

J. CHRISTOPHER EDWARDS

The Gospel According to the Epistle of Barnabas

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe
503*

Mohr Siebeck

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The Gospel According to the Epistle of Barnabas

Jesus Traditions in an Early Christian Polemic

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

After publishing a revised version of my doctoral thesis on the early reception history of the ransom saying in Mark 10:45/Matt 20:28, friends and colleagues would occasionally inquire about my next project. My consistent answer was that I had absolutely no clue – not the expected response to the standard academic icebreaker. All I knew was that I did not want to write anything about the Jesus of the synoptic gospels. I was raised in a protestant environment, which means that somewhere deep inside me there is a pressure to write about Paul, but the time required to wade into the minefield of Pauline studies has always proved to be an effective deterrent. My best option for a project seemed to be a focused study on something non-canonical. After exploring various ideas for a few semesters, I decided to concentrate my research on the reception of Jesus in the Epistle of Barnabas. Why? Barnabas has a lot of Jesus traditions, which have never been the focus of any work on the epistle, as far as I can tell. Also, the extant manuscripts of Barnabas are only in Greek and Latin. Even with these highly beneficial settings, this project, like all academic projects, was a complicated mixture of thrill and burden. Now that the project is complete, and I am satisfied with my contribution to Barnabas research, I hope to overcome my earlier inhibitions and turn my attention towards producing a volume on Paul.

There are many people who have supported me in various ways over the past few years. First and foremost is my spouse, Lucia, whose love and companionship are a great source of stability. I am very pleased that our children, Vincent and Michael, are turning into good-natured people and that they have acquired a love for learning and baseball. My parents, Darrell and Michelle Edwards, have been a constant support, as have my in-laws, Anthony and Lucia Luciano. I am fortunate to have Darrell Hayes as my next-door neighbor. Never move, Darrell! I am thankful for the continued friendship of Grant MacAskill and Charles Huff, and for rekindled friendships with Timothy Hein and Ryan McAuley. I'd like to thank Ben Wood for being an ideal officemate and a consistent voice of reason, both professionally and personally. I'm also thankful for the supportive friendships of Athena Devlin, Richard Grasso, Emily Horowitz, Chris Keith, Jennifer Lancaster, George Laskaris, Michael Luciano, Nickie Phillips, Eric Platt, Mark Rawsley, Sara Rzeszutek, Scott Weiss, and

Jennifer Wingate. I'd like to thank the members of the St. Francis College Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies who model an integration of scholarship, teaching, and good humor, especially Alexandria Egler, Rachel Falkenstern, James Freeman, Jenny Labendz, Rex Mixon, and Clayton Shoppa. I'm very thankful for all my other colleagues at SFC who are too numerous to mention – I started to write your names down, but I was six lines in and only through last names beginning with K! Let me just say that I really like everyone I work with at the college.

Further thanks are due to Erica Lakata and Timothy Hein for making trips to the Burke Library and the University of Edinburgh Library to scan articles I needed. I am grateful to Jon Laansma, David Lincicum, and R. J. Matava for offering insightful comments on the Greek and Latin texts. Scott Weiss was an invaluable resource for correcting my German translations. The members of the Columbia New Testament Seminar provided vital criticisms of my ideas at an early stage in the project. More importantly, the Seminar has provided me with new friendships among other Early Christian specialists in the New York area. In this regard I am especially grateful to Emma Wasserman and Larry Welborn, who have served as excellent professional examples. Much praise is due to Juliet Barron, Gloria Gianoulis, and Jenny Labendz, who closely proof-read this manuscript before final submission. James Carleton Paget was kind enough to glance at the manuscript and provide critical comments that substantially improved the text. Jens Schröter also offered helpful comments on my engagement with German scholarship. I would like to thank the editors of WUNT II, especially Jörg Frey and Tobias Nicklas, for accepting the volume for publication. I am very grateful to see my work alongside other important works on Barnabas in this same series, those by James Carleton Paget, Reidar Hvalvik, and James Rhodes.

Finally, I would like to dedicate this book to the memory of Rev. Charles Howell. Father Howell was the Rector of Christ Church New Brighton on the north shore of Staten Island from 2006 to 2015. He combined deep spirituality, great learning, wisdom, humility, and charity in a way that I can only describe as the image of Christ. He remains an example to all who knew him.

New York, 20 August 2019

J. Christopher Edwards

Table of Contents

Preface.....	V
Abbreviations.....	IX
Editions and Translations.....	XI
Introduction.....	1
Chapter 1: The Law and the Covenant of Jesus (Barn. 1–4).....	5
1.1 <i>In the Name of the Lord Who Has Loved Us (Barn. 1.1)</i>	5
1.2 <i>The New Law of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Barn. 2.6)</i>	6
1.3 <i>The Covenant of the Beloved Jesus (Barn. 3.6; 4.3, 8)</i>	9
1.4 <i>The Lord Will Judge the World (Barn. 4.12–14)</i>	12
1.5 <i>Conclusion</i>	13
Chapter 2: The Scripture Concerning Him Relates Partly to Israel and Partly to Us (Barn. 5–8).....	15
2.1 <i>Reasons the Lord Endured Suffering in the Flesh (Barn. 5.1–12a)</i>	16
2.2 <i>God Says that the Wounds of His Flesh Came from Them (Barn. 5.12b–6.7)</i>	23
2.3 <i>The Prophet Speaks a Parable Concerning the Lord (Barn. 6.8–19)</i>	29
2.4 <i>Notice How the Type of Jesus Is Revealed (Barn. 7.1–8.7)</i>	34
2.4.1 <i>How Is He Like That One? (Barn. 7.3–11)</i>	36
2.4.2 <i>The Calf Is Jesus (Barn. 8.1–7)</i>	42
2.5 <i>Conclusion</i>	45

Excursus One: Barn. and the Origins of the Accusation That the Jews Killed Jesus.....	48
Chapter 3: The Father Was Revealing Everything about His Son Jesus (Barn. 9–12).....	52
3.1 <i>He Reveals Jesus in the Two Letters and the Cross in the One</i> <i>(Barn. 9.7–8)</i>	53
3.2 <i>We Arise Having Hope in Jesus (Barn. 11.1–11)</i>	55
3.3 <i>They Cannot Be Saved Unless They Place Their Hope in Him</i> <i>(Barn. 12.1–7)</i>	59
3.4 <i>Not a Son of Man but the Son of God (Barn. 12.8–11)</i>	63
3.5 <i>Conclusion</i>	65
Chapter 4: The Coming of the Lord Jesus (Barn. 13–21).....	67
4.1 <i>We Receive the Covenant through the Lord Jesus (Barn. 14.4–9)</i>	67
4.2 <i>The Eighth Day on Which Jesus Arose (Barn. 15.5, 9)</i>	70
4.3 <i>God's Temple Will Be Built Gloriously in the Name of the</i> <i>Lord (Barn. 16.6–8)</i>	73
4.4 <i>The Lord, and His Reward, Is Near (Barn. 21)</i>	76
4.5 <i>Conclusion</i>	77
Conclusion: Jesus Traditions in an Early Christian Polemic.....	79
Excursus Two: Paul and the Gospel of Matthew as Sources for Jesus Traditions in Barn.....	88
Bibliography.....	101
Index of Ancient Sources.....	107
Index of Modern Authors.....	117
Index of Subjects.....	119

Abbreviations

<i>ANF</i>	<i>Ante-Nicene Fathers</i>
<i>ANRW</i>	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung.</i> Part 2, <i>Principat.</i> Edited by Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1972–
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AKG	Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte
<i>ATHR</i>	<i>Anglican Theological Review</i>
BDAG	Danker, Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.</i> 3 rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
BJS	Brown Judaic Studies
<i>CurBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CRINT	Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum
CURSOR	Cursor Mundi
<i>EC</i>	<i>Early Christianity</i>
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
GCP	Graecitas Christianorum primaeva
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
<i>HTR</i>	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HUCA</i>	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
<i>JECS</i>	<i>Journal of Early Christian Studies</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
KAV	Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern

