

MANSE RIM

Messiah and Righteousness in Paul and His Context

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe
673*

Mohr Siebeck

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For our family, *Jaehyun, Ian, Theo*

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Seoul, South Korea 24 December 2025

Manse Rim

Αγαπήσατε δικαιοσύνην, οἱ κρίνοντες τὴν γῆν ...
δικαιοσύνη γὰρ ἀθάνατός ἐστιν

Wisdom of Solomon 1:1, 15

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	VII
Abbreviations	XV
 Chapter 1: Introduction	 1
1.1 The Shape of the Question	2
1.1.1 A Brief History of Justification in Paul	3
1.1.2 An Interpretive Impasse and Beyond	11
1.1.3 A Way Forward	15
1.2 Methodology	19
1.3 Definitions	19
1.3.1 Messiah and Paul's Christ	20
1.3.2 Ancient Jewish Messianism as a Phenomenon of Ancient Jewish Messiah Discourse	22
1.3.3 The Language of Righteousness in Paul	23
1.4 The Rationale for the Selected Texts and Comparison	25
1.5 Outline	28
 Part 1: Messiah and Righteousness in Ancient Jewish Texts	
 Chapter 2: Messiah and Righteousness in Ancient Jewish Biblical Texts	 31
2.1 Messiah and Righteousness in Samuel and Kings	33
2.1.1 Sam 24:18	34
2.1.2 Sam 26:23	35
2.1.3 2 Samuel 8:15	36
2.1.4 Summary	38
2.2 Messiah and Righteousness in the Psalms	39
2.2.1 Pss 7:9; 17:1 (OG 16:1); 18:21, 25 (OG 17:21, 25)	40
2.2.2 OG Ps 2:12	42
2.2.3 Pss 72:1–3 (OG 71:1–3); 89:15 (OG 88:15)	43

2.2.4 Ps 110:4 (OG 109:4)	45
2.2.5 Summary	50
2.3 Messiah and Righteousness in Isaiah	51
2.3.1 Isa 9:5–6 (OG 9:4–5)	52
2.3.2 Isa 11:4–5	54
2.3.3 Isa 16:5	56
2.3.4 Isa 45:13	58
2.3.5 Isa 53:11	60
2.3.6 Summary	63
2.4 Messiah and Righteousness in Jeremiah	63
2.4.1 Jer 23:5–6 OG (Jer 33:15–16 MT)	64
2.4.2 Summary	67
2.5 Messiah and Righteousness in Daniel	67
2.5.1 Dan 9:24	68
2.5.2 Summary	71
2.6 Conclusions	71
 Chapter 3: Messiah and Righteousness in Ancient Jewish Parabiblical Texts	 75
3.1 Messiah and Righteousness in Psalms of Solomon	76
3.1.1 Ps. Sol. 17:21–40	77
3.1.2 Summary	83
3.2 Messiah and Righteousness in the Qumran Texts	83
3.2.1 4Q252 (4QCommGen A) 6 V, 1–5	86
3.2.2 11Q13 2:7–18 (11QMelch; Melchizedek)	88
3.2.3 4Q521 (4QMessAp) 7 II, 4–7	91
3.2.4 Summary	94
3.3 Messiah and Righteousness in the Book of Parables	
(1 Enoch 37–71)	95
3.3.1 1 En. 38:2a	98
3.3.2 1 En. 48:10	99
3.3.3 1 En. 62:2	101
3.3.4 1 En. 39:6–7	103
3.3.5 1 En. 46:3	104
3.3.6 1 En. 49:2–3	105
3.3.7 Summary	106
3.4 Messiah and Righteousness in the Testament of Judah	106
3.4.1 T. Jud. 24:1–6	107
3.4.2 Summary	109
3.5 Messiah and Righteousness in 4 Ezra	109
3.5.1 4 Ezra 7:26–36	110

3.5.2 4 Ezra 12:31–34	111
3.5.3 Summary	111
3.6 Conclusion	112

Part 2: Messiah and Righteousness in the Letters of Paul

Chapter 4: Messiah and Righteousness in Pauline Letters Excluding Galatians and Romans

4.1 Messiah and Righteousness in 1 Thessalonians	118
4.1.1 1 Thess 4:6	119
4.1.2 Summary	121
4.2 Messiah and Righteousness in 1 and 2 Corinthians	122
4.2.1 1 Cor 1:30	122
4.2.2 1 Cor 6:11	128
4.2.3 2 Cor 5:21	133
4.2.4 Summary	139
4.3 Messiah and Righteousness in Philippians	140
4.3.1 Phil 3:9	140
4.3.2 Summary	145
4.4 Conclusion	146

Chapter 5: Messiah and Righteousness in Galatians and Romans

5.1 Messiah and Righteousness in Galatians	149
5.1.1 Gal 2:15–16	150
5.1.2 Gal 3:23–25	158
5.1.3 Gal 2:21; 3:21; 5:4–5	162
5.1.4 Summary	165
5.2 Messiah and Righteousness in Romans	166
5.2.1 Rom 3:21–26	167
5.2.2 Rom 5:16–21	175
5.2.3 Rom 10:4–10	180
5.2.4 Summary	185
5.3 Conclusion	186

Chapter 6: Conclusions

6.1 Summary of the Argument	189
6.2 The Language of Righteousness in Paul and His Interpreters	190

6.3 Messiah and Righteousness in the Context of Early Christianity 193

6.4 Final Remarks 195

Bibliography 197

Index of References 229

Index of Modern Authors 253

Index of Subjects 255

Abbreviations

Almost all of the abbreviations of primary and secondary literature conform to Billie Jean Collins et al., eds., *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL, 2014). Other abbreviations I use which are not included in *The SBL Handbook of Style* are listed below:

