God. It is therefore logical to infer that the sowing of the grain of evil seed in the heart of Adam may have happened in accordance with the will of God.<sup>91</sup>

Although the author laments the reality of the evil seed planted in the human heart, he also recognizes the presence of the divine law in human heart (4 Ezra 3:22). What this means is that the reality of the “evil seed” is not an excuse for people to continue in sin; rather it is something with which human beings will have to struggle to overcome through obedience to the law (4 Ezra 7:92; 14:15). Ezra sees the law as an antidote for the “evil

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<sup>90</sup> Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 63.

<sup>91</sup> Gabriele Boccaccini, “The Evilness of Human Nature in I Enoch, Jubilee, Paul and 4 Ezra: A Second Temple Jewish Debate,” in *Fourth Ezra and Second Baruch: Reconstruction after the Fall*, ed. Matthias Henze and Gabriele Boccaccini (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 74. In fact, in 4 Ezra 3:31, Ezra comes close to blaming God for the evil heart: “For you did not taking away from them the evil heart (*cor malignum*), that your Law might bring forth fruit in them.”

seed” in the human heart. While the origin of the “grain of evil seed” in Adam is not explicitly explained, Uriel deploys this agricultural metaphor for two purposes. First, it serves to explain the origin of the power of evil in human beings.<sup>92</sup> According to Uriel, “a grain of evil seed was sown in Adam’s heart from the beginning, and how much fruit of ungodliness it has produced until now, and will continue until the time of threshing comes!” (4 Ezra 4:30; cf. 2 Bar 32:1-2; Matt 13:30, 39).

Second, the concept is used here (4 Ezra 4:28-30) to construct the argument for the relationship between the present age and the age to come. According to Uriel, “the grain of evil seed has been sown but its harvest has not yet come.” As in Daniel, 4 Ezra employs harvesting and reaping imagery to speak of the eschatological judgment of the wicked. Here it is explicitly stated that the harvest (the time of judgment) of the “grain of evil seed” has not yet come (cf. Jer 51:33; Hos 6:11; Joel 4:13; Rev 14:15-20; Matt 13:3-9, 18-23, 24-30). The sense is that the judgment which will bring evil (which Ezra has spoken about earlier) to an end has not yet come. In the next sentence, Uriel makes an interesting comment: “If therefore that which has been sown is not reaped, and if the place where the evil has been sown does not pass away, the field where the good has been sown will not come” (4 Ezra 4:29). This sentence is central for understanding how the author conceives the temporal relationship between the present age and the age to come. According to Uriel, the place (*locus*—world) where the grain of evil seed was sown will pass away, but not until all the evil that has been sown in it is harvested.<sup>93</sup> Finally, the passage ends with Uriel giving Ezra a glimpse of the abundance of blessings and goodness of the new age which

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<sup>92</sup> It is interesting that 4 Ezra does not mention Eve in his discourse of sin and evil but Adam. This contrast with Sir 25:24 which states explicitly that “Woman is the origin of sin and it through her that we all die.”

<sup>93</sup> Lisbeth S. Fried, *Ezra and the Law in History and Tradition* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 2014), 76; Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 95.

can never be compared with the troubles of the present age: “When heads of good grain without number are sown, how great a threshing floor they will fill!” (4 Ezra 4:31-32).

What we have seen so far in this passage is that the evil in the present age must run its course, then there will be judgement, and the present age will come to an end before the arrival of the new age can take place. In 4 Ezra 4:26-32, the two ages succeed each other just as the two fields succeed each other. This passage introduces us to the deterministic view of history that pervades the text. For instance, in response to Ezra's question about the time when all these things will take place (4 Ezra 4:33), Uriel answers that the time of the present age is already fixed, just as the time of an infant in his mother's womb is fixed and cannot be delayed or hastened (4 Ezra 4:37-40). But the present age is anticipated to end very soon (4:44-52). In fact, in 4 Ezra 5:1-13 Uriel went as far as describing the signs that will precede the end of this present age. The signs include: cosmic chaos, natural disasters, deterioration of the earth, atrocious wickedness, complete absence of righteousness, etc. This present age will give way to a new age of blessedness, righteousness, and immortality. The new age is when God will address the problem of injustice against Israel that Ezra complains about. Putting it in context, Uriel is saying that the eagle's kingdom does not have an infinite temporal duration. The date and time of its end have already been fixed by God. This answer given by Uriel is intended to build Ezra and his audience's trust in the justice and faithfulness of God which is the basic storyline of the text.

### 3.4.2 4 Ezra 7:45-61

#### 3.4.2.1 Literary Setting of 4 Ezra 7:45-61

Fourth Ezra 7:45-61 is located within the broader context of 4 Ezra 6:35–9:25. The section covers the dialogue between Ezra and Uriel that centers on the themes of divine justice, the arrival of a temporal messianic age, the salvation of the few, and the prediction



about the end with some eschatological timetable. Here, as in other sections, Ezra addresses some poignant questions to God in light of God's creative activities and his election of Israel as God's people. For instance, Ezra asks if God created the world for the sake of Israel, why has Israel not yet possessed the world which was created for their sake? If God intends Israel to rule the world, why is Israel being subordinated to the hands of the pagan nations? "How long will this be so?" (4 Ezra 6:57-59). The specific questions raised in this section are precipitated by the realization that God is about to bring this world to an end, while God has not yet fulfilled his promises to Israel.<sup>94</sup> Uriel responds with two parables that highlight how the righteous must go through travails before they can be rewarded in the world to come.

Within this long section, 4 Ezra 7:45-61 is immediately preceded by a section that deals with eschatological signs, especially the temporary messianic age that will precede the new age (4 Ezra 7:26-44). Uriel informs Ezra about a 400-year temporary messianic reign, after which both the Messiah and the group with him shall die. Then the world shall return to primeval silence for seven days. After this period of time, the new world shall be awakened while the old and corrupt world will be destroyed (4 Ezra 7:31). This passage makes clear that after the messianic age, there will be the resurrection of the dead, universal judgment without mercy for the sinners, reward for the righteous, and punishment for the wicked (4 Ezra 7:33-44). Ezra appears dissatisfied with Uriel's explanation. Consequently, Ezra raises stronger soteriological questions, asking why is it that only a few individuals will be saved? Why would the vast majority of people who sin end up in eternal damnation without divine mercy, given the reality of the "evil heart" that appears

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<sup>94</sup> David M. Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, NovTSup 141 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 97-98.

to have made sinning inevitable? These are the driving questions of the third episode to which Uriel again responds appealing to the doctrine of the two ages (4 Ezra 7:45-61).

#### 3.4.2.2 Textual Analysis of 4 Ezra 7:45-61

This pericope opens with another critical complaint from Ezra. Having listened to Uriel's discourse on the new age or the world to come, which will bring delight to the few righteous people, Ezra is rather disturbed by the practical implication of Uriel's eschatological solution for the vast majority of sinful people on earth (4 Ezra 7:46-48):

But what of those concerning whom I asked? For who among the living is there that has not sinned, or who among men that has not transgressed thy covenant? And now I see that the world to come will bring delight to few, but torments to many. For an evil heart has grown up in us, which has alienated us from this, and has brought us into corruption and the ways of death, and has shown us the paths of perdition and removed us far from life—and that not just a few of us but almost all who have been created!

Ezra was deeply worried by the fact that “almost” everyone has sinned (v. 48), and only a few people are righteous. Given the problem of the “evil heart” (v. 48), which makes it difficult for people to keep the law and live righteously, Ezra expresses despair that the age to come will bring not delight but torment to the great majority of people on earth (v. 47), and so he wonders what hope the promise of the new age holds for humanity who are burdened by the evil heart. Although Ezra appears to have a universalistic concern here, it is important to underscore that Ezra's focus is not all humanity per se. Rather, his focus is on Israel in light of all humanity.

In response, Uriel tells Ezra, “For this reason, the Most High has made not one world but two” (*Propter hoc non fecit altissimus unum saeculum sed duo*; 4 Ezra 7:50). Having made this statement, Uriel goes on immediately to discuss the value of rare things in the world as compared with quotidian things, using two parables: (a) one about a precious stone (4 Ezra 7:52-53); and (b) one about precious metals (4 Ezra 7:57-60). The two parables are introduced to explain the meaning of the statement in 4 Ezra 7:50, that is,

the reason the Most High prepared the two worlds. In the first parable, Uriel asks Ezra: suppose he (Ezra) has a few precious stones, will he add lead and clay (obviously of lower quality) to them? Ezra answered Uriel, “Lord, how could this be?” In the second analogy, Uriel invites Ezra to ask the mother earth that produces various metals of different qualities (gold, silver, brass, iron, lead, and clay) which things are more precious and desirable, the rare ones or the ubiquitous? Again, Ezra is invited “to judge... which things are precious and desirable, those that are abundant or those that are rare?” (4 Ezra 7: 58). Obviously, Ezra concedes to Uriel’s analogies that “rare things” are more precious.

These parables underscore two fundamental points. First, before God, the wicked are common and worthless, while the righteous are few but valuable. Although the righteous are few, they are still more precious before God, and on the day of judgment God’s delight will be on these few righteous ones who are saved. The many wicked that will perish count little before God. Secondly, the wicked cannot be added to the righteous for numerical increment. Within this context, it becomes obvious that the age to come was prepared for the purpose of rewarding the few, rare righteous people. These righteous ones, according to the text, are those who have made the glory of God prevail in this evil age, and through whom the name of the Lord has been honored (4 Ezra 7:60-61). The argument of Ezra in this pericope is that God has designated a time when this evil and corruptible age (*saeculum corruptum*; cf. 4 Ezra 4:11) shall be removed and replaced by the new and incorruptible age (*futurum saeculum*; 4 Ezra 6:9; 8:1).

In 4 Ezra, the schema of the two ages presupposes divine determinism, but it also presupposes the realities of sin and evil in the socio-political order. The author is concerned with the presence of sin and evil in the world, which introduces disorder within God’s created order.<sup>95</sup> As we have seen so far, the author perceives the present age, that is, the

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<sup>95</sup> Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 258.

historical context of Roman imperial rule, as embedded with much evil expressed in terms of acute suffering and hardship, grievous oppression, marginalization of the weak and minority groups, injustice, lawlessness, deception, hatred of truth, pride, and blasphemy against God. The destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, as well as the current suffering of God's people, are historical events that attest to the evil and wickedness of this present age perpetuated by those in power, whom the author describes as beasts in human bodies (cf. 4 Ezra 7:12-13; 11:40-43). Note that Ezra never denies the participation of Israel, God's covenant people, in the prevalence of social sin. In fact, Ezra acknowledges Israel's violation of God's law which might be part of the reason they are being punished.<sup>96</sup> However, Ezra's contention is that Babylon (Rome) is morally worse than Zion and thus should not be the instrument for punishing Israel. The negativity ascribed to the present age in which Roman rules by 4 Ezra functions as a critique of the empire that parades itself as the crown of civilization, and the epitome of peace and friendship.

As with the periodization of history, the schema of the two ages enables the author to situate his audience and their historical context towards the end of the chronological spectrum, in order to argue that God's intervention is imminent and that a new age is about to break in.<sup>97</sup> In 4 Ezra, the schema of the two ages is deployed to argue for God's sovereignty in this world, especially as it relates to the vindication and salvation of God's faithful ones under foreign domination. It enables the audience to make sense of their oppression through the promise of God's ultimate salvation. But the author also deploys the same device to underscore and address the social evil prevalent in his days. Again, this chapter has shown that "apocalyptic writers are not apolitical mystics, interested only in individual salvation through a personal union with God, to be fulfilled in the afterlife";<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Cf. 4 Ezra 3:4-27; 7:19-25, 45-48, 72-73; 8:56; 9:10-12; 14:30-31.

<sup>97</sup> Henze, "Dimensions of Time in Jewish Apocalyptic Thought: The Case of 4 Ezra," 14.

<sup>98</sup> Enrique Nardoni, *Rise up, o Judge: A Study of Justice in the Biblical World* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004), 169.

rather, they are prophetic voices who address with coded symbolism the socio-political events of their era. In the case of 4 Ezra, the author denounces the evil of the Roman Empire and predicts its end, while giving the assurance of a new age when God's people will be freed from the yoke of Gentile oppression and enjoy the blessings of their election fully restored. The new age is the age when a Davidic messiah and God himself will rule the people with justice and mercy.

### 3.4.3 Relationship between the Two Ages

We have noted earlier that a major issue in the study of the Jewish apocalyptic two-age worldview today is how to make sense of the relationship between the two ages. Fourth Ezra is very important in this theological discourse, because in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, the author envisions the arrival of a new and glorious age that will succeed the present evil age. The following questions will drive our discussion that follows: Does 4 Ezra envisage a radical/strict dichotomy between the two ages, as some prominent scholars such as Käsemann, Martyn, de Boer, and Gaventa have maintained?<sup>99</sup> Does the text envision a complete destruction of this created order at the end of time, or does the text envisage an eschatological renewal or transformation of the natural order that stands in some kind of continuity with the past? These questions are crucial in helping us understand the way 4 Ezra conceives the relationship between two ages, but they are also important as we consider the ways that Paul frames the relationship between the two ages in the next chapter. As in the previous chapter, here we argue that a careful study of the relationship between the two ages in 4 Ezra shows that the text does not admit a strict eschatological dualism; neither does its eschatological solutions

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<sup>99</sup> The implication of this radical understanding of apocalyptic two-ages for Pauline studies is the claim that Paul also holds such a radical view.

undermine the value of working for a better life in this world as some scholars have insinuated.<sup>100</sup> Fourth Ezra envisions not only material transformation at the eschaton, but also moral renewal (4 Ezra 7:114), an important motif in Paul's eschatological vision as we shall see in the next chapter.

The two texts we examined under the doctrine of the two ages (4 Ezra 4:26-32 and 7:45-61) and various other passages, such as 4 Ezra 5:1-13; 6:7-10; 7:50, 112; 8:1, 46; 11:44, attest not only to eschatological dualism (temporal dualism) but also to cosmological dualism (spatial dualism) in 4 Ezra.<sup>101</sup> Throughout the text, the author constantly contrasts this age and the age to come. This present age is negatively portrayed as the age of the "evil heart" (4 Ezra 3:21; 4:28-30), "sorrow and weakness" (4 Ezra 4:27), an age of corruption, illness, and death (4 Ezra 7:12, 113-114), while the age to come is consistently depicted positively. It is an immortal age, in which there will be no more corruption, infidelity will be cut off, righteousness shall increase and truth will appear (4 Ezra 7:113-

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<sup>100</sup> Some scholars have argued that the Jewish apocalyptic orientation towards heaven and otherworldly realities naturally engender an outlook that is essentially pessimistic and world-denying. For these scholars, the spatial and temporal disjuncture found in many apocalyptic texts leads to an attitude that not only denigrates the world but also devalues ethics in the social order. For instance, in a recent essay that explore the implications of apocalyptic eschatology, Collins argues that the apocalyptic emphasis on the future world or "the coming age" has the potential of relativizing the values of this world or of undermining the importance of working for a better life in this present world. See Collins, "Not One World but Two," 1. For similar view see also Paul D. Hanson, *Dawn of Apocalyptic: The Historical and Sociological Roots of Jewish Apocalyptic Eschatology* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 25-27; Paul D. Hanson, "Prophetic and Apocalyptic Politics," in *The Last Things: Biblical and Theological Perspectives on Eschatology*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Robert W. Jenson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 43-66; D. S. Russell, *Divine Disclosure: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992). Jonathan Moo has offered a strong push back on this view arguing that although the Jewish apocalyptic worldview especially as expressed in 4 Ezra appears to be pessimistic with regard to the present world order, but it is nevertheless surprisingly affirming of the created order and envisions a continuity between the present age and the age to come. Moo shows that the apocalyptic outlook of 4 Ezra does not malign the world as some have assumed, rather, it affirms God's sovereignty and anticipates a future when God will act to transform the socio-political order. While the author of 4 Ezra looks forward to divine restructuring of the social order, he at the same time calls for fidelity to God and the law as the ultimate means of renewal and salvation. See Moo, *Creation, Nature and Hope in 4 Ezra*.

<sup>101</sup> Eschatological or temporal dualism is usually conceived as the division of the world into two temporarily parts, namely, the present age and the age to come. Sometimes, it is used in the sense of a contrast between this age and age to come, while cosmological or spatial dualism expresses the idea of the division of the world in two spatially divided parts such as heaven and earth, above and below, etc. see Jörg Frey, *Qumran, Early Judaism, and New Testament Interpretation: Qumran, Early Judaism, and New Testament Interpretation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 251.

114); it is a greater world (4 Ezra 7:13); in it, the righteous will rest and enjoy peace and glory forever (4 Ezra 7:95). But do these contrasts reflect a rigid temporal or spatial dualism in which there is no continuity? At this point, we shall look at a text, 4 Ezra 6:7-10, that perfectly addresses the question of temporal dualism in 4 Ezra.

#### 3.4.3.1 Eschatological/Temporal Dualism (4 Ezra 6:7-10)

Fourth Ezra 6:7-10 offers an important insight into how the author perceives the relationship between the two ages. It does so through an allusion to Gen 25:26, which is reinterpreted eschatologically. The passage comes within the context of Ezra's dialogue with Uriel regarding the nature of eschatological events. Ezra first asked about the agent through whom God will usher in the eschatological event: "through whom are you going to visit<sup>102</sup> your creation?" (4 Ezra 5:56). In answer, God made it clear to Ezra that eschatological salvation will be actualized by God himself. Just as God alone brought the whole creation into being, so also God alone will bring about its end. Having given the above response, Ezra then poses another question regarding the nature and division of the two ages: "And I answered and said, 'What will be the dividing of the times (*separatio temporum*)? Or when will be the end of the first age and the beginning of the age that follows?'" (4 Ezra 6:6). Here, Ezra wants to know when the first age will end and when the second age will begin. This is probably intended in terms of the signs that will accompany the ending and beginning of each of the ages. The following answer was given to him:

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<sup>102</sup> Moo clarifies that "the visitation of God" in this context should be understood as the full complex of events that accompany the end which the revelation of God's truth and glory, punishment for the wicked, and vindication and reward for the faithful. So here, Ezra want to know God's instrument for bringing about eschatological judgement on God's creation. He wants to know "who will usher in the end of this age and reveal the fullness of God's truth and glory." See Moo, *Creation, Nature and Hope in 4 Ezra*, 46.

<sup>8</sup>He said to me, “From Abraham to Abraham,<sup>103</sup> because from him were born Jacob and Esau, for Jacob’s hand held Esau’s heel from the beginning. <sup>9</sup>For Esau is the end of this age (*hoc saeculum*), and Jacob is the beginning of (the age) that follows (*principium sequentis*). <sup>10</sup>For the end of a man is his heel, and the beginning of a man is his hand; between the heel and the hand seek for nothing else, Ezra!” (4 Ezra 6:8-10).

As many have already noted, Uriel's response here serves as strong evidence for both continuity and discontinuity between this age and the age to come. In this passage, the two sons of Isaac Esau and Jacob, were compared with the two ages, and the relationship between the two brothers was used to illustrate the relationship between the two ages. In verse 9, Uriel states that “Esau is the end of this age, and Jacob is the beginning of the age that follows.” Some scholars have correctly read this passage within the framework of the Deuteronomic covenant and the election of Israel, and not in terms of a radical dualistic separation.<sup>104</sup> Moo writes in this regard “that the fundamental difference between the two ages is that between the children of promise and all those outside (cf. Mal 1:2-3).”<sup>105</sup> This reading finds textual support in various places in 4 Ezra, particularly in chs. 7:49-61 and 8:1, where the age to come is explicitly said to be reserved as the inheritance of the few righteous, while this present age is for the many. That no radical dualistic separation between the ages is intended can be seen by the touching of the brothers: “For Jacob’s hands held Esau’s heel from the beginning.” The important point the author makes with this analogy is that the beginning of the new age will follow naturally from the end of this present age. Although the age of Esau is different from the age of Jacob, there is no indication of any radical separation between them, but rather a

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<sup>103</sup> There is a textual problem in 6:8 which reads “from Abraham to Abraham.” Early attempts to resolve this difficulty can be seen in the changes introduced in the verse. For instance, Georgian manuscript changed the first Abraham to Adam, making the text read “from Adam to Abraham.” On the other hand, most manuscripts including Ethiopic, an Arabic, and a Latin changed the second Abraham to Isaac, “from Abraham to Isaac. Today, most scholars accept the second reading as the more plausible reading. See Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 143; Moo, *Creation, Nature and Hope in 4 Ezra*, 117.

<sup>104</sup> Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination*, 219; J. P. Davies, *Paul among the Apocalypses?* 91; Moo, *Creation, Nature and Hope in 4 Ezra*, 117.

<sup>105</sup> Moo, *Creation, Nature and Hope in 4 Ezra*, 117.



close succession. Just as it was at their birth, so also it will be at their final redemption: one will immediately follow the other as has been divinely planned from the beginning.<sup>106</sup>

### 3.5 The Soteriology of 4 Ezra

The major concern of 4 Ezra is soteriological, that is, the salvation of God's people from their current plight of Roman domination. The text shows that one question that remains uppermost in the mind of the author is: When will God's salvific action on behalf of his covenant people who are suffering in this present evil age take place? This section intends to examine some important dimensions of 4 Ezra's soteriology, namely the nature of Ezra's soteriology, as well as the possibility and the means of attaining salvation. Here we argue that despite the author's anthropological pessimism, 4 Ezra does affirm the possibility of salvation, as well as the interaction of divine and human agency on soteriological issues, despite its emphasis on divine determinism. The striking similarities we see in 4 Ezra and Paul's eschatology also appear in their soteriological outlook. As such, the way 4 Ezra depicts the interaction between human and divine agency sheds light on how Paul conceptualizes the interaction of divine and human agency in Rom 5:12-21.

When the Jews in first century CE talk about salvation, they do not talk about it as an abstract concept; rather, they talk about it as an existential reality. The hope of salvation is primarily framed in terms of a political emancipation from Roman domination and the inauguration of the messianic rule. This is the background that shapes the author's

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<sup>106</sup> There is another reading of this text which is important for the overall argument of this chapter. In some Rabbinic texts, Esau is usually identified with Rome and so stands in for the Roman Empire.<sup>106</sup> From this perspective, Esau/Rome represents the present evil age/kingdom whose end the author is predicting while Jacob/Israel represents the new age, the eschatological kingdom of Israel that would succeed Rome. This may be suggesting that with the fall of Rome, there will be no foreign empire that will succeed it, but the restored kingdom of Israel. In this way, the author offers the hope of liberation from all foreign domination to his readers. Read from this lens, the passage again captures the anti-Roman imperial discourse that runs through the entire text.

soteriology, as can be seen from the dialogue. Ezra's major complaint is that "Israel has been given over to the Gentiles as a reproach" (4 Ezra 4:23); "those who opposed thy Torah have trodden down those who believed in thy covenant" (4 Ezra 5:29); "O Lord, behold, these nations, which are reputed as nothing, domineer over us and trample upon us" (4 Ezra 6:57). In light of this reality, Moo correctly argues that "the salvation for which Ezra longs is necessarily this-worldly, national and even political."<sup>107</sup> In 4 Ezra, the author speaks of salvation in terms of the "new age," "the age to come," an age of righteousness and peace (4 Ezra 6:9; 7:113, 8:50-51) when God will reverse the current plight of Israel and restore the beauty and glory of Jerusalem.

With regard to the agent of salvation, in 4 Ezra salvation is seen first of all as God's prerogative. God is the one to liberate his chosen people from their current situation of suffering and subjugation. This point is explained in 4 Ezra 6:18-28, which is the first prediction concerning God's cosmic intervention in order to redeem Israel. In the text, God reveals to Ezra God's intention to visit the inhabitants of the world in order to judge and punish the wicked and save his people (4 Ezra 6:19). The passage reveals God's plan to save Jerusalem from this present plight with many signs and wonders. Here we read, "it shall come to pass that whoever remains after all that I have foretold to you shall himself be saved and shall see my salvation and the end of my world" (4 Ezra 6:25). This passage makes obvious the fact that salvation of Israel is primarily a divine initiative. Neither obedience, righteousness, nor piety on the part of the people is mentioned as the reason for the divine intervention. Instead, it is Israel's current situation of oppression and subjugation under the Roman Empire that is propelling God to intervene.

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<sup>107</sup> Jonathan Moo, "The Few Who Obtain Mercy: Soteriology in 4 Ezra," in *This World and the World to Come: Soteriology in Early Judaism*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner, LSTS 74 (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 101.

But later on, we learn that divine salvation will actually require human obedience to the divine plan. This point is explicitly stated in 4 Ezra 9:1-13, a passage similar to 4 Ezra 6:18-28 in its description of cosmic signs that will precede God's intervention to save God's people:

and it shall be that everyone who will be saved and will be able to escape on account of his works, or on account of the faith by which he has believed will survive the dangers that have been predicted, and will see my salvation in my land and within my borders, which I have sanctified for myself from the beginning ( 4 Ezra 9:7-8).

This passage makes it clear that both “faith” and “work” are necessary requirements for salvation. Both are necessary conditions that qualify one for entrance into the age to come.<sup>108</sup> There are many passages that attest to human agency or participation in the divine economy of salvation. For instance, the righteous who will experience divine salvation are described as “those who are alive and keep thy commandments” (4 Ezra 7:45); those “who have made my glory to prevail now, and through them my name has now been honored” (4 Ezra 7:60); those “who have a treasure of works laid up with the Most High” (4 Ezra

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<sup>108</sup> In 4 Ezra “faith” and “work” are two closely related concepts. Stone explains that the two words “are not very clearly differentiated and are used interchangeably.” Stone, *Fourth Ezra*, 296. This can be seen from fact that both terms are proximately placed in some sentences (cf. 9:7; 13:23). In the mind of the author, the two concepts are not diametrically opposing paths to salvation but rather complementary paths that lead people to the new age. Faith in God is expressed through good works (cf. James 2:14-26). But unfortunately, since the Reformation period, the protestant interpretation of “faith” and “work” in Pauline letters (Rom 3:27-28; Gal 2:15-16) has read the two concepts as binary opposites with Paul affirming the former as the approved means of salvation. They argue that when Paul writes that *justification is not by ‘works of the law,’* that he was actually attacking and rejecting the Judaism of his day that claims one can earn a right standing before God by total obedience to the law. This reading gained dominance among Pauline interpreters until the emergence of the New Perspective on Paul (NPP) championed by E. P. Sanders, D. G. Dunn, and N.T. Wright. These scholars debunked the fundamental premise of the reformation view of Paul and the Second Temple Judaism. For instance, Dunn clarifies that Paul did not oppose the Mosaic law nor did he have any issue with the mainline Judaism's understanding and interpretation of the law. Rather, Paul was opposed to his fellow Jews who use the “works of law”—the traditional Jewish boundary markers—namely, circumcision, Sabbath observance, and kosher laws as criteria to exclude others who did not follow these regulations from God's graceful salvation. Dunn argues that the real reason Paul opposed these laws is because these practices functioned to keep people apart—the people that Christ died to bring together. Emphasis on the law as a means of inclusion would definitely block the Gentile's access to membership in the new covenant community. Dunn makes distinction between “works of the law” (acts that distinguishes Jews from Gentiles) and “good works” (acts of righteousness). For Dunn people will still be judged on the final judgement based on their acts of righteousness. See James D.G. Dunn, “The Theology of Galatians: The Issue of Covenantal Nomism,” in *Pauline Theology*, ed. J.M. Bassler (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 1:125–46.

7:77); those who “during the time that they lived in it, they laboriously served the Most High, and withstood danger every hour, that they might keep the law of the Lawgiver perfectly” (4 Ezra 7:89); those who “have striven with great effort to overcome the evil thought which was formed with them, that it might not lead them astray from life into death,” (4 Ezra 7:92); and those who while “they were alive they kept the law which was given them in trust” (4 Ezra 7:94).

In 4 Ezra, the wicked and sinners who must face God’s judgement of eternal damnation are those who vehemently opposed God and his law. The author clearly states that the reason why those on earth are being punished is “because though they had understanding they committed iniquity, and though they received the commandments they did not keep them, and though they obtained the law, they dealt unfaithfully with what they received (4 Ezra 7:72).” Prior to this verse, the author described the crime of the wicked not only in terms of rejection of the law but also as deliberate opposition to God: “they were not obedient, and spoke against him... they even declared that the Most High does not exist, and they ignored his ways! They scorned his law, and denied his covenants; they have been unfaithful to his statutes, and have not performed his works” (4 Ezra 7:23-24).

Today, some scholars deny the divine agency in 4 Ezra’s soteriology due to the emphasis placed on human agency through obedience to the law and good works in the text. E. P. Sanders is the first to argue that 4 Ezra is an exception to the pattern of “covenantal nomism” that is characteristic of Second Temple theology.<sup>109</sup> Sanders

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<sup>109</sup> The term “covenantal nomism” was coined by E. P. Sander to express the idea of how Second Temple Judaism perceives itself as a religion of grace rather than a legalistic religion that the Reformers portrayed it. The term expresses the fact that one becomes a member of community of God’s people (salvation) through God’s gracious election (covenant), but maintains one’s membership in the covenant community by obedience to the law (nomism). In other words, Second Temple Judaism expounds a participatory soteriology. But surprisingly, Sander argues that 4 Ezra does not reflect the pattern of “covenantal nomism” that he found in other Jewish sources due to the text’s emphasis on legalistic perfectionism which creates no room for atonement and divine mercy. E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 409.

characterizes the author's perspective as "legalistic perfectionism."<sup>110</sup> Sanders's argument of lack of "grace" or divine agency in 4 Ezra's soteriology is further taken up by Bruce Longenecker. In his comparative study of the eschatology of 4 Ezra and Romans 1-11, Longenecker argues that 4 Ezra expounds a theological view that promotes "a type of legalism in which salvation is attained to by works of merit."<sup>111</sup> According to Longenecker, "in the eschatological age, God will (in his 'mercy') save the few who have proven themselves to be worthy of salvation by their works."<sup>112</sup> Longenecker draws these conclusions based on the supposed absence of divine mercy or grace in 4 Ezra.<sup>113</sup> Even where Longenecker perceives the presence of grace, he thinks that God's grace in 4 Ezra is more or less "an eschatological reflex to those who have saved themselves anyway by their works."<sup>114</sup>

While it is true that the human response to God through obedience to the law (ethical praxis) is emphasized in 4 Ezra, it does not negate the fact that salvation is first of all a divine initiative, as we have seen at the beginning of this section. Moreover, some passages attest to divine agency in the salvation of the few righteous ones. For instance, in 4 Ezra 9:20-22 we hear "but let my grape and my plant be saved, because with much labor I have perfected it." This passage shows that the obedient response of the righteous, their perfection, is not without divine empowerment. God is actively working, even "laboring," alongside the individual to defeat the evil heart in the present evil age.<sup>115</sup> Similarly, in 4 Ezra 8:11 we hear that "God will guide the righteous in his mercy." deSilva notes in this

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<sup>110</sup> Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 409; 418.

<sup>111</sup> Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant*, 270.

<sup>112</sup> Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant*, 270.

<sup>113</sup> Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant*, 152.

<sup>114</sup> Longenecker, *Eschatology and the Covenant*, 152. For a critique of Longenecker reading of 4 Ezra's soteriology, see David A. DeSilva, "Grace, the Law and Justification in 4 Ezra and the Pauline Letters: A Dialogue," *JSNT* 37.1 (2014): 25-49; Moo, "The Few Who Obtain Mercy: Soteriology in 4 Ezra," 98-113.

<sup>115</sup> Paul expresses similar view in his letters particularly in Phil 2:12-13 which says "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is /god who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose."

regard that “while the author of *4 Ezra* is rigorous in his view of what constitutes covenant faithfulness, it is not the case that he believes God to require perfect performance or sinlessness. God remains merciful and gracious in the theology of the book (7:132-33).<sup>116</sup> In *4 Ezra* 7:132-139 the author acknowledges God as merciful (7:132), gracious (7:133), patient (7:134), bountiful (7:135), and abundant in compassion (7:136-137) to his people since they are his own works (7:133-134). These passages attest to the author’s belief that God’s grace, patience, compassion, and mercy are very much operative in this present evil age for those who repent (*4 Ezra* 7:82); it is only at the time of divine judgment that mercy will be withdrawn (*4 Ezra* 7:33-35). The logic of *4 Ezra* is that the attainment of salvation is possible despite the human propensity to evil (evil heart). This is because the author recognizes human beings as moral agents who have responsibility to choose their destiny. Human beings retain the freedom to choose either life or death (*4 Ezra* 7:129-131) through obedience to God’s law or through disregard for the law.

### 3.6 The Rhetorical Function of *4 Ezra*

To discern the overall purpose or rhetorical function of *4 Ezra* is not an easy thing to do, given the complicated nature of the text itself. However, over the years, scholars have worked hard to figure out the reason(s) why the author of *4 Ezra* penned such a sophisticated theological masterpiece. Obviously, scholars differ with regard to the rhetorical function of the text and, as a result, a number of proposals have been posited. The first proposal is what I term “the consolation thesis.” Given the fact that *4 Ezra* was a response to a national catastrophe— the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple— some scholars have seen the rhetorical function of the text as that of providing “a sense of

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<sup>116</sup> DeSilva, “Grace, the Law and Justification in *4 Ezra* and the Pauline Letters,” 33.

meaning in the face of chaos, ‘a coherence that has been lost or profoundly threatened by the [temple’s] destruction’<sup>117</sup>

Longenecker is one of the major proponents of this view. According to Longenecker, 4 Ezra serves two related purposes. First, it aims to manage the sorrow felt by Jews in the wake of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple so that the nation could heal. Longenecker argues that in order to heal, the hearers and readers of 4 Ezra are invited to “follow the progress of its main character, who gives voice to the trauma and distress of the people initially (episodes I-III), but who emerges from this full of confidence, hope and praise (episodes IV-VII)”<sup>118</sup> So Longenecker sees the primary function of 4 Ezra as the management of the sorrow felt by the Jewish community following the event of 70 CE. The author seeks to encourage his people to maintain absolute confidence in God’s justice despite their deep sorrow.