KWJS	Key Words in Jewish Studies
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
LSTS	The Library of Second Temple Studies
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NovTSup	Novum Testamentum, Supplements
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
PRCY	Philosophy and Religion: A Comparative Yearbook
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue biblique</i>
<i>RBén</i>	<i>Revue bénédictine</i>
<i>RSR</i>	<i>Recherches de science religieuse</i>
SC	Sources chrétiennes
SCJ	Studies in Christianity and Judaism
SJLA	Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity
SJS	Studia Judaeoslavica
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SPB	Studia Post Biblica
<i>SR</i>	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
<i>StEv</i>	<i>Studia Evangelica</i>
StPatr	Studia Patristica
StPB	Studia Post-biblica
<i>StStR</i>	<i>Studi storico-religiosi</i>
SUC	Schriften des Urchristentums
<i>SVTQ</i>	<i>St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly</i>
TBN	Themes in Biblical Narrative
<i>TDNT</i>	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976
TENTS	Texts and Editions for New Testament Study
TU	Texte und Untersuchungen
<i>VC</i>	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>
VCSup	Vigiliae Christianae, Supplements
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZAC</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity</i>
<i>ZKT</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für katholische Theologie</i>

Editions and Translations

The Greek text comes from K. Wengst, *Didache (Apostellehre). Barnabasbrief. Zweiter Klemensbrief. Schrift an Diognet*, SUC 2 (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1984). The Latin text comes from J. M. Herr, *Die Versio Latina des Barnabasbriefes und ihr Verhältnis zur altlateinischen Bibel* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herdersche Verlagshandlung, 1908).

I follow Wengst's text-critical abbreviations: S = Codex Sinaiticus; H = Codex Hierosolymitanus; V = Codex Vaticanus graecus 859; L = Codex Corbeienensis (the Latin translation); P = Papyrus PSI 757. For a fuller discussion of these manuscripts, see P. Prigent and R. A. Kraft, *Épître de Barnabé*, SC 172 (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1971), 49–70.

Almost all the English translations follow M. W. Holmes, ed. and trans., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007). On a few occasions, I prefer my own translation, or that of B. D. Ehrman, ed. and trans., *The Apostolic Fathers: Epistle of Barnabas, Papias and Quadratus, Epistle to Diognetus, The Shepherd of Hermas*, LCL 25 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).

Biblical texts are quoted from the NRSV.

Introduction

It is not overly artificial or imposing to read Jesus as having significant importance in Barn. The name “Jesus” occurs twenty-one times in the epistle. The author also frequently refers to Jesus with various titles, such as “beloved,” “Son of God,” “Christ,” and “Lord” – a title he shares with God.¹ The Jesus traditions in Barn. are most concentrated in chapters five through nine and eleven through twelve. In these chapters and elsewhere, the main topic is Jesus’ prefiguration in the scriptures. The author reads various texts from the Septuagint as speaking directly about Jesus’ preexistence, incarnation, ministry, suffering, resurrection, and future coming. Given the author’s extensive use of Jesus traditions, the paucity of research on Jesus in Barn. is surprising but not inexplicable. Earlier research on Barn. focused primarily on standard introductory questions, such as date, provenance, and authorship,² and there was less

¹ The author of Barn. uses the title, Lord (κύριος), with reference to both God and Jesus. For a discussion of this phenomenon, see J. C. Edwards, “Identifying the Lord in the Epistle of Barnabas,” *StPatr* 93 (2017): 51–60. The only previous study to very briefly (in a couple footnotes) attempt to identify the referents for the uses of κύριος in Barn. is W. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos: A History of the Belief in Christ from the Beginnings of Christianity to Irenaeus*, trans. John E. Steely (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2013), 290–91. Cf. F. R. Prostmeier, *Der Barnabasbrief*, KAV 8 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 337.

² Barn. must have been written sometime between 70 CE and the end of the second century since Barn. 16.3–5 references the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, and Clement of Alexandria is the earliest witness to Barn. Attempts to offer a more precise date are based on Barn. 4.4–5 and 16.3–4. Barn. 4.4–5 cites Daniel’s prophecy concerning the humiliation of three kings, which could be a reference to the humiliation of three Roman emperors, although there is no agreement on which three. Barn. 16.3–4 recognizes an effort to rebuild the Jerusalem temple, but there are difficulties matching this text with a particular building project. While the ambiguous nature of the evidence for a precise date will likely never produce a scholarly consensus, there are clusters of support around the reigns of Vespasian, Nerva, and especially Hadrian, whose construction of the temple to Jupiter in his *Aelia Capitolina* is thought to match the temple construction mentioned in 16.3–4.

The majority of scholarship favors an Egyptian provenance – or more specifically, Alexandria – as the most plausible option among several others. The rationale for this preference is grounded in the early reception of Barn. within Egyptian Christianity. Clement of Alexandria appeals to the epistle on several occasions, as do later Alexandrian fathers, such as Origen and Didymus the Blind. Further, the text of Barn. is included in Codex Sinaiticus,

concern for the epistle's Jesus traditions, if they were not relevant for addressing these questions. There were also source-critical approaches, which examined the literary unity of the epistle.³ More recent research has centered on the purpose of Barn., either as an exhortation to proper ethics, or much more frequently as a polemic against Judaism.⁴ In most of this latter research, the Jesus

following the book of Revelation. Absent regular appeals to Barn. by early Christian communities elsewhere, Egypt remains the best hypothesis for the provenance of Barn. However, the fact that Barn. circulated in Egypt does not mean it was composed there. It is for this reason that an Egyptian provenance cannot be more than the most probable option.

While Clement of Alexandria attributes the epistle to Paul's associate, Barnabas, the authorship of Barn. is originally anonymous since no author is listed in the main text. Affectionate statements within the epistle suggest the author and the addressees know one another (e.g. 1.1–5; 4.6). However, there are no named persons in the epistle. Statements such as the ones found at 3.6, 13.7, 14.5–8, and 16.7 have led a majority of scholars to very tentatively conclude that the author and addressees are gentiles. If the author is a gentile, he appears to be familiar with some rabbinic traditions and Jewish hermeneutics.

For further discussion of these introductory issues, see J. Carleton Paget, *The Epistle of Barnabas: Outlook and Background*, WUNT 2/64 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1994), 3–42; "The Epistle of Barnabas," *ExpTim* 117/11 (2006): 441–44; R. Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century*, WUNT 2/82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 17–55; Prostmeier, *Der Barnabasbrief*, 11–134; J. N. Rhodes, *The Epistle of Barnabas & Deuteronomic Tradition: Polemics, Paraenesis, and the Legacy of the Golden-Calf Incident*, WUNT 2/188 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 47–51, 71–80, 192.

³ E.g. R. A. Kraft, "The Epistle of Barnabas: Its Quotations and Their Sources" (PhD diss., Harvard, 1961); P. Prigent, *Les Testimonia dans le Christianisme Primitif: L'Épître de Barnabé I–XVI et ses Sources* (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1961); K. Wengst, *Tradition und Theologie des Barnabasbriefes*, AKG 42 (Berlin: Gruyter, 1971). The author of Barn. certainly utilizes sources for his content. In 1.5 he admits his desire to "share something of what I have received." The author's most universally recognized source is the Two Ways tradition in chapters 18–20. It is also widely recognized that the author uses sources – probably testimony sources – for his many quotations from Jewish scriptures, especially Isa – see R. Kraft, "Barnabas' Isaiah Text and the 'Testimony Book' Hypothesis," *JBL* 79 (1960), esp. 349; "Barnabas' Isaiah Text and Melito's Paschal Homily," *JBL* 80/4 (1961): 371–73. On the early Christian use of testimony sources, see M. C. Albl, "And Scripture Cannot Be Broken": *The Form and Function of the Early Christian Testimonia Collections*, NovTSup 96 (Leiden: Brill, 1999). The recognition that the author uses sources should not undercut his role in redacting and incorporating these sources for his own purposes. For a discussion and general critique of previous source-critical approaches, which often overlook the epistle's stylistic unity, and in their most extreme versions effectively undermine questions regarding Barn.'s authorship, date, and provenance, see Carleton Paget, *The Epistle*, 1–2, 71–100.