ASBT	Acadia Studies in Bible and Theology
GAP	Guides to Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
<i>JAJ</i>	Journal of Ancient Judaism
<i>JBTh</i>	Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie
JCT	Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies Series
JSJSup	Supplements to Journal for the Study of Judaism
OG	Old Greek
PCNT	Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament
SBEC	Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity
SBET	Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology
SBLSCS	Society of Biblical Literature Septuagint and Cognate Studies
SBLSS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
<i>SJC</i>	Scripta Judaica Cracoviensia

Chapter 1

Introduction

In the early second century, the Bishop and Martyr Polycarp of Smyrna vigorously encouraged the Christ assembly in Philippi with the following message:

Thus we should persevere, unremitting in our hope and in the down payment of our righteousness, which is Christ Jesus [τῇ ἐλπίδι ἡμῶν καὶ τῷ ἀρραβῶνι τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἡμῶν, ὃς ἐστὶ Χριστὸς Ἰησοῦς], who bore our sins in his own body on the tree, who did not commit sin nor was deceit found in his mouth; but he endured all things on our account, that we might live in him (Pol. *Phil* 8:1 [Bart D. Ehrman, LCL]).

Polycarp's words "our hope and the down payment of our righteousness, Christ Jesus" evoke Paul's exhortations to the Christ assembly in Corinth, such as "Christ became righteousness" (1 Cor 1:30) and "we became the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor 5:21). While Polycarp's phrase appears to be used prospectively, Paul affirms that Christ himself became righteousness for the Corinthians in retrospect, and that the *pneuma* – not Christ – is "our collateral" in the present (2 Cor 1:22; 5:5). The similarity might be attributed to Polycarp's appeal to Paul's authoritative teachings.¹ On the connection between these two ancient writers, Annette Merz puts it, "Polycarp anchors his faith and teaching in Pauline tradition."²

One might question whether Polycarp and Paul employ the language of righteousness *vis-à-vis* Christ in the same manner. It has been argued that Polycarp predominantly employs the term righteousness in a moral sense, referencing the example of Christ, whose endurance serves as a model for the righteousness of the Philippian assembly (Pol. *Phil* 8:1–2), especially when addressing issues such as "Valens' fall into avarice" (Pol. *Phil* 11:1).³ Then, what

¹ Benjamin Edsall, "The Reception of Paul, Peter, and James in the Apostolic Fathers," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, eds. Michael F. Bird and Scot D. Harrower (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 123–24.

² It is my translation from Annette Merz, *Die fiktive Selbstauslegung des Paulus: Inter-textuelle Studien zur Intention und Rezeption der Pastoralbriefe*, NTOA/SUNT 52 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004), 131: "dass Polykarp seinen Glauben und seine Lehre in pln Tradition verankert."

³ Michel Holmes, "Polycarp of Smyrna, Epistle to the Philippians," in *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 113; Paul A. Hartog, "Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians and the Martyrdom of Polycarp," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Apostolic Fathers*, eds. Michael F. Bird and Scot D. Harrower (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 231.

about Paul's language of righteousness? The enigmatic phrase "Christ became righteousness,"⁴ for example, has been subject to more profound theological interpretations within a soteriological framework. Although we might not have an answer to this question now, what Polycarp and Paul do share is a clear awareness of the close connection between Christ and righteousness.

My thesis primarily focuses on the language of righteousness *vis-à-vis* the messiah in ancient Jewish texts and the epistles of Paul. More broadly, the subject of my research includes ancient Jewish messianism in general and Paul's Christology in particular. Within Pauline scholarship, Paul's language of righteousness has been one of the thorny conundrums. Interpreters of Paul have fairly consistently deemed Paul's language of righteousness as distinctive and even idiosyncratic when contrasted with its conventional usage in the ancient Mediterranean world. It is my contention in this thesis that Paul's language of righteousness makes sense in the context of ancient Jewish messianism and apocalypticism. In this study, I thus explore the number of passages in ancient Jewish texts and the letters of Paul where the messiah is meaningfully linked with righteousness, analyzing the key traits of the relationship between them. Put simply, what is the relation between Christ and righteousness in the letters of Paul? How and why does Paul closely associate Christ with righteousness in just the way that he does? These are the questions that I aim to answer within this study.

It is important to clarify that my intention is not that of providing an all-encompassing investigation into the traditional theological topic of "Justification in Paul," nor do I seek to settle all the differences present in scholarly debates. Instead, this study attempts to advance exegetical and linguistic analysis of Paul's language of righteousness, especially in its relation to the messiah, in order to offer a fresh perspective on the current impasse regarding Pauline justification. Through scrutiny of this specific association, interpreters of Paul will gain a more nuanced appreciation and categorization of various aspects of righteousness language as it pertains to Paul's perception of Christ. As a result, my research will pave the way for a deeper exploration of ongoing discussions concerning both Pauline justification and Pauline Christology.

1.1 The Shape of the Question

The present chapter establishes the rationale for my argument by first providing a short overview of the history of the debate. Second, I will problematize the presuppositions and methodologies related to the subject matter. Third, this chapter will suggest a fresh perspective and methodology for addressing the current question. Finally, the structure of the study will be outlined.

⁴ On the discussion, see ch. 4.2.1.

1.1.1 A Brief History of Justification in Paul⁵

The field of New Testament and Pauline studies has a rich history of exegetical and interpretive exploration. Among the various topics that have generated intense debate, Pauline justification has been a focal point ever since Martin Luther and the Protestant reformers emphasized “justification” as the heart of Paul’s theology.⁶ However, agreement on the matter of “Justification in Paul” remains elusive, rendering the debate even more intractable than before, even within the discipline of biblical studies. In this context, a range of diverse perspectives and positions have surfaced, each advocating its own particular understanding of Paul’s theology. Indeed, over the last few decades, the Pauline concept of justification has been approached variously by numerous New Testament scholars, specifically with a focus on its original historical and literary context. A brief overview of the history of the debate in modern biblical scholarship will pave the way for our study.

a) F. C. Baur to W. D. Davies

Since Luther’s antithetical framework of *law* versus *grace* had dominated the discourse of justification in Paul for a long time, it might be good to start with the progenitor of modern Pauline criticism Ferdinand Christian Baur, who emphasizes *justification by faith* as “the chief proposition of the Pauline doctrine” (der Hauptsatz der paulinischen Lehre).⁷ Baur states: “δικαιοσύνη is a conception applicable to both Judaism and Christianity, and must thus have a higher and more general meaning; righteousness is not here a term of a particular re-

⁵ C.f., Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification*, 4th ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020); Stephen Westerholm, *Perspectives Old and New on Paul: The “Lutheran” Paul and his Critics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); David E. Aune, ed., *Rereading Paul Together: Protestant and Catholic Perspectives on Justification* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006); Magnus Zetterholm, *Approaches to Paul: A Student’s Guide to Recent Scholarship* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2009); N. T. Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters: Some Contemporary Debates* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015).