A second proposed rhetorical function of 4 Ezra is what I might term “discouragement of resistance thesis.” A major proponent of this view is Philip Esler, who argues that the primary purpose of 4 Ezra is the management or elimination of the powerful cognitive dissonance which many Jews experienced as a result of their total defeat by Rome.<sup>119</sup> In order to manage this cognitive dissonance, Esler argues that the author of 4 Ezra writes to encourage his audience to accept their current state of affairs and to discourage them from any thought of insurrection against Rome, since the latter would definitively be punished by God or his messiah. According to Esler, 4 Ezra “does not advocate or even refer to the type of vindication which would involve participation by Jews in destroying Rome.”<sup>120</sup> The Jews are simply told to wait for the messianic solution

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<sup>117</sup> Greg Carey, *Ultimate Things: An Introduction to Jewish and Christian Apocalyptic Literature* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice, 2012), 155.

<sup>118</sup> Bruce W. Longenecker, “Locating 4 Ezra: A Consideration of Its Social Setting and Functions,” *JSJ* 28.3 (1997): 287.

<sup>119</sup> Philip F. Esler, “The Social Function of 4 Ezra,” *JSNT* 53 (1994): 121.

<sup>120</sup> Esler, “The Social Function of 4 Ezra,” 115.

to their current problem of the Roman domination. So, for Esler, 4 Ezra recommends some sort of introversion for his Jewish audience; they are to live quietly, focusing on the strict observance of the Torah since entrance into the heavenly city or salvation in the next world depends absolutely upon compliance with the Law in the present time.<sup>121</sup> For scholars who share this view, the author of 4 Ezra wrote to deflect the attention of his audience from Rome or any thought of insurrection against Rome.

While not denying the fact that 4 Ezra provides consolation or a sense of meaning for the Jews in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple by the Romans, this chapter adopts Kenneth Jones's position that 4 Ezra was written to counteract Josephus's view that the destruction of Jerusalem was justified because of Israel's sin (4 Ezra 3:28-30) and that Roman rule was a sign of God's approval.<sup>122</sup> While God may have allowed the reign and domination of Rome for his own mysterious purpose, what is certain for the author is that the Roman kingdom, like the fourth kingdom of Daniel, must come to an end. It will not rule forever. Its ideological claim of *imperium sine fine* is only but an illusion because its end is already fixed by God. Fourth Ezra envisions the end of the oppressive Roman Empire and the arrival of a divinely established kingdom that will be marked by justice and righteousness—a new Jerusalem on earth. As a result, the author calls his audience to faithfulness, to align themselves with God through obedience to Torah.

### 3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has shown that the idea of a deterministic history pervades the narrative of 4 Ezra. This can be seen in way that the author views history as a periodized

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<sup>121</sup> Esler, "The Social Function of 4 Ezra," 117–21. For similar see, Daniel M. Gurtner, *Introducing the Pseudepigrapha of Second Temple Judaism: Message, Context, and Significance* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 104–5.

<sup>122</sup> Jones, *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70*, 274.



schema which can be numbered (4 Ezra 12:11; 14:11-12) or divided (4 Ezra 4:26-32; 6:7; 7:50). Underlying this perspective of history is the notion of God's sovereignty. God is the one who directs the course of history. In 4 Ezra, God's power to direct or control the course of history is evident not only in the ways that God divides the ages (4 Ezra 7:50) and controls times and seasons (4 Ezra 13:38), but also in the way that God determines the succession of kings (4 Ezra 11:39). The text attests to a linear and teleological view of history, that it is a sequence of successive kingdoms followed by a definitive divine rule that would last forever. The vision of the eagle climaxes in the reign of the messiah who will execute justice on earth. In an era when the Roman Empire was propagating its ideology of *imperium sine fine*, the author offers a deterministic view of history in which world history is on its course leading up to the final triumph of God. By means of *vaticinia ex eventu*, the author imagines the end of Roman imperial power and envisions the triumph of God and his messiah who will inaugurate a new age of righteousness and justice for God's people. The author's emphasis on the divine control of history functions both as "an encouragement in adversity as well as a remedy for despair."<sup>123</sup>

At the heart of the author's historical review is the certainty of God's intervention to save his faithful ones and to punish their enemies. For the audience, the heartwarming conclusion that the author reached in his discourse of the present evil age is that it is coming to an end, to be succeeded by a new age marked by righteousness and justice. "The day of judgement will be the end of this age and the beginning of the immortal age to come" (4 Ezra 7:113). God will certainly address the wickedness and injustice in this age by punishing Israel's oppressors and by vindicating his faithful ones by restoring the

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<sup>123</sup>Christopher Rowland, *The Open Heaven: A Study of Apocalyptic in Judaism and Early Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 145.

beauty and glory of Zion (4 Ezra 10:50-54; 13:39-50). A temporary messianic age shall usher in the new age wherein God himself will be king over his faithful ones.

Although the language of temporal dualism abounds in 4 Ezra, indicating that the world to come differs in significant ways from the present age, yet our study of the relationship between the two ages shows that the author does not envision a radical disjuncture between the two temporal spheres.<sup>124</sup> Finally, the crux of 4 Ezra is the assurance of the salvation of God's people from this present evil age. While some studies have denied the divine agency in 4 Ezra's soteriology, this chapter demonstrates that salvation in 4 Ezra is primarily God's initiative, but also that God's people have moral responsibility to accept or decline God's gift of salvation through the choices they make. Human obedience to the divine law is only a positive response to God's gracious gift of salvation. In light of the assurance of God's salvific intervention, the author encourages his audience to choose the way of obedience that leads to life, rather than the way of Adam that Rome embodies, a way that that leads to damnation.

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<sup>124</sup> The author conceives the world to come in terms of God's renewal of creation (*creaturam renovare*) (7:75), not in terms of annihilation as some scholars have posited.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### PARTICIPATORY SOTERIOLOGY, READING ROMANS 5:12-21 IN LIGHT OF JEWISH APOCALYPTIC ESCHATOLOGY

#### 4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I explored how two Jewish authors (Daniel and Ezra) used two apocalyptic devices: the periodization of history and the two-age motif to address the socio-political issues of their day. I argued that Daniel functions as a narrative of resistance to imperial domination and hegemony. Using the means of apocalyptic periodization and the two-age schema, the author resists and counters an imperial ideological claim over time and history, its sinful and oppressive praxis. The author of 4 Ezra, writing after the destruction of the Second Temple, deployed the devices of periodization and the two-ages motif to assure his audience that the Most High God, the Jewish God, is still in control of time and the unfolding of historical events. Perceiving their socio-political context as the climax of evil, these authors thirsted and yearned for an imminent divine salvific intervention, when God would address the injustices and various manifestations of evils faced by their people. I argued that, read in their socio-historical context, the soteriology of Daniel and 4 Ezra is not a longing for a “future,” “abstract,” “spiritualized,” and “personalized” experience of God in some other-worldly existence. Rather, it is a discourse of a human quest for the transformation of the social order into a new and better world—a reality that would be realized through the synergy of divine and human action.

Having established that Jewish apocalyptists usually deploy the devices of periodization of history and the doctrine of the two ages for political, ideological and theological purposes, this chapter extends the investigation to Paul. The chapter proceeds on the premise that Paul’s Adam-Christ discourse in Rom 5:12-21 is to be understood from

the framework of the Jewish apocalyptic worldview, particularly the apocalyptic periodization of history and the doctrine of the two ages. In Rom 5:12-21, Paul divides history into three epochs: (a) the era of Adam—before the Mosaic law; (b) the era of Moses—the period of the law; and (c) the era of Christ—the period of grace and righteousness. Paul’s antithetical juxtaposition of Adam and Christ in Rom 5:12-21 also provides a clear illustration of the doctrine of the two ages. The contrast that Paul makes between Adam and Christ in Rom 5:12-21 is grounded in the apocalyptic dualism of two ages. While these points have been accentuated in previous studies, no work to the best of my knowledge has carried out a thorough investigation of the socio-political implications of Paul’s use of periodization and the motif of the two ages in Rom 5:12-21, and it is this sociopolitical function of periodization of history and the doctrine of the two ages in Rom 5:12-21 that this chapter explores in more detail.

The first thing that jumps out when one compares Paul’s periodization in Rom 5:12-21 and the periodization of Daniel 2 and 7, and 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34 is that Paul never mentioned any empire in his division of history. While the authors of the Book of Daniel and 4 Ezra schematized history based on important political entities of their time (the gentile empires), Paul follows a different trajectory. He presents a historical review in which history is divided according to the most important moments in Israel’s salvation history. Using the theory of “hidden transcripts” developed by contemporary empire critics,<sup>1</sup> I aim to show how Paul’s periodization of history, which on the surface carries no political significance, is indeed embedded with socio-political significance albeit in coded

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<sup>1</sup>For a broader reading of this subject see Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance: Applying the Work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004). For specific studies on how the concept of hidden transcript has been applied to Paul see, Elliot Neil, “Strategies of Resistance and Hidden Transcripts in the Pauline Corpus,” in *Hidden Transcripts and the Arts of Resistance: Applying the Work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 97–122; Christoph Heilig, *Hidden Criticism? The Methodology and Plausibility of the Search for a Counter-Imperial Subtext in Paul*, WUNT 392/2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 54–67; James R. Harrison, *Paul and the Imperial Authorities at Thessalonica and Rome: A Study in the Conflict of Ideology*, WUNT 273 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 28–33.

ways. Paul's periodization of history and the implicit doctrine of the two ages in Rom 5:12-21 function as theological critique of Paul's socio-political context, the Roman Empire under the reign of Nero. Besides functioning as a critique of the socio-political system that Paul describes in terms of ἀδικία ("injustice") and ἀσέβεια ("ungodliness"), I also argue that Paul uses the apocalyptic devices of periodization of history and doctrine of the two ages to emphasize God's absolute sovereignty and control over the universe, including the politics of the Roman Empire. The threefold division of history in Rom 5:12-21 conveys a sense of theological determinism that we saw first in 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34. For Jewish apocalyptists, including Paul, periodization underscores the fact that "everything has been carefully planned and now happens at the precise moment that was fixed by God."<sup>2</sup> In Rom 5:12-21, Paul construes history as a process that has already been fixed from creation to redemption—a process that is under God's control.

The second task of this chapter is to examine the nature of Paul's soteriological discourse in Rom 5:12-21. There is a general consensus that in Rom 5:12-21 Paul is concerned with God's salvific intervention in human history, an intervention that culminates with the Christ-event. The text is one of Paul's most extensive discussions of God's saving action in Christ. In Jewish apocalyptic tradition, discourse about periodization of history and the doctrine of the two ages is usually connected with discourse about divine salvation in that they express the urgency of God's salvific intervention. The end of the sequence is a moment of *Kairos* when God will establish his rule and wipe out all evil and injustice in the world. Rom 5:12-21 not only exhibits these features, the text also contains explicit references of important soteriological terms that are foundational for Paul's soteriology.

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<sup>2</sup> Matthias Henze, "This Age and the Age to Come in 2 Baruch," in *Dreams, Visions, Imaginations: Jewish, Christian and Gnostic Views of the World to Come*, ed. Jens Schröter, Tobias Nicklas, and Armand P. Tàrrach, BZNW 247 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 122.

While there is consensus among Pauline scholars that Rom 5:12-21 reflects an undisputed Pauline theology of salvation, the nature of salvation in the text has been vigorously contested. Paul's soteriology in Rom 5:12-21 has been read predominantly from three western theological perspectives: the first perspective which dates back to Augustine, reads Rom 5:12-21 as Paul's discourse of an original (inherited) sin and what God did to save humanity from this condition. The second perspective which dates back to Martin Luther reads Rom 5:12-21 as textual support for the doctrine of justification by faith alone. Here, salvation is construed in terms of God's imputation of Christ's righteousness on the sinner who turns to him in faith. The third perspective which is championed by the contemporary "apocalyptic school" of thought interprets sin and death in Rom 5:12-21 not as inherited sin nor as sinful human actions but as cosmic powers. Salvation from this lens is construed in terms of liberation from the cosmic powers of sin and death.

I do not approach Rom 5:12-21 from any of these lenses. Rather, I read the text in light contemporary empire criticism which pays attention to the various mechanisms that ancient colonized peoples deploy to resist imperial hegemony and domination. Read from this lens, I argue that what Paul is doing with the Adam narrative is first and foremost a subtle theological critique of both individual and systemic sins that have dominated the human world, especially as they are reflected within the socio-political context of the Roman Empire. At a time when the Roman Empire was propagating an ideology of realized eschatology, an ideology of a new age, a new era of peace and security (*pax Romana*), Paul engages in a rhetoric of the reign of sin and death that functions as a counternarrative to the ideological propaganda of the empire. Secondly, I argue that Rom 5:12-21 is ultimately a discourse about the *just deed* (δικαίωμα) of Jesus and the *just deed* of Christ's believers who are called to embody the δικαίωμα of Jesus. For Paul, it is

through the praxis of “just deed” that God will restore divine order in the world. It is on this ground that I argue for a participatory and transformative reading of soteriology in Rom 5:12-21.

The chapter is divided into eight sections. The first section is the general introduction to the chapter. Section two is a review of two contemporary theological discourses on Paul. The review on empire and postcolonial criticisms enables us to see how scholars have construed Paul’s interaction with the Roman Empire either as resisting or reinscribing (and in some cases doing both at the same time) the Roman imperial ideologies. The review on New Perspective on Paul provides insight into my interpretation of the δίκαιο- terminologies in Rom 5:12-21. These reviews enable me to situate my own work within the current scholarly discourse on Paul. Section three focuses on Paul’s letter to the Romans. Here I explore some fundamental issues in Romans which include the authorship, integrity, circumstances, and purpose of Romans, identity and character of its addressees, as well as the social political context of the letter. Here I explore some of the historical events, especially the socio-political and religious issues that shape Paul’s discourse in Rom 5:12-21. The fourth section offers a detailed exegesis of Rom 5:12-21. Sections five and six explores the topic of periodization of history and the implicit motif of the two ages Rom 5:12-21. In section seven, I offer a sociopolitical reading of Paul’s personification of sin and death in Rom 5:12-21 as it relates to Roman imperial domination in the first century BC. The last section concludes the chapter.

## 4.2 Paul in Contemporary Pauline Scholarship

### 4.2.1 The Apostle Paul in Contemporary Empire and Postcolonial Criticisms

Not much attention was paid either to the Roman imperial context of the Letter to the Romans or to Paul’s socio-political discourses within the text in the mainstream

(western) scholarship. The reason for this lack of attention to the sociopolitical elements of Paul's gospel is that Paul was understood as apolitical and a social conservative, one who proclaimed a solely "spiritual" gospel of God's salvation that had no socio-economic or political significance for his communities.<sup>3</sup> Paul's focus was understood as a spiritual salvation of souls. According to Daniel Oudshoorn, scholars who adopt this perspective often see Paul as "a patriarchal figure who is unconcerned with matters related to slavery, patriarchy, political oppression, or altering the world order— after all, these things are ephemeral and inconsequential in light of the deeper spiritual reality of the 'Gospel.'"<sup>4</sup> The result is that the mainstream readings of Paul have focused primarily on the spiritual matters such as individual salvation, justification by faith, peace, etc., so much so that the political and social issues that affect God's people in their everyday lives are barely addressed in Pauline studies.

In recent times, some studies have challenged this traditional view of Paul, arguing that Paul was much more political than is usually recognized and that the gospel he proclaimed carries with it profound social and political implications. This new trend in Pauline scholarship began with Adolf Deissmann's, *Light from the Ancient East: The New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*. In his study, Deissmann showed that extensive shared linguistic parallels exist between the Christological titles used by Paul and the titles of the deified Roman emperors. For instance, Christological terms such as υἱός θεοῦ ("Son of God"), κύριος ("lord"), σωτήρ

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<sup>3</sup>This view is explicitly expressed by F. C. Grant who notes that "it is less and less possible, to represent early Christianity as a revolutionary social (or social-economic) movement... it is clear that Christianity was from the beginning a purely religious movement, a cult, a body of beliefs and practices centered on something else than the economic welfare or well-being of any racial, national, or social group." F. C. Grant, "The Economic Background of the New Testament," in *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology: Essay in Honor of C. H. Dodd*, ed. William D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964), 101.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Oudshoorn, *Pauline Politics: An Examination of Various Perspectives*, PUD 1 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 28.



(“savior”), etc., are terms used also within the Roman religious spheres.<sup>5</sup> Although Deissmann concludes that these Christological titles used by Paul were not primarily intended as anti-imperial appellations, he acknowledged, however, the existence of polemical parallelism between the cult of the emperor and the cult of Christ. For instance, Deissmann notes that when Paul call Jesus “Lord” the people might hear in Paul’s voice a “silent protest” against other “lords,” particularly the Emperor who is also addressed as “the lord.” But most importantly, Deissman affirms that “St. Paul himself may have felt and intended this silent protest.”<sup>6</sup>

With the emergence of empire and postcolonial criticisms, as well as feminist liberation studies towards the end of the twentieth century, the imperial context of the NT writers, particularly Paul, came to the forefront. A major endeavor for most empire critics is identifying the different forms (mostly subtle) of resistance practice that colonized people invent in order to challenge or subvert the hegemonic forces that dominate them. Three poignant studies edited by Richard Horsley<sup>7</sup> have explored the ways in which Paul negotiated and opposed the complex political and moral-religious realities of the Roman Empire. Horsley’s collections spotlight the pervasive Roman imperial context under which Paul conducted his ministry of proclaiming the salvific gospel of Jesus the Messiah and his mission of forming a new community of God’s covenant people whose beliefs and praxis stand in opposition to that of the Roman Empire. Horsley identifies important aspects of Roman imperial ideology that Paul counters in the Letter to the Romans, namely: the imperial cult, the patronage system, and the imperial gospel of salvation.

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<sup>5</sup> Adolf Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East; the New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, trans. Lionel R. M. Strachan (New York: Harper & Bros, 1927), 338–78.

<sup>6</sup> Deissmann, *Light from the Ancient East; the New Testament Illustrated by Recently Discovered Texts of the Graeco-Roman World*, 355.

<sup>7</sup> Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and Empire: Religion and Power in Roman Imperial Society* (Harrisburg, PA.: Trinity, 1997); Richard Horsley, ed., *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation: Essay in Honor of Krister Stendahl* (Harrisburg, PN: Trinity, 2000); Richard A. Horsley, ed., *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (Harrisburg, PA.: Trinity, 2004).

Neil Elliot is another prominent proponent of a political reading of Paul. In his essay, “Paul and the Politics of Empire: Problems and Prospects,”<sup>8</sup> Elliot aptly captures the counterimperial strands in Paul’s Letter to the Romans. He argues that Romans is a “defiant indictment of the rampant injustice and impiety of the Roman ‘golden age.’”<sup>9</sup> According to him, Paul’s rhetoric of “*adikia*” and “*asebeia*” in Romans 1-2 functions as an indictment of the Augustan golden age and that Paul indicts the empire using coded language and metaphors. Wei Wan notes that underlying this approach to the study of Paul is “the idea that early Christian proclamation of Christ’s Lordship, wherever and whenever it was made, constituted an antithesis, a challenge, to imperial authority—and, indeed, oppressive forces everywhere. Christian practices informed by that Kerygma are subsequently understood as acts of resistance formulated as alternatives to practices in wider Roman society, particularly that of the veneration of the emperor himself.”<sup>10</sup>

This anti-imperial reading of Paul has not been left unchallenged. Some scholars have pointed out that Paul’s rhetoric of obedience to civil authority in Rom 13:1-7 portrays a “pro-empire” sentiment rather than an anti-imperial one.<sup>11</sup> Paul is perceived to have endorsed the authority of the Roman state and its dominant imperial order, ordering the Christian believers to obey the dictates of the emperor. Secondly, it has been pointed out that Paul scarcely mentions Rome in his letters. John Barclay argues that although Paul speaks of principalities, powers, authorities, and the rulers of this world, Paul never

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<sup>8</sup> Neil Elliott, “Paul and the Politics of Empire: Problems and Prospect,” in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, 17–39.

<sup>9</sup> Elliott, “Paul and the Politics of Empire: Problems and Prospect,” 37. See also Neil Elliott, *The Arrogance of Nations: Reading Romans in the Shadow of Empire*, Paul in Critical Contexts (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010).

<sup>10</sup> Wei Hsien Wan, *The Contest for Time and Space in the Roman Imperial Cults and 1 Peter: Reconfiguring the Universe* (Bloomsbury, 2019), 6.

<sup>11</sup> See Hans D. Betz, “Paul,” vol. 5 of in *ABD* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 5:187.

explicitly names “Rome” as the worldly powers he confronts.<sup>12</sup> For Barclay, Rome was insignificant to Paul and so could not have functioned as a target of Paul’s polemic.

This contemporary characterization of Paul as either anti-imperial agent or pro-empire puppet has been explained in light of postcolonial theory of hybridity and ambivalence. From a postcolonial lens, Paul is understood as an ethnic hybrid figure.<sup>13</sup> So, when it comes to how Paul navigated and negotiated the sociopolitical situation within the Roman Empire as both a colonized subject and a citizen of Rome, one has to bear in mind Jason Coker’s admonition that “Paul’s hybridity blurs the boundaries between simple acquiescence and subversion.... Paul uses imperial ideology when necessary to argue against empire, but supports imperial claims at other times.”<sup>14</sup> So, what we see sometimes in Paul is an ambivalence that is indicative of hybrid colonized subjects.<sup>15</sup> These observations are extremely important in our examination of Rom 5:12-21.

#### 4.2.2 The New Perspective on Paul

Romans 5:12-21 is replete with δικαίο-words—δικαίωμα (vv. 16, 18), δικαιοσύνη (vv. 17, 21), δικαίωσις (v. 18), and δίκαιος (v. 19)—that is, the language of justification, justice and righteousness. As a result, Rom 5:12-21 has been used to defend the doctrine

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<sup>12</sup> John M. G. Barclay, “Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul,” in *Pauline Churches and Diaspora Jews*, WUNT 275 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 374–75.

<sup>13</sup> Robert P. Seesengood, “Hybridity and the Rhetoric of Endurance: Reading Paul’s Athletic Metaphors in a Context of Postcolonial Self-Consciousness,” *BCT* 1.3 (2005): 1–14; L. Ann Jervis, “Reading Romans 7 in Conversation with Postcolonial Theory: Paul’s Struggle towards a Christian Identity of Hybridity,” in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 95–109; Caroline E. Johnson Hodge, *If Sons, Then Heirs: A Study of Kinship and Ethnicity in the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 4–5.

<sup>14</sup> K. Jason Coker, *James in Postcolonial Perspective: The Letter as Nativist Discourse* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 180.

<sup>15</sup> In postcolonial studies hybridity describes a complex process whereby the interaction of the colonized and colonizer inevitably influences the self-definition of each.<sup>15</sup> Hybridity creates a liminal space, what Bhabha describes as a “third space,” an interstitial space that defies the simple binary notions of colonizer and colonized. According to Christopher Stanley, the “hybrid identity is simultaneously compliant and resistant.” Christopher D. Stanley, “Paul the Ethnic Hybrid? Postcolonial Perspectives on Paul’s Categorizations,” in *The Colonized Apostle: Paul through Postcolonial Eyes*, ed. Christopher D. Stanley (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 112. See also Jervis, “Reading Romans 7 in Conversation with Postcolonial Theory: Paul’s Struggle towards a Christian Identity of Hybridity,” 97.

of justification by faith alone. Luther and those who follow his reading conceptualize Paul's doctrine of justification by faith alone as the way in which God justifies individual sinners who profess faith in Christ Jesus through the imputation of God/Christ's righteousness.<sup>16</sup> Today, the above reading of justification has been challenged by the proponents of New Perspective on Paul.

Krister Stendahl well-known essay, "The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West," has been considered by many as a major catalyst for the New Perspective. In the essay, Standahl argues that "Where Paul was concerned about the possibility for Gentiles to be included in the messianic community, his statements are now read as answers to the quest for assurance about man's salvation out of a common human predicament."<sup>17</sup> Standahl makes a strong argument that western theology has misread Paul as being anti-Jewish because its theology was largely shaped by Luther's introspective conscience, his struggle to gain personal justification and his polemic against the Catholic Church. But the New Perspective is largely credited to E. P. Sanders with the publication of his groundbreaking work *on Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (1977). Contrary to the Reformation's projection of Judaism as a legalistic religion, Sanders argue that the Judaism of Paul's day was actually a religion of grace marked by a pattern which Sanders describes as "covenantal nomism." Other important proponents include D. G. Dunn, and N. T Wright.

An important aspect of the New Perspective that informs my reading of Roman 5:12-21 is its interpretation of Paul's doctrine of justification especially as has been modified by scholars who stress both the acquittal (forensic) and transformative character of justification in Paul's thought. For instance, Thomas Stegman has excellently shown that besides expressing the forensic meaning of "acquitted" or "righteous" status for all

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<sup>16</sup> Martin Luther, *Lectures on Romans*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikán and Helmut T. Lehmann, LW (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1972), 25:256, 306.

<sup>17</sup> Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 86.

who are “in Christ,” the concept of justification (δικαίο- terminology) connotes real transformation.<sup>18</sup> According to Stegman, God not only creates a new status of “forgiven” for those who receive the good news in faith, God also transforms and empowers them to become more Christ-like.<sup>19</sup> Michael Gorman has made very significant contribution in articulating this transformational quality of “justification” in Paul’s soteriology. Gorman argues that justification expresses the notion of deification or “cruciform” *theosis*.<sup>20</sup> In a recent monograph, *The Practice of the Body of Christ: Human Agency in Pauline Theology after MacIntyre*, Colin Miller expresses a similar view, arguing that δικαίο- word group in Rom 5:12-21 expresses not only the *just action* of Christ himself, but also the *just action* of the ecclesial community.<sup>21</sup> Although my framework is empire and postcolonial criticisms, my reading of Rom 5:12-21 affirms and builds on these studies in so far as they emphasize the transformative character of the hybrid communities (Jews and Gentiles) that God is forming “in Christ”— a people whose distinct identity, message, and praxis are countercultural to the ideology and praxis of the Roman Empire.

#### 4.3 The Letter to the Romans

##### 4.3.1 Authorship, Unity and Integrity of the Letter

There is a general consensus among scholars that Paul authored the Letter to the Romans.<sup>22</sup> Everett Harrison notes that “internal evidence is especially strong, for the

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<sup>18</sup> Thomas D. Stegman, “Paul’s Use of Dikaio Terminology: Moving Beyond N. T. Wright’s Forensic Interpretation,” *TS* 72.3 (2011): 496.

<sup>19</sup> Stegman, “Paul’s Use of Dikaio Terminology,” 499.

<sup>20</sup> See Gorman Michael, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord* (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2017); Michael J. Gorman, *Becoming the Gospel: Paul, Participation, and Mission*, Gospel and Our Culture Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015); Michael J. Gorman, *Cruciformity: Paul’s Narrative Spirituality of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001); Michael J. Gorman, *Participating in Christ: Explorations in Paul’s Theology and Spirituality* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2019); Michael J. Gorman, *The Death of the Messiah and the Birth of the New Covenant: The (Not-so) New Model of the Atonement* (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2014).

<sup>21</sup> Colin D. Miller, *The Practice of the Body of Christ: Human Agency in Pauline Theology after MacIntyre*, PTMS 200 (Cambridge: James Clarke, 2014), 61–82.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2018), 2–3; Scott W. Hahn, *Romans*, CCSC (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), xv–xvii.

language, theology and spirit are unmistakably Paul's."<sup>23</sup> There is explicit claim of Pauline authorship at the opening line of the Letter (Rom 1:1). Not only is Paul mentioned as the sender, the author also describes himself as an "Israelite" from "the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom 11:1), and "the apostle to the Gentiles" (Rom 11:13). Scott Hahn finds that these internal details fit the biographical profile of Paul the apostle.<sup>24</sup> Even though linguistic, stylistic, literary, historical, and theological evidences are all in support of Pauline authorship of the letter, it is important to acknowledge the roles played by other significant persons, such as Tertius (Rom 16:22) and Phoebe (Rom 16:12), both in the writing and in the delivery and elucidation of the letter.

While Pauline authorship of Romans has remained largely uncontested, the literary unity and integrity of the letter have been vigorously questioned. There is argument regarding whether or not Paul wrote all sixteen chapters of Romans as a single letter. The concern about the literary integrity of Romans has to do with the inclusion or exclusion of chapters 15-16 in some textual traditions, the placement of the doxology in Rom 16:25-27 in different locations, and the omission of "in Rome" (Rom 1:7, 15) in some manuscripts.<sup>25</sup> These textual variants raise questions about whether Romans should be seen as a composite letter. I will not go into the nitty-gritty of the problem as it has already been attended to by various scholars.<sup>26</sup> This study presupposes the integrity of the entire epistle.

#### 4.3.2 Audience and Date of Composition

Paul identifies his recipients in Rom 1:7 as "all in Rome who are loved by God and are called to be saints." As the capital of the Roman Empire, Rome was inhabited by

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<sup>23</sup>Everett Falconer Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 303.

<sup>24</sup> Hahn, *Romans*, xv-xvi.

<sup>25</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/German Bible Society, 1994), 471.

<sup>26</sup> Harry Y. Gamble, *The Textual History of the Letter to the Romans: A Study in Textual and Literary Criticism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977); Schreiner, *Romans*, 5-10.

multi-ethnic groups from different parts of the world. Walter's quote from *Deipnosophistae* (c. 200 CE) provides a glimpse into the diversity of Rome in the first and second centuries CE: "even entire nations are settled there *en masse*, like the Cappadocians, the Scythians, the Pontians, and more besides."<sup>27</sup> These were people from different socio-economic and religious backgrounds. There is internal evidence within the text that supports this view. John Harvey has shown that "much of the content of Romans is devoted to issues of particular interest to Jewish readers (2:1–3:8; 3:19–20, 27–31; 4:12–15; 5:13–14, 20; 6:14; 7:1–8:4; 9:30–10:8; 13:8–10). Yet the epistolary sections of the letter are styled for Gentiles (1:1–17; 15:14–16:27), and Paul includes his readers among the Gentiles to whom he was called to minister (1:5–6, 13; 15:14–21)."<sup>28</sup>

In light of these internal evidence, Harvey concludes that it is probably best to see Romans as written to a mixed congregation of Jews and Gentiles, with Gentiles in the majority.<sup>29</sup> Harvey's conclusion has already been confirmed by earlier studies. For instance, Andrew Clarke's onomastic study of Romans 16 also shows that the people Paul acknowledged in his greeting in Romans 16 includes names from different ethnic groups (Jews and Gentiles), from different social backgrounds (immigrants, slaves, freed, and free persons), as well as names of both males and females.<sup>30</sup> The names are presented in a way that transcend all ethnic, social, and gender barriers. Consequently, Clarke concludes that Paul's theology of inclusiveness is aptly demonstrated in the greetings.<sup>31</sup>

Peter Lampe insightful study of Romans 16 also enables us to further reconstruct not only the identity of members of the Christian communities in Rome but also the social

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<sup>27</sup> Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae* 1.20. Quoted in James C. Walters, *Ethnic Issues in Paul's Letter to the Romans: Changing Self-Definitions in Earliest Roman Christianity* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity, 1993), 10–11.

<sup>28</sup> John D. Harvey, *Romans*, EGGNT (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2017), 4.

<sup>29</sup> Harvey, *Romans*, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Andre D. Clark, "Jew and Greek, Slave and Free, Male and Female: Paul's Theology of Ethnic, Social and Gender Inclusiveness in Romans 16," in *Rome in the Bible and the Early Church*, ed. Peter Oakes (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 103–25.

<sup>31</sup> Clark, "Jew and Greek, Slave and Free, Male and Female: Paul's Theology of Ethnic, Social and Gender Inclusiveness in Romans 16," 123.

realities of these house churches.<sup>32</sup> According to Lampe, Paul's greeting assumed the existence of at least seven clusters of house churches who congregate in different places: These include the house church led by Priscilla and Aquila (16:3-5a); the house churches connected to Aristobulus (16:10), Narcissus (16:11), Asyncritus (16:14) and Philologus, Julia and others (16:15), and other individuals who do not belong to any of these groups.<sup>33</sup> According to Lampe, those who belonged to the households of Aristobulus and Narcissus were slaves or freed slaves who were still working for their masters.

It makes sense therefore to argue that those who make up the Christian communities in Rome are not only multi-ethnic groups, but they are also mixed social classes with different socioeconomic realities: the rich and the poor, the freepersons and the slaves, the colonizers and the colonized, men and women, who have pledged allegiance to Jesus the Messiah. To this mixed audience, Paul sent "his trans-ethnic gospel, one that unites Jews, Romans, Greeks, and Barbarians under the lordship of Jesus." Postcolonial critics have also used the concept of hybridity to shed light on the new identity of Christ's believers in Rome. By their incorporation into Christ, members of Christ now have an "in-Christ" identity—a hybrid identity that transcends and subverts all previous identities and socio-cultural binaries (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 5:17). Their "in-Christ" identity is one that would inform their ethical choices and, over time, would produce a distinct ethos in comparison with Roman imperial ideology.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Peter Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus: Christians at Rome in the First Two Centuries*, ed. Marshall D. Johnson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Peter Lampe, "The Roman Christians of Romans 16," in *The Roman Debate. Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 216–30.

<sup>33</sup> Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 359–65. For further discussion of the nature of these house churches, see Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, HCHCB (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 949–74.

<sup>34</sup> J. Brian Tucker, *Remain in Your Calling: Paul and the Continuation of Social Identities in 1 Corinthians* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 47–48.