⁴ It is frequently noted that the vocabulary of "Jew" or "Judaism" never occurs in Barn. The author's most frequent title for his opponents is simply "them." The language of "us" versus "them" is ubiquitous within the epistle (see Hvalvik, *The Struggle*, 137–39). However, the author also identifies his opponents as either Israel (4.14; 5.2, 8; 6.7; 8.1, 3; 9.2; 11.1; 12.2, 5; 16.5) or the synagogue (5.13; 6.6). Rhodes points out that "with a single exception

traditions are again infrequently discussed, presumably because Barn.'s bizarre salvation-history model, or perhaps better, quoting Hvalvik, "damnation history" model, makes Jesus inconsequential for determining Israel's fate.⁵

In Barn. 4.6–8 the author famously contends that Israel completely lost the one covenant (εις τέλος ἀπώλεσαν αὐτήν) at Sinai when Moses smashed the stone tablets as a result of the people's idolatry. The author regards the stone tablets and the covenant as being identical, and so he concludes that when Moses smashed the tablets "their covenant was shattered" (συνετριβή αὐτῶν ἡ διαθήκη). The author repeats this story, with some variations, in Barn. 14.1–4. Therefore according to Barn., the decisive moment in Israel's history does not come with the rejection of Jesus, as it does in other early Christian literature, but with the prior Sinai incident. The rejection of Jesus did not cause Israel to lose the covenant because they already lost it at Sinai.⁶ For Barn., Israel's rejection of Jesus simply completes their sins – Barn. occasionally references the completion of sins as one of the purposes for Jesus being incarnated (5.11; 14.5; cf. 8.1). Most current scholarship on Barn. recognizes that the decisive failure of Israel to possess the one covenant is an issue of central importance in the epistle. Because Barn. argues that Israel completely lost the covenant at Sinai, its subsequent rejection of Jesus almost becomes a peripheral issue, and the Jesus traditions throughout Barn. – many of which concern his rejection – easily become overlooked.⁷

The purpose of the present volume is to fill this lacuna in Barn. research by making a thorough study of the epistle's Jesus traditions. By "Jesus tradition,"

(9.2), L consistently renders Ἰσραήλ as 'Judaei' (6:7; 8:3; 12:2 bis;) or 'populous Iudaeorum' (4:14; 5:2, 8; 8:1; 11:1; 12:2, 5; 16:5)" (*The Epistle*, 27, n. 74).

⁵ Hvalvik, *The Struggle*, 146.

⁶ While early Christians frequently appealed to the Sinai incident to explain the Jewish tendency towards idolatry and the resulting necessity of the ceremonial laws, Barn.'s interpretation of the Sinai incident is distinctive for its time. Prior to Barn., there is no extant evidence of the argument that Israel completely lost the covenant at Sinai. The book of Acts, which may be contemporaneous with Barn., argues that as a result of the golden calf incident, God "turned away from them and handed them over to worship the host of heaven" (7:41–43). However, Acts never asserts that Israel lost the covenant. For later patristic and rabbinic interpretations of the Sinai incident, see L. Smolar and M. Aberbach, "The Golden-Calf Episode in Postbiblical Literature," *HUCA* 39 (1968): 98–116. Finally, it should be noted that Rhodes interprets Barn. so that Israel maintains the covenant following the Sinai incident (*The Epistle*, 1–32). However, Rhodes does not appreciate that Barn. views God's continued interactions with Israel, following the Sinai incident, not as part of some continuing covenant faithfulness, but simply as a means for building up their sins, which culminate in the rejection of Jesus.

⁷ This tendency to overlook Barn.'s Jesus traditions is highlighted by Hvalvik when he states: "One of the peculiar things about the *Epistle of Barnabas*, is the amount of texts dealing with Christ, his cross and his suffering. At first sight the extensive discussion of Christ's suffering may seem like a sidetrack" (*The Struggle*, 144).

I simply mean material that demonstrably refers to Jesus. The following chapters offer a close reading of all the Jesus traditions scattered throughout Barn.⁸ In addition to providing new exegetical insights and suggesting solutions to a few older interpretive problems, this detailed reading anticipates many of the volume's findings, which are summarized in the Conclusion. The overarching thesis of this small volume is that Jesus is central to almost every argument in the epistle and is, therefore, also central to describing its polemical rhetoric. I'm hopeful that this very brief study can contribute a few new insights to anyone who engages in research on this intriguing and enigmatic early Christian epistle.

⁸ The major works on Barn. typically offer their own organizational structure for the epistle, and most of these are identical in their divisions of the major sections. My own divisions in Chapters One through Four reflect a desire to maintain these agreed upon divisions while sometimes combining major sections where appropriate.

Chapter One

The Law and the Covenant of Jesus (Barn. 1–4)

While Jesus does not come to the fore until Barn. 5, he is either mentioned or referred to six times in Barn. 1–4 (1.1; 2.6; 3.6; 4.3, 8, 12–14). Of these six, the appeals to Jesus in 2.6; 3.6; 4.3, 8 are of most significance since they involve two important issues in the epistle: the interpretation of the law and the possession of the covenant.

1.1 In the Name of the Lord Who Has Loved Us (Barn. 1.1)

The first reference to Jesus in Barn. is also the most ambiguous. It occurs in the opening line of the epistle. The author greets his readers “in the name of the Lord (*ὀνόματι κυρίου*) who has loved us” (1.1).¹ It is probable that *κυρίου* here refers to Jesus. Elsewhere in Barn., the phrase “in/on the name” is used with reference to Jesus (16.6–8; cf. 12.8–9; though see 19.5).² New Testament texts also use the phrase mostly in reference to Jesus – excluding quotations of Ps 118:26.³ Finally, it is worth noting that L identifies *κυρίου* as Jesus Christ (*in nomine domini nostri Jesu Christi*), which shows that earlier readers were also seeking to clarify the identity of *κυρίου* in 1.1.⁴

¹ For a discussion of the grammatical peculiarities in the salutation, see E. J. Goodspeed, “The Salutation of Barnabas,” *JBL* 34 (1915): 162–65.

² On *ὀνόματι κυρίου* as a reference to Jesus in Barn. 16.6–8, see the below discussion in section 4.3. The occurrence of *ὄνομα κυρίου* in 19.5 is simply a traditional statement – “You shall not take the Lord’s name in vain.” The clause in 1.1, “who has loved us,” is not helpful for identifying the referent since both God and Jesus are described as loving in Barn. God is described as loving Jesus in 3.6; 4.3, 8, and Jesus is described as loving Israel in 5.8. On the text-critical issue in 5.8, see ch. 2 n. 26 below.

³ E.g. Matt 18:20; Mark 9:37, 41; John 14:14; 15:16; Acts 16:18; 1 Cor 5:4; Eph 5:20; Col 3:17; 2 Thess 3:6; 1 Pet 4:14.

⁴ Only two verses later, in 1.3, the identification of *κυρίου* is much more uncertain because the text of 1.3 is uncertain. At 1.3, S reads: “from the riches of the Lord’s love,” which points back to the loving Lord in 1.1, who is probably Jesus. However, H reads: “from the riches of the Lord’s fountain” (*πηγῆς κυρίου*), and *πηγή* is linked with the Lord as God at 11.2. Again, L clarifies things by replacing *πηγῆς κυρίου* with *πηγῆς τοῦ θεοῦ* (*fonte dei*). The uncertainty regarding the identity of *κυρίου* in 1.3 continues into the identity of *κύριος* in 1.4. Once more, L clarifies the referent as God by translating *κυρίου* instead of *κύριος*. Reading

1.2 The New Law of Our Lord Jesus Christ (Barn. 2.6)

The first unambiguous reference to Jesus occurs in Barn. 2.6. The author states that God has “abolished” ritual sacrifice, “in order that the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ, which is free from the yoke of compulsion, might have its offering, one not made by humans.”⁵ A version of this rare phrase – the law of Christ – is familiar from Paul’s writings in Gal 6:2 (cf. 1 Cor 9:21). In his survey of research on the phrase in Gal, T. A. Wilson highlights the relatively recent trend, which I think is correct, to interpret the phrase as referring to the law of

κύριου closely associates the Lord with righteousness (*δικαιοσύνης κυρίου*) – a characteristic related to God in Barn. (e.g. *τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ δικαιωμάτων* at 1.2). Prostmeier vastly oversimplifies the issues when he states, “Der Aorist *ἀγαπήσαντος* und das Personalpronomen *ἡμᾶς* stellen zum einen klar, daß *κύριος* in Barn 1,1.3.4.6 Jesus Christus meint” (*Der Barnabasbrief*, 145).

