

## 5. THE GOSPEL OF PAUL AND THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM

**Simon Gathercole**

### **Introduction**

The New Testament authors were united in their understanding of the gospel both in their preaching ministries and in their literary legacy (i.e. the New Testament documents). The first four books of the New Testament were not merely regarded as ‘The Four Gospels’, but as works attesting to the *one* gospel, that according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.<sup>1</sup> These Gospels are, furthermore, not independent of one another; rather, Mark’s Gospel was the basis of Matthew and Luke. Luke perhaps used Matthew’s Gospel,<sup>2</sup>

- 
1. Hengel 1984 makes a number of important points on this matter. He notes the prevalence of references to ‘the gospel’ in the second century, even when the Gospel accounts are meant (see his p. 11 for some of the papyrological evidence, and p. 20 for literary indications). He notes that, to his knowledge, the plural *euangelia* occurs only twice prior to Irenaeus (p. 14).
  2. For the best recent defence of this proposal, and concomitant opposition

and John may well have presumed the circulation of Mark's Gospel.<sup>3</sup>

Nor did the process of the formation of the Gospels take place in isolation from that of the epistles. The linguistic and theological commonalities between the Johannine epistles and the Gospel of John have been widely recognized. There is a very strong probability that Paul was the mentor of Luke, the author of Luke-Acts.<sup>4</sup> Less certain, but still quite plausible, is the case that has perennially been made for Mark's Gospel as a product of the Pauline school.<sup>5</sup> So not only do some of the Gospels build on others, but some of them also emerged from the same circles that also produced the epistles as well – another reason why we should not be surprised to find theological harmony.<sup>6</sup>

The concern in this chapter is with the extent to which Paul's gospel is the same as, or represents a radical departure from, that of the Gospel writers and the other apostles. Relevant here is one of the most striking pieces of evidence for the harmony within the apostolic preaching, a very brief comment by Paul after his own summary of the gospel and list of the witnesses to the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. *Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed* (1 Cor. 15:10–11, my italics).

So Paul affirms that all the people he has just mentioned as witnesses of the risen Jesus – he himself, Peter, the rest of the Twelve, and James the brother of the Lord – are all in exactly the

---

to the Q hypothesis, see Goodacre 2001.

3. See R. J. Bauckham, 'John for Readers of Mark', in Bauckham 1998:147–171.

4. On the issues here see Thornton 1991.

5. Most recently, Joel Marcus has evaluated some of the most important proponents and opponents of this hypothesis in the twentieth century (Marcus 2000).

6. 2 Pet. 3:15–16 also refers to 'all' the letters of Paul.

same evangelistic boat: they have all believed the same gospel and preach that same gospel.<sup>7</sup>

One of the main challenges to this view came in the nineteenth century from the Tübingen school, and still persists into the present. The argument goes – drawing on Galatians 2 in particular – that Paul was in fact extremely isolated in advocating a Law-free gospel and a radical integration of Jew and Gentile.<sup>8</sup> The problem with this line, however, is that Paul, Peter and James were preaching the same gospel not only in the mid-50s when Paul wrote 1 Corinthians 15 but also in the late 40s at the time (probably) of the Antioch incident and the composition of Galatians.<sup>9</sup> In Galatians 2, Paul does not fault Peter's theological understanding of the gospel, but rather whether he is living according to it at Antioch. Previously, in Galatians 2:1–10, there had been a remarkable display of unity among Paul, Peter, James and John, in opposition to 'those of the circumcision'.<sup>10</sup> The 'pillars' of the Jerusalem church had not insisted on Titus, Paul's companion, being circumcised; on the contrary, they seem to have shared full fellowship with him in Galatians 2:1–10. The same leaders of the Jerusalem church also offered Paul and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship for the Gentile mission.<sup>11</sup>