⁶ The seemingly insoluble disparity notwithstanding, a consensus was finally made with an ecumenical pronouncement between Lutherans and Catholics (*JDDJ*, 2.13) in 1999 as a result of successive dialogues since the Council of Trent in 1545, and thereafter the long, spirited between the Lutheran Church and the Roman Catholic Church debate comes to an end, in theory at least, despite disagreement from Lutheran theologians such as Gerhard Ebeling and Eberhard Jüngel. On which, see Anthony N. S. Lane, *Justification by Faith in Catholic-Protestant Dialogue: An Evangelical Assessment* (London: T&T Clark, 2002), especially Appendix II, 239–59. See further about the appraisal of *JDDJ*, McGrath, *Iustitia Dei*, 412–13.

⁷ Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ: His Life and Works, His Epistles and Teachings; A Contribution to a Critical History of Primitive Christianity*. vol. 2 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1845–1846. rept, Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003), 2:134–68, here 2:134.

ligion, but of a universal one.”⁸ Baur understood the conception of δικαιοσύνη as a personal and spiritual “moral condition” (sittliche Beschaffenheit) – being in the right relation towards God,⁹ and a majority of his contemporary scholars continued to reiterate this conception of justification. In this context, “justification by faith” was regarded as the central theme of Pauline theology, through which Christianity characterized by “free gift” was distinguished from Jewish “legalism.”

William Wrede may have been the first to contend in his *Paulus* that Pauline justification is not the center of his theology, but rather a “polemical doctrine of Paul.” Although following the Lutheran antithetical interpretation of *gift* and *performance* overall, Wrede pointed to the fact that the topic “justification” is only developed in detail in the two letters, Romans and Galatians.¹⁰ As such, for Wrede, Pauline justification is intelligible only in light of “his controversy with Judaism and Jewish Christianity.”¹¹

The centrality of the concept of justification and the distinction between Judaism and Christianity constituted a vital presupposition, particularly in Protestant biblical scholarship, and it held sway over the German Pauline scholarship up until the mid-twentieth century. This perspective can be found in the works of Rudolf Bultmann, Ernst Käsemann, Peter Stuhlmacher, and Hans Conzelmann, among others.¹² Wrede was quite correct to say that “the soul strivings of Luther have stood as model for the portrait of Paul” in their works,¹³ as they were interpreting Paul through Luther’s distinctive individual and anthropological interpretation.¹⁴

Meanwhile, influential scholars such as G. Claude Montefiore and George Foot Moore began casting critical doubts upon the traditional Lutheran stance and its view of Judaism. The rise of new perspectives on Judaism and its relation to Paul began to turn the debate in another direction.¹⁵ One example can

⁸ Baur, *Paul the Apostle*, 2:135.

⁹ Baur, *Paul the Apostle*, 2:135.

¹⁰ William Wrede, *Paul*, trans. Edward Lummis (London: Philip Green, 1907), 122–37, here 123. *Italic original.*

¹¹ Wrede, *Paul*, 123.

¹² Rudolf Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testaments*, 3 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1948–1953); ET Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel, 2 vols. (London: SCM, 1951/1955), 1:185–352; Ernst Käsemann, *Paulinische Perspektiven* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1969); ET Ernst Käsemann, *Perspectives on Paul*, trans. M. Kohl (London: SCM, 1971); Peter Stuhlmacher, *Gerechtigkeit Gottes bei Paulus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1965); Hans Conzelmann, *Grundriss der Theologie des Neuen Testaments* (München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1967); ET Hans Conzelmann, *An Outline of the Theology of the New Testament*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM, 1969).

¹³ Wrede, *Paul*, 146.

¹⁴ Ernst Käsemann, *Das Neue Testament als Kanon* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1970), 405.

¹⁵ Claude. G. Montefiore, “Rabbinic Judaism and the Epistles of St. Paul,” *JQR* 13 (1900–1): 161–217; George Foot Moore, “Christian Writers on Judaism,” *HTR* 14 (1921): 197–254.

be found in the work of the celebrated Alsatian theologian and humanitarian Albert Schweitzer. In his famous *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus*, Schweitzer claimed that “[t]he doctrine of righteousness by faith is therefore a subsidiary crater [*Nebenkrater*], which has formed within the rim of the main crater – the mystical doctrine of redemption through the being-in-Christ.”¹⁶ Schweitzer, much like Wrede, saw the limited purpose of the doctrine in the context of the “controversy with the Law” and “Jewish apocalyptic eschatology.”¹⁷ By locating the center of Paul’s theology in the mystical “being-in-Christ,” he pointed out, like Wrede, that the doctrine of justification always appears in the controversy over the Law in Romans or Galatians.¹⁸ For Schweitzer, justification given by faith and grace, not by law, is not just a forensic declaration but rather an eschatological “condition” or “qualification,” namely a resurrected “state of existence” in the Messianic kingdom, conferred as the first effect of “the being-in Christ.”¹⁹

In the same vein, W. D. Davies insisted that the idea of justification by faith is not a dogma but just one “metaphor” among others and thus should be regarded “not as the essential pivot of his thought but as a convenient polemic.” Davies maintained that the doctrine should be assessed in light of the teachings of Paul *in toto*.²⁰ For Wrede, Schweitzer, and Davies, therefore, justification is not the center of Pauline theology and is properly understood in its relation to Paul’s other significant doctrines of redemption. This notion anticipated the emergence of new and fresh perspectives on Paul.