⁵ This statement is frequently seen as potentially inconsistent with the larger message of Barn. in two interrelated ways. First, the idea that God has “abolished” – from *καταργέω* – ritual sacrifice could be read to imply that the observance of such rituals was at one point legitimate. This would conflict with Barn.’s controlling message that the literal observance of rituals was never legitimate, and any commands involving ritual activities were always meant to be ethically interpreted. However, the statement that God has “abolished” the practice of sacrifice does not imply that sacrifice was ever legitimate – indeed, the following verse (2.7) suggests that God never commanded Israel’s ancestors to offer sacrifices. Further, in Barn. 16.2, the author again uses *καταργέω* to refer to the Lord’s abolition of the temple, and it is clear from 16.1–5 that God never regarded the temple as legitimate. In Barn. 9.4, the author similarly claims that physical circumcision has been abolished, and he makes it clear that ritualized physical circumcision was never legitimate and is in fact demonic. Therefore, it is best to understand *καταργέω* in 2.6 as a reference to God’s abolition of the illegitimate practice of sacrifice, which presumably coincided with his abolition (i.e. destruction) of the illegitimate Temple. The second potential inconsistency is the mention of a “new law [...] free from the yoke of compulsion” which may be read to imply the existence of an old law with a yoke of compulsion. However, the dominant message throughout Barn. is that there is only one law, which is misinterpreted by Israel and correctly interpreted by the author and his community. It is, therefore, likely that Barn.’s idea of a “new law [...] free from the yoke of compulsion” in 2.6 is nothing more than an indication of his interaction with other Christian sources that assume an old law burdened by a yoke of compulsion, which was later superseded by a new law. According to J. Carleton Paget in 2.6 and elsewhere, Barn. demonstrates his awareness of terminology from other Christian sources, which he incorporates into his own writing in a “slightly inept way,” resulting in inconsistencies with the dominant messages in his epistle. In this case, the dominant message is that there is, and has only ever been, one law (“Barnabas and the Outsiders: Jews and Their World in the *Epistle of Barnabas*,” in *Christian Communities in the Second Century: Between Ideal and Reality*, ed. M. Grundeken and J. Verheyden, WUNT 1/342 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015], 194–95). Cf. Carleton Paget, *The Epistle*, 106–07; Wengst, *Tradition und Theologie*, 18.

Moses, rather than that which replaces the law of Moses.⁶ Just as Paul uses the phrase to refer to his own ‘correct’ interpretation of the law of Moses, so too does the author of Barn. In the fuller context of the epistle, “the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ” is a reference to what the author believes is the true, original, and ethical interpretation of the law of Moses. It is the same interpretation which Moses himself intended and the prophets understood, but which was lost on the vast majority of the Israelites, who continually misinterpreted the commandments and mistakenly believed that God literally demanded “compulsory” requirements, such as sacrifice, Sabbath observance, fasting, circumcision, and food regulations.⁷ Yet a question remains unanswered: Why say “the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ” when simply saying “the new law” might have the same effect?⁸

One possibility is that the author receives the entire phrase, “the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ,” because it is held together as a Pauline cliché.⁹ He uses the cliché to refer to his true interpretation of the law of Moses, despite the fact that a part of the cliché – the notion of a “new law” – is incongruent with his controlling message that there is only one law.¹⁰ In this view, the genitive modifier – “of our Lord Jesus Christ” – is an integral part of the cliché, which the author carelessly receives without assigning it any special purpose.

A second possibility is that while the entire phrase refers to the true interpretation of the law of Moses, the genitive modifier – “of our Lord Jesus

⁶ “The Law of Christ and the Law of Moses: Reflections on a Recent Trend in Interpretation.” *CurBR* (2006): 5/1, 123–44. Wilson highlights those observing a close connection between Gal 5:13–14 and 6:2, and Paul’s consistent use of νόμος to refer to the law of Moses (*ibid.*, 135).

⁷ See Barn. 10.11–12, which states: “Observe what a wise lawgiver Moses was! But how could those people grasp or understand these things? But we, however, having rightly understood the commandments, explain them as the Lord intended.”

⁸ According to Wilson, among those who agree that the phrase, “the law of Christ,” in Gal 6:2 is a reference to the law of Moses, there is no consensus on why Paul added “of Christ” when simply referring to “the law” would have been sufficient to make his point (*ibid.*, 136–37).

⁹ Barn. may receive the phrase from Paul or sources familiar with Paul (See Excursus Two below). Aside from Paul and Barn., I located the phrase before the third century in Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.*, 3.95.2, and Tertullian, *Marc.*, 5.4.13 (cf. Justin, *Dial.* 11). Tertullian uses Paul’s language in Gal 6:2 to argue that “Christ’s law is the Creator’s law.” If the phrase is a cliché, then it is underrepresented in extant early Christian literature. Finally, it is notable that an interesting mutation of the phrase also occurs again in Barn. 8.2 (only in S) which reads: νόμος Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς ἐστίν. S^c rightly corrects νόμος Χριστὸς back to μόνος.

¹⁰ On this incongruity, see n. 5 above.

Christ” – specifically refers to the ethical teachings of Jesus as the correct expression of the law’s original meaning.¹¹ There are several Jesus traditions scattered throughout Barn. that are similar to traditions from our extant gospels.¹² However, while the author shows an awareness of several aspects of Jesus’ earthly life, as well as a saying seemingly from Matt 22:14 (Barn. 4.14), he makes no extensive appeals to the ethical teachings of Jesus that are available in our extant gospels.¹³ This makes it less likely that the genitive modifier in 2.6 specifically refers to the ethical teachings of Jesus as the true expression of the author’s ethical allegorizing of the law in Barn. 2.4–3.6.

A third and final possibility is that the genitive modifier – “of our Lord Jesus Christ” – has a polemical function. Certainly, 2.6 occurs in a larger context (2.4–10) that expresses opposition to those who might make sacrificial offerings under the yoke of compulsion. It is also noteworthy that the only other occurrence of νόμος in Barn. is in 3.6, where the author warns against becoming “proselytes to their law.”¹⁴ So it may be that the genitive modifier in 2.6, “of our Lord Jesus Christ” – in addition to being part of an early Christian cliché – is important for separating “their law” from our law, which is the original and true reading of the law. The author seems to employ Jesus in a similar way in 4.8 to distinguish between “their covenant” and “the covenant of the beloved Jesus” (cf. 14.4–5). Therefore, it is likely that the cliché in 2.6 – “the new law of our Lord Jesus Christ” – is received by the author not only to refer to his

¹¹ Windisch states, “Mit dem ‘neuen Gesetze unsres Herrn Jesu Christi’ 2.6 könnte etwa die in der Bergpredigt verfaßte Lehre gemeint sein” (*Die apostolischen Väter III: Der Barnabasbrief*, HNT Ergänzungsband [Tübingen: J.C.B Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1920], 374).

¹² For discussion of Barn.’s familiarity with one or more extant gospels, see Excursus Two below.