- 
7. On the importance of this often neglected statement, see Hengel and Schwemer 1997.
  8. See the bibliography and description of the views of Baur, Schweitzer and Barrett in Gathercole 2005:309–310.
  9. These dates remain provisional, of course, and nothing of substance depends on them for the main burden of the present argument.
  10. See the argument in Gathercole 2005:309–327.
  11. This is not to deny that very early on there were heretics in the church, whether of a Law-enforcing or proto-gnosticizing kind. In the first category, we obviously have the target of Paul's opposition in Galatians, which he denounces as preaching another gospel. On the other hand, there are those who go even further than Eph. 2 in the overrealization of eschatology: Hymenaeus and Philetus in 2 Tim. 2:17–18 consider that the resurrection has already happened. So it is not the point here to argue that the gospel remained uncontaminated throughout the apostolic period.

This chapter aims to build on these historical points by identifying the specific ways in which Paul's gospel can be seen to have the same content at its centre as the gospel in the Gospels. The chapter, then, will consist of two parts, the first on Paul, and the second offering some comparisons with the Gospels. Within each of these parts, there will be examination of the three core elements of the gospel as God's account of his saving activity (1) in Jesus the Messiah, in which, by Jesus' death and resurrection he (2) atones for sin and (3) brings new creation.

### The Pauline gospel

There are two bodies of texts which are most useful for identifying the content of Paul's gospel. The first is the sermons of Paul in Acts, which – if the point above about Luke as witness of Paul's ministry is correct – should be given much more credence than is usually allowed. However, Acts is covered by Chris Green elsewhere in this book, and my brief is to explore the second: the summary statements and other comments in the epistles themselves.

As has already been mentioned, the focus here will be on the three aspects of the gospel message that are central in Paul (which also emerge in the Gospel narratives). These consist of (1) who Jesus is, with particular reference to his identity as royal Messiah and son of God; (2) his work of atonement and justification accomplished in the cross and resurrection, and (3) Jesus' work of new creation and of rescue from the power of sin. These three elements are the core of the *euangelion* according to Paul.

#### *The gospel of who Jesus is: Romans 1:3–4*

The gospel according to Paul is simultaneously an affirmation of *who* Jesus is as well as of *what* he has done. This is reflected in the fact that much New Testament scholarship nowadays refuses to

---

But it is to deny that a pluralistic heterodoxy *preceded* an apostolic orthodoxy, an orthodoxy that emerged only later with the triumph of conformity over heresy.

draw a sharp distinction between Christology and soteriology. Here, however, we shall do so – at least for heuristic purposes – and deal first with Jesus' identity by focusing on Romans 1:3–4:

Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy Scriptures, concerning his Son, who was descended from David according to the flesh, and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord (Rom. 1:1–4).

In this statement from Paul, then, Jesus is Son of God twice over. He is 'from the seed of David' by being a member of Joseph's family, so possessing the Davidic lineage that is a minimal requirement for a messianic claim. 'Son of God' can simply be understood in this sense – that just as God could call David his son in Psalm 2, so David's descendant in 2 Samuel 7 was entitled to the same designation. Paul's Christology, however, is not merely confined to this Davidic understanding of Jesus' divine sonship. Paul understands Jesus as pre-existent Son of God, as well as powerfully *post*-existent. This is the key point of verse 4, that in the resurrection Jesus was declared Son of God in power and appointed to his position at the right hand of God, as Lord (Col. 3:1; cf. Rom. 8:3). Central to both Davidic descent according to the flesh and his appointment *in power* is that they each underscore Jesus' *royal* status, his lordship and reign over the whole world. Colossians 1:15–20 is a majestic statement of this, portraying the full extent of Jesus' dominion over heaven and earth and everything in them. So the *identity* of Jesus is the first central aspect of Paul's gospel.

### ***Christ's death and resurrection for sins and justification***

When it comes to the Gospels' account of what Jesus has *done*, we are on fairly safe ground in going to 1 Corinthians 15. This is because the first few verses make it explicit that Paul is here recounting the gospel that he preached in Corinth:

Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, <sup>2</sup> and by which you are being

saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you – unless you believed in vain.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received (1 Cor. 15:1–3a).