Romans is usually dated between 55 and 59 CE based on some historical details of Paul's travels record in Acts 18-20 and internal evidence from Rom 15:14-33.<sup>35</sup> I support the proposed date of 56-57 CE. This is the time frame one could get by correlating Paul's itinerary in Acts 18-20. The letter may have been written in the house of Gaius (16:25) who lived in Corinth (1 Cor 1:14) while Paul was at Corinth during his third missionary journey. Paul's first visit to Corinth occurred between 50-52 CE. This was the time when Gallio was the proconsul in Achaia (Acts 18:12-17). From there, Paul travelled to Ephesus where he spent three years (Acts 18:18-19) and then returned to Greece (likely Corinth) again (Acts 20:2). Paul had already written in 1 Corinthians that he would receive some collection from the community upon his arrival and before going to Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1-4). This placed his second visit to Corinth around 56-57 CE. So, Paul's travel to Jerusalem (Acts 20:4-6) makes late 56 or early 57 CE the most like date for the letter. Internal evidence from Rom 15:14-33 confirm that Paul has completed his mission in the eastern Mediterranean basin and wanted to move to the West (Rom 15:23-24). He planned to go to Jerusalem to deliver the collection he had taken from his churches before coming to Rome (Rom 15:25-26). Little did he know that he would be arrested in Jerusalem and taken to Rome as a prisoner who would be executed few years later. One can infer that Paul wrote Romans when he was about to set out for Jerusalem from Corinth (cf. Acts 20-21).

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<sup>35</sup> Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 85–88; Jewett, *Romans*, 18; Schreiner, *Romans*, 3–5. Scholars who give a closer range dating includes: Jewett who suggests a date between late 56 or early 57 CE, see Jewett, *Romans* 18. Arland J. Hultgren proposes 55-58 CE Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 4. while Luke Timothy Johnson and Richard Longenecker suggest the Winter of 57-58 CE; see Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 4; Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 5–6. Those who give precise date includes: Frank Matera who supports early 56 CE, see Frank J. Matera, *Romans*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 4–6. While Elsa Tamez suggests 56 or 57 CE, see Elsa Tamez, "Romans: A Feminist Reading," in *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature*, ed. Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 698.

#### 4.3.3 The Purpose of Romans

The purpose of Romans remains an actively contested issue among scholars. Scholars dispute whether or not Paul's letter was addressing a particular problem in the churches in Rome. There are three dominant contentions in this on-going debate: (a) Romans as Paul's compendium of Christian faith which has no particular situational affinity; (b) Paul's purpose is simply missional; (c) Paul's purpose is simply pastoral.<sup>36</sup> The argument with regards to the missional thesis is that since Paul had intended an upcoming mission to Spain, he wrote to the Roman Christian communities to establish a partnership with them in extending the gospel to the West. Jewett writes: "The basic idea in the interpretation of each verse and paragraph is that Paul wishes to gain support for a mission to the barbarians in Spain, which requires that the gospel of impartial, divine righteousness revealed in Christ be clarified to rid it of prejudicial elements that are currently dividing the congregations in Rome."<sup>37</sup> Since the unity of these factious house churches is fundamental to realizing his project, Paul wrote to them, providing "a theological argument that will unify the competing house-churches in Rome so that they will be willing to cooperate in a mission to Spain, to be mounted from Rome."<sup>38</sup>

Finally, there are those who see Romans as a pastoral letter that addresses the existential needs of the Christian communities in Rome.<sup>39</sup> The problem according to the proponents is the internal tensions between Jewish and Gentile believers. It is important to understand the historical background that informs the third perspective. At the beginning,

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<sup>36</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 1–3; Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 10–11; Hahn, *Romans*, xxii–xxiii.

<sup>37</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 1.

<sup>38</sup> Robert Jewett, "Following the Argument of Romans," in *The Roman Debate. Revised and Expanded Edition*, ed. Karl P. Donfried (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 266.

<sup>39</sup> Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 163–91; Paul S. Minear, *The Obedience of Faith; The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans*, SBT 2 (Naperville, IL: A. R. Allenson, 1971), 8–17; Christiaan J. Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 59–93; William L. Lane, "Social Perspectives on Roman Christianity during the Formative Years from Nero to Nerva: Romans, Hebrews, 1 Clement," in *Judaism and Christianity in the First-Century Rome*, ed. Peter Richardson and Karl P. Donfried (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 196–244; Walters, *Ethnic Issues in Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 56–66.

Christianity in Rome was predominantly Jewish with the Gentiles in the minority. The situation changed with the edit of emperor Claudius in 49 CE that led to the banishment of Jews in Rome. According to Suetonius, Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome, since they were constantly in rebellion, at the instigation of Chrestus — a misspelling of *Christus*.<sup>40</sup> With the expulsion, (a) what used to be a synagogue-based community turned into a network of house churches with new administrative positions; (b) a previously predominant Jewish community became a dominantly Gentile community; (c) there emerged competing forms of leadership as well as different understandings and practices of the gospel.<sup>41</sup>

When Jewish Christians returned to Rome in 54 CE after the death of Claudius, they were faced with these new developments, which according to Walters, had potentials for conflict.<sup>42</sup> Evidence of disunity and differences among the Jewish and Gentile Christians in the letter (Rom 2:17-29; 3:27; 9-11; 14:1-15:13) support this argument. It is possible that Paul may have known about the conflict in the Roman Christian churches through some of his friends such as Priscilla and Aquila (Rom 16:3). Besides the internal conflict within the Roman house churches, Paul is also aware of the problem of Roman imperial domination in economic, political, and military affairs with its adverse effect on most of Christ's believers in Rome. Elsa Tamez notes that "the context of subjugation by the Roman Empire is as conspicuous as the internal theological conflict within Judaism resulting from the event of the Messiah."<sup>43</sup> These explain Paul's concern regarding peace and reconciliation between the Jews and the Gentiles as well as his emphasis on the revelation of the justice/righteousness of God who takes side with the oppressed

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<sup>40</sup> Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, ed. Catherine Edwards (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 184.

<sup>41</sup> Walters, *Ethnic Issues in Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 56–66.

<sup>42</sup> Walters, *Ethnic Issues in Paul's Letter to the Romans*, 63–64; Corneliu Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul's Theology: Narrative Readings in Romans*, LNTS 421 (New York: T & T Clark, 2010), 102.

<sup>43</sup> Tamez, "Romans: A Feminist Reading," 698–99.

throughout the letter. Paul encourages them to “pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding” (Rom 14:19) and to embody the righteousness of God that is made visible through Christ’s self-giving love (Rom 5:12-21) as a way of counteracting the Roman imperial ideology of domination. One can say that Paul does not have just one purpose in writing Romans. Paul was concerned about the prospective Spanish mission and needed the assistance of the Roman Christians. Consequently, he writes to them to introduce himself and his gospel. However, Paul was aware of the conflicts and divisions within these house churches, and the other socio-political realities that faced his audience, so he addresses these issues in his letter. While the mission motive is a natural reason for Paul to write, the pastoral motive is the more immediate objective of his letter.<sup>44</sup>

#### 4.3.4 The Socio-political Context of Rome and Paul’s Apocalyptic Response

In this section, I examine the socio-political context of Rome at the time that Paul wrote the Letter to the Romans. The purpose is to explore how the socio-political events of the time might add to illuminate our understanding of what Paul is doing and saying in Rom 5:12-21. Romans shares the same imperial context that I have briefly examined in Chapter Three. Romans is written about forty years before 4 Ezra. It was written at the time when Nero the last of the Julio-Claudian emperors ruled the Roman Empire. What is peculiar about this historical period is the widespread propaganda of *Pax Romana* within the empire and beyond. Some scholars describe this era as a time of Rome’s imperial realized eschatology. One of the political ideologies propagated at this period is the idea that a new era has begun with the ascension of Augustus to the throne. According to Virgil, Augustus was the one destined by the gods to bring about the infinite and golden age of Roman universal rule, an era of great peace, security, and prosperity.

In Book 6 of the Aeneid, Virgil has Anchises prophesy concerning Augustus:

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<sup>44</sup> Chimbuoyim G. Uzodimma, “An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Concept of Reconciliation in Romans 5:1-11: Envisioning a Transformative Human Relationship” (STL Thes., Boston College School of Theology and Ministry, 2018), 33–34.

Here is Caesar, and all the seed of Iulu destined to pass under heaven's spacious sphere. And this in truth is whom you so often hear promised to you, Augustus Caesar, son of a god, who shall again establish a golden age (*aurea condet saecula*) in Latium amid fields once ruled by Saturn; he will advance his empire beyond the Garamants and Indians to a land which lies beyond our stars, beyond the path of year and sun...<sup>45</sup>

Horsley writes that “this tradition provides the background for proclaiming Augustus and his successors as inaugurators of a new, golden age, the ‘Age of Saturn,’ in which paradisaical conditions on earth would be restored.”<sup>46</sup> Virgil’s vision of the Augustan golden age is marked by the banishing of war, the advent of faith and justice, the flourishing of law, and the upsurge of piety in the whole land—virtues that Augustus himself would embody.<sup>47</sup> The Augustan ideology of a golden age is also consolidated with a change (reform) of calendrical time known as the Julian Calendar which Julius Caesar, the adoptive father of Augustus, had instituted in 45 BCE to mark his triumph over Egypt and as a means of control in Rome and the conquered territories.<sup>48</sup> As we saw in chapter two, this is the ideology behind the Seleucids invention of a new dating systems..

Around 8 BCE, Augustus reformed the Julian calendar to a fixed year of 365<sup>1/4</sup> days and used the opportunity to rename the eighth month, previously known as Sextilis, with his own name, Augustus. Although Augustus’s birthday was September 23, he designated the eighth rather than the ninth month with his name in order to commemorate three special anniversaries that fell in August: (a) the beginning of his first consulship in 43 BCE; (b) his capture of Alexandria in 39 BCE; (c) and his triple triumph in 29 BCE.<sup>49</sup> Having reformed the Julian calendar, Augustus marked 1<sup>st</sup> August 7 BCE as the beginning

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<sup>45</sup> Virgil, *Aen.* 6.789-792 (Fairclough, LCL).

<sup>46</sup> Richard A. Horsley, *Paul and the Roman Imperial Order* (New York: Trinity Press International, 2004), 27.

<sup>47</sup> The year 31 BCE marked the beginning of the realization of Virgil’s vision, as Rome finally witnessed the end of a string of seemingly endless civil wars that had continued, relatively uninterrupted, since 49 BCE. Augustus accomplished this end with the Battle of Actium and the defeat of Marcus Antonius, and therefore achieved the first facet of the Golden Age.

<sup>48</sup> Laura Salah Nasrallah, *Archaeology and the Letters of Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 199–200.

<sup>49</sup> Harriet I. Flower, *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden: Religion at the Roman Street Corner* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2017), 337.

of a new era, and designated September 23<sup>rd</sup> (his birthday) as the New Year.<sup>50</sup> As Sacha Stern notes, “control of the calendar, and more specifically of the length of the months and years, gave political rulers the means of controlling economic activity, state administration, religious cult, and in some political systems their own tenures of office – often to their personal advantage”<sup>51</sup> Thus the reformed Julian calendar was imposed throughout the empire to facilitate imperial administration throughout the Roman provinces, but it also became a way of controlling temporality (the marking and celebration of important imperial feasts and holidays), and the subjectivity of the colonized regions. According to Stern,

unlike lunar calendars that were usually dependent on unpredictable, locally variable factors such as lunar phases and the visibility and sighting of the new moon, the Julian calendar was fixed, unchanging, and therefore completely predictable. This made it possible for anyone in the Roman Empire to reckon time in an identical way.... This single, common time frame also contributed to the cultural cohesion of the empire, and perhaps to a growing sense of shared *romanitas* throughout it.<sup>52</sup>

In this way, Rome maintained transnational unity across its territories, making it easier for a regularized collection of taxes across the region.

In the eyes of Rome, the golden era inaugurated by Augustus is seen as the culmination of the universal human history. The Roman Empire enacted and reinforced this rhetoric of realized eschatology through a number of public events such as games, festivals, poems, etc. As we shall see in this study, the imperial eschatological rhetoric of the Julio-Claudian dynasty is simply a propaganda designed to reinforce the Roman ideology of *imperium sine fine*.<sup>53</sup> The close association of Augustus with time and the

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<sup>50</sup> For Augustus’s calendrical reform, see Sacha Stern, *Calendars in Antiquity: Empires, States, and Societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 214–16; Matthew S. Champion, Serena Masolini, and C. Philipp E. Nothaft, eds., *Peter de Rivo on Chronology and the Calendar* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020), XLIII; Sacha Stern, “Calendars, Politics, and Power Relations in the Roman Empire,” in *The Construction of Time in Antiquity*, ed. Jonathan Ben-Dov and Lutz Doering (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 31–49.

<sup>51</sup> Stern, “Calendars, Politics, and Power Relations in the Roman Empire,” 31.

<sup>52</sup> Stern, “Calendars, Politics, and Power Relations in the Roman Empire,” 33.

<sup>53</sup> Horace, *Carmen Saeculare*, 66-68.

new age continued in the reign of his successors, particularly during the reign of Nero when Paul sent the letter to the Christian communities in Rome. Oudshoorn writes:

The ideology of the Golden Age reborn gained considerable traction during the reign of Nero.... After the violence of Claudius and Caligula raised the specter of another civil war, Nero is praised as a long-awaited savior who will restore peace to the world in a new (or renewed) Golden Age. Thus, according to Seneca, the reign of Nero was to be a time defined by justice, goodness, piety, integrity, honor, moderation, happiness, virtue, and the banishment of evil.<sup>54</sup>

But for most colonized subjects of the Roman Empire, the supposed golden age of Rome whether under Augustus or Nero was just a hoax. The *Pax Romana* and the new way of calculating time that came with it was simply a means of domination and exploitation rather than peace and prosperity. For most people under the Roman rule, the golden age of Rome was nothing other than a mere euphemism for the subjugation, plunder, and colonization which the empire accomplished through military power. This explains the resistance to adopt the Julian calendar in some Roman provinces. Stern notes that among the people and provinces who resisted the Julian calendar and retained their ancestral lunar calendar were “the Jews and Samaritans of Palestine and the Diaspora, and much of the Greek peninsula (notably the city of Athens), Macedonia, and the northern regions from there down to the Danube.”<sup>55</sup>

How can the above socio-political context shed light on our reading and understanding of Paul’s Letter to the Romans, particularly Rom 5:12-21, where Paul engages in an antithetical discourse of Adam and Christ that appears to have no direct bearing to socio-political issues? How do we make sense of Paul’s theory of time and history in Rom 5:12-21 in light of the Roman imperial rhetoric of realized eschatology? I argue that in Rom 5:12-21, Paul presents a periodization of history and its implicit doctrine of the two ages that is subversive and counter-imperial to the Roman imperial ideology of

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<sup>54</sup> Daniel Oudshoorn, *Pauline Eschatology: The Apocalyptic Rupture of Eternal Imperialism*, PUD 2 (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 26.

<sup>55</sup> Stern, “Calendars, Politics, and Power Relations in the Roman Empire,” 33.

realized eschatology discussed above. Like the authors of the Book of Daniel and 4 Ezra, Paul deploys apocalyptic categories of periodization of history and the two-age to address the socio-political evils of his day in coded forms that is peculiar to most colonized subjects across the globe.

#### 4.3.5 Literary Context of Romans 5:12-21

There is disagreement on the exact place of chapter 5 in the structure of Romans. Does the chapter belong to the previous section (Rom 1:18-4:25) or does it belong to the following section that ends in Rom 8:39?<sup>56</sup> This structural dispute arises as a result of the linguistic and thematic affinities of chapter 5 with the preceding chapters, as well as with the chapters that follow. Corneliu Constantineanu summarizes the argument as follows: “there are (1) those who take ch. 5 as a conclusion of the larger section of chs. 1-5; (2) those who take ch. 5 as a bridge between the sections, with ch. 5:1-11 belonging to chs. 1-4 and 5:12-21 to chs. 6-8; (3) those who take ch. 5 as an introduction to chs. 5-8.”<sup>57</sup> While I recognize the linguistic affinity between chapter 5 and chapters 1-4, I agree with scholars who see chapter 5 as the beginning of a new section (Rom 5:1-8:39) that is concerned with sanctification through the Spirit.<sup>58</sup>

Three major rationales for this placement include: (1) The opening clause: Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως (“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith”) signals a summary of the theological argument of Rom 1:18-4:25, and prepares for the presentation of a new message that follows, “we have peace” (Rom 5:2-8:39). (2) Content:

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<sup>56</sup> For the different exegetical arguments in support of each position see Felipe de Jesús Legarreta-Castillo, *The Figure of Adam in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15: The New Creation and Its Ethical and Social Reconfiguration*, ES (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 150–51; Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation in Paul’s Theology*, 116; Richard J. Erickson, “The Damned and the Justified in Romans 5:12-21: An Analysis of Semantic Structure,” in *Discourse Analysis and the New Testament: Approaches and Results*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Jeffery T. Reed, JSNTSup 170 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 282–307.

<sup>57</sup> Constantineanu, *The Social Significance of Reconciliation*, 116.

<sup>58</sup> Charles E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ICC 32 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1986), 1:252-254; Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 539-547.



Cranfield finds a correlation with the content of chapters 5-8; these four chapters have a similar structure in which the first sub-sections of each chapter draw out the meaning of justification as: reconciliation (Rom 5:1-11), sanctification (Rom 6:1-14), freedom from the law (Rom 7:1-6), and being indwelt by the Spirit (Rom 8:1-11). The second subsection in each chapter, according to Cranfield, expounds what has already been said in the first subsection.<sup>59</sup> (3) Vocabulary: there is a major shift from the forensic πιστ- (faith/faithfulness) and δικ- (righteousness) terminology of Rom 1:16-4:25 (33 times) to an emphasis on more relational and pastoral terminology, such as reconciliation, love, peace, life/live in Rom 5:1-8:39.<sup>60</sup>

Romans 5 itself is divided into two major sections: 5:1-11 and 5:12-21. Romans 5:1-11 focuses on the new relationship that believers enjoy because of their reconciliation, with God while in Rom 5:12-21 Paul discusses Adam and Jesus as two persons who inaugurate different ages, the era of sin and death, and the era of grace and righteousness. At the end of the Adam-Christ typology, Paul begins his discourse on baptism in Romans 6 which functions as part of his larger exhortations to his audience on how to embody God's righteousness. Having been reconciled with God through the Messiah (ch. 5), believers cannot continue to live the old life of sin that brings conflict and enmity both in vertical and horizontal relationships, but rather, they are to walk in the newness of life inaugurated by Christ.

#### 4.3.6 The Literary Structure of Romans 5:12-21

The entrance of sin and death into the world through Adam (v. 12)

The Relation of sin and the law (vv. 13-14)

The various contrasts (vv. 15-17)

(a) Trespass and the gift (v. 15)

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<sup>59</sup> Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 1:254.

<sup>60</sup> This section especially the argument for the placement of Rom 5:12-21 is taken from my STL thesis: Uzodimma, "An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Concept of Reconciliation," 36.

(b) Condemnation and justification (v. 16)

(c) Death and life (v.17)

The Implications of the Adam-Christ Narrative for Christ's Believer (vv. 18-21)

#### 4.4 Textual Analysis of Romans 5:12-21

Romans 5:12-21 tells the story of two historical figures: Adam and Christ whose actions reveal two contrasting ways of being in the world, or two contrasting ways of relating with God and fellow human beings. The first, the old way, is marked by disobedience to God and results in the reign of sin and death, while the second, the new way, is marked by obedience to God and results in the reign of grace. Paul portrays Adam as the head of a sinful humanity through his disobedience which “unleashed the cosmic powers of sin and death that then entrapped those who followed in his rebellion against God and his ways (Rom 5:12).”<sup>61</sup> But Paul does not stop here; rather, he goes further to disclose what God has done to rectify the plight of human sinfulness through Jesus the Messiah whose *just deed* (Jesus' faithfulness and obedience to God) counteracts the sinful deeds of Adam. For Paul, “Jesus is the new Adam through whose obedience God has defeated the reign of sin and death.”<sup>62</sup> Jesus' *just deed* unleashed the divine power of grace which enables Christ's believers to participate in Jesus' obedience and faithfulness. While in the dominant Reformation theology this passage functions as textual support for the doctrine of imputation of Christ's righteousness on sinners, I argue that given the Roman imperial context of the text and Paul's apocalyptic understanding of the Christ event, Paul is concerned with “right living” or “doing just deed” as a way of counteracting the life of sinfulness which Adam inaugurated through his disobedience.

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<sup>61</sup> Thomas D. Stegman, *Written for Our Instruction: Theological and Spiritual Riches in Romans* (New York: Paulist, 2017), 39.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas D. Stegman, “Romans,” in *The Paulist Biblical Commentary*, ed. E. Aguilar et al. (New York: Paulist Press, 2018), 1254.

#### 4.4.1 The Entrance of Sin and Death into the World through Adam (v. 12)

<sup>12</sup>Therefore (διὰ τοῦτο), just as sin (ἡ ἁμαρτία) entered the world through one man, and death came through sin (τῆς ἁμαρτίας), and so death (ὁ θάνατος) spread to all because (ἐφ' ᾧ) all have sinned (ἥμαρτο) (NRSV).

The *pericope* opens with διὰ τοῦτο (“therefore,” “on account of this”). Usually Paul employs this prepositional phrase to draw out the logical implication of an argument or something he had said earlier. But the problem with its appearance in verse 12a is that its antecedent is not obvious.<sup>63</sup> I will adopt the view that argues that the antecedent of διὰ τοῦτο is Rom 5:1-11.<sup>64</sup> What this reading implies is that Paul grounds his theological reflection on the benefits that believers enjoy in Christ (Rom 5:1-11) in the obedience of Jesus which Paul contrasts with the disobedience of Adam (Rom 5:12-21). By introducing the phrase διὰ τοῦτο in 12a, Paul begins to explicate the sinful human condition that calls for the self-giving death of Jesus the Messiah (Rom 5:1-11) and the implications of the Christ’s narrative for believers. Paul does this by means of several contrasts and comparisons between Adam and Jesus the Messiah.

Paul begins his Adam-Christ antithetical comparison in v. 12a with the particle ὥσπερ (“just as”), but does not continue with the corresponding οὕτως καὶ (“so too”) phrase until v.18. Instead, the comparison is interrupted by two explanatory asides (vv. 13-

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<sup>63</sup> Some scholars argue that διὰ τοῦτο (5:12a) points to the entire larger argument that Paul makes in Rom 1:18-5:11. See Beker, *Paul the Apostle*, 85; James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, WBC 38A (Dallas, TX: Word Books, 1988), 272. Some argue that the antecedent of διὰ τοῦτο is 5:11. See Heinrich A. W. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistle to the Romans*, ed. William P. Dickson and Timothy Dwight, MCNT (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1889), 1: 240; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, PC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 228. There are also those who argue that the διὰ τοῦτο in 12a function as a meaningless transitional expression without any logical link with what comes before it. See Bultmann, “Adam and Christ According to Romans 5,” 153.

<sup>64</sup> Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 586; Stanley E. Porter, “The Argument of Romans 5: Can a Rhetorical Question Make a Difference?,” *JBL* 110.4 (1991): 671; Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, 87; Matera, *Romans*, 136. For more discussion of scholarly position on διὰ τοῦτο in Rom 5:12, see Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 586; Schreiner, *Romans*, 271–72.

14 and vv. 15-17).<sup>65</sup> Hence, scholars regard 5:12 as an *anacoluthon*.<sup>66</sup> The first thing to notice in this sentence is that there is sin (ἡ ἁμαρτία) that is personified, as well as sin (ἥμαρτον) that is not personified. What this means on the one hand is that Paul thinks of sin as an entity (noun), hence the personification, but on the other hand, he construes sin as a human act (verb). Paul also personifies death (ὁ θάνατος). I shall deal with these personified entities later in this chapter, but here it is important to note that when Paul personifies sin and death, he perceives them as hostile and evil powers that invaded the human world and began to dominate humans. The central point here is the entrance of sin into the human world through Adam, and death spreading to all people (εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους) because all have sinned (ἐφ' ᾧ πάντες ἥμαρτον). Obviously, verse 12 alludes to the narrative of Genesis 3 which tells how Adam and Eve rebelled against God's command (Gen 3:3). Adam is the implied "one man" here, as this is made clear in Rom 5:14 where his name is explicitly mentioned. Paul makes a similar argument of sin coming into the world through Adam in I Cor 15: 21-23.

The second issue to note in verse 12 is that Paul seems to suggest a causal relationship between the sin of one man (δι' ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου) and the sin of Adam's posterity (πάντας). While in the first part (v. 12a), Paul states that "just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin," in the second part (v. 12b) he says, "so also death spread to all people because (ἐφ' ᾧ) all have sinned." Although Paul invites his readers to see the chain of causality between the sin of Adam and all other individuals' sins using the phrase ἐφ' ᾧ, scholarly understanding of how Paul imagined that relationship has remained a contested subject.<sup>67</sup> In this chapter, I read the phrase ἐφ'

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<sup>65</sup> Stegman, "Romans," 1254.

<sup>66</sup> *Anacoluthon* is a grammatically incomplete sentence. A sentence with a *protasis* without an *apodosis*. Paul pauses to clarify his opening remark before supplying the rest of the comparison which began again in verse 15.

<sup>67</sup> For a detailed discussion of the various argument with regard to the meaning of ἐφ' ᾧ see, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "The Consecutive Meaning of ΕΦ' Ω in Romans 5.12," *NTS* 39.3 (1993): 321–39; Matera,

ὥστε as a causal conjunction (“because”, “for this reason”). Thus, what this reading entails is that Paul is saying that death entered the world first as a consequence of Adam’s action (Gen 3:19); however, death spread to each individual because everyone else sinned by replicating the sin of Adam, each in their own way. In other words, the first part (v. 12a) describes a situation in which Adam is responsible, while the second part (v. 12b) explains a situation in which the descendants of Adam are also responsible.

This reading is consistent not only within Rom 1:18-3:20 where Paul stresses human responsibility for actively choosing sin. It is also consistent with how other Jewish apocalyptic writers conceptualized the relationship between Adam’s sin and individuals’ sins. For instance, in 4 Ezra 3:7, the author writes regarding Adam, “O Adam, what have you done? For though it was you who sinned, the misfortune was not yours alone, but ours also who are your descendants. For what good is it to us, if an eternal life has been promised to us, but we have done deeds that bring death?” (4 Ezra 7:118-119). A similar pattern of thought occurs in 2 Bar 54:19; “Adam is therefore not the cause, except only for himself, but each of us has become our own Adam.” Second Baruch makes it clear that Adam was responsible for his own sin, while each subsequent individual is responsible for his or her own sin. As we can see, these authors think of Adam’s sin as the first of many other transgressions that have brought death into the world.<sup>68</sup> No matter how we perceive the relationship between the primordial sin of Adam and the sins of his descendants, what is obvious in both Paul and his contemporary apocalyptic writers is that sin brings death. This is evident in the way that Paul frequently puts sin and death in close proximity in Romans 5-8 (5:12, 21; 6:16, 23; 7:5, 11, 13; 8:2).

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*Romans*, 126–27; Mark Rapinchuk, “Universal Sin and Salvation in Romans 5:12-21,” *JETS* 42.3 (1999): 427–41; Scott W. Hahn and Curtis J. Mitch, “The Diffusion of Death: Romans 5:12 and Original Sin,” *LS* (2017): 13–36.

<sup>68</sup> Legarreta-Castillo, *The Figure of Adam in Romans 5 and 1 Corinthians 15: The New Creation and Its Ethical and Social Reconfiguration*, 155.

#### 4.4.2 The Role of the Law (vv. 13-14)

<sup>13</sup> sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned (ἐλλογεῖται) when there is no law. <sup>14</sup> Yet death exercised dominion (ἐβασίλευσεν) from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression (παραβάσεως) of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come (τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος) (NRSV).

Paul introduces a digression (the first explanatory aside) in verses 13-14. Having argued that “all sinned” in verse 12 (cf. Rom 3:9-10), Paul had to explain how human beings could sin in the period between Adam and Moses when there was no Mosaic Law. Paul’s explanation in this regard is that there was sin before the time of Moses when there was no law, when people had a somewhat vague sense of what God required (Rom 2:14-15).<sup>69</sup> What this means is that prior to the giving of the Mosaic law, there was sin already in the world, but it was not reckoned (οὐκ ἐλλογεῖται) since there was no law to measure it (v.13). For Paul, “Sin invaded creation before the division between Israel and Gentile nations, and its regime has no respect for those boundaries.”<sup>70</sup> The fact that both Jews and Gentiles sin remains a major argument of Paul in Rom 1:18-3:20. Paul sums it up in this statement: “they have all turned aside, together they have become corrupt; there is no one who does good, there is not even one” (Rom 3:12, NASB). What we see here is an indictment of all humanity (Jews and Gentiles) alike. Both have sinned and rebelled against God.

Having explained the status of sin prior to the revelation of the Mosaic law, Paul goes on in verse 14 to explain the status of death within the same historical time frame. Here Paul makes it clear that “death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one to come”) (v.14). What Paul is saying here is that because there was already sin in the world

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<sup>69</sup> Frank Thielman, *Romans*, ZECNT 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2018), 286.

<sup>70</sup> Moffitt, *Atonement and the Logic of Resurrection in the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 72.

before the revelation of the law, death was also present and exercised dominion within that time period (Adam to Moses). People continue to die between the period of Adam and Moses, even “those whose sin was not like the transgression of Adam,” that is, those who had not sinned by breaking a specific divine commandment as Adam did (Gen 2:17). In verse 14, Paul is trying to answer an important question: why is it that those who lived in the period between Adam and Moses (who did not have the laws) died, given that sin is not reckoned where there is no law? (v.13b, cf. Rom 4:15). Paul’s response is that sin existed in the world before the law came into being (v. 13a), even though it was not technically defined as a violation of a revealed law. As such, death did reign in that period when there was no law (v. 14a).

A crucial feature of these parenthetical verses is that they introduces Christ—the “One about to come.” Adam is said to be a type of the one who was to come (Ἀδάμ, ὅς ἐστιν τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος). Paul’s use of this temporal reference (τοῦ μέλλοντος) alludes to Jesus’ incarnation. The phrase τοῦ μέλλοντος announces the arrival of a new reality in the history of a world embedded in sin; the arrival of someone who is going to introduce a new plot in the story of sin and death; someone who is like Adam in terms of being human but at the same time massively unlike Adam. The “one about to come” is Jesus the Messiah who in Paul’s thought stands at the beginning of the new age with its reign of grace and righteousness just, as Adam stands at the beginning of the old age and its reign of sin and death.

#### 4.4.3 The Various Contrasts (vv. 15-17)

<sup>15</sup> But the free gift (τὸ χάρισμα) is not like the trespass (τὸ παράπτωμα). For if the many died through the one man’s trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. <sup>16</sup> And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation (κατάκριμα), but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification (εἰς δικαίωμα). <sup>17</sup> If by the trespass of the one man death ruled through the one man, how much more (πολλῷ μᾶλλον) will those who receive the abundance of grace (περισσεῖαν

τῆς χάριτος) and the gift that consists of righteousness/justice (τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης) rule in life through the one man, Jesus Christ (translation mine).

Having clarified how sin and death became dominant players in the period between Adam and Moses, in this second parenthetical unit (vv. 15-17) Paul immediately introduces Jesus Christ explicitly in the discourse for the first time and in a series of statements he contrasts Adam, the head of the old age/old humanity, and Jesus Christ, the head of the new age/new humanity.<sup>71</sup> Paul's major point in this explanatory aside is to highlight the dissimilarity and imbalance between Adam and Christ, the dissimilarity of their actions and the ages that both of them represent.<sup>72</sup> The phrase "much more" in verses 15 and 17 accentuates the point of their incomparability. Paul underscores this difference first in verse 15a in the statement, "the gift is not like the trespass."

While the referent of trespass (τὸ παράπτωμα) as the sinful disobedience of Adam is easier to understand since Paul had already intimated that Adam broke the divine commandment (v.14), the referent of gift/grace (τὸ χάρισμα) is not explicit. However, when read in light of verse 16a, it becomes obvious that τὸ χάρισμα in verse 15a is a reference to Christ's obedience which is made concrete in his self-giving death on the cross (Gal 2:20). In verse 16, Paul writes: "And the free gift is not like the effect of the one's man sin." Verse 16a sheds light on verse 15, enabling one to see clearly that "the gift" in verse 15 is a reference to Christ's obedience. In the context of Romans 5, τὸ χάρισμα refers to the totality of the Christ-event, an event through which God effected his saving act. Paul's emphasis on the "gift" or "grace" in verses 15-17 (eight occurrences) underscores the importance of the concept in Paul's soteriology not only in Rom 5:12-21 but also in the preceding section (vv. 1-11) where Paul first introduced the theme (v. 2).

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<sup>71</sup> Richard K. Moore, *Paul's Concept of Justification: God's Gift of a Right Relationship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2015), 126–27.

<sup>72</sup> A. Katherine Grieb, *The Story of Romans: A Narrative Defense of God's Righteousness* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 65.



For Paul, there is no correspondence between τὸ παράπτωμα (“trespass”) of Adam that gave rise to a culture of sin and death in our world, and τὸ χάρισμα (“the gift/grace”) that opened up for humanity a new way of being that lead to the flourishing of human life. In verse 15b, Paul employs the common device of argument from lesser to greater, known to Latin rhetoric as *a minore ad maius* and to rabbinic writers as *qal wahomer*, to accentuate the point of their incomparability. As Harrison notes, Paul’s focus is simultaneously theocentric and Christocentric. It is theocentric because Christ’s death is an act of God’s patronage that inaugurates the reign of grace (ἡ χάρις τοῦ Θεοῦ) but it is also Christological because it is a deliberate act of Christ (ἡ δωρεὰ ἐν χάριτι τῇ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) as a benefactor that leads to righteousness.<sup>73</sup> This χάρις Paul says abounds for the many (εἰς τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐπερίσσευσεν). The use of the language or imagery of “abundance,” or “overflow” of good things, to describe the eschatological “new age” is typical of Jewish apocalyptic tradition (cf. 4 Ezra 8:52-54; 2 Bar 29:5, 9). Paul reflects this tradition here in verse 15, and also in verses 17 and 20 in his discourse about God’s χάρις (cf. Rom 6:20; 2 Cor 4:15; 8:7; 9:8).