¹³ The absence of any obvious invocations of Jesus’ ethical teachings in the epistle is somewhat shocking since one of the primary purposes of Barn. is to encourage proper ethics. The author of Barn. either does not know the traditions of Jesus’ ethical teachings, or he and his audience (or those he wishes his audience to oppose) regard the sources containing these teachings as unauthoritative. This is not to say that Jesus has nothing to do with the author’s hortatory thrust. The author does utilize Jesus to support his ethical exhortations, but not by encouraging his audience to look back at Jesus’ earthly life and teachings. Rather, he encourages them towards good behavior by reminding them that Jesus “is about to judge the living and the dead” (7.2). On Jesus’ role as the end-time judge in Barn., see the below discussion of Barn. 4.12–14.

¹⁴ I take “their law” (ἐκείνων νόμῳ) as a reference to their wrong interpretation of the law (see Carleton Paget, *The Epistle*, 58). There is a text-critical problem behind the word translated as “proselytes.” H and L read προσήλυτοι, while S reads ἐπήλυτοι. Carleton Paget argues that “there is no substantial difference in the meaning of the two words” (ibid., 110). Elsewhere, Carleton Paget argues that there is sufficient evidence to support the claim that during the period of Barn.’s composition, some Jews encouraged gentile conversion, which means that it is historically possible that Barn. 3.6 represents a response to a real threat (“Jewish Proselytism at the Time of Christian Origins: Chimera or Reality?,” *JSNT* 62 [1996]: 65–103).

true interpretation of the law of Moses, but also to decisively associate that interpretation with Jesus, who is received as a rhetorical tool for dividing “their” false interpretations from “our” true interpretations of the law.¹⁵

1.3 The Covenant of the Beloved Jesus (Barn. 3.6; 4.3, 8)

In Barn. 3.6; 4.3, 8, there are three references to Jesus, all using the title “beloved.”¹⁶ These are the only places in the epistle where Jesus is assigned this title.¹⁷ While 3.6 and 4.3 speak of “his beloved,” 4.8 clearly identifies the beloved as Jesus – “the beloved Jesus.” In Barn. 3.6, the author mentions God’s earlier revelations to the people prepared “in his beloved.”¹⁸ This idea of being “in Jesus” appears again in 6.8, where the author recalls God’s command through Moses to “enter into the good land” – it is revealed in 6.9–10 that Jesus is the good land, who should be entered. In Barn. 4.3, the author claims that God has cut short the days “so that his beloved might make haste and come into his inheritance (*κληρονομία*).” According to Barn. 14.5, Jesus’ inheritance is the covenant. Barn. also frequently claims that his audience (i.e. “us”) is the true inheritor of the one covenant (6.19; 13.1–6; 14.4; cf. 4.8). This is only possible because his audience is situated in God’s beloved Jesus (3.6), the true inheritor of the covenant. Or, as 14.5 states: “we might receive the covenant through the Lord Jesus who inherited it.”¹⁹ In sum, Jesus’ inheritance is the covenant (4.3; 14.5), and Barn.’s audience is situated “in the beloved” (3.6; 6.8–10), which allows them the right to inherit the covenant through Jesus. The point is that for Barn., possession of the covenant is a consequence of being in

¹⁵ For a survey of the various strategies used by early Christians to interpret the law, see D. Lincicum, “Against the Law: The *Epistle of Barnabas* and Torah Polemic in Early Christianity,” in *Law and Lawlessness in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. D. Lincicum, R. Sheridan, and C. Stang, WUNT 1/420 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 105–21.

¹⁶ All three are substantive, perfect passive participles from *ἀγαπάω*.

¹⁷ In the canonical gospels, Jesus is famously called “beloved” at his baptism (Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22), and his transfiguration (Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7) – though here the word is from *ἀγαπητός*, rather than *ἀγαπάω*. In Matt (12:18), the title appears to be grounded in reflection on Christ as the Isaianic servant, who is called “beloved” in Isa 44:2. Elsewhere in the New Testament, Jesus is referred to as beloved in 2 Pet 1:17, Col 1:13, and Eph 1:6 (*ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ*); cf. 1 Clem. 59.2–3; Ign., *Smyrn* 1.0; Mart Pol. 14.1, 3; Diogn. 8.11.

¹⁸ The idea that God has revealed to his people (i.e. “us”), “everything in advance” is asserted frequently throughout the epistle (e.g., 1.7; 5.3; 6.7; 7.1; 11.1). In 3.6, God’s advance revelation “to us” (2.4; 3.3) concerns the acceptable interpretation of sacrifice and fasting (2.4–3.5).

¹⁹ διὰ τοῦ κληρονομοῦντος διαθήκην κυρίου Ἰησοῦ λάβωμεν.

the beloved, and this makes Jesus central to the author's claim of covenant possession.²⁰

The third consecutive reference to Jesus as "beloved" occurs in Barn. 4.8 amid the author's famous interpretation of the Sinai incident, wherein "those people" (ἐκεῖνοι) lose "their covenant" precisely when Moses smashes the two stone tablets.²¹ Barn. 4.8 gives purpose to this incident – it occurred "in order that the covenant of the beloved Jesus might be sealed in our heart, in hope inspired by faith in him." One of the many distinctive features of Barn. is that the author assumes there is only one covenant.²² Therefore, when the author speaks of "their covenant" in 4.8 he does not suppose that there exist two covenants, an old and a new, "their covenant" and "the covenant of the beloved Jesus." Rather, the author thinks there is only one covenant, which Israel lost at Sinai, and which was subsequently inherited by Jesus.²³ While the language of "their covenant" in 4.8 is in some sense historical – where "their" refers to the Israelites at Sinai – it is also contemporary.²⁴ In 4.6, the author warns not to be like "certain people [...] claiming, 'Our covenant remains valid.'"²⁵ For

²⁰ It should be noted that Barn. in no way considers being "a people prepared in God's beloved" as a safeguard against the possibility of being "thrust out of the kingdom of the Lord" (4.13). For Barn., future salvation is not guaranteed. Rather, it depends entirely on one's behavior in these last days (see 4.9–13).

²¹ The incident is introduced above in the Introduction.

²² This assumed singularity of the covenant is most apparent in several verses later in the epistle: "Let us see [...] whether the covenant is for us or for them" (13.1); "Let us see if he has actually given the covenant [...] to the people. He has indeed given it; but they were not worthy to receive it [...] But how did we receive it? [...] the Lord himself gave it to us" (14.1, 4).

²³ The same is true of the author's view of the law. While he might speak of "their law" (3.6), he only believes that there is one law, which is wrongly interpreted by "them" and rightly interpreted by "us."

²⁴ Mention of "their covenant" occurs again at 9.6. See discussion below.

²⁵ There is a notoriously difficult text-critical problem at 4.6. The author urges his audience: "do not be like certain people (τισιν); that is, do not continue to pile up your sins while claiming that [...]." The difficulty concerns how to translate the content of what these certain people are claiming. Scholarship on Barn. has most often preferred a retroversion of the Greek text behind the Latin witness – ἡ διαθήκη ἐκεῖνων καὶ ἡμῶν. ἡμῶν μὲν behind *testamentum illorum et nostrum est. nostrum est autem* (e.g. Carleton Paget, *The Epistle* 114; Prostmeier, *Der Barnabasbrief*, 208, cf. 339). With this text, "certain people" are claiming that "the covenant is theirs and ours," thereby denying the author's community's exclusive possession of the one covenant. By claiming that the one covenant is possessed equally by "them" and "us," it is often thought that these "certain people" are attempting to legitimize Judaism and open the possibility of conversion to Judaism and participation in Jewish religious practices – it is worth noting that Barn. 3.6 does exhibit an awareness of the option to become a proselyte "to their law." In response to the claim of dual possession of the covenant, the author asserts: "It is ours (ἡμῶν μὲν)." With his subsequent telling of the Sinai

Index of Ancient Sources

Old Testament (with Deuterocanonicals)

Genesis

1:26	18, 29, 32, 46, 47, 84
1:26–27	19
1:26–28	19
2:2–3	70
2:7	31
3:19	31
14:14	54
15:2	22
15:6	68, 90
15:16	22
17	54, 82
17:23	54