So Paul here is explicitly recounting the gospel, as well as what he regards as being ‘of first importance’.<sup>12</sup> As a result, it is difficult to see why the most recent book on Paul’s gospel, by Douglas Campbell, pays so little attention to 1 Corinthians 15.<sup>13</sup> The chapter receives only a few mentions in passing and in footnotes, and Campbell’s book is much more concerned with discovering which of Romans 1–4, or 5–8 or 9–11 is the true exposition of the gospel. On the other hand, 1 Corinthians 15 can sometimes be neglected by British evangelicals as well, and simply be used in ‘evidence for the resurrection’ talks.

On another level, the account in 1 Corinthians 15 calls into question the view that the single centre of the gospel is the lordship of Jesus.<sup>14</sup> This is of course essential to the gospel, but it is not sufficient as an account. As 1 Corinthians 15 shows, the explication of the events by which this has taken place (the death and resurrection of Jesus) are integral, indeed central, to the proclamation of the gospel.<sup>15</sup>

12. Thiselton notes that *en prōtois* is strictly speaking to be understood logically rather than temporally here, while allowing for some ambiguity (Thiselton 2000:1186).

13. Campbell 2005.

14. See e.g. Wright 1997:114. Or as he eloquently puts it elsewhere, ‘The Gospel is the announcement that Jesus is Lord – Lord of the world, Lord of the cosmos, Lord of the earth, of the ozone layer, of whales and waterfalls, of trees and tortoises’ (1997:154–155).

15. Indeed, Wright – while maintaining an insistence on defining the gospel as the proclamation of the lordship of Jesus – would probably affirm this; his polemic against an identification of the gospel *tout simple* with a doctrine of justification that is detached from the proclamation of the lordship of Christ is probably what gives rise to his somewhat one-sided formulation in the places noted above.

Another issue which 1 Corinthians 15 addresses, albeit indirectly, is whether the gospel can be written down and defined, or whether it exists in proclamation only or requires reinterpretation in every generation. To answer this, it is clear that the gospel has both permanent relevance and changeless content. So Paul pronounces the divine curse on anyone who tells the Galatians anything different from what they originally heard. In chapter 15 here, he similarly reminds the Corinthians of the gospel he preached to them, and rehearses its content in written form. The gospel is not the events themselves, but the report of the events. It has cognitive content, and as such cannot only be told (1 Thess. 2:2) and preached (e.g. 1 Cor. 9:16), but can also be defended and safeguarded (Phil. 1:7; 2 Tim. 1:13–14).

As to what it says the gospel is, we turn to verses 3–8:

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me (1 Cor. 15:3–8).

The language used here in connection with the death of Christ taps into the common formula of Christ 'dying for', as in:

Christ died for the ungodly (Rom. 5:6).

Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8).

who . . . gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

who gave himself as a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:6).

Closest, however, is the parallel in Galatians 1:4, 'who gave himself for our sins', where the reference is not only to dying *for us*, but specifically *for our sins*. As has been argued elsewhere, the interchangeability of the statements of Christ's death 'for us' and

the language of his death 'for our sins' points strongly in a substitutionary direction.<sup>16</sup> This is also present in 1 Peter: 'For Christ also suffered once *for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous*' (1 Pet. 3:18, my italics; cf. 2:24). This relation taps into the Old Testament tradition of death as the penalty for sin that begins in Genesis 2 – 3 and permeates the whole canon thereafter.

In Genesis, God spells out to Adam and Eve that if they disobey his command, they will surely die (Gen. 2:17). When they do disobey, they lose their capacity to live forever by being prohibited access to the tree of life. So disobedience leads to the divine punishment of death. Similarly, in the Law, God presents Israel with a choice of life or death (Deut. 30:17–20). Life comes from obedience to the commandments (Lev. 18:5 etc.), and death and destruction are the divine penalties for forsaking Torah (e.g. Deut. 28:20–24).