b) Krister Stendahl to New Perspectives

After two World Wars, revisionist accounts of Paul and Judaism were taken one step further. Though he was a lone voice during his time, Krister Stendahl, a Lutheran scholar and New Testament professor at Harvard Divinity School, criticized Luther’s famous formula “*simul justus et peccator*” (simultaneously righteous and sinner) in his influential essay, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West.” Stendahl posited that Paul was not concerned about “a general and timeless human problem,” the problem of human conscience presupposed and interpreted first by Augustine and later by Luther.²¹ Rather, for Stendahl, Paul’s primary concern was the possibility of

¹⁶ Albert Schweitzer, *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1930), 220; ET Albert Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, trans. W. Montgomery (New York: Holt, 1931), 205–26, here 225.

¹⁷ Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 205, 225.

¹⁸ Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 220.

¹⁹ Schweitzer, *Mysticism*, 205, 215.

²⁰ W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism: Some Rabbinic Elements in Pauline Theology*, 4th ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 221–22.

²¹ Krister Stendahl, “The Apostle Paul and the Introspective Conscience of the West,” *HTR* 56 (1963): 199–215, here 205.

Gentiles “becoming Christians” in the time of Messiah.²² In his subsequent book *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* published in 1976, Stendahl reaffirmed that justification by faith in effect means nothing other than salvation of the Gentiles as “full and genuine heirs” of the promise of God to Abraham.²³ Following Stendahl’s exegetical and historical reorientation, a number of Pauline scholars have attempted to proffer various interpretations of justification, particularly from the perspective of Paul viewed within Judaism in the context of his Gentile mission.

Among others, E. P. Sanders, James D. G. Dunn, N. T. Wright, and those who identify themselves with the so-called “New Perspective” pronounce that justification has to do with “covenantal membership,” the inclusion of the gentile Christ-followers in the people of God. However, their emphasis varies and indeed, as Wright cautions, there is no monochrome within the new perspectives.²⁴

E. P. Sanders, mostly sympathetic to Schweitzer and his own teacher Davies, did not view Pauline justification as the central theme of Paul’s theology. In his groundbreaking book *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion*, Sanders argued that justification is “a transfer term,” denoting a transfer “from death to life, from the lordship of sin to the lordship of Christ.”²⁵ Pointing to the lack of legal terminology for repentance, forgiveness, and guilt, Sanders reaches the conclusion that justification by faith is tantamount to participation in Christ.²⁶ In other words, the meaning of righteousness is merely paralleled to life, salvation, reconciliation, and liberation, such that “participationist language” better reveals the heart of Paul’s thought better than “juristic language.”²⁷

Mostly agreeing with Sanders’ view, James D. G. Dunn in his 1992 essay “The Justice of God” and later his collected essays *The New Perspective on Paul* in 2008 highlights that justification by faith is God’s embracing people “without reference to one’s race or custom.” This idea stands against national exclusivism or ethnocentrism, hence it refers to “the justice of God.”²⁸ One of the most critical contributions of Dunn’s writing is that of unveiling the meaning of the enigmatic phrase “works of law,” reflected upon and attested by 4QMMT and other Second Temple Jewish documents, which denotes the “distinctive Jewish works/customs” not as human achievements in a legalistic sense

²² Stendahl, “Introspective,” 206.

²³ Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), 1–2.

²⁴ Wright, *Paul and His Recent Interpreters*, 91.

²⁵ E. P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 472, 500.

²⁶ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 503–6, 520.

²⁷ Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 472, 503, 520.

²⁸ James D. G. Dunn, “The Justice of God: A Renewed Perspective on Justification by Faith,” *JTS* 43 (1992): 1–22, here 15; idem, *The New Perspective on Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008).

but as the marker of “set-apartness” to God and from other nations.²⁹ For Dunn, the membership issue – the relationship between Israel and other nations – is at stake.³⁰ Thus, he strongly argues that the “mutual acceptance by those in Christ” in a social and corporate dimension, which is what previous Pauline scholarship neglected, should be integral to the traditional understanding of justification.³¹

One of the most prolific and significant New Testament scholars of today, N. T. Wright explicates in similar, but not quite identical terms, what Pauline justification really meant, averring that justification is “a subset of election” and part of Paul’s “doctrine of the people of God,” which represents one’s status within the covenant.³² Thus, for Wright, as with Sanders and Dunn, δικαιοσύνη is more or less the status of “covenant membership.”³³ Yet Wright does not abandon the traditional forensic aspect of justification but rather combines it with his own covenantal, apocalyptic, and eschatological framework. This framework involves God’s forensic declaration by which God is “in the right” in relation to his covenant, and a believer (both Jew and Gentile) is “in the right” in relation to God, becoming a member of the “sin-forgiven covenant family.”³⁴ All in all, with his own definition of justification, Wright draws a conclusion that both juristic and participationist thoughts are in effect “part of Paul’s overall covenantal theology.”³⁵ For Wright, the climax of *Heilsgeschichte* is represented by what God has done in the messiah whose covenantal faithfulness, viz., his substitutionary death and resurrection, enables those who will be raised from the dead, as the Messiah was, to become part of a new covenant family.³⁶ While he is not the first to discuss the messiah’s role in justification by faith, Wright is the first to give the most serious and thorough attention to the messiahship of Jesus, integrating it into the heart of the discussion.³⁷

c) Apocalyptic Perspectives

On the other hand, there exists another stream of interpretation on justification that draws upon their predecessors Ernst Käsemann and J. Christiaan Beker.³⁸

²⁹ Dunn, *New Perspective*, 317, 376–77; James D. G. Dunn, “4QMMT and Galatians,” *NTS* 43 (1997): 147–53.

³⁰ Dunn, *New Perspective*, 378.

³¹ Dunn, *New Perspective*, 96, 379.