Exodus

4:24–26	53
7:3	13
17:8–16	60
17:14	63
20:8	70
25:7	41

Leviticus

16	36–37, 40
16:7	36
16:8	24, 40
16:9	36
16:10	40, 51
16:20–22	40, 51
23:29	37

Numbers

13:16	63
19	43
21:8	62
29:11	37

Deuteronomy

5:12	70
21	40
21:22–23	24
21:23	24, 40, 62

Chronicles

36:15–17	22
----------	----

Psalms

1:1	57
1:2	57
1:3–6	57
22	24–26, 28, 46
22:1	25, 50
22:7–8	25
22:16	25–26, 28–29, 46, 51
22:18	25, 28, 46, 51
22:20	25, 46, 51
22:22	33, 47
24:4	70
42:2	33, 47
68:22	96
90:4	70
110:1	64–66, 85
118	28
118:12	28–29, 46, 51
118:22	26, 28, 46
118:24	28
118:26	5
119	24–25, 28, 46
119:120	25, 46, 51

Isaiah

1:13	71
3:9–10	29, 46, 51

14:6	69	<i>Ezekiel</i>	
16:1–2	56	20:6	58
28:16	26–27, 46–47	20:15	58
33:16–18	56–57	47:1–12	58
33:18	57		
40:12	73	<i>Daniel</i>	
42:6–7	68–69	9:24	75
44:2	9		
45:1	57, 64–66, 85	<i>Joel</i>	
45:2–3	56–57	3:4	28
49:6–7	68–69		
50	85	<i>Zechariah</i>	
50:6	26, 46, 51	3:5	41
50:7	24, 26–27, 46	13	85
50:8	26	13:7	23, 29, 46, 51, 97,
50:8–9	46		98
50:9	26		
53	85	<i>Malachi</i>	
53:5	15, 17, 46–47	3:32	28
53:7	15, 17, 46–47		
61:1–2	68–69	<i>2 Maccabees</i>	
65:2	60	6:12–17	22
66:1	74		
		<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>	
<i>Jeremiah</i>		2:12–20	29
2:12–13	56		

New Testament

<i>Matthew</i>		21:33	25
3:17	9	22:14	8, 13, 89, 92–93,
5–7	94		98
5–9:13	21, 94	23:31–32	22
7:13–14	92	23:32	92
8–9:8	94	24:1–2	92
9:9	94	25:18	25
9:10–12	94	26:31	23, 97
9:13	21, 92, 94, 98	26:63–64	97
12:18	9	26:67–68	48
14:33	94–96	27:15–23	48
16:16	95–96	27:24	48
16:18	92	27:25	48
17:2	21, 95	27:28	41
17:5	9, 21, 95	27:34	96
18:17	92	27:35	29
18:20	5	27:46	50
19:28	92	27:48	96

<i>Mark</i>		19:16–18	48
1:11	9	19:23	48
2:17	93, 98	19:23–24	29
6:51	95	19:29	96
8:29	95		
9:2–3	95	<i>Acts</i>	
9:7	9, 21, 95	2:23	49
9:37	5	2:27	16
9:41	5	2:31	16
12:1	25	3:13–17	49
12:10–11	26	4:10	49
14:27	23, 97–98	4:27–28	49
14:65	48	5:30	24, 49
15:16–20	48	7:35–52	22
15:24	29	7:41–43	3
15:34	50	7:49	74
15:36	96	7:52	49
		10:39	24, 49
<i>Luke</i>		13:27–29	49
2:32	69	13:29	24
3:22	9	13:35	16
4:18–19	69	13:47	69
5:8	21	14:22	99
5:32	93, 98	16:18	5
9:20	95	17:24	74
9:29	95	26:18	69
9:35	21, 95	26:23	69
18:32–33	49	27:9	37
22:63–65	48		
22:70	97	<i>Romans</i>	
23:4	48	3:8	91
23:14–15	48	3:31	90
23:22	48	4	91
23:25–26	48	4:11	90–91
23:33	48	4:24–25	58
23:34	29	9:32–33	90
23:35–37	49	9:33	26
23:36	96		
		<i>I Corinthians</i>	
<i>John</i>		1:18	24, 62
1:3	18	1:23	24
1:10	18	3:16–17	90
3:14	89	5:4	5
14:14	5	8:6	18
15:16	5	9:21	6, 91
18:22–23	48	10:4	26, 90
18:38	48	12:2	73
19:4	48		
19:6	48		

<i>2 Corinthians</i>		4:5	73
3:7	90		
3:11	90	<i>2 Thessalonians</i>	
3:13	90	2:8	71
<i>Galatians</i>		<i>Titus</i>	
3:10	40	2:14	68
3:13	40	<i>Hebrews</i>	
5:1	90	1:2	18
5:11	24, 62	2:11–12	33
5:13–14	7	2:12	37
6:2	6–7, 91	3:6	5
<i>Ephesians</i>		9	36
1:6	9	9:13–14	43
4:17	73	10:5	37
5:20	5	12:24	89
<i>Philippians</i>		<i>1 Peter</i>	
2:9–11	58	2:6–8	26
<i>Colossians</i>		2:24	24
1:13	9	4:14	5
1:16	18	<i>2 Peter</i>	
2:11–12	56	1:17	9, 21, 95
3:17	5	3:8	70
<i>1 Thessalonians</i>		3:15–16	91
1:9–10	58	<i>Revelation</i>	
2:14–15	49	22:12	77
2:15–16	22		

Old Testament Pseudepigrapha

<i>4 Ezra</i>		10.57	93
4.33	59	<i>Odes of Solomon</i>	
5.5	59	17.8–10	57
8.3	93		
9.15	93		

Philo

<i>De migratione Abrahami</i>		<i>De specialibus legibus</i>	
89–93	53	1.262	43

<i>Legum allegoriae</i>		III.88–94	67
1.90	31		

Rabbinic Literature

<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>		<i>m. Menahot</i>	
8.3	19	11.7	38
<i>m. Yoma</i>		<i>m. Parah</i>	
6	36	3	4

Early Christian Literature

<i>Barnabas</i>		3.6	2, 5, 8–11, 13–14, 18, 28, 33–34, 37, 56, 59, 79–81
1–4	5, 12–14, 67		
1.1	5–6, 75, 77		
1.1–5	2	4.1	42
1.2	77	4.3	5, 9, 13, 18, 81
1.3	5–6	4.4–5	1
1.4	5–6	4.6	2, 10–12, 79, 81
1.5	2	4.6–8	14–15, 52, 54, 67, 69–70, 78, 80, 86
1.6	6		
1.7	9, 17–18, 28, 33– 34, 37, 56, 59	4.7	27, 31–32
2	53	4.7–8	3, 80
2.1	42	4.8	5, 8–11, 13–14, 16, 30, 32, 45, 80, 84
2.4	9, 18, 28, 33–34, 37, 56, 59	4.9	11–12, 42
2.4–10	8	4.9–13	10
2.4–3.5	9, 13	4.9–14	15, 32, 70
2.4–3.6	8	4.11	33–34, 68, 75, 77, 90
2.5	71		
2.5–10	35, 61	4.11–12	12
2.6	5–6, 8, 11, 13–14, 16, 30, 35, 45, 80, 90–92	4.12	12–13, 15, 18, 71, 77, 88
2.7	6	4.12–14	5, 8, 12–14
2.9	18, 28, 33–34, 37, 56, 59	4.13	10, 12, 15
3	53	4.14	2, 8, 12–13, 20, 88–89, 92–94, 98
3.1–2	38	5	16, 65, 86
3.1–6	38	5–6	63
3.3	9	5–8	13, 15–16, 45–47, 50, 52, 65–66
3.4	77	5–12	52, 65, 67–68, 78