The difference between Paul and the majority of the Old Testament, however, is that in Christ's death, it is one who has never sinned who suffers the consequences of it. This does not really mean 'as a consequence of sins' in the sense that Jesus' death is the result of the sin-ridden judicial process as narrated in the trial narratives in the Gospels, though this is not far from Paul's mind.<sup>17</sup> Rather, the consequence of transgression which we saw spelt out in Genesis and Deuteronomy above (i.e. death) is borne by Jesus. In fact, the Pauline statements above refer specifically to Christ's bearing the punishment, and not strictly speaking to his bearing sin(s), though that is undoubtedly true.<sup>18</sup> Paul does speak, however, of Jesus hyperbolically *becoming* the sin (2 Cor. 5:21) just as he talks of him becoming the punishment, or curse, as well (Gal. 3:13). Indeed, God's condemnation of sin in the flesh presumes Jesus' bearing of sin in his flesh (Rom. 8:3).

In Paul's argument in Romans 1 – 3, the implication of this is spelt out in some detail as *justification*. Romans 3:21–26 provides both a longer version of the 'death for sin' formula mentioned above, and its relation to justification. In brief, while God had not

16. Gathercole 2003:161–162.

17. Note the ambiguity of the *paredotbē* in Rom. 4:25.

18. As in, say, 1 Pet. 2:24: 'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree . . .'



punished sin in full prior to the coming of Christ, in the cross, that full measure of retribution is exacted on the cross. And so this action in Christ simultaneously demonstrates God's justice (in that he does not let sin go unpunished), as well as his righteous salvation. He is both just, and the justifier.<sup>19</sup> It is this act of God as the one who pronounces people righteous that occupies Paul's argument for the rest of chapter 3 and the whole of chapter 4. That Romans 3:21–26 is also an exposition of the gospel is clear from the connection to Romans 1:16–17. The gospel is the place where 'the righteousness of God is revealed', according to 1:16–17, and Rom. 3:21–26 begins with the almost identical language of the righteousness of God being made manifest in the events described there.

In 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 3, we have in this deliberate articulation by Paul of his gospel an explicit statement of Christ's atoning work. As a result, I find it hard to fathom how Campbell can argue that 'the atoning work of the cross' is present only in a 'marginal role' here.<sup>20</sup> The importance of the atonement–justification sequence in Paul's thought can be seen in his exploration of the implications of justification in Romans 5:1–11: peace with God, access to him, and the boast in God through Christ.

Finally, as far as justification is concerned, it is important to note that for Paul the resurrection also is related to justification: 'who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification' (Rom. 4:25). Paul draws no hard distinction between justification and new life: just as the analogy is drawn between the justification of the ungodly and the creation of life from non-life in Romans 4, so in Romans 5:18 he can say that the coming of Christ brings to all *dikaiōsin zōēs*; literally, 'justification of life'. But we need to expand the discussion of resurrection more widely at this point.

### ***New creation, and rescue from the dominion of sin***

The resurrection is no mere afterthought in Paul's gospel, and nowhere is this clearer than in 1 Corinthians 15. The gospel is an account of both Jesus' death and resurrection indivisibly, as is also

19. For a detailed treatment of these verses see Gathercole 2004a:177–181.

20. Campbell 2005:198 and n. 43.

implied in Paul's presupposition that as Christians 'we believe that Jesus died and rose again' (1 Thess. 4:14). One factor implicit here is that the portrayal of the death and resurrection of Christ clarifies the relation of the gospel to history, time and space. The gospel is in no way detached from history – God's saving action does not take place in some Gnostic other-worldly sphere, but in the real world; specifically, in the flesh of Christ: as noted already, Romans 8:3 talks about sin being punished on the cross in Christ's flesh. And Christ really was raised bodily, not merely as an apparition.<sup>21</sup> However, the key point of the resurrection for Paul is that Christ's new life means our new life, both at the eschaton when we receive new bodies, but also in the present.