³² N. T. Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 121–22.

³³ N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 216; idem, *Justification: God’s Plan and Paul’s Vision* (London: SPCK, 2009), 214.

³⁴ Wright, *Climax*, 170.

³⁵ Wright, *Climax*, 213.

³⁶ Wright, *Climax*, 214–16.

³⁷ Wright, *Paul: In Fresh Perspective*, 42–50.

³⁸ Ernst Käsemann, “‘The Righteousness of God’ in Paul,” 168–82 in *New Testament Questions of Today*, trans. W. J. Montague (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969); J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987).

Represented by Martinus de Boer, J. L. Martyn, Beverly Gaventa, and Douglas Campbell, this perspective is known as “Apocalyptic Perspective on Paul” or “the Union School.” They insightfully claim that justification should connote not only the “rectification” of the sinners, but also the rectification of the cosmos itself by emancipating it from the powers of Sin and Death. This situates Paul within the context of Jewish apocalyptic literature.³⁹

This innovative interpretation is succinctly epitomized in the statement by de Boer in his commentary on Galatians, that: “justification cannot mean only ‘to accept’ sinners but also ‘to rectify’ them, to make them righteous, ... as involving God’s powerful, apocalyptic rectifying action in the present remain inchoate.”⁴⁰ In the same way, Gaventa writes in her book on Romans: “Salvation concerns God’s powerful action in Jesus Christ to reclaim humanity, individual and corporate, from the powers of Sin and Death.... God has interceded in the death and resurrection of Jesus to break their power.”⁴¹ For Gaventa, this cosmic rectification is what Paul meant by justification. As these scholars perceive it, the true plight for Paul is not merely that of an individual human or a nation, but rather that of the entire cosmos both earthly and spiritual. Consequently, justification gains its full meaning only when considered within the context of this cosmic vista.

d) Social Implications of Justification

Viewing justification from a different angle, some biblical scholars consider social dynamics and cultural backgrounds rather than just theological or linguistic issues. One of them, for example, the renowned Norwegian scholar Nils Alstrup Dahl, offered an intriguing perspective on Paul’s justification in his collected essay, “The Doctrine of Justification: Its Social Function and Implications.” Dahl articulated the social implication of justification as follows:

It is not merely a word of consolation to troubled consciences. Neither is it simply a polemical doctrinal developed in controversies with the Jews. In what appears to be the more

³⁹ J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 33A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 263–75; Martinus C. de Boer, “Paul’s Use and Interpretation of a Justification Tradition in Galatians 2.15–21,” *JSNT* 28 (2005): 189–216; Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009); Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *When in Romans: An Invitation to Linger with the Gospel According to Paul* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2016), 22–46. Wright summarizes their distinctive emphases on “apocalyptic” as follows: “the imminent *parousia* (Käsemann), the victory of the cross (Beker), the two ‘ages’ and the two ‘tracks’ of ‘apocalyptic’ (de Boer), the three cosmic ‘agents’ (God, humans, the powers) (Martyn), the distinction between ‘sins’ and ‘Sin’ (Gaventa), or the importance of divine sovereignty over against human initiative (Campbell)” (Wright, *Paul and His Interpreters*, 216).

⁴⁰ Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 155.

⁴¹ Gaventa, *When in Romans*, 40–41.

traditional early Christian usage, the references to justification serve to remind all members of the congregation of what God has done for them and with them in Jesus Christ.... The Pauline formulation of the doctrine of justification has a clear social relevance; it implies an understanding of what Christian community is, and it provides guidelines to show the members of that community how they ought to relate to one another.⁴²

Alongside Dahl, scholars like Wayne Meeks and John Barclay also underscore, albeit in diverse voices and manners, the multiple social implications of our subject.⁴³ Particularly, Barclay accounts for justification in terms of a social value system, enunciating that justification is God's "incongruous gift," the gift granted to the unworthy. He argues that this lays the groundwork for a new "boundary-erasing" community, to the extent that it "demolishes old criteria of worth [i.e. a Jewish law] and clears space for innovative communities that inaugurate new patterns of social existence."⁴⁴ Barclay is in agreement with the "new perspective" on the original historical context and the formation of the early church, while, simultaneously, he assumes a defensible attitude toward the "old perspective" by recontextualizing the Augustinian-Lutheran tradition.

More recently and with remarkable insight, Paula Fredriksen avers, "Made right by God toward God, they [pagan Christ-followers] were likewise pneumatically enabled to make right toward each other by acting rightly toward each other."⁴⁵ To be specific, Fredriksen distinguishes between εὐσέβεια – though Paul never uses this term in his letters – and δικαιοσύνη by postulating that the Greek-speaking Jewish hearers would know the signal of εὐσέβεια as *piety* toward God (related to the first five commandments) and of δικαιοσύνη as *justice* toward others (related to the second five). Per Fredriksen, these two terms served as a code for the two primary principles of Jewish religion, the Decalogue.⁴⁶ Then, Fredriksen underlines, whenever Paul uses δικαιοσύνη in the context of his mission, it resonates with the Second Table of the Law, so that the pagan Christ-following community understood δικαιοσύνη as "a community nexus" through which they could fulfill the Law's second table with the

⁴² Nils A. Dahl, "The Doctrine of Justification: Its Social Function and Implications," in *Studies in Paul* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1977), 104–5, 108.

⁴³ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 2nd ed (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), ch. 6; John M. G. Barclay, "Pure Grace: Paul's Distinctive Jewish Theology of Gift," *ST* 68 (2014): 4–20; idem, *Paul and the Gift* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015).

⁴⁴ Barclay, *Paul and the Gift*, 572; idem, "Pure Grace," 16.

⁴⁵ Paula Fredriksen, "Paul's Letter to the Romans, the Ten Commandments, and Pagan 'Justification by Faith': For Alan Segal ז"ר," *JBL* 133 (2014): 801–8; idem, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University, 2017), 94–130, here 121.