5.1	13, 15–17, 22, 44, 84, 89	6.1–4	2
5.1–2	34	6.2	30, 39
5.1–12	15–16	6.2–3	2, 30–31, 46
5.1–14	46	6.2–4	45
5.1–6.7	34	6.3	24, 27, 30–31, 44, 47, 62, 73, 75–76, 83–84
5.2	2, 15, 17, 29, 45– 47, 85	6.3–4	90
5.3	9, 17, 28	6.4	30, 46, 85
5.3–4	17, 30	6.5	28
5.4	88	6.6	2, 23, 25, 28, 30, 33, 46, 85, 88
5.5	16–19, 23, 32, 34, 44, 46, 84–85, 88	6.6–7	23, 28, 30, 40, 46, 50–51, 60, 83
5.6	16, 20, 28, 37, 72, 77, 88	6.7	2, 9, 16, 23, 28, 30, 33–34, 46, 56, 59, 84, 88
5.6–7	15, 17	6.8	9, 22, 28, 30, 37, 47
5.6–10	19	6.8–9	39
5.7	12, 15, 20–21, 34, 70, 77, 88	6.8–10	9, 29, 30–31, 33, 71, 85
5.8	2, 5, 13, 20, 44, 88	6.8–17	30
5.8–9	21, 94	6.8–18	46
5.8–10	93–94	6.8–19	29–30, 34, 45, 47, 58, 71, 84
5.9	15–16, 20–21, 32, 34, 44, 88–89, 94– 96, 98	6.9	16, 27–28, 30–31, 34, 44, 58, 73, 75
5.9–10	94–95, 98	6.9–10	9
5.10	16, 20–22, 28, 95	6.10	30–31
5.11	3, 15–17, 21–22, 28–29, 34, 43–44, 46, 60, 63, 84, 89, 92	6.11	17, 32, 34, 47, 75
5.11–6.7	17, 20, 22	6.11–13	30–31
5.12	16–18, 22–24, 28– 29, 33–34, 37, 46, 49, 56, 59, 83–84, 88, 97–98	6.12	15, 18, 29, 32, 34, 46, 84–85
5.12–13	40	6.12–13	32, 47
5.12–14	23, 28, 50–51, 60, 83	6.12–16	33
5.12–6.7	16, 23, 26	6.13	30–33, 71
5.13	2, 16, 23–26, 28– 29, 33, 40, 46, 62, 66, 85, 89	6.14	16, 28, 30, 32–33
5.13–14	69	6.14–15	55, 75
5.13–6.2	33	6.14–16	30, 33, 81, 88
5.14	23–24, 26–27, 46, 89	6.15	33
5.14–6.2	46	6.16	25, 29, 33, 47
6.1–2	2, 47	6.17	29–30, 32
		6.17–19	30–32, 47
		6.18	18, 32
		6.19	9, 32, 34, 71
		7	34–36, 81, 96–97
		7–8	34–36, 43–45, 59, 61

7.1	9, 28, 34, 56, 59	8.5	12, 24, 31, 43–45,
7.1–2	37		47, 58, 62, 66, 73,
7.1–5	28		75, 84
7.1–11	30	8.5–6	12
7.1–8.7	34	8.6	42, 45
7.2	8, 12, 15, 34, 37,	8.7	34–35, 45, 56, 85
	68, 70, 77, 84, 88	9	45, 53, 55, 66, 82
7.3	17, 24, 34, 37, 39,	9–12	47, 52, 65–66
	43–44, 47, 56, 58–	9.1	54, 56
	59, 62, 66, 85, 88,	9.1–2	45
	96	9.1–4	54
7.3–5	34, 36–39, 46, 96–	9.1–5	54
	97	9.2	2, 27
7.3–11	34, 36, 46	9.4	53–54, 90
7.4	38	9.6	10, 54–55, 79, 90
7.4–5	50–51, 60, 83	9.7	55, 64, 68, 85
7.5	17, 34, 39–40, 89,	9.7–8	52–53
	96	9.7–9	54, 85
7.6	36	9.8	18, 24, 28, 33–34,
7.6–7	36		37, 54, 56, 59, 62,
7.6–11	85		77
7.7	24, 34, 37, 40, 43	9.9	54–55
7.7–11	36–37, 40	10	52–53, 55, 86
7.8	40–43, 89, 97	10.1	55
7.8–9	34, 50–51, 60, 83	10.2	52, 77
7.9	15, 24, 40–43, 46,	10.9	52
	62, 66, 84, 88, 96–	10.9–10	55
	97	10.10–12	30
7.9–10	37, 40–42	10.11	52
7.9–11	40	10.11–12	7
7.10	34, 41–43	10.12	55–56
7.11	12, 25, 33–34, 40,	11	17, 55–56, 59, 66
	42–44, 88, 98	11.1	2, 9, 24, 28, 56–59,
8	43, 46, 81		61–62, 82
8.1	2–3, 17, 21, 24, 29,	11.1–11	58, 60
	34, 43–44, 46, 60,	11.2	5, 56, 58, 82
	62, 66, 84, 92	11.2–3	56
8.1–2	22, 34, 39	11.4	57
8.1–3	21	11.4–5	56, 68
8.1–6	34	11.5	57–59, 82, 88
8.1–7	30, 42	11.5–7	60
8.2	7, 35, 43, 46–47,	11.6	24, 57–58, 60, 82
	85	11.6–7	56–57
8.2–6	43	11.7	58, 82
8.3	2, 21, 34, 44, 47,	11.8	24, 31, 44, 57–59,
	88, 92		61–62, 73, 75, 82
8.4	44	11.9	39, 58, 72
		11.9–10	56, 58
		11.10	58

11.11	21, 31, 44, 56, 58–59, 61, 68, 73, 75, 82	14.1–5 14.2–3 14.4	11, 14, 81 32, 84 9–10, 15, 17, 20, 22, 67, 69, 84
12	55, 86		8, 11, 32, 68, 80–81
12.1	24, 59	14.4–5	81
12.1–7	24, 59, 61–62, 64–65, 68, 85	14.4–7	32
12.1–11	85	14.4–9	67
12.2	2, 34, 44, 58, 59–62	14.5	3, 9, 13, 17, 21–22, 29, 43, 60, 68–69, 84, 92
12.2–3	31, 52, 61, 73, 75		2
12.2–4	85	14.5–8	77
12.2–5	61	14.5–9	68–69
12.3	35, 44, 58, 60	14.6	68
12.4	60, 62	14.6–7	68
12.5	2, 34, 42, 52, 59–62, 66, 84, 89	14.6–8 14.7	68–69
12.5–7	52	14.7–8	68
12.5–8	85	14.8	68–69, 72
12.6	34–35, 59	14.9	69
12.7	24, 58, 60, 62, 68, 76–77, 89	14.14 15	2 67, 78, 82
12.7–8	85	15.1	70–71, 73
12.8	18, 28, 33–34, 37, 56, 59–60, 63	15.1–3 15.2	70 70
12.8–9	5, 85	15.3	70–71
12.8–10	15, 52	15.4	70
12.8–11	63, 66, 84	15.4–5	70
12.9	63	15.5	12, 22, 70–71, 77, 88
12.10	19, 34–35, 63–65, 68, 79, 84	15.6	71
12.10–11	63, 65, 85	15.6–8	32
12.10–12	65	15.7	71–73, 78, 83
12.11	56, 64	15.8	71
13	91	15.9	70, 72, 83, 88
13–14	52, 67, 69, 73, 78, 80, 86	16 16.1	67, 76, 78 27, 31, 62, 73
13–21	67, 78	16.1–2	73, 83
13.1	10, 12	16.1–5	6
13.1–6	9, 12	16.2	6, 73–74, 83, 90
13.2–3	67	16.3	74
13.4–5	67	16.3–4	1, 74, 79, 80
13.5	34, 64, 68	16.3–5	1, 74, 92
13.6	32	16.4	61, 74
13.7	2, 68–69, 90–91	16.5	2, 17, 61, 74
14	70	16.6	74, 83
14.1	10, 15, 20, 22	16.6–8	5, 73, 75, 83, 88
14.1–3	15	16.7	2, 21, 68, 84
14.1–4	3, 68, 80, 84	16.8	17, 33, 44, 58, 75