One point on which Paul still agreed with his Pharisaic contemporaries is in the view that all people – both righteous and wicked alike – would be raised from the dead by God at the judgment. Based on Daniel 12, the idea was common in early Judaism and in the New Testament that there would be a 'general resurrection' on the last day. To quote a Pauline example:

If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you (Rom. 8:11).

Here Paul is about to launch into the exposition in Romans 8:18–27 of 'the glory that is to be revealed in us' (8:18). This will come when the whole of creation is set free from decay, and – as in 1 Corinthians 15 – our bodies are transformed into a glorious state (Rom. 8:21, 23).

Additionally, however, Paul articulates a position that is less common in earliest Christianity; namely, that resurrection life is also a present reality:

God . . . made us alive together with Christ . . . and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:4–7).

---

21. See the discussions of this issue throughout Wright 2003.

So here, in this radical statement of the present condition that Christians inhabit, we are already resurrected with Christ, and no longer live in the mundane reality of the old age, but in the heavenly sphere.

However, it is not only in the resurrection that this new life and new realm are created. Christ also destroys *in the cross* the powers of sin and death:

and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised (2 Cor. 5:15).

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father (Gal. 1:3–4).

But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation (Gal. 6:14–15).

Christ died 'for all' not only to atone for individuals' transgressions, but also to pronounce destruction on the old world and create a new one. As those who have been delivered from the previous age that was controlled by Satan, Christians now live for Christ. The most substantial exposition of this comes in Romans 6, which sketches the participationist dimensions of Christ's death. These have been neatly summed up in syllogism form by Daniel Bailey:

Christ died to sin (Rom. 6:10)

We died with Christ (6:3–7)

Therefore: we died to sin (6:2).<sup>22</sup>

---

22. Slightly modified from the account in Moo 1997:354.

To follow the same reverse order of the above: in verse 10, Christ's dying a death to sin refers to the climactic end to the power of sin that the cross brought about; we are then baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3); therefore, we participate in that decisive end to the power of sin, and so have no possibility of being under its control any longer.

### *Summary*

So to summarize the Pauline data examined here, we can simply repeat the definition offered above: that the gospel is God's account of his saving activity in Jesus the Messiah, in which, by Jesus' death and resurrection, he atones for sin and brings new creation.

### **Paul and the Synoptics**

So in the gospel of Paul we encounter Jesus the Messiah bringing atoning sacrifice and justification, and redemption from the previous evil age into the lordship of Christ. What does this have to do with the preaching of Jesus and the message set out in the fourfold Gospel? A number have, of course, said that the answer is 'very little', and proclaimed Paul a second founder of Christianity.<sup>23</sup> But the differences are only superficial.

### *Messiahship*

First, when it comes to the gospel of the identity of Jesus, there is clearly no disjunction between the epistles and the Gospels. The Fourth Gospel, for example, makes it explicit that the purpose of the document is to convince the reader that the Messiah is Jesus (John 20:30–31). Mark's Gospel has as its heading 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ' (Mark 1:1). The Gospel of Matthew begins by introducing 'the book of the genealogy of Jesus *Christ*, the *son of David*, the son of Abraham' (Matt. 1:1, my italics). The climactic resurrection appearance in Luke's Gospel has the disappointed disciples lamenting that 'we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel'

---

23. E.g. Maccoby 1986.

(Luke 24:21). To this Jesus replies, 'Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?' (Luke 24:26; cf. 24:46–47). As in Romans 1, Jesus' Messiahship in the Gospels goes hand in hand with being Son of God, as expressed in particular in the baptism and the transfiguration.<sup>24</sup>