⁴⁶ Fredriksen, "Paul's Letter to the Romans," 802–3; idem, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle*, 118–19. On this issue, she draws upon Josephus (*A.J.* 18.116–19), Philo (*Spec.* 263; *Decal.* 19), and Synoptic traditions (Mark 1:15; 10:19; 12:29–31; Matt 4:17; 5:21–22, 31–37; 22:34–40; Luke 10:25–28).

power of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁷ In the context of social justice, Fredriksen believes that justification goes beyond “membership” of non-Jews; instead, she sees it as an actual way of life, a manner of living as a “member” of the kingdom of the messiah. According to her interpretation, treating others *righteously* is Paul’s justification.

e) *Neo-traditionalists*⁴⁸

During recent discussions, a relatively large number of biblical scholars have endeavored to defend the traditional reading of justification. For example, Mark Seifrid, Peter Stuhlmacher, A. Andrew Das, Thomas Schreiner, D. A. Carson, Seyoon Kim, Stephen Westerholm, Frank Thielman, and Simon Gathercole, among others, have adopted this approach.⁴⁹ By becoming more attuned to differing emphases on anthropology, ecclesiology, eschatology, christology, and even cosmology, and by oscillating between various viewpoints on this issue, they have enriched and diversified the concept of Paul’s justification. At times, they have achieved this by mediating various positions.⁵⁰ As an example, Michael Bird states: “My own labors on justification have led to the conclusion that justification is the act whereby God creates a new people, with a new status, in a new covenant, as a foretaste of the new age. In which case, justification is forensic, apocalyptic, covenantal, and transformative.”⁵¹ Bird

⁴⁷ Fredriksen, “Paul’s Letter to the Romans,” 808; idem, *Paul*, 121.

⁴⁸ I borrow the term from Pamela Eisenbaum, “A Remedy for Having Been Born of Woman: Jesus, Gentiles, and Genealogy in Romans,” *JBL* 123 (2004): 671–702 at 673n4.

⁴⁹ Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification by Faith: The Origin and Development of a Central Pauline Theme* (Leiden: Brill, 1992); Peter Stuhlmacher, *Revisiting Paul’s Doctrine of Justification: A Challenge to the New Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001); A. Andrew Das, *Paul, the Law, and the Covenant* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2001); Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001); D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien and Mark A. Seifrid, eds., *Justification and Variegated Nomism*, 2 vols., WUNT 2.140 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001); Seyoon Kim, *Paul and the New Perspective: Second Thoughts on the Origin of Paul’s Gospel*, WUNT 140 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck/Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); Westerholm, *Perspectives*; Frank S. Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005); Simon J. Gathercole, *Where is Boasting? Early Jewish Soteriology and Paul’s Response in Romans 1–5* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002); idem, “Justification by Faith,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Pauline Studies*, eds. R. Barry Matlock and Matthew V. Novenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 422–40.

⁵⁰ For the mediating position, see Don Garlington, “The New Perspective on Paul: An Appraisal Two Decades Later,” *CTR* 2 (2005): 17–38; idem, *In Defense of the New Perspective on Paul: Essays and Reviews* (Eugen, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005); Michael F. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification and the New Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2007); idem, *An Anomalous Jew: Paul among Jews, Greeks, and Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016); Stephen J. Chester, *Reading Paul with the Reformers: Reconciling Old and New Perspectives* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2017).

⁵¹ Bird, *An Anomalous Jew*, 140.

Index of References

Old Testament/Hebrew Bible (and Septuagint)

<i>Genesis</i>		2:3	70n204
1–3	96	2:6	20n86
1:2	93	2:10	70n204
6:16 (Symmachus)	174n97	2:15	20n86
12:3	44	4:3	20n85
14	49	4:5	20n85
14:18–19	49	4:16	20n85
14:18–19a	50	6:10	70n204
15:6	153	6:15	20n85, 20n86
18:18	44	6:18	70n204
22:18	44	6:22	70n204
26:4	44	7:1	70n204
28:14	44	7:6	70n204
28:18	20n86	8:10–12	20n86
35:14	20n86	8:12	20n87
49:9–10	111	8:30	20n87
49:10	26, 86, 86n47, 94, 112	10:12	70n204
		10:17	70n204
<i>Exodus</i>		11:44	121
4:10	61n151	14:13	70n204
9:27 (9:27)	173, 174	14:15–18	20n86
12:23 (12:23)	173	14:26–29	20n86
14:31	61n151	16:21–22	136
15:13 (15:13)	173, 174	18:5	182–83, 185–86
28:4	49	19:2	121
29:7	20n87	19:6	121
29:21	20n87	20:7	121
29:37	70n204	21:10	20n85
30:10	70n204	21:12	20n85
30:29	70n204	21:20	20n87
30:36	70n204	22:32	121
40:9	20n86	24:9	70n204
40:10	70n204	25:9	89
40:15	20n87	25:13	89
		27:29	70n204
<i>Leviticus</i>		<i>Numbers</i>	
1:3	136	3:3	20n87
2:1	20n86		