16.9	55	Ignatius	
16.10	75		
17	76	<i>Magnesians</i>	
17.2	76	8.2	20
18–20	2, 67, 76–77, 86		
18.1	55	<i>Smyrnaeans</i>	
19.2	77	1.0	9
19.5	5		
19.7	75	Irenaeus	
21	76		
21.1	12, 77, 84	<i>Against Heresies</i>	
21.3	12, 67, 71, 77, 88	4.29.1	22
21.5	18, 77, 84		
21.6	77	Justin Martyr	
21.8	39, 58		
21.9	77	<i>First Apology</i>	
		35	49
<i>1 Clement</i>		36	49
16.5	37	49	49
22.1	37	67.7	72
59.2–3	9		
		<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>	
Clement of Alexandria		11	7, 91
		14	42, 49
<i>Paedagogos</i>		16	16, 49
3.95.2	7, 91	17	49
		26	69
<i>Stromata</i>		32.1	24
6.16	21, 95	40.4	37
		40.4–5	36, 39
<i>Diognetus</i>		46.2	37
4.1	37	49.1	64
8.11	9	53.6	23
		62	19, 84
<i>Gospel of Peter</i>		73	44
1–17	49	86	1
2	89	89.2	24
9	26, 89	90	16, 62
10	89	90.1	24, 62
12	29	93	49
16	89, 96	94	60, 62
17	22, 89	96	49
18	89	97	26, 29
21	89	121–22	69
59	89		
60	89	<i>Martyrdom of Polycarp</i>	
		14.1	9
<i>Gospel of Thomas</i>		14.3	9
58	98		

Melito

Peri Pascha

36–38	35
41	35
79	96
80	96
93	96

Pseudo-Clementine Homilies

18.13	64
-------	----

Tertullian

Against the Jews

9	16
12	69
14.9–10	36, 39

Against Marcion

3.7.7–8	36, 39
3.20.4	69
5.4.13	7, 91
5.6.1	69

Index of Modern Authors

- Aberbach, M. 3
Adams, S. A. 28
Albl, M. C. 2
Audet, J.-P. 76
- Barnard, L. W. 16, 26, 30, 43, 72, 74
Barrett, C. K. 72
Bates, M. W. 18, 28, 33, 60, 69
Bauckham, R. J. 72
Beatrice, P. F. 92
Bousset, W. 1
- Carleton Paget, J. 2, 6, 8, 10–11, 15–16,
19, 26, 32–36, 38, 40, 42–44, 53–54,
56, 61, 65, 67, 70–71, 79, 88–94, 96–
98
- Chamberas, P. A. 21
Chandler, K. K. 43
Cohen, S. J. D. 87
Crossan, J. D. 50
- Dahl, N. A. 30
Derrett, J. D. M. 44
Derry, K. 27
Draper, J. A. 76
Dunn, J. D. G. 87
- Edwards, J. C. 1, 12, 52, 54, 65, 68, 87,
89
Edwards, R. 19
Ehorn, S. M. 28
Ehrman, B. D., XI, 17–18, 41, 49, 57
Eliav, Y. Z. 56
- Ferguson, E. 70, 72
Foster, P. 50, 92, 96
Fredriksen, P. 24
- Goodacre, M. 92
- Goodspeed, E. J. 5, 76
Grabbe, L. L. 36, 42
Gregory, A. F. 92
- Hagner, D. A. 92
Harris, J. R. 40
Hayes, C. 91
Henderson, T. P. 49
Hengel, M. 25
Henning, M. 12
Herr, J. M. XI
Holmes, M. W. XI, 17, 41, 44, 57
Horbury, W. 21, 43, 79
Hurtado, L. W. 54, 64–65
Hvalvik, R. 2–3, 15, 17, 22, 31, 33, 35,
37–38, 45, 54, 56, 59, 79, 92–93
- Kister, M. 59
Koester, H. 50, 90
Köhler, W. D. 92
Kok, M. 73, 79
Koltun-Fromm, N. 25–26, 28
Kraft, R. A. 2, 17, 22, 24, 26–30, 53, 56–
57, 59–60, 63, 65, 69, 71, 75
- Lincicum, D. 9
Loman, J. 79
Lowy, S. 79
- Mara, M. G. 89
Martin, J. P. 31, 36
Massaux, E. 92, 94, 97
Muilenburg, J. 76
- Nicklas, T. 79
- Oepke, A. 79
Orlov, A. A. 36

- Pearson, B. 49
Pleše, Z. 49
Prigent, P. 2, 16, 23, 30, 42, 55, 57, 63, 98
Prostmeier, F. R. 1–2, 6, 10, 17–18, 28, 32, 35, 41, 43, 47, 55, 59–60, 63–64, 72, 79, 85

Reijners, G. Q. 24
Rhodes, J. N. 2–3, 11–13, 15, 20, 22, 31, 35, 39, 42, 53, 56–57, 61, 63, 74, 76–77, 79, 92
Richardson, P. 17, 27, 56, 73
Rothschild, C. K. 35
Rutgers, L. V. 25

Schwartz, D. R. 53
Sheppard, A. 74

Shukster, M. B. 27, 56, 73
Skarsaune, O. 17, 38, 41, 43–44, 56, 60, 62
Smith, J. C. H. 77
Smolar, L. 3
Steenberg, M. C. 19
Stökl Ben Ezra, D. 36–38, 41, 45

Taylor, M. S. 7
Thomas, M. J. 90
Tukett, C. M. 92
Turner, D. L. 22

Wilson, R. McL. 19
Wilson T. A. 7
Wengst, K. XI, 2, 27, 34, 37, 56, 61, 65
Windisch, H. 8, 12–13, 18, 20, 22–23, 39, 59, 63, 94

Index of Subjects

- Abraham 54–55, 66, 68, 82, 85–86, 90
Adam 31
Amalek 62–63
Apostles 20–21, 44, 92–93
Atonement 15, 17
- Baptism 55–59, 61, 66, 82, 86
Binding of Isaac 34–35, 37, 85
Bronze Serpent 52, 60–62, 66, 85
- Church 25, 33, 92
Circumcision 52–55, 66, 82, 85–86, 90–91
Cornerstone 27–28, 46, 90
Covenant 3, 9–15, 32, 52, 54, 66–69, 78, 80–81, 86
Cross 24–26, 37, 41, 44, 48, 52, 54–60, 62, 65–66
- Eucharist 38–39
- Hope 27, 31, 44, 47, 55, 58–60, 62, 66, 73, 75–76, 78
- Incarnation 15, 19–20, 28, 31, 63, 89
Israel 15–17, 20, 22–23, 29, 46, 55–56, 58, 60–62, 64–66, 83–84, 92
- Joshua 52, 63, 66
Judgment 12, 14–15, 70, 76–77
- Land 29–33, 46, 58, 81, 86
Last Days 11
- Law 6–9, 13, 80, 86, 90–91
Lots 28–29
Love 1, 20
- Moses 3, 7, 11, 29–30, 37, 46, 52, 60–63, 66, 68, 70, 80, 85–86
- Pilate 48, 51
Preexistence of Jesus 18–19, 32–33, 37, 39, 46, 84, 86, 89
- Red Heifer 34–35, 42–45, 81, 85, 89
Resurrection 20, 57–58, 72–73, 78, 83
- Sabbath 70–73, 78, 82–83, 86
Second Coming 36, 46
Sinai 3, 10–12, 52, 62, 65, 67–70, 78, 80
Son of David 64–66, 84–85
Son of God 21, 32, 46, 60, 63–66, 70, 84–85, 94–95, 97–98
Son of Man 63
Suffering of Jesus 11, 15–17, 19–20, 23–26, 28–29, 34–38, 46, 48–52, 62, 68–69, 78, 86, 96
Synagogue 16, 25, 28–29, 46, 83–84
- Temple 27, 33–34, 61–62, 73–76, 78, 83, 86, 90, 92
Transfiguration 21, 95–96, 98
Typology 34–37, 40, 43, 45–46, 59, 61–63, 66
- Yom Kippur 34–43, 45–46, 81, 85, 89