Perhaps even more important for our purposes here, however, is the Gospels' combination of Messiahship with Jesus' identity as the Son of Man. (Interestingly, Paul never uses the title.) In this first section, we can begin by pointing out one aspect which 'Messiah', 'Son of God' and 'Son of Man' (along with 'Lord', the other dominant title) have in common: they all highlight the dominion which Jesus possesses as the divinely installed king. Jesus' Messiahship is highlighted in the references to him as son of David, no mere genealogical titbit, but an accentuation of his role as ruler from the Davidic dynasty. 'Son of God' taps into a similar Davidic connection.<sup>25</sup> Finally, the 'Son of Man' title (as it is, at the very least in the Gospel narratives) evokes the figure in Daniel to whom was given

dominion  
and glory and a kingdom,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him;  
his dominion is an everlasting dominion,  
which shall not pass away,  
and his kingdom one  
that shall not be destroyed (Dan. 7:14–15).<sup>26</sup>

24. The 'Johannine thunderbolt' (Matt. 11:27/Luke 10:21–22) and the ignorance logion (Mark 13:32; Matt. 24:36) offer further strikingly exalted presentations of the divine sonship of Jesus. The former accentuates the exclusive mutual relationship between Father and Son, even extending to the Son's power in election; the latter places the Son in a heavenly hierarchy between the angels and the Father.
25. See e.g. Marcus 1992:71–72, for discussion of the combination of traditional royal imagery in the sonship language, but with recognition of the divine power implicit in the presentation at the same time.
26. The analysis below has been explained in more detail in Gathercole 2004b.

It is the extraordinary authority that this figure possesses that is revealed by Jesus in the opening of his ministry. To take Mark 2 as an example, Jesus declares the scope of his dominion on two fronts:

the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins . . . (Mark 2:10).

So the Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath (Mark 2:28).

Both of these far exceed any conventional expectations of a ruler: authority over sin and over divinely sanctified spheres of reality could come only under the aegis of God himself. So the kingly dominion exercised by Jesus the Son of Man here is clearly a point that is emphasized. Jesus' Messiahship is equally central to both Paul and the Gospels.

#### ***Jesus' death for the many***

The next phase in the ministry of the Son of Man comes in striking contrast to this initial revelation, however. In three of the next references to Jesus' destiny as Son of Man, the authority that has been declared so clearly in the opening events of his ministry is rejected. In a series of passion predictions, Jesus announces that the Son of Man is going to be handed over to the Gentiles and put to death (Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:45). The first of these is striking in that it is obviously a comment on the nature of Jesus' Messiahship. The last is particularly relevant to our theme because of its overlap with the theme of atonement, which is so prominent in Paul's exposition of the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15. As Mark 10:45 puts it, 'For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.' This verse is very important in our context for two reasons. To start with, it explains the apparent contradiction between – on the one hand – the enormous scope of Jesus' authority as Son of Man, which we saw was a feature of the opening of his ministry in Mark's Gospel, and – on the other – the fact that this authority has been not only resisted but actually overcome. Why do the people rage against the Lord's anointed one? Well, because apparently they can defeat him. In fact, however, while the Son of Man *revealed* that authority at the

outset, it was never his intention to impose that authority finally over that generation; rather, his first coming was to die as the Servant of the Lord.

Why this intention? Because 'the many' need not only the defeat of their enemies but their own lives bought back as well. I have argued elsewhere that one aspect of the background to this 'ransom' language lies in the statements in Exodus 21 and 30, which are concerned with payments for the redemption of life.<sup>27</sup> In addition, there is also more than a passing nod to Isaiah 53, where the Lord lays the iniquity of us all upon the Servant (Isa. 53.6). So Jesus in Mark 10:45 is paying in his death the ransom price for his people who need sins borne by another to avoid death. A similar idea comes in Caiaphas's ironic statement in John's Gospel, where the high priest prophesies that Jesus will die on behalf of and instead of the whole people of God (John 11:20–52).