7:1	20n86	10:1	20n87
7:10	20n86	12:3	20n85, 33n8
7:84	20n86	12:5	20n85, 33n8
7:88	20n86	12:7	35n21, 41
12:7	61n151	13:9–10	49
18:9	70n204	16:3	20n87
24:17	26, 94, 107n131, 108, 112	16:13	34
35:25	20n87	16:6	20n85, 33n8
		18:8	35
		20:31	35
<i>Deuteronomy</i>		22:3–4	57
7:8	173	22:8	35
9:26	173	24	34
10:8	49	24:7	20n85, 33n8
13:6	173	24:11	20n85, 33n8
15:2	89	24:13	41
15:15	173	24:15	35
17:14–20	79n16	24:16	41
21:5	49	24:18	27, 32, 34–35, 38, 71
21:8	173	26	34
30	184–85	26:9	20n85, 33n8
30:12–13	184	26:11	20n85, 33n8
30:12–14	184, 186	26:16	20n85, 33n8
32:25	119n6	26:23	20n85, 27, 32, 35, 38, 41, 55, 71
30:12–14	182		
33	26		
		<i>2 Samuel (2 Kingdoms)</i>	
<i>Joshua</i>		1:14	20n85, 33n8
1:1	61n151	1:16	20n85, 33n8
1:7	61n151	2:4	20n87
1:13	61n151	(2:5)	20n85, 33n8
1:15	61n151	2:7	20n87
8:31	61n151	3:39	20n87
12:6	61n151	5:1–5	36
		5:2	82
<i>Judges</i>		5:3	20n87
9:16	20n87	5:6–16	36
		5:17	20n87
<i>Ruth</i>		5:17–25	36
1:4	57	6:1–23	36
4:22	57	6:12–19	49
		6:13	49
<i>1 Samuel (1 Kingdoms)</i>		6:14	49
2	124	6:17	49, 57
2:1–10	94	6:18–19	50
2:10	20n85, 33n8	6:18–20	49
2:35	20n85, 33n8	7	65
7–8	59	7:12–13	79n16
7:1–17	33	7:12–14	82n29

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 7:12–17 | 53n101 | <i>2 Chronicles</i> | |
| 7:13–14 | 36 | 6:23 | 35n21 |
| 7:23 | 173 | 6:42 | 20n85, 33n8 |
| 8:1–14 | 36 | 23:7 (22:7) | 20n85, 20n87, 33n8 |
| 8:11–12 | 57 | 23:11 | 20n87 |
| 8:15 | 27, 32, 36–38, 44, 65,
72, 119n7 | 26:16–20 | 49 |
| 8:18 (8:18) | 49n87 | <i>Ezra</i> | |
| 9:1–13 | 38 | 3:2 | 66n179 |
| 10:6–11:1 | 38 | 3:8 | 66n179 |
| 11:2–12:25 | 38 | 5:2 | 66n179 |
| 12:26–31 | 38 | 10:18 | 66n179 |
| 13:1–14:33 | 38 | <i>Nehemiah</i> | |
| 15:1–20:26 | 38 | 1:7 | 61n151 |
| 19:22 | 20n85, 33n8 | 1:10 | 173 |
| 20:23–26 | 36 | 9:14 | 61n151 |
| 20:26 | 38 | 9:29 | 182n134 |
| 22 | 41 | 10:2 | 61n151 |
| 22:51 | 20n85, 33n8 | 12:26 | 66n179 |
| 23:1 | 20n85 | | |
| 23:20 | 57 | <i>Psalms</i> | |
| <i>1 Kings (3 Kingdoms)</i> | | 1:1 | 43 |
| 1:39 | 20n87 | 1:2 | 43 |
| 3:6 | 36n25 | 1:5 | 39n45 |
| 8:32 | 35n21, 41, 62 | 1:6 | 39n45, 43 |
| 8:53 | 61n151 | 2 | 32, 42n62, 44, 50, 59,
106 |
| 10:9 | 36n33, 38 | 2:1–2 | 26 |
| 12:31–33 | 49 | 2:2 | 20n85, 33n8 |
| 13:1–2 | 49 | 2:7 | 33n12, 53n101 |
| 17 | 94 | 2:7–9 | 112 |
| 18:36 | 61n151 | 2:9 (2:9) | 43, 79n16, 81, 83 |
| <i>2 Kings (4 Kingdoms)</i> | | 2:10 | 43 |
| 9:6 | 20n87 | 2:11 | 43 |
| 11:12 | 20n87 | 2:12 (2:12) | 42–43, 43n64, 50, 72 |
| 15:29 | 52 | 5:9 | 39n45 |
| 16:12–15 | 49 | 5:13 | 39n45 |
| 21:8 | 61n151 | 7 | 32, 40 |
| 23:30 | 20n87 | 7:8b–9 | 89 |
| <i>1 Chronicles</i> | | 7:9 | 27, 40–41, 50, 71 |
| 11:3 | 20n87 | 7:10 | 39n45 |
| 16:22 | 20n85, 33n8 | 7:11 | 41 |
| 17:21 | 173 | 7:12 | 39n45, 41 |
| 18:15–17 | 36 | 7:13–17 | 41 |
| 23:13 | 70n204 | 7:18 | 39n45, 41 |
| 29:22 | 20n87 | 9:8–9 | 45 |
| | | 9:9 | 39n45 |
| | | 9:19 | 44, 55 |

10:12–14	44	47:7–9	45
10:12–18	55	48:11	39n45
10:17–18	44	50:6	39n45
11:3	39n45	51:16	39n45
11:5	39n45	52:5	39n45
11:7	39n45	52:8	39n45
14:5	39n45	55:23	39n45
15:2	39n45	58:11	39n45
17	32, 41	58:12	39n45
17:1 (16:1)	27, 40, 40n52, 50, 71	64:11	39n45
17:51	20n85	65:6	39n45
18	32, 42, 42n62, 44, 50, 59	68:4	39n45
18:21 (17:21)	27, 40, 42, 50, 71	69:28	39n45
18:22–24	42	69:29	39n45
18:25 (17:25)	27, 40, 50, 71	71:2	39n45
18:26	42	71:15	39n45
18:38–51	42	71:16	39n45
18:44	42	71:19	39n45
18:51 (17:51)	33n8, 42	71:24	39n45
20	42n62	72	32, 42n62, 43, 50, 59
20:7 (19:7)	20n85, 33n8	72:1	39n45, 44
21	42n62	72:1–2	65
22:32	39n45	72:1–3 (71:1–3)	43, 50, 72, 119n7
24:5	39n45	72:1–4	53n101, 55
28:8 (27:8)	20n85, 33n8	72:2	39n45, 44
31:1	39n45	72:3	39n45, 44
31:19	39n45	72:4	44
32:11	39n45	72:7–10	44
33:1	39n45	72:8	44
33:5	39n45	72:9–10	44
34:16	39n45	72:12–14	44
34:20	39n45	72:16–17	44
34:22	39n45	72:17	44
35:24	39n45	72:20	43
35:28	39n45	75:11	39n45
37:12	39n45	82:1–2	89
37:16	39n45	84:10 (83:10)	20n85, 33n8
37:17	39n45	88:13	39n45
37:21	39n45	89 (88)	32, 42n62, 44, 59
37:25	39n45	89:1–38	44
37:29	39n45	89:2–3	55
37:30	39n45	89:4–5	33n12
37:32	39n45	89:15 (88:15)	39n45, 43, 50, 53, 57, 72
37:39	39n45	89:17	39n45
40:11	39n45	89:26–29	33n12
45	42n62, 59	89:38–37	65
45:5	39n45	89:39 (88:39)	20n85, 33n8, 45
45:8	44	89:39–53	44