Paul continues the antithetical comparison between Adam and Christ in verse 16a, stating that “the gift is not like the one person who sinned.” In verse 16b, Paul reinforces the contrast by underscoring the judicial (κρίμα) implications of Adam’s disobedience and Christ’s obedience: “the judgement following Adam’s sin results in condemnation (κατάκριμα) but the gift (τὸ δὲ χάρισμα) following many trespasses results in εἰς δικαίωμα.” Here, we see the first of the five δικαίο-word group whose meaning is fundamental to understanding Paul’s soteriology. In most English Bible translations, δικαίωμα is translated as “justification” (NRSV, NET, RSV, NIV, KJV). So, the dominant

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<sup>73</sup> James R. Harrison, *Paul’s Language of Grace in Its Graeco-Roman Context*, WUNT 2/172 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 226.

understanding of this clause is that Paul is making a case for the doctrine of justification of sinners through the imputation of Christ's righteousness. But the question is: what does Paul mean by εἰς δικαίωμα. Does Paul have imputation of Christ's righteousness on sinners in mind in this clause and in the entire passage?

The first person to raise an objection to "justification of the sinner by means of imputation of Christ's righteousness" rendering of εἰς δικαίωμα in verse 16 is Daniel Kirk in an essay "Reconsidering 'Dikaiōma' in Rom 5:16." Kirk cautions against the scholarly tendency to read "justification" into the Adam/Christ antithesis in Rom 5:16, arguing that δικαίωμα does not elsewhere denote the idea of justification of sinners and that it is lexicographically problematic to import the idea of justification of sinners in verse 16. Kirk notes the three occurrences of δικαίωμα in Romans: (a) Rom 1:32, where δικαίωμα means "judgment" or "legal decree" and connotes "the sense of what a judge orders a defendant to do in order for the court to be satisfied"<sup>74</sup>; (b) Rom 8:4, "God's sending his son to die on the cross is said to result in the fulfillment of the δικαίωμα of the law in those who walk according to the Spirit."<sup>75</sup> Kirk clarifies that the means by which the δικαίωμα is accomplished is the death of Jesus. (c) Rom 2:26, here, the meaning is much clearer as the requirements of the law: "if the uncircumcised person should keep the requirements (δικαιώματα) of the law...." Given these three instances, Kirk argues that δικαίωμα in its historical context connotes the idea of "a legal requirement." How then does δικαίωμα function in Rom 5:16? Kirk submits that "Paul creates a context in which δικαίωμα refers to a legal requirement of death, a requirement met in the cross of Christ."<sup>76</sup> Consequently, Kirk translates verse 16b as "but the gift came through many transgressions leading to

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<sup>74</sup> J. R. Daniel Kirk, "Reconsidering 'Dikaiōma' in Romans 5:16," *JBL* 126.4 (2007): 791, <https://doi.org/10.2307/27638468>.

<sup>75</sup> Kirk, "Reconsidering 'Dikaiōma' in Romans 5," 791.

<sup>76</sup> Kirk, "Reconsidering 'Dikaiōma' in Romans 5," 791.

reparation,”<sup>77</sup> Kirk offers a compelling lexical discussion of δικαίωμα that differs from the dominant reading of imputation of righteousness; however, his reading has underexplored other elements embedded in the term.

In his work *The Practice of the Body of Christ: Human Agency in Pauline Theology after MacIntyre*, Colin Miller, building on Kirk’s essay, explores further the concept of δικαίωμα in biblical and extra-biblical sources. Miller observes that “δικαίωμα falls into the grammatical realm of words used to talk about “just actions,” “legal duties,” “just practice,” “just habit,” etc.<sup>78</sup> He points out several instances in the Scripture where δικαίωμα connotes the idea of “just deed,” such as in 1 Sam 8:9 (LXX), “Now then, listen to their voice nevertheless, since you shall testify to them, and announce to them the just way (τὸ δικαίωμα) of the king who shall reign over them.” The same view is reflected in Rev 15:4 where δικαίωμα is used to refer to the “just deeds” of God that have been revealed (τὰ δικαιώματά σου ἐφανερώθησαν), and in Rev 19:8 where it is used in reference to the just deeds of the saints (τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἁγίων ἐστίν). Based on this textual evidence, Miller concludes that Paul gives no indication in verse 16b that he is talking about a forensic status of “justified” or “righteous” before God, but rather it is the “just work” of Christ on the cross that is in view here.<sup>79</sup> Consequently, Miller reads δικαίωμα in verse 16b as “just act” and translates the whole clause as follows: “for the judgment from one man led to execution, but the gift that arose from many transgressions led to a just act.”<sup>80</sup>

I agree with Miller on his reading of δικαίωμα as “just act” or “right action,” and his application of the meaning to Rom 5:16. However, I do not deny the forensic character of δικαίωμα as Miller does. As Stegman has rightly demonstrated, the δικαίο language

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<sup>77</sup> Kirk, “Reconsidering ‘Dikaiōma’ in Romans 5,” 792.

<sup>78</sup> Miller, *The Practice of the Body of Christ*, 69.

<sup>79</sup> Miller, *The Practice of the Body of Christ*, 70.

<sup>80</sup> Miller, *The Practice of the Body of Christ*, 70.

connotes both forensic and transformational meanings.<sup>81</sup> Δικαίωμα is first of all a judicial terminology that connotes the idea of a legal acquittal, as in when a judge declares that someone is in the right according to the law (Exod 23:7; Deut 25:1). But the idea of δικαίωμα is not just legal, it also has an ethical component. Holiness of life is inherent in the meaning of δικαίωμα. In fact, the Hebrew word חֻקִּים (“statute”, “ordinance”), which is translated as δικαίωμα in LXX is usually found in the context of laws that deal with holiness or sanctification. For instance, in Lev 20:7-8 God commands the Israelites to keep his חֻקִּים (δικαίωμα). God graciously gave his holy חֻקִּים (δικαίωμα) to his covenant people in order to preserve them from the profane ways of foreign nations. In Rom 5:12-21 as in 2 Cor 5:21, the purpose of justification is transformation of believers into the justice of God. It entails the embodiment of justice.

Having contrasted the effects of the sinful action of Adam and just action of Jesus (v. 16), Paul ends the explanatory aside in verse 17 by examining more closely the implications of Adam’s trespass and Jesus’ obedience for the rest of humanity. Again, Paul deploys the *a minore ad maius rhetoric* to argue that “if by the trespass of the one man death ruled through the one man, how much more (πολλῷ μᾶλλον) will those who receive the abundance of grace (περισσεΐαν τῆς χάριτος) and the gift that consists of righteousness/justice (τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης) rule in life through the one man, Jesus Christ” (v.17). Scholars who argue for the doctrine of “imputed righteousness,” translate the phrase τῆς δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης as “the gift of righteousness,” (righteous status) which the sinner receives as a gift from God by believing in Jesus Christ.<sup>82</sup> Since I do not share the view that Paul was wrestling with the idea of imputation of righteousness on sinners in this passage (or elsewhere, throughout Romans) I translate τῆς δικαιοσύνης as

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<sup>81</sup> Stegman, “Paul’s Use of Dikaio Terminology,” 499.

<sup>82</sup> This is the background that informs most translations of δωρεᾶς τῆς δικαιοσύνης in Rom 5:17. For some examples, see Schreiner, *Romans*, 291; Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 249; Frank Thielman, *Romans*, 289–90.

an exegetical genitive, that is, “the gift that consists of righteousness/justice.” My translation highlights the ethical element inherent in the gift that believers have received.

#### 4.4.4 The Implications of the Adam-Christ Narrative for Believers (vv. 18-21)

This is the climax of the comparison that Paul sets out beginning in verse 12. After the second of the explanatory asides, Paul finally returns to complete the comparison which he began in verse 12 and to draw out the implications of his Adam-Christ narrative for the believers. In verses 18-19, Paul sets the comparison as follows:

<sup>18</sup>Therefore just as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man’s act of righteousness (δι’ ἑνὸς δικαιώματος) leads to righteousness of life for all (δικαιώματος εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς δικαίωσιν ζωῆς). <sup>19</sup>For just as by the one man’s disobedience (διὰ τῆς ὑπακοῆς τοῦ ἑνὸς) the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous (δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται οἱ πολλοί).

In verses 18-19, Paul makes two comparisons: First, Paul compares the one trespass of Adam that leads to condemnation with the one act of righteousness (ἑνὸς δικαιώματος) of Christ that results in righteousness of life (δικαίωσιν ζωῆς) (v.18). Second, Paul makes a comparison between the many who were made sinners through the disobedience of the one man (19a), and the many who will be established as righteous (δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται) through the one man’s obedience (19b). Appeal has also been made frequently to verses 18-19 as evidence for the argument of God’s justification of sinners through the imputation of Christ’s righteousness.<sup>83</sup> Given the fact that Paul speaks about “making righteous” (δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται), the question to be addressed here is how are people made righteous or justified? The first thing that needs to be clarified is that these verses do not speak about imputation of righteousness. These verses are primarily concerned with Jesus’ redemptive obedience (Jesus’ just deed). Paul uses the genitive form of δικαίωμα (δικαιώματος, v. 18) to speak about the one man’s “just deed.” Then, in verse

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<sup>83</sup> Schreiner, *Romans*, 292.

19, Paul makes it obvious that the ἐνὸς δικαίωμα (one man's act of righteousness) is a referent to Jesus' obedience unto death. "The one man's act of righteousness (ἐνὸς δικαίωμα) leads to righteousness of life (εἰς δικαίωσιν ζωῆς) for all people."

Here Paul proffers an answer to the question of how people are made righteous. The answer that Paul gives is that Jesus' act of righteousness leads (εἰς) believers to similar acts of righteousness. In other words, one is made righteous not so much by the transference of Jesus' righteousness but by the empowered imitation of Jesus' righteousness. We need to pay attention to the preposition εἰς ("into", v. 18) which usually implies an entrance into something. Paul usually deploys εἰς in baptismal context (1 Cor 10:2, and 1 Cor 12:13; Acts 8:16, 19:5) to indicate "a means by which a shared identity of a people is created, an identity in reference to Moses, Christ, and/or the Church."<sup>84</sup> What Paul is communicating here is that Jesus' *righteous deed* (ἐνὸς δικαίωμα), that is, his obedient response to God, creates the possibility of similar just deeds for the new people of God. The fact that Paul has the ethical praxis of the new people of God in view here is further supported by his use of δικαίωσιν ζωῆς (v. 18) with reference to all people. According to Miller, δικαίωσιν means "the process of doing a just act," or "the act of executing δίκαιον."<sup>85</sup> The term is synonymous with δικαίωμα. So, this text speaks about the just praxis of believers that has its foundation in Jesus' just deed.

In verse 19, Paul clarifies the point even further, making it more evident that Jesus' obedience is the basis for the righteousness of others. Here, Paul speaks of the making righteous, using the term κατασταθήσονται (the future passive indicative of the verb καθίστημι, which mean "to make" or "cause to become"). It is important to point out that καθίστημι does not convey the idea of imputation, reckoning or being credited. Where

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<sup>84</sup> Arland Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 245.

<sup>85</sup> Miller, *The Practice of the Body of Christ*, 71.

Paul has reckoning in view he uses the Greek term ἐλογίσθη from the verb λογίζομαι (Rom 4:3). In fact, Gorman reads καθίστημι in this verse as the functional equivalent of γίνομαι (“become”) (2 Cor 5:21).<sup>86</sup> Paul is not making a case for the imputation of Christ’s righteousness on sinners; rather, Paul is saying that Jesus’ obedience unto death, an act by which he expresses his self-giving love and faithfulness to his Father, creates the possibility for similar acts of righteousness and obedience for his followers.

When we consider that in verse 12 that people were made sinners through their actual participation in Adam’s crime and not by imputation, it makes sense to understand the corresponding process of the establishment of the many in the state of righteousness through obedience of Christ to involve human cooperation too. According to Byrne, “such cooperation would, in the first instance, involve a response of faith. Required beyond that, however, would be the continuing human cooperation with grace in preserving and living out the divine gift of righteousness.”<sup>87</sup> In Paul’s mind, as Adam’s disobedience became characteristic of the lives of his descendants (those who follow his lifestyle), so also Jesus’ obedience would become the defining character of the new community that he forms. For Paul, believers who are “in Christ” share in his life by replicating his life of perfect obedience to God. It is Jesus’ faithful obedience which becomes the standard or model of how “the many” will be made righteous (v. 19). This makes sense in light of the fact that Paul presents the obedience of Jesus (Phil 2:6-11) as the basis of his exhortation to the Christian believers in Philippi.

In the concluding section (vv. 20-21), Paul returns to his reflection on the law which he introduced earlier in verses 13 and 14. In this final section, he briefly reviews the role of the law in the history of God’s salvific plan. In verse 20, Paul states that “the Law

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<sup>86</sup> Gorman, *Participating in Christ: Explorations in Paul’s Theology and Spirituality*, 195.

<sup>87</sup> Brendan Byrne, *Paul and the Economy of Salvation: Reading from the Perspective of the Last Judgment* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2021), 139.

came with the result that wrongdoing increased,” but where sin increases, grace increases even more. For many Jews, the law was supposed to be God’s solution to the problem of sin. But Paul argues that the Law did not resolve the problem or reality of sin in the world; rather, it makes sin more visible (Rom 7:13), raising it to the level of transgression (cf. Rom 2:20) and making it accountable. As Matera affirms, “the appearance of the law made God’s will known, and for the first time, people violated specific commandments of God’s law, just as Adam did. Thus sin increased.”<sup>88</sup> It is obvious that Paul does not think that the Law achieved its redemptive purpose in so far as people continued to do wrong even when they have clarity about the wrongness of their actions.

It is important to clarify that Paul does not speak derogatorily about the law; rather, he presents the law in a positive light in Romans referring to it as holy, righteous and good (Rom 7:12). Paul states that his gospel does not invalidate the law, but offers it true fulfillment (Rom 3:31). At the same, Paul believes that no one is able to keep the full requirement of the law unless one is empowered by God’s grace. Hence his argument: “where sin abounds, grace abounds even more (ἐπλεόνασεν ἡ ἀμαρτία, ὑπερπερίσσευσεν ἡ χάρις).” Although the law did not help human beings to escape the dominion of sin, verse 21 attests to God’s salvific intervention to save humans from the dominion of sin through the gift of Jesus Christ who, in the words of Stegmann, “shows forth authentic human existence.”<sup>89</sup> For Paul, living the life of obedience and justice is now possible because Jesus has set the example for us to emulate, but also because God has unleashed his divine Spirit to empower believers and enable them to fulfill the just demands of the law (Rom 8:4). Finally, Paul makes it clear that Jesus the Messiah and Lord is the agent through whom God achieves this salvific mission (v. 21). My reading of the δικαίο-word group in

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<sup>88</sup> Matera, *Romans*, 140.

<sup>89</sup> Stegman, *Written for Our Instruction*, 40.



Rom 5:12-21 shows that what Paul is expressing is not so much the imputation of God/Jesus' righteousness, but refers to the embodiment of Christ's righteousness. Through his Adam-Christ discourse, Paul underscores the fact that God's people are obligated to participate in the righteousness and faithfulness of Jesus. While not denying the forensic character of the δικαίο-word group, my intent in this exegesis is to highlight the participatory and transformative qualities of δικαίο- terms in Rom 5:12-21.

#### 4.5 Paul's Apocalyptic Periodization of History in Romans 5:12-21

In Rom 5:12-21, Paul presents an eschatological and dualistic view of history that is typical of most contemporary Jewish apocalyptic writers. Unlike the authors of Daniel and 4 Ezra who viewed history according to the world-political periods, Paul offers a "theology of history" in which history is divided into three major moments of salvation history.<sup>90</sup> The first is the era "before the law" (ἄχρι νόμου, v. 13), that is, from Adam to Moses (ἀπὸ Ἀδὰμ μέχρι Μωϋσέως, v.14) when people lived in the state of nature; the second is the era that spans from Moses to "the one who was to come" (Jesus the Messiah, vv. 14) when Jews live under the law. The third is the new era of salvation (the time of Christ and the Church) when people live under the reign of grace. It is an era when God, through the sending of Christ and the Spirit, empowers believers to live in obedience and justice resulting in the fulness of life. As such, the era is marked by grace, obedience, and righteousness for all who imitate Jesus' filial obedience to God. Here, Paul employs periodization to explain the reality of sin and death in the world, just as Daniel and 4 Ezra uses the same apocalyptic device to address the reality of evil in their historical contexts.

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<sup>90</sup> Gerbern S. Oegema, *Apocalyptic Interpretation of the Bible: Apocalypticism and Biblical Interpretation in Early Judaism, the Apostle Paul, the Historical Jesus and Their Reception History* (London: T & T Clark, 2012), 128.

At first glance, Paul's periodization of history might appear to carry no political significance, given the fact that there is no mention of Rome nor any other empire in Paul's narrative. But at a deeper level, Paul has technically sidelined Rome in his division of historical epochs. This confirms the argument of John Barclay that Paul's most subversive action against the Roman Empire was "not to oppose or upstage it, but to relegate it to the rank of a dependent and derivative entity, denied a distinguishable name or significant role in the story of the world."<sup>91</sup> By his conspicuous omission of Rome in his account of world history that stretches from creation (Adam) through redemption (Jesus Christ), Paul makes Rome a theologically unimportant entity despite the empire's claims to the contrary.

Besides using his periodization to relegate the Roman Empire to the background, Paul's periodization of history also presupposes a deterministic view of history that accentuates God's sovereignty over human affairs including those of the Roman emperors, as well as God's power to save his faithful ones. In both Daniel and 4 Ezra, we saw this deterministic view of history. For Paul, God is active in human history, acting purposefully and working with and through individuals and nations (including using vessels of wrath and destruction such as evil empires) (cf. Rom 9:22-24, 4 Ezra 11:39) to achieve his redemptive plan. In fact, Paul argues that God's decision is sovereign and no one can challenge God (Rom 9:19-21). Like Daniel and 4 Ezra, Paul sees God's sovereignty and his activity in history as the interpretive key of historical process. This point is accentuated in Romans 9-11 where Paul argues vehemently that history is under God's control. For Paul, it is God who determines the unfolding of historical events, not the emperors of Rome.

However, unlike Daniel and Ezra, Paul sees the climax and culmination of God's salvation as already taking place in the Christ-event. He believes that God's salvific

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<sup>91</sup> Barclay, "Why the Roman Empire Was Insignificant to Paul," 383-84.

intervention through the death and resurrection of Christ was an event already planned by God before the beginning of time, and so it speaks to God's supreme foreknowledge. Paul speaks about the Christ-event occurring at "the right time" (κατὰ καιρὸν) (v. 6), "when the fullness of time has come, God sent his Son" (Gal 4:4). In Paul's mind, the Christ-event which ushered in the era of grace, was already preordained by God. As such, Paul presents a Christological reading of history that highlights God's power to rectify what has gone wrong in the human world through Jesus the Messiah.

Not only does Paul offer a deterministic view of the Christ-event, he also interprets it as a mystery that has been revealed to him. Paul speaks about the Christ-event as a mystery (μυστήριον) ordained before the ages (1 Cor 2:7). The word "mystery" echoes Dan 2:27-28, where the same word is used to describe the revelation which God showed to Daniel concerning Nebuchadnezzar's dream. Other mysteries which Paul is privileged to receive have to do with the end-time events, namely, the mystery with regard to the nature of bodily resurrection (1 Cor 15:51), as well as the mystery of God's salvific plan for the Gentiles (Rom 11:25-27). In these two instances, Paul claims to make a prophetic revelation about events that would precede the eschaton. For Paul, the gracious revelation of the eschatological community consisting of Jews and Gentiles is a hidden mystery which has been revealed through the Christ-event. Through faith in Christ, the Gentiles are now admitted to the family of God and are partakers in the eschatological blessing with the Jews on equal footing (Rom 11:1-36). Following the Danielic tradition, Paul regards himself as a steward of these divine mysteries (1 Cor 4:1) which were hidden from the rulers of this present age (1 Cor 2:6-8), but are now revealed to Christ's believers (cf. Col 1:26; Eph 3:9). Therefore, it suffices to say that Paul sees himself in the mode of Daniel the prophet who received divine mysteries about God's eschatological events.

Lastly, as in the Book of Daniel and 4 Ezra, Paul's purpose in delineating a fixed order of events in Romans 5 is to accentuate the immediacy of God's salvific intervention. The passage speaks of God's power to make righteous and to save (vv. 10-11, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21), God's power to create a new order in the midst of the chaos of human sinfulness (Romans 8). In Rom 5:12-21 Paul sees Jesus as the divine agent through whom God has commenced his salvific act. Daniel's visions of God establishing his divine Kingdom through the agency of the "One like the Son of Man" (Dan 7:14) may also have informed Paul's understanding of Jesus as the Messiah and Lord (v. 21). For Paul, Jesus is the Messiah through whom God has effected his salvific act and inaugurated his divine reign on earth, a reign that is marked by justice and righteousness. As in the Book of Daniel, the divine kingdom which God establishes through his Messiah is one where those designated as "holy one" those whose life is marked by faithfulness will enjoy the fulness of life (v. 21).

#### 4.6 The Doctrine of the Two Ages and the Adam-Christ Antithesis in Romans 5:12-21

While it is obvious that Paul engages in a threefold periodization of history in Rom 5:12-21, there is no explicit reference to the doctrine of the two ages in the passage. However, some Pauline scholars have argued that the two-age and two-Adam structures of Paul's thought mutually interpret one another, and should be read in light of each other.<sup>92</sup> In this section, I affirm the argument that the doctrine of two ages underlies Paul's Adam-Christ antithesis in Rom 5:12-21 and that the contrast Paul makes between Adam and Christ is essentially eschatological and so reflects the two-age apocalyptic theological worldview. Jason Meyer has already noted that "the two-age and the two-Adam structures

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<sup>92</sup> See Meyer, *The End of the Law*, 56–57; Pascuzzi, *Paul*, 98–100; Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A Study of Hermeneutical Τύπος Structures*, AUSS 2 (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1981), 193–291; George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 450–51.

of Paul's thought mutually interpret one another, and thus students of Paul must view them together."<sup>93</sup> Meyer poses an important question in this regard, asking, how do these categories relate? Meyer's insightful response is

The two-age structure relates to the two-Adam structure as follows: the death of Christ simultaneously abolishes the "old creation" and atones for the consequences unleashed by the sin of the "Old Adam," while the resurrection of Christ represents the dawning of the "new creation." More specifically, the resurrection simultaneously serves as the event in which the new creation comes into existence, and Jesus begins His dominion over the new creation as the Last Adam.<sup>94</sup>

Meyer's explanation underscores a fundamental aspect of Pauline theology, namely, that the death of Jesus represents the abolishing of the old age of sin and evil while his resurrection represents the dawn of a new age of righteousness. But Paul reveals more about the nature of the two-ages in Rom 5:12-21 than is usually recognized.

In Rom 5:12-21, Paul makes clear that the present evil age was inaugurated with the sin of Adam, while the Christ-event inaugurates the new age. As we have noted earlier, the dualism of the two ages that is characteristic of apocalyptic eschatology is both temporal and spatial. At the temporal level, time emerges as a key theme in Rom 5:12-21. Chronologically, the narrative begins with Adam who is the catalyst of sin and death in the world through his disobedience (v. 12), and culminates with the Christ-event (and the response of the believers) which brought grace and life through his obedience (vv. 15, 16, 18, 19). Paul uses different temporal expressions or time modifiers, such as ἄχρι (v. 13) ἀπὸ, μέχρι (v. 14), and the substantival participle, τοῦ μέλλοντος (v. 15), to designate historical events. The first three temporal modifiers mark the boundaries of time period defined by Adam and Moses: ἄχρι νόμου ("until the law," v. 13), ἀπὸ Ἀδάμ μέχρι

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<sup>93</sup> Meyer, *The End of the Law*, 56–57.

<sup>94</sup> Meyer, *The End of the Law*, 57.

Μωϋσέως (“from Adam until Moses,” v. 14),<sup>95</sup> while the fourth time modifier τύπος τοῦ μέλλοντος (“a type of the one about to come”) is a descriptive genitive that makes a temporal connection between Adam and Christ. Finally, Paul speaks about ζωὴν αἰώνιον (“eternal life”), a temporal concept that I shall explore in the next chapter. While Rom 5:12-21 records three historical events, these can simply be divided into two temporal periods: (a) The old age of sin and death marked by disobedience to God; (b) the new age of grace, justice, and life (eternal salvation) marked by obedience to God. Throughout the narrative, Paul continues to make various contrasts between the time of Adam through Moses (the old age) and the time of Christ (the new age).

Paul also uses spatial language in his discourse about the two eras. In Rom 5:12, 20-21, Paul speaks about the “reign” of death, the reign of sin and the reign of grace using the Greek word βασιλεύειν (“to reign, “to exercise dominion”). The concept of reign is directly connected to the notion of realm because reigning occurs within a political jurisdiction in which there is a ruler (king). Paul is referring to two realms or two geopolitical jurisdictions: (a) the realm where sin and death rule, and (b) the realm where grace rules. In other words, Paul is talking about two kingdoms in which two entities sin/death, and grace are kings within two political domains. Just as Paul contrasted the temporal dimension, so too he contrasts the spatial dimension. Sin rules in death (ἐβασίλευσεν ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ), while grace rules through righteousness resulting in eternal life (ἡ χάρις βασιλεύσῃ διὰ δικαιοσύνης εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον).

The imagery of kingdoms with kings presupposes people who are citizens. In Paul’s mind, each of these kingdoms has its own citizens, and one can only become a citizen of one kingdom. The kingdom where sin reigns in death is the kingdom where

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<sup>95</sup> Jae Hyun Lee, “Richard B. Hays and a Narrative Approach to the Pauline Letters,” in *Pillars in the History of Biblical Interpretation: Prevailing Methods after 1980*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Sean A. Adams, MBSS (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 2:430.

Adam stands at the head as the representative figure, while the kingdom where grace rules through righteousness/justice is the one where Jesus the Messiah reigns. As Constantine Campbell correctly notes, “a realm will be shaped by its ruler as the ruler imposes its will over its domain.”<sup>96</sup> To be a citizen or live in the kingdom of sin and under its rule is to forge an allegiance with sin. It means living the Adam-determined existence, one that is characterized by disobedience, ungodliness, injustice, domination of the weaker others, and all sorts of social evils (Rom 1:18-3:20). On the contrary, to be a citizen and live under the rule of grace, is to pledge allegiance with Christ whom Paul calls Jesus the Messiah τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν (our Lord v. 21). It means to imitate the character of Jesus the Messiah, embodying his life of obedience, faithfulness, and justice. When Paul refers to Jesus the Messiah as “our Lord” in verse 21, he makes explicit that believers are no longer under the realm of sin where human behavior is modeled after Adam. Rather, they have been transferred to the realm of grace and as such their behavior is to be shaped by the life of Christ. This is exactly what Paul is driving at in this antithetical temporal discourse, and it fits well within the overall purpose of the letter. For Paul, the mind and behavior of Christ’s believers are no longer to conform to the standard of this age; rather, they are to be transformed (Rom 12:1-2).

That Paul’s eschatology was shaped by Jewish two-age apocalyptic eschatology in which time is conceived as a succession of two ages (the present age and the age to come) can also be discerned from various Pauline statements. For instance, Paul thinks of himself and his communities as the generation “on whom the end of the ages have come” (1 Cor 10:11). Paul frequently uses καινότης, (Rom 7:6) and καινός (1 Cor 11: 25; 2 Cor 3: 6; 5:17; Gal 6: 2, 15) to refer to the “new creation” or “new age” of salvation inaugurated by

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<sup>96</sup> Constantine R. Campbell, *Paul and the Hope of Glory: An Exegetical and Theological Study* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2020), 67.

Jesus Christ. Through one's participation in the Christ-event, one enters a new realm of existence in which one is empowered to live the eschatological new life inaugurated by Christ. Paul also speaks of the "present evil age" in Gal 1:4. Other times he refers to it simply as "this age" (Cf. Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 1:20; 2:6-8; 3:18; 2 Cor 4:4). Both Paul and the early Christians believed that the expected apocalyptic new age had dawned in their day. This is because in Jewish apocalyptic texts, one of the signs of the eschatological new age is the resurrection of the dead (cf. Dan 12:2; 1 Enoch 22). When Jesus rose from the dead, the early Church, including Paul, interpreted the resurrection of Jesus as the sign of the beginning of the new era predicted by the Jewish prophets and apocalyptists.<sup>97</sup> The defeat of death is a demonstration that the new age has been inaugurated.

Consequently, instead of looking toward to future events as the sign of the eschatological age, Paul looked backward to the past event (Jesus' resurrection) as the beginning of the predicted blessed future. For Paul, the clearest evidence that confirms Christ's resurrection as the sign of the new is the outpouring of the divine Spirit on the believers. The gift of the Spirit in both Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic texts is a gift of the end time. Although God's Spirit has always resided among a few leaders (kings and prophets), the prophets looked forward to the day when the Spirit would be poured forth upon all God's people (Cf. Joel 2:28-30; Jer 31:33-34). In Acts, this apocalyptic event happened at the Pentecost and Peter interpreted it as the fulfillment of the prophetic expectation (Acts 2:16-18). In Rom 8:23-25, Paul also identifies the Spirit as the "first fruits" of the eschatological blessings. For Paul, the surprising inclusion of the Gentiles among the people of God confirmed through their receiving of the gift of the Spirit is a sure sign that the new age has begun (Gal 3:1-5; Rom 9-11).

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<sup>97</sup> Pascuzzi, *Paul*, 98–101.



Read through the lens of empire criticism, one could argue that Paul uses the two-realm antithesis as a subtle critique of the socio-political order of his day, the Roman Empire. In Paul thought, the realm in which the powers of sin and death rule is this present age (1 Cor 2:6-8) in which Rome holds political power. In the Jewish apocalyptic worldview, the anti-God cosmic actors such as sin, death (Rom 5:12-21; 8:2, 38; 1 Cor 15:26), principalities and powers (Rom 8:38), Satan (Rom 16:20; 2 Cor 2:11) do not simply exist in the spiritual or heavenly real; rather, they are closely connected to individual and corporate bodies who govern earthly institutions in the real world.<sup>98</sup> For instance, in 1 Cor 2:8, Paul indirectly equates Rome with the rulers of this evil and corrupt present age who are doomed to end: “None of the rulers of this age knew this wisdom, because if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” Here Paul makes clear that the rulers of this age are the human political rulers who killed the Lord of glory (Jesus Christ) through crucifixion. In a way, 1 Cor 2:8 sheds light on the identity of the “sin” that reigns in death.

Just as in Daniel 2 and 7 and 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34, Paul connects the imperial power of his day to cosmic forces of evil whose dominion is already doomed to come to an end. For Paul, the Roman Empire is the structural embodiment of sin within the world.<sup>99</sup> In the mind of these authors, the kingdom that will replace the evil kingdoms and political powers of the present age is God’s kingdom which will be ushered in through agency of the Messiah. In Rom 5:12-21, Paul makes it clear that Jesus is the Messiah (Χριστός, vv.15, 17, 21). Already in Rom 1:3-4, Paul identifies Jesus as the Messiah (Χριστός), from the root of David. In fact, the reference to Jesus as Χριστός in Rom 1:1-4, a passage that echoes 2 Sam 7:12-16, and Ps 2:7-8, coupled with linguistic evidence of terms such as σπέρματος

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<sup>98</sup> Oudshoorn, *Pauline Eschatology*, 45.

<sup>99</sup> Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* (New York: T & T Clark, 2008), 11.

Δαυὶδ (the seed of David), Υἱοῦ Θεοῦ (Son of God), πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης (Spirit of holiness), δυνάμις (Power), ἀνάστασις (resurrection), and κύριος (Lord), all used in reference to Jesus, point to the fact that Rom 1:3-4 is set forth as a narrative of Jesus' Davidic messiahship—a thought pattern that Paul shares with some of his contemporary Jewish apocalyptic writers.

Paul continued the messianic discourse which began in Rom 1:1-4 in this *pericope*. For Paul, Jesus is not only the Messiah whose kingdom is displacing the kingdom of this present age, Jesus is also the Lord (κύριος, v. 21). These theological appellations are embedded with political significance in first century Rome. In fact, N. T. Wright has argued that Paul's insistence on Jesus' identity as "King and Lord" to whom all must pledge the obedience of faith is an implicit challenge to the kingship and lordship of Caesar.<sup>100</sup> Although Paul does not call Jesus "Son of Man," yet the way he conceptualizes Jesus as the new, second, or last Adam in this passage and in 1 Corinthians 15 who is given a universal sovereignty seems to allude to the "Son of Man" narrative in Daniel 7.

Finally, there is also the ethical dimension of this passage that needs to be emphasized. While some argue that this passage is about the imputation of Christ's righteousness on the sinner, it is difficult to support that argument in light of Paul's realm language. The spatial emphasis of this passage makes it clear that Paul has the participation of people in each of these realms in mind rather than any imputation of righteousness. Campbell makes this point clearer: "the realm structure that contrasts the domain of sin and death with the domain of grace and righteousness suggests that Christ, like Adam, stands as the way into the realm he represents. Those who exist under this realm are characterized by righteousness because they belong to the realm of righteousness made

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<sup>100</sup> N. T. Wright, "Paul's Gospel and Caesar's Empire," in *Paul and Politics: Ekklesia, Israel, Imperium, Interpretation*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Harrisburg, PA.: Trinity Press International, 2000), 168; N. T. Wright, *Paul in Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 69.

open by Christ not by being imputed with Christ's righteousness per se."<sup>101</sup> This is the rhetorical purpose of this passage as we have argued throughout this chapter.