The statement in Mark 10:45 is not only one among many of Mark's and Jesus' statements about his death, but the one that actually explains the purpose of it. The death of Christ is clearly not incidental to his coming, especially when one considers that in Mark, Jesus' journey to his death occupies almost half the work. The passion in the other Gospels is no less climactic, even if it does not occupy quite the same word count. And this passion is explained, theologically, in this particular statement in Mark 10:45, as the payment of a ransom price (cf. Mark 14:24). As in 1 Corinthians 15, we have the motif of penal substitution, in that Jesus functions both as substitute ('for many') and as the one who pays the price required for sin. In this respect, the ransom motif accentuates the more individual dimension to Markan soteriology; there is perhaps also an implication that those bought by Jesus are those who are predestined to enter the

---

27. See Gathercole 2003:162–164. In Exod. 21, if an Israelite irresponsibly causes death, then he himself should be put to death. However, it is possible, if the family of the deceased consent, that 'he shall *give for the redemption of his life whatever is imposed on him*' (Exod. 21:30; my italics). Similarly, at Moses' census, in order to avoid plague, 'each shall *give a ransom for his life to the LORD*' (Exod. 30:12; my italics).

kingdom.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the Son of Man also represents the people of God as a whole. The sequence of Daniel 7 indicates that his relation to the saints of the Most High is analogous in the chapter to the relation between the other kings and their kingdoms. This will be explored further below.

*The conquest of the demonic realm and the reign of God*

An important parallel to Paul's idea of the destruction of the old world and its new creation comes in the beginning of Jesus' ministry. In Mark 1, Jesus proclaims that the time is fulfilled and the kingdom near, and commands repentance and belief in the gospel. Because Jesus the King has come, the kingdom of God is inaugurated. This means the demolition of the demonic control of the world, and the establishment of God's reign in its place. As a result of the inauguration of God's kingdom, unclean spirits are cast out (Mark 1:21–28), the sick are healed (1:29–34), those with leprosy and the paralysed are cured (1:40–45; 2:1–12). In the course of this, the gospel is preached (1:14–15, 39) and sins are forgiven (2:5, 10). People are commanded to abandon old allegiances, and to follow Jesus. This is how one enters the kingdom.

Scholars have also observed the correspondence between the Son of Man motif and the theme of the kingdom of God. This is understandable given the backdrop in Daniel 7, which joins the two so closely together. The first coming of the Son of Man was a revelation of his authority, but ultimately aimed at Jesus' death; it did nevertheless constitute both the announcement of the defeat of the demonic hold over God's creation and the paradoxical defeat of sin through the death of Jesus. However, the second coming of Jesus will be the occasion of his final vanquishing of sin, when the Son of Man comes in glory, in the power of his angels.

The coming of the kingdom in the gospel thus has the same twofold character as the coming of the Son of Man. The kingdom comes in the person of Jesus in Mark 1. The kingdom is present because the King-Messiah is present. But the rule of Jesus, while

---

28. As suggested already by Schweitzer 1945:352–353; see alternatively Schweitzer 2000:322–323.



exercised for the benefit of many, is not established fully until his second coming. This corresponds to the tension in Paul between God's people experiencing in the present the risen life of Christ, but knowing full liberation and glory only at the end of the age. In the Gospels, too, followers of Jesus are secure in their status of belonging to Christ and already belong to the kingdom, but still await its consummation.

### Conclusion

I have suggested here that the similarity between the gospel according to Paul and the gospel according to the evangelists lies not in the equivalence of certain terms, such as 'righteousness of God' in Paul = 'kingdom of God' in the Synoptics. Similarly, I have not taken the approach of harmonizing Paul and the Gospels by, for example, arguing that Paul's use of the language of 'kingdom of God' is much more significant in his thought than is implied by the small number of references. Rather, the unity of their presentations of the gospel can be seen in the broad outlines of these three key themes: (1) the identity of Jesus as Messiah, (2) his work of atoning sacrifice and justification, and (3) his inauguration of a new dominion. These lie at the heart of the apostolic gospel.

© Simon Gathercole, 2006.