#### 4.6.1 The Relationship between the Two Ages

One of the unresolved questions in the current discussion of Paul's doctrine of the two ages is how to conceptualize the relationship between the two ages in Paul's thought. For some scholars, such as Martyn, de Boer, Gaventa, etc., the relationship between the two ages is conceived in terms of strict dualism or radical discontinuity, marked not by linear continuities but by God's punctiliar invasion of the present evil age.<sup>102</sup> This view is given explicit articulation by de Boer as follows; "there is and can be 'no continuity' between the two ages."<sup>103</sup> I argue that this reading is problematic in that such a radical discontinuity between the two ages is never evident neither in Paul nor in other Jewish apocalyptic texts at least as we have seen in both Daniel and 4 Ezra. Rather, these texts reflect a motif of the two ages that is marked by both continuity and discontinuity and as such, they become a lens through which we can construct Paul's understanding of the relationship between the two ages in Rom 5:12-21.

We must admit that the relationship between Adam and Christ in Rom 5:12-21 is one that is obviously marked by contrast at multiple levels. Throughout the narrative, Paul constantly contrasts the time of Christ with the time of Adam. While the era of Adam is signified by sin, the new era inaugurated by Christ is signified by grace and righteousness/justice. By using the Adam and Christ antithesis as a foil, Paul indirectly addresses two ways of being human and of living in the world: one that is marked by sinfulness (disobedience), the other marked by righteousness (obedience). Adam denotes

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<sup>101</sup> Campbell, *Paul and the Hope of Glory*, 67–68.

<sup>102</sup> J. P. Davies, *Paul among the Apocalypses?*, 15; Martyn, *Galatians*, 347.

<sup>103</sup> Martinus C. de Boer, "Paul and Apocalyptic Theology," in *EA*, 1988, 348.

a lifestyle that leads to death while Christ denotes a lifestyle that leads to eternal life. The contrast that Paul makes is between the old creation and the new creation. While Paul consistently contrasts the eras of Adam and of Christ, there is no evidence that Paul has in mind a strict radical break between the era of Adam and the era of Christ, what de Boer describes as “a clean break with the past.”<sup>104</sup> Rather, what we see is a clear inaugurated eschatology in which the two eras overlap.

The first thing to note in the relationship between the old creation and the new creation as symbolized by the figures of Adam and Christ is that Paul never repudiated the ongoing reality of Adamic existence. Loren Struckenbruck has correctly pointed out this fact. According to Struckenbruck, “the advent of Christ did not do away with the ongoing power of death in the world.”<sup>105</sup> In fact, at the time Romans was written, Paul and the Christian communities were still living under Roman rule; they were still under the powers hostile to God and God’s people.<sup>106</sup> Paul is not denying this reality nor is Paul arguing for a complete annihilation of the realities that Adam represents. Rather, Paul is concerned with exposing two coexisting ways of living and acting in God’s world: one based on the reality of the old and evil age, the other based on the reality of the new age.<sup>107</sup> In Romans 6, Paul makes clearer that even though ‘the age to come,’ with its distinctive powers for righteous living, has been inaugurated by Jesus, yet “this age” (Gal 1:4) with its negative powers still exists and continually attempts to thwart the effects of that inaugurated new age.<sup>108</sup> This reality explains Paul’s ethical paraenesis in Romans 6 where Paul frames his injunctions in terms of the indicatives and the imperatives.

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<sup>104</sup> Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 261–62.

<sup>105</sup> Struckenbruck, ““Overlapping Ages at Qumran and ‘Apocalyptic’ in Pauline Theology,” 315.

<sup>106</sup> Pascuzzi, *Paul*, 96.

<sup>107</sup> Christopher L. Carter, *The Great Sermon Tradition as a Fiscal Framework in 1 Corinthians: Towards a Pauline Theology of Material Possessions* (A&C Black, 2010), 118.

<sup>108</sup> Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 615.

Secondly, even though Paul believes that the new age has already begun with the resurrection of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit, Paul does not assume that its final consummation—the Parousia—(1 Thess 4:15, 1 Cor 1:8) has occurred. In fact, the final transfer of Christ’s messianic sovereignty to God at the end of time is yet to happen. So, what Paul expounds is an inaugurated eschatology which retains a futuristic dimension, that is, an “already but not yet” eschatology. In between the realized and future eschaton, there is what Gorman described as the overlapping of the age, an “in between time.”<sup>109</sup> This is the time in which we currently live, it is the time when both the old age and the new age are happening at the same time. It is a time of great fulfilment as well as a time of great anticipation. The community of God’s people are encouraged to align themselves in the present era with the one true God and the power of the age to come, over against the power of this age. Believers are to live the new life “in Christ,” that is, having their daily existence shaped by the Christ-event.

#### 4.7 Socio-political Reading of Sin and Death in Romans 5:12-21

There are two major issues that emerged in Rom 5:12-21: (a) the emergence of sin and death in the world through Adam; (b) the reality of grace and righteousness (justification). In this section I examine a dominant western reading of sin and death in this passage, then I propose an alternative reading. Here, I argue that it is the reality of systemic sin and the culture death in the world especially as they are made manifest in the first century imperial context of Rome Paul speaks about in this passage. I shall address the issue of justification in the next chapter.

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<sup>109</sup> Michael, *Apostle of the Crucified Lord*, 172.

#### 4.7.1 The Personification of Sin and Death

Sin is a major concept in any discourse about salvation in either in the Old or New Testament, but especially in Paul's theology. Talk about divine salvation presupposes the reality of sin and evil. In Christian theology, sin is usually construed as a human rebellion against God, a deliberate violation of God's divine law; it is generally perceived as an act of wrongdoing. This understanding of sin constitutes much of Paul's discourse of human sinfulness in Romans 1-3 where Paul speaks of sin as a human infraction of God's will which resulted not only in the rupturing of divine-human relationship (Rom 5:1-11) but also in the rupturing of the human relationships (Rom 1:18-3:32). But Paul appears to construe sin differently in Rom 5:12-21. The first thing to notice in Rom 5:12 is that Paul speaks of sin as if it were a person rather than the object of human action. Prior to Rom 5:12 Paul speaks about ἁμαρτία ("sin") without the definite article ἡ ("the"). But in our *pericope*, we see for the first-time sin in its articular form (ἡ ἁμαρτία). It is generally agreed that by using the articular forms of ἁμαρτία, Paul personifies "sin," as an independent entity with the capacity to exercise power over human beings.

Before chapter 5, the closest that Paul come to imagining sin as an active force is in Rom 3:9 where Paul states that "both Jews and Greeks are "under sin," (ὕφ' ἁμαρτίαν).<sup>110</sup> But it is only in this *pericope* that Paul reveals in more detail the aggressive and oppressive manner in which sin invades (εἰσῆλθεν) the human world and takes over the center stage of human history, ruling and exerting dominion like an emperor. Beginning from verse 12, sin functions not only as the grammatical subject of a verb: sin (ἡ ἁμαρτία) "came into the world" (v. 12), sin (ἡ ἁμαρτία) "exercised dominion" (Rom 5:21; 6:12, 14), sin (ἡ ἁμαρτία) "produced in me all kinds of covetousness" (Rom 7:8),

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<sup>110</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer notes that in Rom 3:9 "Paul personifies it (sin) as a master who dominates a slave; it holds human in bondage to it." Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 331.

sin (ἡ ἁμαρτία) “revived” (Rom 7:9), sin (ἡ ἁμαρτία) “dwells within me” (Rom 7:17, 20), but it also acquires some intensity, sin “increased” (v.20).<sup>111</sup> Sin has an ally—Death (ὁ θάνατος) whom Paul also personifies (vv. 12, 14, 17, 21). Both are construed as powers who have entered on the world stage from the offstage to wreak havoc in the world. With their entrance, they began to enslave humans (Rom 6:20) and hold them captive (Rom 7:23).

The question is, how should we understand the personification of sin and death in Rom 5:12-21? A major response to this question came from Ernst Käsemann who reads the personified sin and death in Rom 5:12-21 as demonic, anti-God powers.<sup>112</sup> Sin as a cosmic anti-God power has become the dominant reading of Paul’s personification of sin in Rom 5:12-21 especially among scholars of the ‘Apocalyptic’ school.<sup>113</sup> For instance, N.T. Wright writes, “‘Sin’ takes on a malevolent life of its own, exercising power over persons and communities. It is almost as though by ‘sin’ Paul is referring to what in some other part of the Bible is meant by ‘Satan.’”<sup>114</sup> Similarly, in his monograph *The Defeat of Death: Apocalyptic Eschatology in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 5*, de Boer identifies two tracks of Jewish apocalyptic eschatology: cosmological and forensic and explores how death is construed in both soteriological tracks.<sup>115</sup> According to de Boer, in the cosmological track, death is understood as a cosmic force that is opposed to God. Here

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<sup>111</sup> Beverly Roberts Gaventa, “The Cosmic Power of Sin in Paul’s Letter to the Romans: Toward a Widescreen Edition,” *Int* 58.3 (J2004): 230.

<sup>112</sup> Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 198. Käsemann’s reading comes as a critique of Bultmann’s reading of personified sin and death as metaphors used by Paul to communicate fundamental features of human situation. For a detailed discussion of the debate between Bultmann and Käsemann, see de Boer, *The Defeat of Death*, 15–37.

<sup>113</sup> For this reading of Sin and Death as cosmic anti-God powers see, Yoonjong Kim, *The Divine-Human Relationship in Romans 1-8 in the Light of Interdependence Theory*, LNTS 635 (London: T&T Clark, 2020), 114; Martinus C. de Boer, “Sin and Soteriology in Romans,” in *Sin and Its Remedy in Paul*, ed. Nijay K. Gupta and John K. Goodrich, CPT (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2020), 15–18; Gaventa, “The Cosmic Power of Sin in Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” 229–40; de Boer, “Sin and Soteriology in Romans,” 14–32; Stegman, *Written for Our Instruction*, 67.

<sup>114</sup> N.T. Wright, “The Letter to the Romans: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2002), 10:457.

<sup>115</sup> de Boer, *The Defeat of Death*, 85–86.

salvation is ultimately articulated in terms of God's triumphant defeat of the cosmic power of death and re-establish God's sovereignty over the world.<sup>116</sup> On the contrary, in the forensic apocalyptic eschatology, death is understood as the punishment for sin. According to de Boer, the two tracks are intricately connected and complementary rather than diametrically opposed, and like a railway, both tracks can run side by side, crisscross, or overlap, even in the same document.<sup>117</sup>

But when it comes to applying this paradigm to Paul, de Boer argues that Paul follows the cosmological track only. As a result, de Boer argues that death in Pauline thought reflects the cosmological apocalyptic eschatology which sees death not as a natural end of life nor a purely penal decree, nor a metaphor for a deeper reality, but as a demonic cosmological power that God has defeated in Jesus Christ. For de Boer, the personification of death in 1 Cor 15:24-26 and Rom 5: 12, 14, 17, and 21 "provides *prima facie* support for the hypothesis that death is for Paul a cosmological/apocalyptic power."<sup>118</sup> The reason for this conclusion is that de Boer conceives salvation in Paul's thought as primarily the victorious battle that God fought to free humans being from the clutches of cosmic powers that held humans in bondage in this present age. For him, salvation in Paul's theology is about deliverance from the bondage and slavery to demonic powers, not about the forgiveness of human sin. In this reading, there are not two but three principle actors (God, enslaved humanity, and the culpable "powers") in Paul's narrative of salvation.<sup>119</sup>

A major conclusion drawn from the above reading is that Paul's prerogative in the Letter to the Romans, particularly in Romans 5-8, is with sin as a supra-human power that

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<sup>116</sup> de Boer, "Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology," 359.

<sup>117</sup> de Boer, "Paul and Apocalyptic Eschatology," 177; de Boer, *The Defeat of Death*, 360.

<sup>118</sup> de Boer, *The Defeat of Death*, 35.

<sup>119</sup> J. Louis Martyn, "Epilogue: An Essay in Pauline Meta-Ethics," in *Divine and Human Agency in Paul and His Cultural Environment*, ed. John M. G. Barclay and Simon J. Bathercole (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 178; Martinus C. de Boer, "Paul, Theologian of God's Apocalypse," *Int* 56.1 (2002): 21-33; de Boer, "Paul and Apocalyptic Theology," 345-83; Collins, *Seers, Sybils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism*, 287-99.



enslaves the human (the cosmological dimension), and not sin as specific human action against God or other human beings (moral dimension). In other words, salvation in Paul's theology in Romans 5-8 is about deliverance from the bondage and slavery of demonic powers, not about human sin and its forgiveness. According to Louis Martyn, "human beings are not said to need forgiveness, but rather deliverance from a genuine slavery...., And by his death, Christ is not said to have accomplished our forgiveness, but rather our redemption from slavery."<sup>120</sup> Elsewhere Martyn writes, "the human plight consists fundamentally of enslavement to supra-human powers; and God's redemptive act is his deed of liberation."<sup>121</sup> In fact, some statements about forgiveness of sin in relation to Christ's death as found in Pauline letters is interpreted by some scholars of the "apocalyptic" school as belonging not to Paul but to a pre-Pauline tradition that Paul opposes.<sup>122</sup> From this perspective, "sins" (the individual human act) do not really feature in the plight that Paul describes because that human plight is understood not as 'self-caused' and cannot be addressed by repentance either; rather, the plight consists in enslavement and is ultimately addressed by divine liberation.

I must state that I recognize the significance of this apocalyptic reading of sin and death as personified cosmic powers in Romans in so far as it sheds light on the apocalyptic symbolic worldview of Second Temple Jews which endorses the existence of other supernatural forces some of whom are malicious spirits or anti-God powers who are opposed to God and God's created order. These anti-God powers inhabit the cosmos alongside human beings, exerting enormous negative influence on people. As such, human beings are always caught up in a matrix of spiritual power who contest for power and dominion. But despite this significance, this reading is obviously problematic on many

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<sup>120</sup> J. Louis Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 153.

<sup>121</sup> Martyn, *Galatians*, 97.

<sup>122</sup> Martyn, *Theological Issues in the Letters of Paul*, 148.

counts. First, it imposes a false dichotomy between the “cosmological” and the “forensic” soteriological framework.<sup>123</sup> Secondly, the apocalyptic cosmological frameworks that is singled out for Paul not only undermine human responsibility in the ongoing systemic sins in the world and the ways in which structural sins have contributed to the diminishment of the quality of human life resulting in death but it also assume that human beings has no capacity to transform the social order. Third, this reading also downplays Paul’s persistent appeal for an embodied righteousness and a transformed lifestyle in his gospel. In Romans, Paul makes it clear that ethical transformation is a consequence of one’s identification with Christ (participation in Christ) and salvation involves the synergy of the divine and human partners. Fourth, the belief that only God can do away with sin and death albeit in a future eschatological existence have resulted in people being passive in the face of real evil in the world, waiting for God to miraculously change the social order.

Given the Roman imperial context of Paul and his audience, I think there is more to Paul’s personification of sin and death than has been explored in western readings. In this section I will read sin and death in Rom 5:12-21 in light of empire criticism which takes seriously the imperial context of Paul’s Letter to the Romans. As a methodological framework, empire criticism seeks to lay bare the harsh realities of human subjugation by imperial dominance at all levels and in all spheres. My argument here is that Paul’s personification of sin and death as forces of domination, enslavement, and death-dealing can be understood as the way that colonized subjects such as Paul give coded expression to systemic political and economic domination, and as well as to the culture of death that were prevalent within the Roman Empire. As we have already seen in 4 Ezra 4:23-24, the experience of evil, particularly death, is an existential reality that speak to the daily

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<sup>123</sup> J. P. Davies, *Paul among the Apocalypses?*, 149–97; Surburg, “Rectify or Justify? A Response to J. Louis Martyn’s Interpretation of Paul’s Righteousness Language,” 64; N. T. Wright, “Paul in Current Anglophone Scholarship,” *ExpTim* 123.8 (2012): 373.

experiences of colonized subjects of the Roman Empire (cf. 4 Ezra 4:23-24). The same could be said of Paul. For Paul, sin and death are not experienced as activities of spiritual or cosmic powers that can act independent of the political powers and political institutions.<sup>124</sup> The idea of transhuman powers exercising their ungodly reign of domination in and through earthly political powers and institutions is not foreign in Jewish apocalyptic thought. Sin and death are cosmic realities that work through systems of human societies and governance,<sup>125</sup> but human beings have to give their consent and cooperation before they can be used by these forces of destruction.

The first supporting evidence for my reading is that in Rom 5:12-21, the images that Paul uses to speak of sin and death are regnal imageries and metaphors of dominion. Paul speaks of sin and death as active powers that εἰσῆλθεν (to “invade,” “to force into”) the cosmos and begin to exercise dominion. So, it makes more sense to understand Paul’s description of sin and death analogously to the colonizers (who invade the territories of their subjects by force), and the world and humanity as the colonized subject who are oftentimes helpless in such situations.<sup>126</sup> Some scholars have pointed out that Paul’s use of εἰσερχομαι signals a metaphor of dominion or subjugation.<sup>127</sup> Likewise, the Greek verb βασιλεύειν (to reign, dominate, to be a king) according to Robert Jewett “implies irresistible coercive power” in its Roman imperial context.<sup>128</sup> Paul’s use of εἰσερχομαι and βασιλεύω in close proximity with respect to sin and death alludes to the aggressive

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<sup>124</sup> For instance, in the Book of Daniel, the author makes an association between the evil celestial powers and the oppressive political powers of the day (Daniel 7, 10). For the Jews prior to Paul, the human embodiment of these cosmic powers at the political level have been Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Greece. At the time of Paul, the Rome empire became the pure embodiment of these evil powers as we have already seen in 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34.

<sup>125</sup> Ian E. Rock, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans and Roman Imperialism*. (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2012), 131.

<sup>126</sup> Jervis, “Reading Romans 7 in Conversation with Postcolonial Theory: Paul’s Struggle towards a Christian Identity of Hybridity,” 98.

<sup>127</sup> Annette Potgieter, *Contested Body: Metaphors of Dominion in Romans 5-8* (Cape Town, South Africa: AOSIS, 2020), 68; Matthew Black, *Romans*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 81.

<sup>128</sup> Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 377.

invasion and violence with which the Roman Empire dominated her diverse subjects as well as the sinful social structures created by the ruling elites that resulted in the subordination, oppression, and death of many defenseless people. Earlier in Rom 1:18-3:20, Paul provides insight into the sin-ridden condition of his society— sinful situation that Paul describes in terms of ἀσέβεια (ungodliness) and ἀδικία (unrighteousness). Some scholars have described the injustice, violence, immorality, impiety, and all the antisocial behavior enumerated in Rom 1:18-32 as Paul’s critique of the socio-political context of the Roman Empire. For instance, Melanie Johnson-Debaufre notes that the text reflects the chaos of the time of the Julio-Claudius emperors.<sup>129</sup>

Secondly, in Romans 8, Paul includes ὁ θάνατος (“Death”) among the cosmic forces of this present age that have potential of causing affliction for the believers (Rom 8:31-39). In an important study that investigates the Roman imperial ideology and the principalities and powers in Rom 8:31-39, Sung-Chul Hong explores the nature of the cosmic forces that Paul listed in Rom 8:31-39 as they may have been understood within the context of first century Rome. While not denying the numinous or otherworldly characters of the elemental powers listed in the passage, Hong argues that the “cosmic powers” in Rom 8:31-39 are simply “hostile powers that worked through the earthly domination system of Nero.”<sup>130</sup> Read in its imperial context of Rome, Hong argues that “it is not impossible to assume that the personified death in Romans is a tool of Satan and angelic powers which show its power as a murderous force in the functionary institution of the Roman imperial political, economic and religious system, oppressing the chosen people of God.”<sup>131</sup> In a more recent essay, James Harrison calls attention to the “culture of

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<sup>129</sup> Melanie Johnson-Debaufre, “Narrative, Multiplicity, and the Letters of Paul,” in *The Oxford Biblical Narrative*, ed. Danna N. Fewell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 371.

<sup>130</sup> Sung-Chul Hong, “The Imperial Ideology of Rome and the Principalities and Powers in Romans 8:31-39,” *S&I* 2.2 (2008): 85.

<sup>131</sup> Hong, “The Imperial Ideology of Rome and the Principalities and Powers in Romans 8:31-39,” 96–97.

death” that entrenched Nero’s reign, a social reality that characterizes the Julio-Claudian rulers.<sup>132</sup> Both Hong’s and Harrison’s essays enable us to see the personification of death in Romans not so much as abstract or spiritual phenomena but rather as imperial structures of domination that result in the death of many people or diminish the quality of their life.

Another support for my reading is that Rom 8:31-39, the only place where Paul includes θάνατος (“death”) among other cosmic powers, is itself a unit that occurs within a literary context (Rom 8:14-39) known as a lament section. Generally, biblical lament is a cry for God’s help in the midst of suffering, oppression or distress especially when engendered by the injustice of foreign powers. We find examples of laments in the Psalms. Most of the psalms of lament were written when the Jews were under foreign oppression. Sylvia Keesmaat rightly comments that lament songs

articulate the groans of those living in the shadow of empire, the cry of those protesting the injustice of empire, and the plea of those who expect redemption from the violence of empire. It is no surprise, therefore, to find that Romans 8 describes precisely these groans, this cry, and such a plea.<sup>133</sup>

Romans 8:14-39 exhibit most of the literary features of psalms of lament. For instance, in Rom 8:15, believers cry ‘Abba, Father’ (Rom 8:15). According to Keesmaat “in the story of Israel, this cry to God as father is a cry for redemption out of suffering.”<sup>134</sup> Not only that, the Greek word κρᾶζειν “(cry)” which appears in 8:15 is the word that is overwhelmingly found in psalms of lament to describe those crying out to God in the midst of their oppression. Again, Keesmaat points out that the groans (συστενάζω) of those living in the shadow of empire are reflected in Romans 8 and argues that the “language of

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<sup>132</sup> James R. Harrison, “Paul and the ‘Social Relations’ of Death at Rome (Romans 5:14, 17, 21),” in *Paul and His Social Relations*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Christopher D. Land, PS 7 (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 85–123.

<sup>133</sup> Sylvia C. Keesmaat, “The Psalms in Romans and Galatians,” in *The Psalms in the New Testament*, ed. Steve Moyise and Maarten J. J. Menken, NTSI (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 149.

<sup>134</sup> Keesmaat, “The Psalms in Romans and Galatians,” 149.

groaning originated in Israel's first experience of empire, and was repeatedly used when Israel found herself suffering under imperial control.”<sup>135</sup>

Besides the language of κρᾶζω (“crying”) out and συστενάζω (“groaning”) which describe a community engaged in lament, Keesmaat points out other clues in Rom 8:14-39 that suggest the difficulty that the Roman communities were experiencing was one that was instigated by the Roman imperial oppression: (a) Paul makes reference to persecution in Rom 8:26; (b) he also speaks of suffering or tribulation (θλίψις), distress (ἡ στενοχωρία), persecution (ἡ διωγμὸς), danger (ἡ κίνδυνος), and the sword (ἡ μάχαιρα) in Rom 8:35. These as well as references to death (θάνατος) rulers (ἄρχαι), and powers (δυνάμεις) in Rom 8:38 suggest that the realities that Paul is referring to had something to do with the rulers who have the power to wield the sword in the Roman Empire.<sup>136</sup> Earlier in 1 Cor 15:32, Paul indicates that he fought with “wild beast” in Ephesus. Some scholars have understood the “wild beasts” literally as Paul's fight with lions in the amphitheater in Ephesus,<sup>137</sup> or metaphorically as a reference to Paul's struggle with false brethren and opponents of Paul's gospel.<sup>138</sup> However, in light of the many representations of the Rome empire as a violent beast that we have seen in this study, it makes sense to see the “wild beasts” that Paul fought with as a coded reference to the political powers of the Roman Empire.

Lastly it is very striking that in Romans 8 Paul appeals to Ps 44:23, a text that speaks about the physical killing of God's people by foreign military forces: “For your sake we are being killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep to be slaughtered” (8:36).

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<sup>135</sup> Keesmaat, “The Psalms in Romans and Galatians,” 149.

<sup>136</sup> Keesmaat, “The Psalms in Romans and Galatians,” 150.

<sup>137</sup> C.R. Bowen, “I Fought with Beasts at Ephesus,” *JBL* 48 (1923): 59–68. For a list of those who read “wild beasts” in 1 Cor 15:32 as real beasts see Robert E. Osborne, “Paul and the Wild Beasts,” *JBL* 85.2 (1966): 225–30.

<sup>138</sup> Guy Williams, “Apocalyptic and Magical Interpretation of Paul's ‘Beast Fight’ in Ephesus (1 Corinthians 15:32),” *JTS* 57.1 (2006): 45; Abraham J. Malherbe, “The Beasts at Ephesus,” *JBL* 87.1 (1968): 71–80, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3263423>.

Paul's appeal to Psalm 44:23 suggests that Paul and his communities within the Roman Empire are in a situation analogous to those of the psalmist's community. Like the psalmist, Paul cries out to God; he utters the martyr's prayer for deliverance challenging God to defend his honor hence it is because of their allegiance to Christ that they are being slaughtered like defenseless sheep, given over to wild beast as food. The basis of the plea for God's salvific intervention in both Psalm 44 and Romans 8 (Ps 44:4, 5, 7, 8; Rom 8:24) is that God's people have been faithful.

In light of these evidences, it makes sense to connect Paul rhetoric of the domination of sin and death in Rom 5:12-21 to this historical phenomenon of Roman imperial violent domination of colonized subjects that resulted in the deaths of many Jews and other colonized persons. It is obvious that what Paul is describing in Rom 5:12-21 is the culture of sin and death that characterizes the social context of Roman imperial rule; the way of life that is marked by injustice, domination, exploitation, and the actual physical killing of colonial subjects by the imperial powers. This is a phenomenon that became a human reality from the moment Adam chose to deify himself and refused to submit to the divine order (Gen 3:5). Douglas Harink describes this as the "sin of sovereignty," that is, when "human rule over other human beings, often with the threat of punishment and death."<sup>139</sup> Beginning with Adam, the quest to dominate and subdue others has become a prevalent part of human history. It manifests itself in every social order and social institutions, from the family to the empire.

If the domination of sin and death are construed in light of the aggression and domination of another entity by power, Paul may be said to be making an implicit analogy between the all permeating and violent domination of the Roman Empire and the

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<sup>139</sup> Douglas Harink, *Resurrecting Justice: Reading Romans for the Life of the World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2020), 74.

dominance of sin and death in the human world. In Pauline thought, sin and death are cosmic realities that work through systems of human societies and governance.<sup>140</sup> They are the realities that are manifest in the actions and decisions of people, especially the ruling powers and in this instance, the Roman Empire. As we have seen, 4 Ezra also attests to the violent reign of the Roman Empire. 4 Ezra's catalogues of the sin of the Roman Empire (4 Ezra 11:40-43) finds very close parallels in Rom 1:18-3:20 thereby allowing me to argue that Rom 5:12-21 functions as an anti-imperial text that critiques the culture of sin and death in the empire, the violent domination of the empire under the guise of *pax Romana*.

#### 4.5 Conclusion

In Rom 5:12-21, Paul articulates a theology of sin and death that is traceable to Adam; God's gift of justification (salvation) that is made manifest in Jesus Christ that has reversed the legacy of sin and death set by Adam; and the implication of humanity's identification with each of these representative figures. I argued in this chapter that the Jewish apocalyptic eschatology is the best conceptual framework for understanding Paul's Adam-Christ discourse in Rom 5:12-21. In the *pericope*, Paul engages in a threefold periodization of history and the two-age eschatological schema that uses Adam and Christ to represent the two ages. I argue that in Rom 5:12-21 these two apocalyptic devices functioned just the same way as they did in the Book of Daniel and 4 Ezra. Like the author of Daniel, Paul deployed the apocalyptic periodization of history and the two-age schema to make a critique of Rome's imperial ideology of a realized eschatology (*Pax Romana*). Like most colonized persons, Paul carries out his critique in the most coded form: first by undermining the relevance of Rome in his historical review, and second, by stressing the

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<sup>140</sup> Rock, *Paul's Letter to the Romans and Roman Imperialism*, 131.



reality of sin and death in a historical period when the Roman Empire propagated the rhetoric of peace and justice. Besides the critique of the empire, Paul also uses the apocalyptic periodization and the two-age schema much the same way as we saw in 4 Ezra, namely, to underscore a deterministic view of history in which all historical events, past, present, and future are perceived to be under God's control. For Paul, God is in control of historical not the Roman emperors.

Second, in contrast to a dominant western reading of Paul's personification of sin and death as cosmic forces or anti-God's power that invaded the human world through Adam and took hostage of humanity, I argue that Paul's personification of sin and death should be read against the background of Roman imperial aggression and domination of the world especially the Jews. When read against that background, Paul's personification of sin and death function as coded reference to the systemic realities of sin and death in the Roman Empire rather than to cosmic concepts of sin and death. In other words, Paul is making an implicit analogy between the all permeating and violent domination of the Roman Empire and dominance of sin and death in the human world.

How then should we make sense of Paul's discourse of justification in light of the above background? Based on an exegetical analysis of Rom 5:12-21, my argument is that Paul's discourse of justification/righteousness using the *δικαίω*-words is not about the imputation of Christ's righteousness on Christ's believers as have been construed particularly in the Reformation theology, rather, Paul is concerned with the character of Jesus the Messiah (his just deed) and the character of the new community that Jesus inaugurates. Paul's primary focus lies on Christ as the bearer of the legacy of righteousness that results in the fulness of life, a way of life that Christ's believers are invited to embody. Byrne correctly argues that "the strongly ethical note that is clearly implied in the notion of sinning suggests a similar ethical element in the countervailing parallel of

‘righteousness’”<sup>141</sup> in Rom 5:12-21. Ultimately, the purpose of Paul’s Adam and Christ antithesis in Rom 5:12-21 is to draw the implications of Jesus’ story of faithful obedience as a model for shaping the ethical life of the Christian communities in Rome. For Paul, the immediate goal and result of justification is the creation of a “hybrid community”— a mixed community that includes both Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slave and free, white and black, poor and rich, who will embody the “in Christ” righteousness made possible through the spirit. This vision in its true essence is countercultural to Roman imperial ideology of violence and domination in the guise of peace and justice. In the next chapter, I shall explore in more detail Paul’s discourse of sin and death in Rom 5:12-21 in light of colonized women’s experiences and what Paul’s discourse of justification and salvation might entail for them in this twenty-first century.

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<sup>141</sup> Byrne, *Paul and the Economy of Salvation*, 138.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### THE IMPLICATIONS OF PAUL'S PARTICIPATORY SOTERIOLOGY FOR WOMEN TODAY

#### 5.1 Introduction

This study begins with some pressing questions: How might reading Paul's discourse on sin and death in Rom 5:12-21, read in light of women's experiences of systemic evils (e.g., injustice, gender inequality, violence, exclusion, power imbalance, oppression, domination, discriminatory attitudes and practices, etc.) illuminate our understanding of Paul's soteriology today? How might approaching Paul's soteriology as a quest for justice for the oppressed and the transformation of the social order (socio-cultural, economic, political, and religious) in our present society be instructive for theological gender discourse? What kinds of practices do the concept of *δικαίωσις* call Christ's believers to engage with respect to social sins against women? Put differently, does Paul's theology of salvation/justification in Rom 5:12-21 have an emancipatory thrust with social implications for the lives of women?

This chapter discusses how Paul's theology of justification and salvation can be actualized for women today, especially Nigerian Igbo women. Here, I will consider the relevance of Paul's theology of justification and salvation for women and girls who are mostly the victims of various forms of domination such as colonial, neocolonial, or patriarchal domination. There is no question that women have been the major target of male domination which is usually referred to as violence and oppression in contemporary parlance. I argued in the last chapter that the realities of sin and death addressed in Rom 5:12-21 include the various manifestations of systemic sins within the Roman Empire, especially the sin of domination which Paul identifies as characteristic of humanity in the

old age of sin and evil. In this chapter, I narrow my investigation down to women's experiences of domination within the imperial context of Rome and in the present-day Nigerian context particularly among the Igbo ethnic group.

Violence and oppression against women are perennial and global social problems which are present in almost every era and culture. According to Rose Uchem's analysis of the United Nations Statistical Department,

Girls and women worldwide, across lines of incomes, class and culture, are subjected to physical, sexual and psychological abuse... Around the world, at least one in every three women has been beaten, coerced into sex, or abused in some other way – most often by someone she knows, including her husband or another male family member... As many as 5,000 women and girls are killed annually in so-called “honor” killings, many of them for the dishonor of having been raped.<sup>1</sup>

While emphasizing the global nature of this problem, it is important to note that women in the Global South, particularly women in Africa, are more likely to face violence than their female counterparts in the west. This is due to certain factors such as colonial, neocolonial, and patriarchal ideologies that support and maintain the on-going male domination in many developing countries. Therefore, it is my contention that Paul's teachings about the “reign” and “domination” of sin, and death in the present evil age speaks also to the experience of women and girls in Nigeria who have to face the realities of male domination, violence, and injustice on a daily basis.

Since in Rom 5:12-21 Paul also speaks about the new life-giving and life-transforming realities that God inaugurates through Christ and the Spirit, this chapter will also explore the meaning and implications of God's free gift of salvation for these women. I argue that for women (both in ancient Rome and in the contemporary Igbo context), Paul's soteriology, that is, God's salvific intervention through Jesus the Messiah, is not an

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<sup>1</sup> Rose N. Uchem, *Overcoming Women's Subordination: An Igbo African and Christian Perspective: Envisioning an Inclusive Theology with Reference to Women* (Enugu: Snaap, 2001), 13.

abstract theological speculation about the imputation of divine righteousness on sinful people which would acquit them of their crimes. Rather, it is a message of liberation from systemic sins that women and girls undergo in their various social contexts, a message of liberation from the grips of various types of violence that women and girls endure in their bodies on daily basis. I agree with Sylvia Keesmaat that Paul's theology of justification is about the reversal of injustice and the restoration of all relationships that have been deformed by injustice.<sup>2</sup> For the female members of the Roman Christian communities and the Christian women in the Igbo community, the realities that Paul describes as salvation are simply the reversal of life in the old age of sinful domination.

This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section introduces the chapter. The second section examines some manifestations of sin and death as they affect the lives of Christian women in Rome who read and heard this text. Here, I probe an important question: What experiences of sin, evil and death do the theology of God's saving righteousness and justice in Rom 5:12-21 speak to in its historical context as it relates to the experiences of Christian women in antiquity? Here, I explore what life entails for many women in the first century Roman imperial domination, focusing on the violent dehumanization of female bodies particularly, noncitizen and colonized women as well as women of different lower status. The third section explores the Nigerian Igbo women's experience of violence and domination today. Here, I discuss patriarchy as the major cause of systemic oppression and domination of women by men in Nigeria, particularly among the Igbo ethnic group and how it is connected to modern colonialism and its ideological gender politics. The fourth section examines the prospects that Paul's theology of justification and salvation hold for Christian women. This section considers the following

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<sup>2</sup> Sylvia C. Keesmaat and Brian J. Walsh, *Romans Disarmed: Resisting Empire, Demanding Justice*, (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2019), 12.

questions: (1) What does life in the new age of grace and salvation entail for Paul's female audience in first century Rome and for Nigerian women today? (2) How might Paul's participatory language help us understand inclusivity and equality for women as integral in the mission of Christ? The fifth section explores the implications of Paul's theology of salvation and justification for gender relationship in the contemporary postcolonial Igbo communities. This is followed by a conclusion.

## 5.2 Reading Romans 5:12-21 in Light of Women's Experience of Sin and Death within the Ancient Roman Empire

In Chapter Four, I argued that Paul's personification of sin and death in Rom 5:12-21 makes more sense when read in light of the Roman imperial domination in the first century CE, an oppressive system that placed many Jews and other colonized subjects at the threat of death on a daily basis. This sociopolitical reality has been given adequate articulation in the works of Tat-siong Benny Liew who builds on Giorgio Agamben's notion of *homo sacer* and "bare life" and applies it to the situation of Jews under the Roman Empire. In his erudite work *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Giorgio Agamben describes certain groups of people: the Jews in the Nazi camps, minority groups, homosexuals, disabled, etc., as *homo sacer*—a term borrowed from ancient Roman law. A *homo sacer* is someone who can be killed with impunity but whose body cannot be sacrificed, and the person who killed him cannot be judged guilty of the crime of murder because the killing of a *homo sacer* does not constitute a violation of the law.<sup>3</sup> A *homo sacer* is a person of utter vulnerability and debasement who has nothing in him that is

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<sup>3</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 74; Schütz Anton, "Homo Sacer," *AD*, 95.

worthy of dignity for participating in an act of sacred or legal significance neither in life nor in death. As Anton Schütz clarifies,

two strict lines determines the status of the *homo sacer*; he is locked out of the politico-legal order's protection, considering that, whoever would kill the *homo sacer* is not deemed to have committed a murder, yet, at the same time, he is locked in with respect to this 'order's' procedures, considering that his exclusion from being sacrifice-worthy is the outcome of a well-defined routine, consecration or sacrifice, *sacratio* (HS, 81ff.), that he has undergone and survived.<sup>4</sup>

As one can see, the *homo sacer* is banned or excluded from both the human law and the divine law (in that neither laws guarantees him a right) yet his ban or exclusion is formulated through human and divine laws. As such, Agamben argues that the *homo sacer* reflects the paradox of the 'exclusive inclusion' structure of the sovereign power.<sup>5</sup>

For Agamben, the Jews and other minority groups in the Nazi camp are the *homo sacer* whose life situation he describes as "bare life," that is, a subhuman life, a life without quality or existential significance. David Simpson explains that "bare life stands outside the parameters of citizenship: it is without identity, the exception to all the rules."<sup>6</sup> Bare life is considered by the sovereign state as unworthy of being lived, and as such, it could be terminated at any time. Agamben formulated the concept of "bare life" to describe the dehumanization and degradation of those human lives who were locked up in the concentration camps. Paradoxically, bare life does not naturally exist on its own, rather, it is the creation or the by-product of the sovereign state itself— the result of the exercise of sovereign power and biopower. Agamben also identifies the Nazi concentration camp as a third space, a "space of exception" where the suspension of normal legal and constitutional arrangements becomes the norm. The third space is where the sovereign power can suspend the laws that it created, thereby making the powerless and the

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<sup>4</sup> Anton, "Homo Sacer," 95.

<sup>5</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 21–22.

<sup>6</sup> David Simpson, *9/11: The Culture of Commemoration* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 50.

vulnerable within that space susceptible to the whims and caprices of the sovereign state. Agamben argues that by means of such exceptions to rules, legal subjects are stripped of their legal rights and rendered as “bare life.”

Agamben deploys the concept of “*homo sacer*” and its “bare life” quality to make critique of the increasing power of the modern sovereign states to declare or create exceptions to the rule which guarantee them the power to commit violence against Jews and other minority groups, and to dispose of their lives with impunity. Liew, on the other hand, argues persuasively that the treatment of Jews as bare life in the western world should not be conceived only as a modern phenomenon; rather, it is a reality that dates back to the first century CE. In his essay on the “Gospel of Bare Life: Reading Death, Dream, and Desire through John’s Jesus,” Liew makes a case that first century Jews live within what he calls the “death zone of the Roman Empire.”<sup>7</sup> According to Liew, Jews are “killable” people who are more exposed to death than others within the Roman Empire. Liew recounts some of these killings as follows:

Jews of the first century CE seemed to live almost necessarily under death threats and executions. Philo, for instance, says that in 38 CE, under the governorship of Flaccus, Alexandrians were given free rein to take Jewish homes, shops, and lives (Flacc. 6.41–43; 8.53–57; 10.73–75). Philo goes on to report that even during the celebratory season Jews were flogged, hung, run over, tortured, and executed at a theater (Flacc. 10.81–85). Of course, things were not much better in Judea. Pilate, as the procurator of Judea from 26 to 36 CE, killed many Jews who protested his use of resources from the Jewish temple treasury for public works (Josephus, *A.J.* 18.60–62).<sup>8</sup>

Liew submits that the first century “Rome’s imperial sovereignty was built on the definition of its subject populations—particularly its colonized populations—as bare life. Seeing the colonized as disposable by-products, damaged goods, or abject left overs of its imperialist projects, Rome placed them under a death sentence that might be commuted at

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<sup>7</sup> Tat-siong Benny Liew, “The Gospel of Bare Life: Reading Death, Dream, and Desire through John’s Jesus,” in *Psychoanalytic Mediations between Marxist and Postcolonial Readings of the Bible*, ed. Tat-siong Benny Liew and Erin Runions, SS 84 (Atlanta: SBL, 2016), 136.

<sup>8</sup> Liew, “The Gospel of Bare Life: Reading Death, Dream, and Desire through John’s Jesus,” 138.



will and at any time, without legal or religious consequence.”<sup>9</sup> This phenomenon is graphically described by the Jewish scholar Ellis Rivkin: “The Roman emperor held the life or death of the Jewish people in the palm of his hand; the governor’s sword was always at the ready; the high priest’s eyes were always penetrating and his ears were always keen; the soldiery was always eager for the slaughter.”<sup>10</sup> While I agree with Liew that Jews under the Roman imperial domination were treated as bare life, people who lived within the death zone of the Roman Empire, I wish to highlight the fact that among the people that can be considered as bare life, people those whose lives could be disposed of at any time without any legal consequence, there are a segment of them who were more vulnerable to violence and death threats than others—women and girls.

#### 5.2.1 Women as Special Targets of Roman Imperial Domination

Having examined the Roman imperial violence against its colonized and conquered subjects especially the Jews, here I intend to investigate how the Roman domination and violence affect the lives of women. While I recognize that in the Christian communities in Rome, there are women such as Prisca, Phoebe, etc., who may have had the privilege of certain level of freedom, security, education affluence, and privileges associated with wealth and independence,<sup>11</sup> the target of this section is the lower-status women (the socially marginalized and powerless women), most of them were colonized, slaves, poor, freed women, etc., who have to bear in their bodies the harsh and evil realities of Roman domination and injustice.

Some ancient artifacts and written sources have shown that violence against women was pervasive in the Roman Empire beginning with the founding fathers of Rome. For instance, many ancient sources tell the myth of how Romulus the founding father of

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<sup>9</sup> Liew, “The Gospel of Bare Life: Reading Death, Dream, and Desire through John’s Jesus,” 138.

<sup>10</sup>Quoted in Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus: Miriam’s Child, Sophia’s Prophet: Critical Issues in Feminist Christology*, Cornerstones (T&T Clark) (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015), 100.

<sup>11</sup> For instance, Peter Lampe argues that since Prisca’s name was not used by slaves is an indication that she was probably freeborn. See Peter Lampe, “Persis,” *ABD* (n.d.): 467–68.

Rome inaugurated his monarchy by launching a brutal attack on the innocent and unsuspecting Sabine women as punishment for the tribe's rejection of Romulus' intermarriage proposal. Romulus and his armies not only carried out a mass abduction of Sabine women, they also raped them.<sup>12</sup> This story of the atrocity against these female bodies by the founding father of Rome and his military troops was told by the Romans themselves as one of the most important myths that marks the founding of the Roman Empire.<sup>13</sup> Not only does the narrative of the rape of Sabine women function as legitimization of male domination, it also became a symbolic representation of Roman imperial power expressed through conquest and the feminization of the conquered nations insofar as it portrayed the conquered nation as raped women.

The rape of the Sabine women was seductively represented in various imperial arts and iconography. Oudshoorn comments that "in the sexualized imperial images of conquest, victorious Romans were portrayed as powerful males and conquered nations were portrayed as submissive women about to be pierced or penetrated by some phallic object."<sup>14</sup> The story of the rape of the Sabine women can be viewed as the paradigm of imperial conquest and colonization both ancient and modern. Beginning with this rape incident, sexual violence against women continues to punctuate important points of early Roman history. The use of violated female bodies to represent conquered nations is common in Roman imperial coinage, arts and iconographies (such as the Capita coins, the Aphrodisias reliefs, the Columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, and other monuments).<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Cicero, *De Republica* 2.12-14; Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.9-13; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 2.30-47; Ovid, *Fasti* 3.167-258; and Plutarch, *Romulus* 14-20.

<sup>13</sup> For further studies on the rape of the Sabine women see, Robert Brown, "Livy's Sabine Women and the Ideal of Concordia," *TAPA* 125 (1995): 291-319, <https://doi.org/10.2307/284357>; Tom Stevenson, "Women of Early Rome as Exempla in Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, Book 1," *CA* 104.2 (2011): 175-89; G. B. Miles, "The First Roman Marriage and the Theft of the Sabine Women," in *Innovations of Antiquity*, ed. Ralph J. Hexter and Daniel L. Selden (New York: Routledge, 1992), 161-96; Julia Hemker, "Rape and the Founding of Rome," *Helios* 12 (1985): 9-20; Ruth Graham, "Sexual Assault," *EP* (n.d.): 224-25; Antonia Holden, "The Abduction of the Sabine Women in Context: The Iconography on Late Antique Contorniate Medallions," *AJA* 112 (2008): 121-42.

<sup>14</sup> Oudshoorn, *Pauline Eschatology*, 57-58.

<sup>15</sup> Sheila Dillon, "Women on the Columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius and the Visual Language of the Roman Victory," in *Representations of War in Ancient Rome*, ed. Sheila Dillon and Katherine Welch

In most of these public visual representations, the all-dominating and triumphant Roman Empire is depicted through the submissive and sexually violated bodies of conquered female nations.<sup>16</sup> For instance, the museum of Sebasteion at Aphrodisias in Asia Minor which was constructed during the Julio-Claudian period in honor of the martial valor of the Julio-Claudian dynasty, contains a marble relief that depicts Claudius as a divine nude warrior raping and dominating the semi-goddess Britannia. The marble relief commemorates the Roman brutal conquest of Britain in 43 CE (a historical incident that happened about twelve years before Paul wrote the Letter to the Romans).

The Jewish nation (ἔθνος Ἰουδαῖος) is one of the fifty personified female *ethnē* in the roster of conquered nations that were displayed in the Sebasteion museum at Aphrodisias. As we have seen with the case of the Sabine women and Britannia, the Roman conquest of Jewish people was enacted through the bodies of Jewish women. They were the ones who embodied the stark realities of imperial domination of the Jewish people. For the tragic rape of women by the Roman imperial forces is almost synonymous with the capture of a city, a point that Livy accentuates, *omne libidinis crudelitatisque et inhumannae superbiae editum in miseros exemplum est* (“every type of lust, cruelty, and inhuman arrogance was inflicted on the wretched”).<sup>17</sup> The association of the sexual violence against Jewish women with the Roman penetration of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Second Temple is given explicit articulation in many Jewish sources. For instance, in 4 Ezra, the rape of virgins, wives, and children (both girls and boys) is listed among the horrors inflicted on the Jews for which Ezra cries to God for justice; “Our children have suffered abuse, our virgins have been defiled, and our wives have been ravished” (4Ezra 10:22).

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 244–71; Davina C. Lopez, *The Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul’s Mission* (Fortress Press, 2010), 26–55; Julia Watts Belser, “Sex in the Shadow of Rome: Sexual Violence and Theological Lament in Talmudic Disaster Tales,” *JFSR* 30.1 (2014): 5–24, <https://doi.org/10.2979/jfemistudreli.30.1.5>.

<sup>16</sup> Belser, “Sex in the Shadow of Rome,” 9.

<sup>17</sup> Livy 21.57.14

Talmud Bavli Gittin 56b (a rabbinic text that seeks to reconstruct the Romans' destruction of the Jerusalem temple) also contains the story of the violation of a Jewish woman (whom the text identified as a prostitute) on the altar of the Temple by Titus. Julia Watts Belser summarizes the narrative as follows:

In this tale, Titus seizes a woman, brings her into the sacred space of the Temple, spreads out a Torah scroll, and violates her on the parchment that contains the divine word. Then Titus draws his sword and cuts into the veil that surrounds the holy of holies, symbolically penetrating the sanctuary. Titus's triumphant phallus is figured as victorious, both through the symbol of the bloodied sword and the rape itself. The blurred boundaries between the woman and the veil intertwine the violence done to the woman and to the sanctuary.<sup>18</sup>

In her analysis of this text, Belser shows that what is being underscored in this story is Titus's actions as a crime against God that results in the suffering of God and the nation. In this way, the Bavli directs attention away from the woman's pain, deemphasizing her suffering and her status as Titus's victim. Belser is correct in her observation regarding the primary concern of the Rabbi in telling the story, yet through this account, we are able to see another instance of how sexual violence against women was intertwined with Roman imperial domination. In "violence against Women in Ancient Rome: Ideology Versus Reality," Serena S. Witzke argues that even though violence against women was rampant in ancient Rome, the women who are mostly the victims of such violence were the noncitizen, colonized and other lower-class women such as slaves and prostitutes. These formed the category of women that faced gendered violence and death more often in the Roman Empire.

As I have shown in chapter four, some of the women who were part of the Roman Christian churches belonged to this lower social group. For instance, it has been suggested that Tryphaena and Tryphosa, Persis, Junia, and Julia (Romans 16) were either slaves or

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<sup>18</sup> Belser, "Sex in the Shadow of Rome," 12.

former slaves who through manumission gained their freedom.<sup>19</sup> Besides coming from the background of slavery, Mary Rose D'Angelo have also suggested that the “luxurious” and “voluptuous” connotation of the names of Tryphaena and Tryphosa (from the Greek verb, τρυφάω) may point to the sexual function they were assigned to by their owners.<sup>20</sup> In other words, the female pair may have been sex workers for their owners before they gained manumission. This is because the nature of slave work for women in the Roman Empire included sexual roles. A female slave could be summoned by her owners to perform sexual act with her master, mistress, and with their guests and friends. In her breathtaking and revelatory study of slavery in ancient Rome, Jennifer Glancy exposes the brutality and dehumanization associated with slavery in the Roman Empire.<sup>21</sup> According to Glancy, “Roman slavery was brutal, vicious, and humanizing—a system of corporeal or bodily control sustained by violence and the threat thereof.”<sup>22</sup> Such persons were considered mere bodies subject to use and abuse in the hands of their owners. Glancy shows that slaves in the Roman Empire were actually surrogate bodies for their owners who have legal right to use and dispose of them at will. A slave can be deployed for virtually any service including taking the death penalty on behalf of his or her owner. They are regarded as simple objects without identity, dignity nor agency. A slave in the Roman Empire is considered a subhuman. She or he is grouped under livestock in the inventory of the owners’ property. Slavery was the ultimate lowest status.

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<sup>19</sup> See Lampe, “Persis,” 5:244; Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 169, 183; Susan Mathew, *Women in the Greetings of Romans 16.1-16: A Study of Mutuality and Women’s Ministry in the Letter to the Romans*, LNTS 471 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 110–12.

<sup>20</sup> Mary Rose D’Angelo, “Tryphaena,” in *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament*, ed. Carol Myer (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), 165.

<sup>21</sup> Jennifer A. Glancy, “Early Christianity, Slavery and Women’s Bodies,” in *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies*, ed. Bernadette J. Brooten (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 143–58; Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> Glancy, “Early Christianity, Slavery and Women’s Bodies,” 143.

While men and women can be forced into slavery, the social implication of this ugly reality differs for women and men. Sharon Jacob has argued that “the term *doulē* (feminine) always and everywhere carries associations that *doulos* (masculine) does not: associations of sexual use and abuse.... A male slave in a man’s world has a different experience in any age, from a female slave in a man’s world. She sinks lower, and the very boundaries of her personhood and her bodily/physic safety are more endangered.”<sup>23</sup> Slave women are more vulnerable to sexual violence than the male slaves. They experience more in their bodies the degradation, domination and violence that characterized the Roman Empire.

Besides their experience of slavery and violence, life within the Roman Empire for many of these Christian women even for those of free-born was tough. In an essay on “Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-called New Consensus,” Steven J. Friesen offers an analysis of the economic resources of Pauline assemblies using a poverty scale with seven categories ranging from ‘below subsistence level’ to ‘imperial elites. Friesen study reveals that there is no evidence for any wealthy saints in the Pauline house churches including those of Romans 16. Friesen submits: “when we look for signs of rich saints we find no indications from Paul’s letters of any assembly members from the super-wealthy elites.”<sup>24</sup> Friesen argues that “of the individuals about whom we have economic information, at least one or two and a maximum of seven can be classified as having moderate surplus resources. Most of the people in Paul’s congregations—including Paul himself—lived near the level of subsistence, either above it or below.”<sup>25</sup> In light of Friesen study, Jimmy Hook submits that those within the Roman house churches whose names

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<sup>23</sup> Sharon Jacob, *Reading Mary Alongside Indian Surrogate Mothers: Violent Love, Oppressive Liberation, and Infancy Narratives* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 105.

<sup>24</sup> Steven J. Friesen, “Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-Called New Consensus,” *JSNT* 26.3 (2004): 358.

<sup>25</sup> Friesen, “Poverty in Pauline Studies: Beyond the So-Called New Consensus,” 348.

carry the possible associations with Roman slavery were also more likely to be poorer.<sup>26</sup> Paul's discourse on the reign of sin and death would not have come across to these female members as an abstract theological treatise, rather, it would have been a message that spoke to their flesh and blood experiences.

### 5.3 Reading Romans 5:12-21 in Light of Nigerian Women's Experience of Patriarchy and Colonization

When a contemporary Nigerian woman reads Paul's discourse of the domination of sin and death in Rom 5:12-2, what comes to her mind is her experience of patriarchal and colonial domination. This section uncovers some of the dehumanizing experiences that many women go through in Nigeria, especially the Igbo women. Secondly, I shall explore the intersection of colonialism and patriarchy and how the two have combined and become two powerful tools of subordination and violence against women in postcolonial Nigeria (Igbo) society.

Nigeria is the most populous country in African with over two hundred million people with women constituting about fifty percent of the population. It is the country home to over 250 ethnic groups with three (Hausa, Igbo, and Yoruba) being regarded as the dominant ones. Nigeria became a country through the amalgamation of these diverse ethnic groups of people with different languages, culture, religion, and socio-political systems by the British colonialists. Nigeria became an independent nation in 1960, however, despite its independence, colonial ideology is still deeply entrenched amongst the people. This is because, through colonization, Nigeria suffered what Ngũgĩ Thiong'o (a contemporary postcolonial critic) calls a "cultural bomb" that resulted in epistemic

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<sup>26</sup> Jimmy Hoke, *Feminism, Queerness, Affect, and Romans under God?*. (Atlanta: SBL, 2021), 108.

violence—an attack on the culture, ideas and value system of the colonized people.

Thiong'o writes:

The biggest weapon wielded and actually daily unleashed by imperialism against the collective defiance is the cultural bomb. The effect of a bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves.<sup>27</sup>

Through colonization, English became the official language of the people. The colonizers engraved so deeply the myth of western superiority in the mind of the people resulting in the subordination of indigenous languages, culture and religion. The Igbo-speaking people are located in the Southeastern part of Nigeria, and are predominately Christians. Although the pre-colonial Igbo society is essentially patriarchal in character, it ran on a fluid socio-political structure that allowed men and women the opportunity to work together for the socio-economic and political development of their society.<sup>28</sup>

As we saw in the preceding section, various forms of violence from the ancient period have been deployed to control and subordinate women. Over time, male domination of women has become characteristic of typical gender relations in many societies such that many people see it as a “normal thing,” a socially acceptable behavior. The problem is exacerbated in patriarchal cultures such as Nigeria where women are treated as second-class citizens with limited or no legal rights protecting them. In feminist discourses, patriarchy is a term used to describe a system of male domination through its social, political and economic institutions. It describes a social system where women are subordinated in many different ways.<sup>29</sup> While the cultural embodiment and practices of patriarchy may vary across different cultures, racial and ethnic groups, the principal or

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<sup>27</sup> Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: Heinemann, 1986), 3.

<sup>28</sup> Uchem, *Overcoming Women's Subordination: An Igbo African and Christian Perspective: Envisioning an Inclusive Theology with Reference to Women*, 40–46.

<sup>29</sup> Kamla Bhasin, *What Is Patriarchy?* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2006), 3.



fundamental assumption of all patriarchal systems is the same everywhere; it is a system that assumes the superiority of men over women. It works on the assumption that men are born to rule and dominate women.

Patriarchal system purveys an ideology of male domination based on biology, thereby making male domination an inevitable and universal reality. In this system, women are seen as inferior, born to be ruled over, to be controlled, and to serve men. They are only to be seen and not be heard. In Nigerian culture, a female child grows from childhood to adulthood under the control of various male figures, (father, boyfriend, husband, and sons), thereby ensuring unending subjugation of women. The patriarchal systems offer material privileges to the men, ascribing to them higher social and authoritative status while simultaneously placing severe limitations on women, dispossessing them of their dignity as human beings. Heidi Hartmann argues that, “the material base upon which patriarchy rests lies most fundamentally in men’s control over women’s labor. Men maintain this control by excluding women from access to some essential productive resources (in capitalist societies, for example, jobs that pay living wages) and by restricting women’s sexuality.”<sup>30</sup> In fact, Hartmann sees a close relationship between patriarchy and colonial capitalism. Both are systems of oppression that have institutionalized domination and inequality with the primary objective of controlling women.

Some scholars have attributed the current form of the patriarchal system with its oppressive gender mechanism in the Global South to the influence of western colonization. Maria Lugones, a leading decolonial theorist, has excellently demonstrated that the patriarchal system with its oppressive gender binaries established in the colonized Global South by western colonizers was not a replica of pre-colonial, “European” gender

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<sup>30</sup> Heidi Hartmann, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union,” in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of the Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, ed. Lydia Sargent (Cambridge: South End, 1981), 15.

arrangements. Rather, what was imposed on the colonized subjects is a rigid gender binary system that differs from both the European gender system and the indigenous people's (colonized) understanding of gender. The Euro-gender system altered how the indigenous people construed and lived gender before colonization.<sup>31</sup> Another decolonial feminist, Breny Mendoza, argues that “in the process of colonization, women and men in the colony were both racialized and sexualized as gender was deployed as a powerful tool to destroy the social relations of the colonized by dividing men and women from each other and creating antagonisms between them.”<sup>32</sup> This divide-and-rule mechanism was packaged in the garb of Christianity.

There are, however, those who hold the view that women were already being subordinated in pre-colonial African patriarchal culture prior to western colonization. April Gordon submits that “before colonial capitalism, African economic, social and political institutions were to varying degrees patriarchal, and promoted male-dominated societies.”<sup>33</sup> Although Gordon is of the opinion that women played second fiddle in pre-colonial African societies, she admits that “the collision of colonial capitalism with African political economies did result in a modification of African gender relations to further colonial economic objectives and to give men more authority and opportunity.”<sup>34</sup> This point was already made by Mercy Oduyoye who acknowledges a collusion between traditional African patriarchy and European (Christian) patriarchy. Oduyoye notes that “Christianity reinforces the cultural conditioning of compliance and submission and leads to the depersonalization of women.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Maria Lugones, “The Coloniality of Gender,” *WKO* 2.2 (2008): 1–17.

<sup>32</sup> Breny Mendoza, “Coloniality of Gender and Power: From Postcolonial to Decoloniality,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, ed. L. Dish and M. Hawkesworth (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 116.

<sup>33</sup> April A. Gordon, *Transforming Capitalism and Patriarchy: Gender and Development in Africa* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996), 5.

<sup>34</sup> Gordon, *Transforming Capitalism and Patriarchy: Gender and Development in Africa*, 6.

<sup>35</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1995), 9.

With respect to Nigeria, Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí in her work, *The Invention of Women*, shows that among the Yoruba ethnic group of Nigeria, “gender was not an organizing principle in Yoruba society prior to colonization by the West. The social categories ‘men’ and ‘women’ were nonexistent, and hence no gender system was in place. Rather, the primary principle of social organization was seniority, defined by relative age.”<sup>36</sup> Oyěwùmí argues that “the usual gloss of the Yoruba categories *obinrin* and *okunrin* as ‘female/woman’ and ‘male/man,’ respectively, is a mistranslation. These categories are neither binarily opposed nor hierarchical.”<sup>37</sup> The point Oyěwùmí makes is that males and females were not ranked according to anatomic distinctions in pre-colonial Yorùbá culture. Oyěwùmí argues vehemently that the subsequent systematic inferiorization and exclusion of *obinrin* (“women”) from the public sphere, from participating in leadership roles in the society, and infringing on women’s choice of career were the consequences of colonization:

The emergence of women as an identifiable category, defined by their anatomy and subordinated to men in all situations, resulted, in part, from the imposition of a patriarchal colonial state. For females, colonization was a twofold process of racial inferiorization and gender subordination. The creation of “women” as a category was one of the very first accomplishments of the colonial state. It is not surprising, therefore, that it was unthinkable for the colonial government to recognize female leaders among the peoples they colonized, such as the Yorùbá.<sup>38</sup>

The Northern part of Nigeria witnessed a rising number of charismatic female figures who became political leaders of different empires and kingdoms in the pre-colonial days. There were women who became warlords and showed great military power. For example, Bakwa Turuku and her daughter Queen Amina were known to have fought many military wars. History has it that Queen Amina founded the present city of Zaria in Kaduna state.

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<sup>36</sup> Oyèrónké Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 31.

<sup>37</sup> Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women*, 32–33.

<sup>38</sup> Oyěwùmí, *The Invention of Women*, 123–24.

With respect to the Igbos in particular, the pre-colonial Igbo society is said to be democratic and egalitarian. J.B.C. Okorie notes that, “the main credo of Igbo culture is the emphasis placed on individual achievement and initiatives, prestige and egalitarian leadership. All participate in community affairs, in decision- making, and development efforts.”<sup>39</sup> In her doctoral dissertation, “The Concept of ‘Sitting on a Man’: Igbo Women’s Political Institutions,” Agara-Houessou-Adin shows that the Igbo practice of dual-sex political system “allowed women and men to carry out their responsibility without infringing on the other’s territory. It was a highly developed form of democracy that existed, in that decisions were reached only after lengthy debates and persuasions either in the respective milieu or as a whole community.”<sup>40</sup> Even though during a general village meeting, the men are more likely to speak than the women, Joseph Therese Agbasiere, a renowned Nigerian anthropologist has powerfully argued that when it comes to “matters of communal interest, a woman like a man is expected to speak her mind” in Igbo land.<sup>41</sup> Generally, political authority among the Igbos was diffuse. Men deliberate and decide on the issues that affect them through a consensus. The same applies to women.

Women played very significant roles in the traditional Igbo religion and spirituality. They functioned as symbols of powerful deities for their communities. For instance, Ani, the female deity or earth goddess is considered the source of all fertility within the Igbo community. She plays a greater part in the life of the people than any other deity. Women serve as the priestesses of most powerful male oracles of the land. They handled sacred things on behalf of their communities. Only the priestesses of these powerful deities have the authority to enter their shrines and perform sacred duties. No

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<sup>39</sup> J.B.C. Okorie, *Oji Igbo: The Igbo Kolanut. Uzo esi asu n’ agozi oji n’ala Igbo. Presenting and blessing of Kolanut in Igboland* (Milipitas: St. Elizabeth Church, 1995), 6, quoted in Rose N. Uchem, “Liberative Inculturation: The Case of Igbo Women,” *BET* 14 (101AD): 87.

<sup>40</sup> Agara-Houessou-Adin, “The Concept of ‘Sitting on a Man’: Igbo Women’s Political Institutions (Nigeria)” (PhD diss., Temple University, 1998), 289.

<sup>41</sup> Joseph Thérèse Agbasiere, *Women in Igbo Life and Thought* (London: Routledge, 2000), 39.

man, even the most powerful ones dares to question or challenge the priestesses of the community's deities in spiritual or mystical matters. It is in light of these realities that Nkiru Uwechia Nzegwu argued for the coexistence of matriarchy and patriarchy in traditional Igbo community.<sup>42</sup> Women enjoyed more autonomy and exercised more agency in the pre-colonial era.

While women were not relegated to the background in the pre-colonial period, they did not at the same time enjoy equal social status with the men. As in other patriarchal societies, there was unequal power relationships between men and women in pre-colonial Igbo culture. Men played the dominant roles while women occupied the subordinate position. Traditional Igbo women were never made Eze or Igwe (kings). Through patrilineage system, the men control landed assets and major means of production. They are the heads of families. The Igbo culture considers men superior to women. It is a culture that reserves certain privileges solely for the men. For instance, only men can give, receive, and break orji (Kolanut) in Igbo social or religious ceremonies. This is a special privilege reserved for men only. Although women had limited voice in decision-making within their communities and in their own homes, they were definitely not silenced. Traditional Igbo women had their own ways of dealing with abusive and hostile men or men who crossed their social boundaries, such as those who violated women's market rules. "Sitting on a man" is one of the strategies that women deploy in this regard to control the excesses of men. "Sitting on a man" means the gathering of women at the offending man's compound, "sometimes late at night, dancing, singing scurrilous songs which detailed the women's grievances against him and often called his manhood into question, banging on his hut with the pestles women used for pounding yams, and perhaps demolishing his hut or

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<sup>42</sup> Nkiru Uwechia Nzegwu, "Recovering Igbo Tradition," in *Women Culture and Development: A Study of Human Capabilities*, ed. Martha Nussbaum and Jonathan Glover (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995), 446–48.

plastering it with mud and roughing him up a bit.”<sup>43</sup> Since Igbo men feared being shamed in this manner by women, they were more careful to do things to avoid this kind of action from the women.

According to Rose Uchem, the pre-colonial Igbo community egalitarian socio-political system was destroyed as a result of contact with western colonization. Uchem submits, “the missionaries effectively and uncritically implemented the colonial policies, which politically, economically and socially marginalized women. Consequently, women were deposed from their economic, political and social positions, which they had enjoyed in the pre-colonial, pre-Christian and pre-Islamic days.”<sup>44</sup> For Uchem, it was through the Christian Churches and the British-based educational system that the colonial policy of marginalizing women was implemented in Igboland by the British colonizers. The missionary colonizers injected certain patriarchal ideologies into the educational system in Nigeria, one of which was the belief that education benefits the boys rather than the girls. While schools were open to the boys, young girls were to stay at home and learn domestic skills while the boys received an education. This phenomenon contributed to a serious gender gap between the males and the females in day Nigeria.

From these studies, we can make the following conclusions. The hierarchical system that existed in the traditional Nigerian (Igbo) societies was one that allowed for cultural inclusion and participation for women, but it became more totalizing and rigid as a result of western colonialization. The colonizers introduced a more totalitarian experience of gender hierarchy in the Igbo society when they strategically pulled women out from the public space and denied them equal access and opportunity to western education. The concept of a rigid gender binary was introduced in Nigeria by the colonizers

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<sup>43</sup> Judith van Allen, “‘Sitting on a Man’: Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women,” *CJAS* 6.2 (1972): 170, <https://doi.org/10.2307/484197>.

<sup>44</sup> Uchem, *Overcoming Women’s Subordination: An Igbo African and Christian Perspective: Envisioning an Inclusive Theology with Reference to Women*, 46–47.

as a tool for domination, inferiorization and domestication of women. This imposed western understanding of gender which systematically disadvantaged women is in acrimonious tension with the indigenous people's pre-colonial cosmology, economics, and politics; (c) the European form of patriarchy with its dominance/subordination paradigm was imposed on the indigenous people through colonization in order to create discord between the males and females thereby disrupting the harmonious existence of the people; (d) The gendered division of labor was absent in some indigenous groups in Nigeria since economic relations were grounded on reciprocity and complementarity.

What does it mean to live as a woman (female) in an oppressive patriarchal and hegemonic society such as the postcolonial Nigeria? This question has been explored by many feminists such as Buchi Emecheta,<sup>45</sup> Flora Nwapa,<sup>46</sup> Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo,<sup>47</sup> Zaynab Alkali,<sup>48</sup> Mercy Amba Oduyoye,<sup>49</sup> Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie,<sup>50</sup> and many other Nigerian feminist scholars who are concerned about the colonial patriarchal system introduced in Nigeria and its ongoing gender oppression. Here, I examine male domination and violence as two core aspects of patriarchy and colonization that have had a horrible impact on the physical and psychological wellbeing of Nigerian (Igbo) women. I argue that in postcolonial Nigerian context, the sin of male domination and violence bring the meaning of the old age and the reign of sin and death clearer home. These realities represent the sinful domination that characterizes life in the old age which Paul delineated in Rom 5:12-21. The families that many Nigerian men rule, the families in which many

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<sup>45</sup> Buchi Emecheta, *The Joys of Motherhood* (London: Heinemann, 1979); Buchi Emecheta, *Second Class Citizen* (New York: Braziller, 1975); Buchi Emecheta, *The Rape of Shavi* (New York: Braziller, 1985).

<sup>46</sup> Flora Nwapa, *Women Are Different*, African Women Writers Series (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1992).

<sup>47</sup> Akachi Adimora-Ezeigbo, *Gender Issues in Nigeria – A Feminine Perspective* (Lagos: Vista Books, 1996).

<sup>48</sup> Zaynab Alkali, *The Virtuous Woman* (Lagos: Longman, 1985).

<sup>49</sup> Oduyoye, *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*.

<sup>50</sup> Chimamanda N. Adichie, *Purple Hibiscus* (Chapel Hill, NC: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 2003); Chimamanda N. Adichie, *Half of a Yellow Sun* (London: Harper Perennial, 2007).

women found themselves are characterized by sinful patriarchal and colonial domination that reduces women to material objects, to bare lives. In light of the experiences of women explored in this chapter, I shall reconstruct a theology of salvation in Rom 5:12-21.

### 5.3.1 Understanding the Domination of Sin and Death in light of Male Domination

Some scholars have pointed out that colonialism was more about the institutions it created than about the identities of who ruled. This is particularly true of the Nigerian situation. The postcolonial Nigeria socio-political structure is first of all created for male dominance. By the time the British colonizers were leaving Nigeria in 1960, they had already produced a class of educated and powerful men to whom they handed over the socio-political administration of the country. These men immediately assumed the roles of the colonial masters. Since women were systematically removed from the public spheres through limited access to education during the colonial administration, there was virtually no female representation both at the executive and legislative arms of government in the first Nigerian republic (1963-1966). With the military coup in 1966, the first Nigerian republican government was overthrown and the military took over the political power between 1966-1979. Again, there was no single female presence in the Nigerian political administration during this period. In fact, between 1960-1999, there was no female representation in the political administration of Nigeria. It was completely the rule of men who decide on issues that affect women. Within these four decades, many Nigerians have forgotten that there was a time when men and women jointly ruled their communities in the pre-colonial era.

In Nigeria particularly among the Igbos, colonialism altered the dynamism of leadership that was operative in the pre-colonial period when there was a somewhat balance of power between men and women. The colonizers and missionaries who assisted them injected the European rigid patriarchal ideology of women's subordination in the



mind of the people. Today, many Nigerian men believe that the woman's place is simply the kitchen and bedroom. This male mentality was given explicit articulation in the words of the current Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari, who said in an interview in 2016 that "I don't know which party my wife belongs to, but she belongs to my kitchen, my living room and the other room."<sup>51</sup> This was Buhari's response to the statement made by his wife, A'isha Buhari, that she would not campaign for him if the situation of things in Nigeria continue to deteriorate the way it has been going. The president's response reveals the gender stereotype entrenched in the Nigerian society where women and girls are constantly relegated to the kitchen and bedroom. In Nigeria as noted by Emmanuel Jaiyeola, and Isaac Aladegbola,

stereotyping and stratification of jobs, skills, political offices and businesses have become so deep-rooted in patriarchy because of the cultures and ideologies of the society. This began with the traditional gender roles in the pre-colonial era and was reinforced during the colonial era when women were forced out of commercial farming and trading to do food-crop farming and petty trading, which both bring in less money. Presently, this practice keeps women under glass ceilings and in low paying jobs, which contributes largely to most Nigerian women being in poverty, experiencing poor health, and suffering from various abuse due to the inequality of social status between genders.<sup>52</sup>

The postcolonial Nigerian society is one in which men have exclusive right over women. Women are socialized to believe that they are inferior to men. Women are seen as objects to be purchased with dowry and once a man pays the dowry on a woman, he acquires a purchasing power and right of ownership over the woman. He virtually can control every aspects of the woman's life. Among the Igbos, male supremacy and domination is ritually celebrated during the traditional marriage when a woman is invited to kneel down and serve her prospective husband a cup of palm wine. The act of kneeling down to perform this ritual indicates the subordinate position of the woman in relation to

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<sup>51</sup>Vanguard online, <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2016/10/wife-belongs-kitchen-buhari/>

<sup>52</sup> Emmanuel O. and Isaac Aladegbola, "Patriarchy and Colonization: The 'Brooder House' for Gender Inequality in Nigeria," *JRWG* 10 (2020): 3.

her husband. Once this ritual is performed, the woman is obligated to be submissive to her husband in everything. She automatically loses her freedom.

### 5.3.2 Understanding Domination of Sin and Death in Light of Violence against Women

The above colonial and patriarchal ideology of male dominance often result in violence against women in its various manifestations. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as “the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, or another person, against a group or community, that either results in or has high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation.”<sup>53</sup> While anyone could be a victim of violence, gender-based violence disproportionately affects the lives of women and girls. The two most pervasive types of gender-based violence that affect women and girls are: Intimate partner violence (IPV), and Domestic violence (DV). Intimate partner violence is defined by WHO as “any behavior within an intimate relationship that causes physical, psychological or sexual harm to those in the relationship.”<sup>54</sup> Most reported cases of IPV are perpetrated by men against their female spouse. Women and girls face more risk of being raped, assaulted, or killed by their intimate partner. The definition offered by the WHO conforms with the definition of IPV offered by the American Medical Association (AMA) as “a pattern of coercive behaviors that may include repeated battering and injury, psychological abuse, sexual assault, progressive social isolation, deprivation and intimidation.”<sup>55</sup> Domestic violence (DV) on other hand is defined by The United States Department of Justice as “a pattern of abusive behavior in relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power

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<sup>53</sup> Etienne G. Krug, World Health Organization, *et al.*, *World Report on Violence and Health* (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2002), 5.

<sup>54</sup> Krug, World Health Organization, *et al.*, *World Report on Violence and Health*, 89.

<sup>55</sup> Taryn Lindhorst and Jeffrey L. Edleson, *Battered Women, Their Children, and International Law: The Unintended Consequences of the Hague Child Abduction Convention* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2012), 31.

and control over another partner.”<sup>56</sup> These two forms of gender-based violence are closely related but domestic violence is wider in scope in that it includes violence carried out by family members such as the violence perpetrated by father against his children.

While IPV and DV are global issues, their prevalence in Nigeria particularly in the Southeastern States (Igbo) is alarming. Some scholars such as Ose Aihie,<sup>57</sup> Elizabeth Abama and Chris Kwaja,<sup>58</sup> Olubunmi Alo, Emmanuel Odusina and Gbadebo Babatunde,<sup>59</sup> Grace R. Etuk, Eucharia N. Nwagbara, and Esther P. Archibong,<sup>60</sup> Rose Uchem,<sup>61</sup> S. N. Obi and B. C. Ozumba,<sup>62</sup> Funmilola B. Alokun,<sup>63</sup> Adebayo A. Abayom and Taiwo O. Kolawole,<sup>64</sup> and others have explored these various forms of violence that women and children undergo in their families in present-day Nigerian society. For instance, Aihie notes that in 2001, a Project Alert was designed to survey the violence against women in Lagos. The project interviewed a group of market women and women in other sectors, as well as female students in secondary and universities in Lagos state. In this report, “64.4% of 45 women interviewed in the work place said they had been beaten by a partner (boyfriend or husband), 56.6% of 48 interviewed market woman admitted experiencing such violence.”<sup>65</sup> According to Aihie, similar study carried out in Oyo state and other

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<sup>56</sup> Don Philpott, *Critical Government Documents on Law and Order* (New York: Bernan, 2016), 35.

<sup>57</sup> Ose N. Aihie, “Prevalence of Domestic Violence in Nigeria: Implications for Counselling,” *EJC* 2.1 (1-8): 2009.

<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth Abama and Chris M. A. Kwaja, “Violence against Women in Nigeria: How the Millennium Development Goals Addresses the Challenge,” *JPAS* 3.3 (2009): 23–34.

<sup>59</sup> Olubunmi A. Alo, Emmanuel K. Odusina, and Gbadebo Babatunde, “Spousal Violence in Southwest Nigeria: Prevalence and Correlates,” *JWH* 1.2 (2012): 1–8.

<sup>60</sup> Grace R. Etuk, Eucharia N. Nwagbara, and Esther P. Archibong, “Working Women and Spousal Violence in Nigeria: Emerging Patterns and Strategies for Change,” *IJBS* 3.17 (272AD): 2012.

<sup>61</sup> Uchem, *Overcoming Women’s Subordination: An Igbo African and Christian Perspective: Envisioning an Inclusive Theology with Reference to Women*.

<sup>62</sup> S. N. Obi and B. C. Ozumba, “Factors Associated with Domestic Violence in South East Nigeria,” *JOG* 27.1 (2007): 75–78.

<sup>63</sup> Adebayo A. Abayom and Taiwo O. Kolawole, “Domestic Violence and Death: Women as Endangered Gender in Nigeria,” *AJSR* 3.3 (2013): 53–60.

<sup>64</sup> Funmilola B. Alokun, “Domestic Violence against Women: A Family Menace,” *ESJ* 9.19 (n.d.): 100–107.

<sup>65</sup> C. Osezua, “The Women’s Body, a Man’s Field: The Commoditization of Female Sexuality among the Benin People of Southern Nigeria,” in *Challenges of Socio-Economic Development in Nigeria at 50: Issues and Policy Options*, ed. E. A. et al Akinlo (Ile-Ife: Obafemi Awolowo University, 2012), 168–85.

Southwestern parts of Nigeria yielded similar results thereby showing a high level of violence against women in Southwestern part of Nigeria.

However, the situation gets even worse in the South East (the Igbos). In a research conducted by Obi and Ozumba, on the “Factors Associated with Domestic Violence, in South East, Nigeria,” the study shows that 70% of the people interviewed reported violence or abuse in their family with 92% of the victims were female partners while the remaining 8% were male.<sup>66</sup> Amobi Linus Ilika conducted a narrower investigation in a small Igbo village of Ozumbulu in Anambra State. This study was designed to assess how the rural women who experienced IPV and DV perceived the experience. The research made shocking revelations: the first is that the women unanimously agree that IPV was pervasive in their community. According to the female respondents (36-40 years), “there is virtually no family where the husband never beat or scolded his wife. In fact, within the first years of marriage, it is fighting and wrestling.”<sup>67</sup> One of the women narrates her ordeal as follows: “He beat me mercilessly and all my face was bruised and battered. I could not go to the market for four days. In addition to the pain and discomfort, I could not stand the anguish and shame of responding to inquisitive neighbours.”<sup>68</sup> Some of the women between the ages of 31-35 expressed their anguish as follows:

Most of us have more than the number of pregnancies we would ordinary want to have. The men will force you (to have sex) and you dare not refuse. He will remind you that you are not a girlfriend, and that he paid bride price on you. After all, they do not know the pains of pregnancy and labour.<sup>69</sup>

The nature of violence experienced by these women range from the physical, such as beating, kicking, flogging, slapping, torture, and cutting of the victim’s vital body parts, to psychological and emotional violence exhibited in verbal abuse (scolding), rape, (forced

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<sup>66</sup> Obi and Ozumba, “Factors Associated with Domestic Violence in South East Nigeria,” 75–78.

<sup>67</sup> Amobi L. Ilika, “Women’s Perception of Partner Violence in a Rural Igbo Community,” *AJRH* 9.3 (2005): 81, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3583414>.

<sup>68</sup> Ilika, “Women’s Perception of Partner Violence in a Rural Igbo Community,” 81.

<sup>69</sup> Ilika, “Women’s Perception of Partner Violence in a Rural Igbo Community,” 81.

and non-consensual sex), shaming of the woman by sending the woman out of her matrimonial home to her parent. Some of these women reported to have lost their self-esteem through these experiences. Many Igbo women have lost their lives to IPV and DV.

The second shocking revelation of this study is that:

the women generally condone and are complacent with intimate partner violence, perceiving it as cultural and religious norms. The women felt that reprimands, beating and forced sex affecting their physical, mental and reproductive wellbeing are normal in marriage. They did not support reporting such cases to the police or divorcing the man, they would rather prefer reporting to family members. They felt that exiting the marriage would not gain the support of family members.<sup>70</sup>

In fact, there is a culture of silence that reinforces the stigma of these women's experience of IPV. Finally, there is also the on-going political and religious-motivated violence against women in Nigeria where women's bodies have become the battlefield between the Boko Haram Jihadist terrorist group, the Fulani Herdsmen, other insurgent groups and the government of Nigeria. The abduction of 276 Chibok girls in Borno State (Northeastern part of Nigeria), in April 2014 sets the precedent for subsequent gendered abductions and rapes, and killings in Nigeria. Many girls today are traumatized and live in perpetual fear of not knowing if they will be the next victim of these horrific attacks on women and girls.

Underlying these various forms of violence against women in Nigeria are the oppressive patriarchal system that dominates and victimizes women, as well as the ideology of women subordination that was injected into the people's mind through colonization. In the present-day Nigeria, patriarchy and colonization function as tools of domination against women. In *Purple Hibiscus*, Adichie shows how colonized men mirror and embody the domination, violence, and brutality of their colonial masters in the fictional character of Eugene. Adichie show that there is a close relationship between

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<sup>70</sup> Ilika, "Women's Perception of Partner Violence in a Rural Igbo Community," 77.

fundamentalist and conservative Catholicism that is the product of colonialization and traditional Igbo patriarchy in that both are systems of domination and oppression against women and children in the present-day Nigeria. In both systems, women are treated like objects to be owned and controlled. They can be physically beaten, sexually raped and mutilated, emotionally abused, socially marginalized and discriminated against with impunity. Underlying the violence against women and children, especially the girl-child, in postcolonial Nigerian society is the ideology behind the bare life that I have discussed above—the ideology that women and girls lack personhood, they mean and worth nothing. As such they can be violated, battered, oppressed, marginalized, and killed at the least provocation without any or much consequence.

#### 5.4 Understanding Paul's Justification and Salvation in Romans 5:12-21:

##### A Postcolonial Nigerian Womanist Perspective

If Paul's discourse of the domination of sin and death are understood in light of the aggressive domination, oppression, and death-dealing activities of the political powers of his day as well as in light of colonial and patriarchal domination in present-day Nigeria, how might these insights shed light on our understanding Paul's discourse on justification and salvation (eternal life) in Rom 5:12-21? Secondly, how can one explain Paul's message of justification and salvation to the contemporary Nigerian (Igbo) women in light of their ongoing experience of domination, violence, dehumanization, injustice, marginalization and exclusion? Framed differently, does Paul's theology of justification and salvation have social significance?

##### 5.4.1 Salvation as Liberation from Various Forms of Domination

In *Salvation as Praxis: A Practical Theology of Salvation for a Multi-Faith World*, Wayne Morris notes that “recent developments in contextual theological voices, especially

those from historically marginalized and oppressed groups, have initiated a shift in their focus on soteriological discourses towards an understanding of salvation as principally relating to the transformation of this world for the better.”<sup>71</sup> Morris critiques modern western soteriological traditions and their other-worldly, spiritualized, personal, and futuristic emphasis of salvation. According to Morris, such understanding of salvation has been used to justify passive acceptance of suffering in this world. However, Morris submits that “salvation in Christian tradition has always been concerned with more than questions about the future, eschatological, post-mortem possibilities.”<sup>72</sup> Soteriology in Christian tradition has always spoken about the “present, temporal, earthly realities in which the human person, perhaps in communion with the rest of creation, can experience the kind of reality now that is promised for the future.”<sup>73</sup>

Morris proposes different ways of thinking about salvation as deification, healing, and liberation. Morris’s alternative approach attempts to grasp salvation as a present reality, the transformation of our earthly existence. Morris argues that Christian soteriology ought to be concerned with naming the sinful structures that perpetuate injustice, inequality and suffering that certain groups of human beings experience, with an aim to seek ways to resist and transform it.<sup>74</sup> Morris names his approach “soteriologies of praxis,” that is, an approach to salvation that “speaks out of and into contexts where new and improved ways of living are envisaged and shaped by struggles against and resistance to oppression.”<sup>75</sup> Such approaches proactively seek to end oppressive and destructive systems and practices such as patriarchy, capitalism, racism, Euro-centrism while promoting more just and egalitarian systems and practices. While Wayne Morris does not

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<sup>71</sup> Wayne Morris, *Salvation as Praxis: A Practical Theology of Salvation for a Multi-Faith World* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 3.

<sup>72</sup> Morris, *Salvation as Praxis: A Practical Theology of Salvation for a Multi-Faith World*, 3.

<sup>73</sup> Morris, *Salvation as Praxis: A Practical Theology of Salvation for a Multi-Faith World*, 3.

<sup>74</sup> Morris, *Salvation as Praxis: A Practical Theology of Salvation for a Multi-Faith World*, 7.

<sup>75</sup> Morris, *Salvation as Praxis: A Practical Theology of Salvation for a Multi-Faith World*, 7.

explicitly identify as a postcolonial critic, his perspectives on salvation capture the core elements of postcolonial discourse on salvation.

As I stated in the introduction, the postcolonial African women's approach to biblical interpretation begins from the vantage point of women's experience of multifaceted oppression due to gender, racism, classism, conquest, colonialism and patriarchy.<sup>76</sup> African women theologians take the concerns of colonized, subordinated, disadvantaged, and marginalized grassroots African women as the starting point of biblical interpretation. This matrix of oppression becomes the point from which African women construe their theology of salvation. The women's experiences of systemic sin and evil are what inform our view and understanding of salvation. Salvation from this perspective is construed in terms of liberation or freedom from the forces of domination and death. It means healing for women who have been brutally bruised both physically and emotionally. Salvation means material and spiritual wellbeing or wholeness, the righting of all unjust relationships between men and women, between nations, etc. It is a spiritual salvation that is not divorced from socio-economic and political emancipation in the present. In fact, for women, salvation entails the total transformation of the social order in light of God's original creative vision. To experience salvation is to have one's life transformed for the better here on earth to the point that heaven and earth become one reality.

Reading from a postcolonial womanist lens, I argue that for the female audience of Paul in Rome and the Igbo Christian women of Nigeria whose lives are shaped by forces of domination both imperial, colonial, and patriarchal domination respectively, Paul's discourse on salvation (eternal life) (Rom 5:21) is heard not as an abstract theological treatise but as a message about God's power to ensure their freedom and liberation from

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<sup>76</sup> Kwok Pui-lan, *Postcolonial Imagination and Feminist Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 64.



all forces of domination. In Romans, Paul's frequently speaks about the freedom of the children of the God, the freedom that was made available to both men and women, Jews and Gentiles through the Christ-event. In Paul's view, the event of Christ and the Spirit have brought freedom for the believers such that they are no longer slaves to the reigning powers of sin and death in their various manifestations (Rom 6:18-23). Paul even goes further to assert that believers are freed from the law (Rom 7:3-6). For women, these includes the socio-cultural and political laws that diminish the quality of their lives. For Igbo women who live in a patriarchal society these laws include the various discriminating laws against them such as the laws that accentuate wife battery or other forms of domestic violence.

In Paul's thought, "it was for freedom that Christ set us free" (Gal 5:1) and "you were called to freedom" (Gal 5:13). Through the death and resurrection of Christ, women can now experience the glorious liberty of being children of God (Rom 8:21). It is important to note that talk about freedom and liberation from slavery is a recurrent topic among Jewish prophets and apocalyptists who protest against various imperial dominations. Shaped by their historical experiences of slavery and exile, most Jewish authors who reflect on God's saving act usually speak about this reality using imageries of prisoners or captives being set free (Pss 68:6; 102:20, 146:7; Isa 61:1-2); the breaking of iron bars and the shattering of prison gates (Pss 107:16; Isa 43:14; 45:2; 61:1; Acts 16:26). These images underscore God's liberating activity on behalf of those held captive by various forces of domination. According to Luke, Jesus began his earthly ministry appropriating to himself the text of Isa 61:1-2 (cf. Lk 4:18-19). While most discourses about freedom in Paul's thought tend to emphasize the spiritual dimension, it is important to bear in mind that what shaped freedom discourses in Paul's time was the Roman imperial domination that held people in life-threatening and life-defeating captivity.

Salvation in biblical context is always a concrete, historical and political event that is inseparable from socioeconomic and political issues that affect people's lives.

In Rom 5:21 Paul speaks about salvation in terms of eternal life (ζωὴν αἰώνιον) which results from the reign of grace and righteousness. Paul makes it clear that in the old age, the reign of sin results in death, but the reign of grace through righteousness (ἡ χάρις βασιλεύσῃ διὰ δικαιοσύνης) in the new age results in eternal life (εἰς ζωὴν αἰώνιον). In the dominant western theology, eternal or everlasting life has often been construed as the unending future existence that is characteristic of life of the age to come. In this traditional reading, eternal life is something we possess after we die and go to heaven. One major problem with this theology is that it has been coopted by the rich and those in power (usually men) who exploit the poor and the vulnerable (especially women) with the promise of having eternal life if they endure their suffering quietly in the present life. This way of thinking about eternal life enables those in power to maintain their dominance over the poor who are thus brainwashed not to struggle to improve the quality of their lives here on earth by the promise of an eternal life in heaven.<sup>77</sup>

But on the contrary, eternal life means more than going to heaven after death. According to Robert Yarbrough, eternal life refers to “the divinely bestowed gift of blessedness in God's presence that endures without end. This relates especially to the quality of life in this age, and to both the quality and duration of life in the age to come.”<sup>78</sup> This is to say that eternal life speaks not only about the quantity (duration) of life but also about the quality of life that God offers to his people as they live and serve him here on earth and in the world to come. In fact, in Rom 6:4, Paul makes it explicit that eternal life

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<sup>77</sup> Rosemary R. Ruether, *Introducing Redemption in Christian Feminism* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 102; Morris, *Salvation as Praxis: A Practical Theology of Salvation for a Multi-Faith World*, 3.

<sup>78</sup> Robert Yarbrough, “Eternal Life, Eternality, Everlasting Life,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 209.

is not only a future event but also a present reality. It speaks to the quality of life, the newness of life that has been made available to the people of God. The giving of life is a core mission of Jesus who came “so that they may have life and have it abundantly” (John 10:10). Here we see a connection between eternal life and fullness of life. In Paul’s thought, the new age that God inaugurates under the lordship of Jesus is characterized by fullness of life which contrasts with death-infested life in the old age. The frequency of the term life (ζωή) in Romans,<sup>79</sup> as well as the occurrences of death in the letter that I have examined in Chapter Four, points to the fact that issues related to life and death are a major concern of Paul in Romans.

More importantly, Paul’s exhortations to embody justice, faithfulness, holiness, love, reconciliation, peace, respect, and hospitality (Romans 12-15) underscores Paul’s vision to shape a community at the heart of the empire whose praxis is diametrically opposed to the culture of death and violence that is prevalent in imperial and patriarchal systems. For the ancient women whose life situation I reviewed above, those who live under the shadow of death, the concept of eternal life is indeed a theology that affirms their life and wellbeing in the face of life-threatening situations. Paul’s theology of salvation therefore should not be construed merely in terms of otherworldly, spiritualized, futuristic existence, it is also about the transformation of flesh and blood individuals and communities in the ongoing divine restoration of our world through Jesus the Messiah. This message about the full flourishing of human life in all its dimensions stands diametrically opposed to imperial, colonial and patriarchal policies of domination and their death-dealing socio-political structures.

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<sup>79</sup>Cf. Rom 2:7; 5:10, 17-18, 21, 6:4, 22-23; 7:10; 8:2, 6, 10, 38; 11:15; and the verb to live (ζῶω), Rom 1:17; 6:2, 10-11, 13; 7:1-3, 9; 8:12-13; 9:26; 10:5; 12:1; 14:7-9,

#### 5.4.2 Justification as the Practice of Justice and Inclusion

In recent time, even in the West, some scholars have begun to move away from the individualized, spiritualized, and forensic emphasis to explore the horizontal, social, participatory, and transformative dimension of Paul's soteriology. Some of the proponents of the social reading of Paul's theology of justification include: F. C. Baur, Marcus Barth, Nils Dahl, Paul Minear, Krister Stendahl, and other scholars of the New Perspective on Paul.<sup>80</sup> While each of these scholars have their different theological goals, what unifies them is the fact that they all acknowledged the social and communal dimensions of Paul's doctrine of justification. They all agree that Paul usually discusses the theme of justification in contexts that deals with issues of division between Jews and Gentiles. This social reading of justification by faith finds a more profound articulation in the work of the Latin American feminist and postcolonial critic Elsa Tamez. In her book, *The Amnesty of Grace: Justification by Faith from a Latin American Perspective*, Tamez offers a rereading of the doctrine of justification by faith from the perspective of oppression, poverty, and struggle of Latin Americans. Tamez bases her work on the fact that,

In the present moment, the doctrine of justification is being confronted radically by the reality of injustice, whose products are the deaths of thousands of innocent people, and the loss of humanity for thousands more. Those products of injustice constitute the principal challenges of the Latin American reality to a rereading of the doctrine of justification by faith.<sup>81</sup>

Consequently, Tamez undertakes a reinterpretation of the doctrine of justification by faith, calling attention to the fact that Paul's theology of justification emerged in a sociopolitical context that is characterized by a system of domination, marginalization, oppression, and exclusion of the most vulnerable people. Reading Paul's letter to the

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<sup>80</sup> Nils A. Dahl, "The Doctrine of Justification, Its Social Function and Implication," in *Studies in Paul: Theology for the Early Christian Mission* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 1977), 95–120; Marcus Barth, "The Social Character of Justification in Paul," *JES* 5 (1968): 241–67; Minear, *The Obedience of Faith; The Purposes of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans*, 90–97; Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles, and Other Essays*, 26–29.

<sup>81</sup> Elsa Tamez, *The Amnesty of Grace: Justification by Faith from a Latin American Perspective*, trans. Sharon H. Ringe (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1993), 36.

Romans within this social context, Tamez argues that there are two fundamental motivations that drive Paul's theology of justification: "the first was to include in the people of God those who do not have the privilege of the law. The second was to strengthen the hope of Christians in a new, more just life for all...."<sup>82</sup> Driven by important social questions, Tamez shows through her in-depth study of Paul's theology of justification that "the revelation of the justice of God and its realization in justification proclaim and bring about the good news of the right to life for all people. The life granted in justification is recognized as an inalienable gift, because it proceeds from the solidarity of God, in Jesus Christ, with those who are excluded."<sup>83</sup> Tamez's reading of justification as an affirmation of life proceeds from the fact that Paul's theology of justification is ultimately about God giving life in its fullness to women and men who are called into the new covenant family that God inaugurates through Jesus the Messiah.

Secondly, Tamez argues that the theology of justification also speaks to both the inclusive and equal membership of the new covenant community who are called through grace to participate in the life of Jesus the Messiah. Paul emphasizes an equal-base admission of all (Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slave and free) into the new family of God through faith (Rom 9-11). In this new family, all are called sons and daughters (2 Cor 6:18), all have equal access to the father who pours out his divine spirit on each one as a gift (Rom 5:1-5). The extensive use of family terminology such as "Abba", sons, children, brother, firstborn, heir, is striking in Romans particularly in chapter 8.<sup>84</sup> For instance, the designation of members of God's family as τέκνα θεοῦ (children of God) in

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<sup>82</sup> Tamez, *The Amnesty of Grace: Justification by Faith from a Latin American Perspective*, 96.

<sup>83</sup> Tamez, *The Amnesty of Grace: Justification by Faith from a Latin American Perspective*, 14.

<sup>84</sup> Rose Mary D'Angelo has argued persuasively that the early Christian's invocation of God as "Abba" or Father was an act of resistance to Roman imperial power. According to D'Angelo, "Where the emperor is the head of the great *familia* of the empire, whose order depends on controlling lesser *familiae*, itineracy and other challenges to the patriarchal family emerge as challenge to the imperial order." Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Abba and 'Father': Imperial Theology and the Jesus Traditions," *JBL* 111.4 (1992): 628. D'Angelo's argument with regard to the resistance overtone embedded in the early Christian's use of "Abba" and father for God supports my overall argument that Paul was engaged in a subtle resistance discourse of the Roman imperial ideology.

Rom 8:16 indicates an inclusive language that marks the new family of God.<sup>85</sup> Paul's rare use of gender inclusive language is a powerful instance of such rhetoric of inclusivity and justice for the Roman Christian communities and for all Christian communities in every age. Paul makes a stronger case for inclusivity and equality of Christ's believer in his other letters. For instance, 2 Cor 5:16-17 and Gal 3:27-9 are instances of Paul's vision of such a community that is not defined by gender, race, or class. This is great news for women whose lives are marked by experiences of exclusion, subordination, and discrimination in that these passages affirm their right of full membership within the new covenant community. Paul's letter to the Romans shows that flesh and blood women were key participants in the early Christian mission.

#### 5.4.3 Romans 16: Inclusivity, Equality and Full Participation of Members of Christ

Roman 16 depicts the praxis of inclusive and equal communities of God's people. The passage contains Paul's greetings to other missionaries and perhaps to specific and prominent members of the Roman house churches who have labored very hard to advance the course of the gospel in Rome. Those mentioned are people who played vital roles not only in preaching the good news but also in partnering with Paul in his ministry. In the passage, Paul recognizes and appreciates the hard work of these men and women of different racial and social backgrounds who committed themselves to spreading the good news of Christ. What is significant in Rom 16 is that, contrary to some passages in which Paul or his disciple seems to subordinate women in both church and family spheres,<sup>86</sup> in Rom 16 Paul takes a different trajectory, he recognizes the ministerial, evangelical, and

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<sup>85</sup> Uzodimma, "An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Concept of Reconciliation," 66-77.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 11:3-16; 1 Cor 14:34-35; Col 3:18-19; Eph 5:22-33; 1 Tim 2:8-15; Titus 2:4-5.

leadership roles of women within the Roman Christian communities.<sup>87</sup> Ten out of the twenty-nine people mentioned in the passage were women.

The list of women includes Phoebe whom Paul identified as a διάκονος of the church of Cenchreae and a προστάτις (“patroness”). The meaning of the title of διάκονος ascribed to Phoebe by Paul has been vigorously contested. Charles Cranfield and Käsemann interpret Phoebe’s role as a διάκονος in terms of an informal services such as the “practical service of the needy,” and “charitable care of the poor, sick, widow and orphans.”<sup>88</sup> In contrast, Robert Jewett, Joseph Fitzmyer, and some other scholars read the title of διάκονος as an ecclesial “minister”—one who occupies an important leadership position in the Church.<sup>89</sup> W. D. Thomas suggests that διάκονος is a special formal leadership role in the early Church. According to him, “the term deacon was used to designate a believer who had been set apart for work in the church with the added authority which came with an act of setting apart.”<sup>90</sup> Fitzmyer contends that the word προστάτις which many commentators read as “helper,” or “support” should actually be translated as “patroness.” According to Fitzmyer, “in giving Phoebe this title, Paul acknowledges the public service that this prominent woman has given to many Christians at Cenchreae.”<sup>91</sup> Judging by her pedigree as indicated in the text, and as well as by Paul’s recommendation that the Romans should “welcome” her and “help her in whatever she may require from you” (v. 2), there is no doubt that Phoebe holds some form of leadership position within the church of Cenchreae. She clearly exercises an officially recognized diaconal ministry in her home Church at Cenchreae.

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<sup>87</sup> Uzodimma, “An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Concept of Reconciliation,” 78.

<sup>88</sup> Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 2:781; Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, 410.

<sup>89</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 944; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 729–30; Hultgren, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 570–71.

<sup>90</sup> W. D. Thomas, “Phoebe: A Helper of Many,” *ExpTim* 95 (1984): 337.

<sup>91</sup> Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 731.

It is to Phoebe that Paul entrusts the delivery of his letter to the Romans. She was the bearer of the letter, a fact that has been attested in early Christian sources, and widely accepted in modern scholarship.<sup>92</sup> While the reason why Paul chose a woman (Phoebe) to be his emissary in Rome is not explicitly stated, the more consensus explanation is that Paul chose Phoebe for the purpose of creating a “logistical base for the Spanish mission.”<sup>93</sup> According to Jewett, Phoebe’s role in this mission would have included “gaining the cooperation of the Roman house churches in creating the logical base and arranging for the translators that would be required for the Spanish mission.”<sup>94</sup> This also means that people being greeted in the *pericope* would understand that they are being recruited as a team for Paul’s missionary project to the West. Paul intends to gain from their giftedness and experiences in advancing his mission to the West. Some of the people Paul greeted were Christians before Paul. So, Paul was eliciting their support in the new mission.

Paul’s choice of Phoebe for this role provides us further insights into her person. It shows that Phoebe was a very influential figure in the early Christian communities. First, by sending an influential figure like Phoebe, Paul knew that his letter and request to the Roman house churches will definitely be delivered, received and accepted by the communities. Second, Paul would have sent someone who has the ability to clarify and defend the content of his letter. By choosing Phoebe, Paul knew that Phoebe can fulfil these roles. As the bearer of the letter, Phoebe

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<sup>92</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 16; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Missionaries, Apostles, Coworkers: Romans 16 and the Reconstruction of Women’s Early Christian History,” *WW* 6.4 (1986): 424; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 729; James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol. 2 of *WBC* (Dallas: TX: Word Books, 1988), 2:886; Hultgren, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 569; Jewett, *Romans*, 947–48; Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1064–65.

<sup>93</sup> Robert Jewett, “Paul, Phoebe, and the Spanish Mission,” in *The Social World of Formative Christianity and Judaism: Essays in Tribute to Howard Clark Kee*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 151.

<sup>94</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 948.



would have been in a position to explain to the Christians at Rome (1) what Paul was saying in the various sections of his letter, (2) what he meant by what he proclaimed in each of those sections, and (3) how he expected certain important sections of his letter to be worked out in practice in the particular situations at Rome.<sup>95</sup>

This meant that Phoebe is the first theologian or exegete to speak or comment on Paul's Letter to the Romans. Clearly, Paul trusts and respects the authority of Phoebe in this regard. In fact, when Paul refers to Phoebe as *προστάτις* ("benefactor"), he quickly admits that Phoebe is also his own benefactor. Paul may have benefited not only from her material wealth but also from her spiritual richness (giftedness) in explicating the content of Paul's gospel message in his absence.

Prisca is another female member that Paul mentions in the passage. Paul greets her together with her husband (Aquila). Jerome Murphy-O'Connor argues that Prisca and Aquila were missionary couples who move from place to place building Christian churches.<sup>96</sup> According to Paul, Prisca and Aquila have not only worked with him but they have also "risked their neck for my life" (v. 3). While the details of how they risked their lives (necks) for Paul is unknown, some scholars do suggest that this couple may have made life-saving intervention for Paul while he was in prison in Ephesus.<sup>97</sup> Paul sends greetings to them and to the church in their house (v. 4). What is of special interest for my study is that Paul introduced the couple by mentioning the name of Prisca before that of her husband Aquila. The same ordering of their names occurs in 2 Tim 4:19; Act 18:18, 26.<sup>98</sup> Some scholars have suggested the ordering of their names which places Prisca's name first is an indication that she played a more significant role within the early Christian communities, or that she had a higher social status than her husband.<sup>99</sup> In the passage, Paul

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<sup>95</sup> Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1064.

<sup>96</sup> Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Prisca and Acquila: Travelling Tentmakers and Church Builders," *BRev* 8 (1992): 40–51.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Acts 18:12-17; 19:23-41; 1 Cor 15:32; 2 Cor 1:8-10. See Jewett, *Romans*, 957–58; Dunn, *Romans* 9-16, 892.

<sup>98</sup> The opposite sequence is found twice in Acts 18:2 and 1 Cor 16:19 where Aquila is named first.

<sup>99</sup> Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 96; Jewett, *Romans*, 955.

refers to Prisca and her husband as τοὺς συνεργούς μου ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (“my coworkers in Christ”) (v. 3). Some scholars argue that at the time Paul wrote the Letter to the Romans, the term “coworker(s)” has assumed a technical meaning of “missionary colleagues.”<sup>100</sup> What this means is that the couple were part of the larger group of Christians that worked together with Paul in proclaiming the gospel and founding churches.<sup>101</sup> It is clear that Prisca did not play a subordinate role in relation to her husband nor to Paul, neither were the couple subordinate to Paul. Paul affirms the couple’s collegiality and collaboration with him in building the new family of God. While the couple and Paul are said to be a team of evangelizers, it is also obvious that Prisca played a more dominant role within the Christian communities.

Another prominent woman that Paul greets in the letter is Junia (v. 7). Junia is the most controversial biblical figure in the New Testament because she is the only woman that has the title of an apostle attached to her name. Scholars who have issue with a woman being called an apostle argue for a masculine reading of “Junias” instead of the Latin feminine name “Junia.”<sup>102</sup> Jewett summarizes the controversy around the figure of Junia as follows:

The modern scholarly controversy over this name rests on the presumption that no woman could rank as an apostle, and thus that the accusative form must refer to a male by the name of Junias or Junianus. However, the evidence in favor of the feminine name “Junia” is overwhelming. Not a single example of a masculine name “Junias” has been found. The patristic evidence investigated by Fàbrega and Fitzmyer indicates that commentators down through the twelfth century refer to Junia as a woman, often commenting on the extraordinary gifts that ranked her among the apostles.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 957.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Cor 3:9; 2 Cor 1:24; 8:23; Phil 2:25; 1 Thess 3:2; Phlm 1, 24.

<sup>102</sup> For detailed argument in favor of feminine or masculine reading and their proponents see, Mathew, *Women in the Greetings of Romans 16.1-16*, 97–106; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 737–40. In fact, Fitzmyer, offers enormous textual evidence from the patristic period that favors the feminine reading of Ἰουνίαν. Not a single instance of a masculine name “Junias” has been found. Dunn argues that the assumption that Junia must be a man is a striking indictment of male presumption regarding the character and structure of earliest Christianity. See Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, 894.

<sup>103</sup> Jewett, *Romans*, 961.

In light of the overwhelming historical and textual evidence in favor of the feminine reading of Ἰουνίαν, I am convinced that Junia is a female name. It might be that Junia and Andronicus are a couple. What is of special interest for this study is what Paul said concerning them: (a) they were Paul's relatives (that is, they were Jewish couple);<sup>104</sup> (b) They were fellow prisoners with Paul; (c) They were prominent among the apostles. This means that Junia together with her husband held a high position in the college of the apostles; (d) they were "in Christ" before Paul, meaning that they believed in Jesus the Messiah before Paul. They may have been among the early followers of Jesus in Jerusalem who brought the Christian faith to Rome. While Paul identified Andronicus and Junia as fellow prisoners, we do not know whether they shared the same period of incarceration with Paul, or whether Paul was just acknowledging that Andronicus and Junia have suffered imprisonment like himself because of the gospel of Christ. Whatever is the case, Junia was an early Christian woman who like Paul suffered in the hands of the Roman political powers because of her allegiance and witness to Christ.

There are other women (Mary, Persis, Tryphaena Tryphosa, and Julia) that Paul includes in his greeting. Paul acknowledged that they have "worked hard" (κοπιάω) in the apostolic ministry (vv. 6, 12). Paul usually uses κοπιάω with reference to missionary work. He uses the term for himself in several places.<sup>105</sup> The term is also applied to leaders of different local churches and other missionaries (1 Cor 3:8; 15:58 16:16; 1 Thess 1:3; 5:12), and to the apostles in general (1 Cor 4:12). There is scanty information about the identity of these four female characters.

It has been suggested that Mary may have been either a Jewish or Gentile Christian woman because the name has both Hebrew (Miriam) and Latin (Maria) background.

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<sup>104</sup> Mary Rose D'Angelo, "Women Partners in the New Testament," *JFSR* 6.1 (1990): 73; Mathew, *Women in the Greetings of Romans 16.1-16*, 103; Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 1069.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. 1 Cor 15:10; 2 Cor 6:5; 11:23, 27; Gal 4:11; Phil 2:16; Col 1:29; 1 Thess 2:9; 3:5; 2 Thess 3:8.

Based on the meaning of their names, Mary Rose D'Angelo argues that Tryphaena and Tryphosa may have been slaves or freedwomen of the same patron.<sup>106</sup> Secondly, both names derive from the Greek verb τρυφάω which means “delicate” or, “luxurious”—a term that has sexual overtone. Based on the use of the verb and its cognates, D'Angelo notes that the two women may have once been sex-workers.<sup>107</sup> Both Lampe's and Peter Oakes' onomastic studies of Romans 16 confirm that these two female characters had a slave background.<sup>108</sup> What is important for us here is that Paul recognizes these four women as missionaries who have labored for the course of the gospel of Christ. In the context of mission in Romans 16, D'Angelo argues that Tryphosa and Tryphaena “emerge as evidence of partnerships of women in the early Christian mission.”<sup>109</sup> It is possible that these women were instrumental in bringing the Gospel to Rome. Paul's affirmation that Mary has worked hard “among you” may point either to her active participation in the founding of the house churches in Rome or in overseeing to the daily activities of these Christian communities. The remaining three women greeted by Paul are the mother of Rufus whom Paul claims as a mother to himself too (v. 13). There is also Nereus' sister, and Julia (v. 15). Although Paul does not provide much information about these women, it is clear that Paul may have known or heard about them because of their active participation within the Roman Christian communities.

There are a number of things that we can make out of this long list of Paul's greeting of prominent women and men in the Roman Christian communities. The first thing is that there was conspicuous presence of women in the Roman house churches. Women were actively present among the first-century Christians in Rome. About one-third

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<sup>106</sup> D'Angelo, “Tryphaena,” 165.

<sup>107</sup> D'Angelo, “Tryphaena,” 165.

<sup>108</sup> Lampe, *From Paul to Valentinus*, 179–83; Clark, “Jew and Greek, Slave and Free, Male and Female: Paul's Theology of Ethnic, Social and Gender Inclusiveness in Romans 16,” 103–25.

<sup>109</sup> D'Angelo, “Women Partners in the New Testament,” 68. Other examples of such female partnership include: Martha and Mary (cf. Luke 10:38–42 and John 11–12); Euodia and Syntyche (cf. Phil 4:1–2). For such women according to D'Angelo, “partnership in the mission would have consecrated female friendship as a means to supply the support, protection and intimacy lost in the disruption of familial bonds and the rejection of marriage.” D'Angelo, “Women Partners in the New Testament,” 83.

of the twenty-six names mentioned in the passage were women. However, when one counts those identified as taking active leadership and ministerial roles, women outnumbered men.<sup>110</sup> As Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza argues, the fact that the names of men mentioned in the passage outnumbered the names of the women does not suggest that women were underrepresented. According to Fiorenza, one must consider the fact that in an androcentric culture such as the biblical world, grammatically masculine language is usually inclusive of female(s) even though women may not be explicitly mentioned. In light of this fact, Fiorenza argues that “it is safe to assume that among those who belong to the house of Aristobulus and Narcissus are also women.... the ‘brethren’ and ‘saints’ who are with those group of persons mentioned in 16:14-15 must have included ‘sisters’ .... It is unlikely that the house church of Prisca and Aquila consists only of men and not of women.”<sup>111</sup> Fiorenza’s reading enables us to see that there is a significant presence of women in the Roman house churches beyond those explicitly named. The named women represent just the “tip of an iceberg” of women’s engagement and activity in Rome.

Frances Taylor Gench offers an apt summary of the roles which women exercised in the Roman house churches as follows:

We learn from it that they proclaimed the gospel and, in some cases, suffered for it, enduring exile or imprisonment and risking life and limb on its behalf. They served as letter couriers and interpreters, emissaries, and patrons and travelled widely in conjunction with missionary endeavor. They also played indispensable roles in local congregations, hosting house churches and laboring tirelessly and tenaciously in community-building ministries. They were influential leaders who exercised offices in the church, serving as deacons and even as apostles under the direct commission of the risen Lord.<sup>112</sup>

In light of Romans 16, Fiorenza has suggested that the history of early Christianity includes the egalitarian leadership of women. According to her, “women and men in the Christian

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<sup>110</sup> Fiorenza, “Missionaries, Apostles, Coworkers: Romans 16 and the Reconstruction of Women’s Early Christian History,” 423–27.

<sup>111</sup> Fiorenza, “Missionaries, Apostles, Coworkers: Romans 16 and the Reconstruction of Women’s Early Christian History,” 428.

<sup>112</sup> Frances T. Gench, *Encountering God in Tyrannical Texts: Reflections on Paul, Women, and the Authority of Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2015), 157.

community are not defined by their sexual procreative capacities or religious, cultural or social roles, but by their discipleship and the empowering with the Spirit.”<sup>113</sup> In Romans 16, Paul participates in God’s mission of altering the hierarchical relationship of domination that characterizes human relationships in the old age by putting in place the paradigm of egalitarianism and mutuality. Paul’s explicit identification of women by their name without subordinating them and his appraisal of their ministry give us a picture of an egalitarian and unified community that Christ forms in union with the Spirit.

Besides being actively present, there is also a high level of equal participation and mutual collaboration between men and women within the Roman house churches on the hand, and between some of them (men and women) and Paul on the other hand. Some scholars have argued that the egalitarianism, mutuality and inclusiveness that is expressed in this passage attest to Paul’s vision of a radical equality and inclusive Church (cf. Gal 3:28) while some argue that this Christian egalitarianism and inclusiveness predate Paul. Fiorenza is a strong voice in this regard. In her groundbreaking work, *In memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*, Fiorenza undertakes a theological mission of reconstructing a democratic history of the Jesus movement and the early Church that is characterized by the praxis of discipleship of equals. Fiorenza argues that the vision of egalitarianism and inclusiveness found in Galatians 3:26-28 express the theological self-understanding of the Christian missionary movement that predates Paul.<sup>114</sup>

According to her,

Those who joined the Christian community joined it as an association of equals in which, according to the pre-Pauline baptismal formula of Galatians 3:28, societal status stratification in terms of the patriarchal family were abolished. This is the main reason why the early Christian movement seems to have been especially attractive to those who had little stake in the rewards of religion

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<sup>113</sup> Elizabeth S. Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM, 1995), 212.

<sup>114</sup> Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 160–99.

based on either class stratification or on male dominance. It is obvious why women were among its leading converts.<sup>115</sup>

Demetrius Williams agrees and writes, “the Hellenistic Christian mission, apart from Paul acknowledged the societal-leveling quality of baptism. Before baptism into Christ, the world was divided into Jew/Greek, slave/free, and male/female, but through baptism these distinctions are removed.”<sup>116</sup>

While Paul may not have invented the radical egalitarianism and inclusiveness that we witness in Rom 16:1-16, he however endorses it. Paul acknowledges all the men and female characters he greets in Rom 16:1-16 as equal and full participants with him in the ecclesial ministry. He acknowledges some such as Prisca and Aquila to be his seniors in the ministry. Ultimately, the passage provides us insight into Paul attitude towards women in ecclesia ministry and leadership towards the end of his apostolic career. What this means is that whatever Paul may or may not have said and written about women in ministry previously, since Romans is considered the last letter of Paul, it makes sense to argue that Rom 16:1-16 represents Paul’s final view of women in ecclesial ministry. Paul sought the support of women in his apostolic ministry. He sees them as agents much like himself who are called to the mission of building the kingdom of God and forming communities of men and women who through their allegiance to God participate in the realities of the divine kingdom. In contrast to the imperial or patriarchal system of domination, exclusion, and violence, we see in Romans 16 an alternative community of love and equality where Jews and Gentiles, men and women, slaves and freed persons, poor and rich collaborated in building God’s earthly kingdom. This passage makes it clear that women enjoyed equal rights and responsibilities in the early Christian communities in Rome.

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<sup>115</sup> Fiorenza, “Missionaries, Apostles, Coworkers: Romans 16 and the Reconstruction of Women’s Early Christian History,” 427.

<sup>116</sup> Demetrius K. Williams, *An End to This Strife: The Politics of Gender in African American Churches* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 28.

## 5.5 Implications of Paul's Theology of Justification for Igbo Communities<sup>117</sup>

Romans 5:12-21 contains important theological implications on how Christians particularly, the Igbo Christian churches and families should construct gender relationship. First, Paul invites his ancient Roman audience to model God's own justice and righteousness as revealed in the life of Jesus in their own communities. For the Igbo Christian communities, this means overcoming longstanding unhealthy and unjust relationships between men and women. The Igbo Christian men are to model themselves after the example of Jesus Christ who embodies not only justice and righteousness but also liberation and freedom of God's people. Secondly, Paul interprets the events of Christ and the Spirit as cosmic, apocalyptic events which mark the inauguration of a new age, an age when God is renewing and transforming humans and their relationships with others through the power of the Spirit. Those who are in Christ Jesus live within this new age. A notable feature of this new age, according to Paul, is that believers no longer perceive others from the perspective of class, race, and gender. What this means for the Igbo community is that any human sense of superiority and inferiority which is based on existence in the old age (that is, the patriarchal and colonial ideologies) is rendered null and void in the new age through baptism in Christ. If the old pagan and colonial Igbo society was characterized by numerous unequal power relationships, the new Igbo Christian society should be the very opposite. Overcoming perennial social division and domination becomes the vision and mission of the new communities which God forms through the Spirit in Igboland.

Third, in Paul's theology, justice, reconciliation, and peace are the very principles that must be reflected in social and communal relations. Paul's theology of salvation and

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<sup>117</sup> This section is adapted from my STL thesis. See Uzodimma, "An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Concept of Reconciliation in Romans 5:1-11: Envisioning a Transformative Human Relationship," 102-5.



justice is essentially a theology of liberation which has its root in God's intervention in the oppression and exploitation of the people of Israel in Egypt. The climax of this divine liberative action is the liberation of humanity from the powers of sin and death, from all forms of domination, and their reconciliation with God and with one another (Rom 5:1-21). This mission which God began in Christ is still on-going and all Christians are called to active mission with respect to it (2 Cor 5: 18-21). For the postcolonial Igbo Christian communities, this will mean identifying and naming gender subordination as structures of oppression, injustice, and domination, and working towards its elimination. Fourth, Paul's exhortation to the "strong" regarding their treatment of the "weak" in Rom 14:1-15:6 is of great significance in the Igbo context. The Igbo men who are the strong and powerful oppress and dominate the women—the perceived weak and powerless. Paul admonishes believers against taking on arrogant and superior attitudes based on their different ethnic, religious, and cultural backgrounds. Igbo Christian communities are called to an ethic of love and care for the other. Oppression of the socially weak and the poor, or indifference to their plights, is a social sin, something that attracts God's anger on a people (Amos 2:6-7; Luke 11:42). Finally, the new community of God's people that Paul envisions is one in which men and women participate fully in its realization on earth. It is a community in which each one has a role to carry out according to the charism bestowed on one.

## 5.6 Conclusion

This chapter unpacks the implications of Paul's soteriological discourse in Rom 5:12-21 for two group of Christian women: the female members of the house churches in ancient Rome and women in the postcolonial Nigerian Igbo context. The chapter explored Paul's theology of the reign of sin and death in light of the experiences of women arguing that Paul's discourse of the reign of sin and death in Rom 5:12-21 functions as a critique

of various forms of domination, especially the aggressive domination, oppression, and death-dealing activities of the political powers of his day, as well as colonial and patriarchal domination of women in the present-day Nigeria. Secondly, I argued that if Paul's discourse of the domination of sin and death are understood in light of women's experiences as shown above, then Paul's message of God's salvific intervention in Jesus the Messiah in Rom 5:12-21, his theology of justification that demands the practice of justice and inclusion would not be understood as an abstract theological speculation. For Paul's female audience, this is a message about God's power for salvation and liberation in their historical experience of domination. It is a proclamation that counters and challenges all systems of domination and violence against women, as well as all ideologies and policies of exclusion in so far as it promotes the full dignity and humanity of women and their full inclusion in the commonwealth of Israel (the new people of God).

In a socio-political context that was characterized by injustice, violence, oppression and marginalization of the poor and vulnerable, Paul preached a gospel that promoted the salvation and liberation of all people irrespective of class, race, and gender. He announces the message of the revelation of God's justice in Jesus the Messiah and invites his audience to embody the character of Jesus as a way of counteracting the social injustice against the poor, particularly against women. Romans 16 provides us an insight into Paul's vision of a new people of God in the new age which God inaugurated through the events of Christ and Spirit. For Paul, the purpose of God's salvific work through Jesus the Messiah is the formation of the new covenant people of God, a new humanity "in Christ" that includes both Jews and Gentiles, men and women who are empowered through the divine Spirit to embody God's righteousness as a means of counteracting the evil political kingdoms and socio-political structures of this world. In Paul's theology, the new family (people) which God inaugurates through must be marked by justice, righteousness, and inclusion as we

saw in Romans 16. It is to be a community which respects and preserves the dignity of human life, a community where Jews and Gentiles, men and women, rich and poor will co-exist in mutual love as they collaborate in building and furthering the mission of Christ in the world. It is an inclusive community where women find love and freedom. Finally, the chapter explores the implications of Paul's soteriology in Rom 5:12-21 for the postcolonial Nigerian Igbo communities noting among other things that it is a theology that invites all Christ's believers to model justice and righteousness in all their relationships, especially the relationship between men and women. The new age which God inaugurates through the events of Christ and the Spirit calls for a new relationship among people, a relationship that is not based on categories of gender, class and ethnicity.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION

Romans 5:12-21 has attracted a variety of complex interpretations. It has been read (1) as a theological treatise of original sin (Augustine); (2) as a textual support for the doctrine of justification by faith alone (Luther and the Reformers); (3) as Paul's discourse of cosmic powers of sin and death that hold people in bondage and God's salvific intervention to liberate human beings from cosmic powers of sin and death (the contemporary "apocalyptic" school). Three major problems have arisen from reading the passage through these lenses: (a) the passage is studied with lack of proper attention to the Roman imperial context in which the text was produced; (b) sin and salvation are over-spiritualized and personalized such that these concepts are rarely applied to concrete contemporary socio-political issues that affect the lives of people today. The result is not only a disjuncture between theology and ethics, but also the disconnection between the Christian kerygma and sociopolitical realities; (c) the rhetorical function of the text for its immediate audience is often times underexplored. The implication is that theologians speculate on the themes of sin and salvation in Rom 5:12-21 without paying adequate attention to the concrete ideologies and behaviors that Paul was challenging nor the practices he was calling his audience to embody as a way of counteracting the systemic sins and evils that Paul sees manifested and concretized within the Roman Empire.

This study offers an alternative reading and interpretation of Paul's Adam-Christ antithetical discourse in Rom 5:12-21 from political and ideological perspectives using two contemporary frameworks—empire and postcolonial criticism with particular attention to Paul's apocalyptic context. Using these frameworks, I read the Adam-Christ antithetical discourse in Rom 5:12-21 as Paul's critique of the realities of sin and death as

embodied by the Roman imperial power. Paul engages in this critique by means of typological reflection on Adam and Christ—the two historical figures whose actions reveal two contrasting ways of being in the world that result either in death or life.

The study made three major arguments: The first is with regard to the background that informed Paul's antithetical discourse. Here, I argue that the Jewish apocalyptic periodization of history and the two-age eschatological schema are the conceptual frameworks for understanding the Adam-Christ antithesis. The second argument of this study is that when Rom 5:12-21 is read in its socio-political context of Roman imperial domination, it becomes evident that the text is Paul's theological critique of the realities of sin and death in our world, especially as concretized in the first-century Roman empire. The third argument of the study has to do with the nature of soteriology that Paul articulates in the text. Here, I argue that Paul's soteriology in Rom 5:12-21 is participatory rather than imputative. For Christ's believers, the text functions as a clarion call for an embodied participation in the new age which God inaugurated through the events of Christ and the Spirit.

In order to develop first argument, I offered a detailed textual study of two Jewish apocalyptic texts: Daniel and 4 Ezra (Daniel 2 and 7; 4 Ezra 4:26-32; 7:45-6; 11:1-12:34) that deal with the themes of periodization of history and the doctrine of the two ages, exploring their meaning and rhetorical functions for the immediate audiences. Chapter two examined the theme of periodization of history and the motif of the two-ages in Daniel 2 and 7. The chapter explored how the author schematized the history of his era using the apocalyptic device of periodization and its implied two-age. I showed that in their original historical context, Daniel 2 and 7 function as textual resistance to the Seleucid imperial oppressive system but particularly to its imperial ideology of time and temporality. This chapter also addressed important theological issues that emerged from these passages such

as the relationship between the doctrine of the two ages in Daniel 2 and 7. It also looked at the soteriology of the Book of Daniel and showed that the author presents a view of salvation that affirms the synergism of both the divine and human actions in God's salvific scheme. In the Book of Daniel, we learnt that human agency in the salvific drama is not diametrically opposed to divine agency. Finally, this chapter examined the influence of Daniel 2 and 7 in the NT theology arguing that Daniel's periodized schema of history and its implied two-ages motif provides a framework that illuminates the periodization of history as well as the doctrine of the two ages found in Paul's letters particularly in Rom 5:12-21.

Chapter three continued the investigation of the meaning and function of periodization of history and the two-age motif in 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34; 4:26-32; 7:45-6, a first century Jewish text that postdates both Daniel and Paul. 4 Ezra provides us another instance of the ongoing political and theological use of apocalyptic devices of periodization of history and the two-age schema by a Second Temple Jewish writer after Daniel. In 4 Ezra, I explored how the author applied the apocalyptic devices of periodization and motif of the two ages in the context of the Roman Empire. At a time when the Jewish community was experiencing a sense of disorientation and meaninglessness caused by the loss of the Second Temple and the city of Jerusalem through the violent domination of the Roman Empire, the author deploys these apocalyptic categories to articulate a deterministic view of history, a theological position that affirms the absolute sovereignty of God over the universal human history, including those of the Roman Empire.

In 4 Ezra 11:1-12:34 the author deploys the technique of periodization similar to Daniel 7 (a technique that uses animal symbolism to number and represent foreign powers) to periodize the entire Roman history and cryptically describe it as a monstrous eagle

whose days are already numbered. By means of this this symbolic vision, the author assures his audience of the imminent end of Roman imperial domination through the mighty power God as well as the arrival of a new age of justice and righteousness when God's faithful people will flourish. I argue that these texts (Daniel and 4 Ezra) participate in a larger ancient Near Eastern anti-imperial discourse that is championed by those who have had the horrible and devastating experience of imperial domination. Perceiving their socio-political context as the climax of evil, both authors thirsted and yearned for an imminent divine salvific intervention, when God would address the injustices and various manifestations of evils faced by their people.

Having established that Jewish apocalyptists usually deploy the devices of periodization of history and the doctrine of the two ages for political, ideological and theological purposes, I proceeded in chapter four to investigate Paul's use of these two apocalyptic devices in Rom 5:12-21. In my reading of Rom 5:12-21, I showed that Paul engages in a threefold periodization of history and the two-age eschatological schema that uses Adam and Christ to represent the two ages. I argue that in the *pericope*, the two apocalyptic devices functioned just the same way as they did in the Book of Daniel and 4 Ezra (Chapters Two and Three respectively). Like the author of Daniel, Paul deployed the apocalyptic periodization of history and the two-age schema to make a critique of Rome's imperial ideology of a realized eschatology (*Pax Romana*) albeit in coded form. Like most colonized persons, Paul carries out his critique in the most coded form: first by undermining the relevance of Rome in his historical review, and second, by stressing the reality of sin and death in a historical period when the Roman Empire propagated the rhetoric of peace and justice. Besides the critique of the empire, Paul also uses the apocalyptic periodization and the two-age schema to underscore a deterministic view of

history in which all historical events, past, present, and future are perceived to be under God's control.

In his discourse of sin and death in Rom 5:12-21, Paul personifies sin and death. How should we understand Paul's personification of sin and death in the text? I argued that given the Roman imperial context of Paul and his audience, Paul's personification of sin and death as forces of domination, enslavement, and death-dealing in Rom 5:12-21 can also be understood as the way that colonized subjects such as Paul give coded expression to the complex and multifaceted experience of colonial domination as well as to the culture of death that were prevalent within the Roman Empire of his day.

The third argument of the study has to do with the nature of Paul's soteriology in Romans 5:12-21. How then should we make sense of Paul's discourse of justification in light of the above background? Through an exegetical analysis of Rom 5:12-21, I showed that Paul's discourse of justification/righteousness using the *δικαίω*-words is not about the imputation of Christ's righteousness on Christ's believers as have been construed particularly in the Reformation theology. Rather, Paul is concerned with the character of Jesus the Messiah (his just deed) and the character of the new community who are called to embody the *δικαίωμα* of Jesus. Paul invites his audience to imitate the character of Jesus (his obedience, faithfulness and justice) as a way of countering the sinful lifestyle of Adam as embodied by the Roman Empire. The passage invites Christ's believers to participate in the new age that Christ inaugurates through embodiment of Christ's life. This is what I called participatory soteriology.

What this means is Adam-Christ narrative is primarily driven by ethical concerns not by abstract theological concerns. Having lived and operated within the Roman Empire, a socio-political context that was drastically marred by rampant violence and injustice, Paul proposes the story of Jesus' self-giving love, obedience, justice, and faithfulness as



counternarrative to the prevalent narrative of domination, violence, and injustice, of the empire. The problem that Paul sees in Rom 5:12-21 is sin and death as they are concretely embodied by concrete people beginning with Adam down to the people of his generation especially as they are revealed in the political activities of the Roman Empire. For Paul, what is need to counter the narrative of sin and death in the human world is right living (justice). Paul finds the paradigm of that right living that leads to life in its fulness in the narrative of Jesus. Jesus is the one man who embodied a new way of living that leads to life. Therefore, Paul proposes Jesus as a model of emulation for his audience. Just as people align themselves with Adam and proliferate his sin, so believers align with Jesus Christ and embody his justice and faithfulness.

This participatory reading of justification in Rom 5:12-21 finds textual support in throughout Romans. Paul makes the case at the beginning of the Letter that his apostolic mandate is to bring about the “obedience of faith” among all the Gentiles (Rom 1:5), that is, to form a community of God’s people whose obedience and faithfulness will bear resemblance to that of Jesus the Messiah. The participatory reading is supported with the larger preceding context of Romans 1-4 where Paul argues that all human beings (Jews and Gentiles) have sinned (cf. Rom 3:25), and would be judged according to their deeds (Rom 2:6), not because of Adam’s sin. In the same context, Paul discusses salvation not as something passively earned, but a reality that is worked out through good work; “to all those who by patiently doing good, seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life” (Rom 2:7).<sup>118</sup> In Romans, Paul is primarily concerned with issues of justices and righteousness. Paul is concerned not only with God’s justice and faithfulness, but the

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<sup>118</sup> Similar thought is also found in Phil 2:12 where Paul exhorts the Philippian community to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. In this passage as in Rom 5:12-21, salvation and obedience go hand in glove. But it is an obedience that is always aided by divine grace, “for it is God who works in you, both to will and act on behalf of his good purpose” (Phil 2:13).

replication of the justice of God in the lives of the believers. Paul's mantra is that "the just/righteous will live by faith" (Rom 1:17).

This participatory reading is also supported within the immediate context of Romans 5-8 which is hortatory in form. In this larger section, Paul argues that the theological import of the Christ-event is the establishment of a new social order, a new humanity "in Christ," who are empowered through the divine Spirit to participate in God's righteousness (Cf. Rom 8:4). It is important to note that Paul begins Romans 5 with an exhortation to embody peace, reconciliation and love (Rom 5:1-11). For Paul, these qualities are the immediate result of the life of a justified person. In Rom 5:1-11, Paul grounds his call for peace and reconciliation on the narrative of God's reconciling love. In Rom 5:12-21, Paul presents Jesus the Messiah as the paradigm of a just person whose life his audience must emulate. In Romans 6-8 Paul present various exhortations to his audience not to engage in sinful practices, not to let sin reign in their bodies (Rom 6:5). The imperatives in Romans 6 are based on Paul's apocalyptic vision, which the indicative announces (see Rom 6: 2-11). For Paul, what God has done for believers through Christ (Rom 6:2-8) calls for a faith response that is demonstrated in an appropriate action on the part of his audience, a response that will transform the life of Christian communities (Rom 6:12-14). The ethical instructions in this subunit are illustrative of what these responses should be: believers are to resist sin, and its lordship over their lives and present their bodies as instrument of righteousness. Paul makes a bold claim that because of the Christ-event, believers can now actually become like Christ, sharing in his death and resurrected life. This is because Christ now lives in them, and the Spirit of God dwells in them (Rom 8:9-11). The participatory reading of justification is also supported within the literary context of Romans 9-11 where Paul discusses the revelation of God's righteousness through the Christ-event which enables both Jews and Gentiles to have access to God on

equal basis. Finally, the participatory reading of justification is also supported in the final section of Romans 12-15; 16), a section that underscores the ethical praxis that should define the justified people of God and as well as the inclusive nature of the Christian communities with respect to mission and evangelization.

Given the need of the Church and theologian to actualize scripture today and my passion to read biblical text from the vintage point of women's experience, particularly the postcolonial Nigerian Igbo women, I proceeded in the fifth chapter to read Paul's discourse of the domination of sin and death in light of women's experiences of systemic oppression and domination by men. I argue here that the reign of sin and death that Paul critiques speaks to the experience of women and girls who have to face on a daily basis the realities of systemic sins of domination, violence, and injustice. Since in Rom 5:12-21 Paul also speaks about Christ and the new life-giving realities that Christ inaugurates with his embodied obedience and faithfulness, this chapter will also explore the meaning and implication of these new realities for Christian women both in the ancient city of Rome and within the present-day Igbo society.

## 6.1 Contribution to Research

To the best of my knowledge, this study is the first to offer a political and social reading of Paul's Adam-Christ antithesis in Rom 5:12-21. Using two modern political frameworks (empire and postcolonial criticisms), I offered an alternative reading of the text that paid serious attention to the socio-political context of the letter, as well as the socio-political significance of the text for its primary audience. Secondly, while I am not the first to argue for a Jewish apocalyptic background of the text, this study has made a significant contribution to the scholarly discourse on the background that informs Paul's Adam-Christ antithesis by being the first to offer a detailed discussion of this apocalyptic

background in light of the Book of Daniel and 4 Ezra. Third, this study is the first to read Rom 5:12-21 in light of women's experience of domination and violence. The study provides an example of how to use a biblical text to reconstruct life in the ancient Christian communities for the purpose of a deeper understanding of the biblical text and as well drawing out its relevance for contemporary Christian communities.

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