89:52 (88:52)	20n85, 33n8	119:123	39n45
89:51–52	26	119:137	39n45
92:13	39n45	119:138	39n45
93:1–4	45	119:142	39n45
94:1	119n6	119:144	39n45
94:15	39n45	119:160	39n45
94:21	39n45	119:172	39n45
95:3–6	45	125:3	39n45
96:10–13	45	129:4	39n45
96:13	39n45, 45, 55	132	42n62
97:2	39n45, 45	132:3	57n124
97:6	39n45	132:10 (131:10)	20n85, 33n8
97:11	39n45	132:11	82n29
97:12	39n45	132:11–12	33n12
98:2	39n45	132:17 (131:17)	20n85, 33n8
98:3–4	82n29	138:2	57
98:9	39n45, 45	140:14	39n45
99:1–3	45	141:5	39n45
99:4	39n45, 45	142:8	39n45
101	42n62	143:1	39n45, 55
103:6	39n45	143:2 (142:2)	153, 157
103:17	39n45	143:11	39n45
104:15	20n85	144	42n62
105:26	61n151	145:7	39n45
106:3	39n45	145:17	39n45
106:31	39n45	146:8	39n45
110	32, 42n62, 48–50, 101, 106, 186	146:7–8	92
110:1	102, 112	<i>Proverbs</i>	
110:1–3	47	8	106
110:1–6	119n7		
110:2 (109:2)	26, 47, 81	<i>Isaiah</i>	
110:4 (109:4)	45, 47–48, 50, 54, 72, 94	(1:17)	51n92
110:4–7	26	(1:21)	51n92
110:5–6 (109:5–6)	50, 81, 102, 112	1:21–23	51n93
110:5–7	47	1:27 (1:26)	51n92
111:3	39n45	2:1–4	51
112:3	39n45	3:10	51n92
112:4	39n45	3:13–15	51n93
112:6	39n45	5:7	51n92, 51n93
112:9	39n45	5:8–24	51n93
116:5	39n45	5:16	51, 51n92
118:15	39n45	5:23	51n92
118:20	39n45	6:3	98n99
119:7	39n45	6:13	55
119:62	39n45	7	55
119:75	39n45	7:13–16	52n94
119:106	39n45	8:11	89
		8:23b	52

8:23b–9:6	52, 52n94, 54	32:17	51n92
9	55	32:20	58
9:3	53	32:20a	57
9:3–4	53	33:5	51, 51n92
9:3b–4	55	(33:6)	51n92
9:4–5	55	33:15	51n92
9:5	53	33:22	51
9:5–6 (9:4–5)	32, 52, 54–55, 63, 65, 72, 119n7, 189	35:5–6	92
9:6	51n92, 53	(38:19)	51n92
10:1–4	51n93	(39:8)	51n92
10:22	51n92	(41:2)	51n92
10:33–34	55	41:8	60n148, 103n116
10:34–11:1	88	41:9	103n116
11	106	41:14	173
11:1	26, 55n114, 56, 88	41:26	51n92
11:1–5	55n114, 79n16, 87, 94, 112	42:1	60, 103n116
11:1–9	65, 65n171, 66	42:1–4	52n94
11:1–10	54	42:1–9	60
11:1–11	52n94, 55	42:3–4	60
11:2–3	54	42:6 (42:6)	51n92, 60
11:2–5 (11:2–5)	79, 80, 83, 101–2	(42:10)	51n92
11:2–6	105	(42:21)	51n92
11:3b–5	54	43:1	173
11:4	55, 102	43:9	51n92
11:4–5	32, 54, 55, 63, 72, 119n7, 189	43:10	103n116
(11:5)	51n92	43:14	173
11:10	26, 55n114	43:20	103n116
11:11–16	55n114	43:26	51n92
13–23	56	44:1	60n148, 103n116
15–16	56	44:2	103n116
16:1	57	44:21	60n148
16:1–4	58	44:22–24	173
16:3	58	44:24	58
16:4	58	44:28	58, 59
16:5	32, 56, 63, 72, 189	45:1	20n85, 33n8, 58, 144
16:5a	57	45:4	60n148, 103n116
24:16	51n92	45:8	51n92, 59, 60, 71, 73, 191
26:2	51n92	45:13	32, 51n92, 58–60, 63, 72, 189
26:7	51n92	45:19	51n92
(26:9)	51n92	45:21 (42:21)	51n92
(26:10)	51n92	(45:23)	51n92
28:17	51n92	(45:24)	51n92
29:21	51n92	45:24–25	173
(32:1)	51n92	45:25	51n92
32:1–17	52n94	(46:12)	51n92
32:16	51n92	(46:13)	51n92
		(47:3)	51n92

(48:1)	51n92	62:1	51n92
(48:18)	51n92	62:1–5	173
48:20	60n148	62:1–12	173
49	106	62:2	51n92
49:2	100	(63:1)	51n92
49:6–7	100, 112	(63:7)	51n92
49:7	103n116	63:9	173
49:3	60n148	64:4	51n92
(49:13)	51n92	(64:5)	51n92
49:24	51n92		
50:8	51n92	<i>Jeremiah</i>	
51:1	51n92	3:11	64n164
51:5	51n92	4:2	64n164
51:5–8	173	(9:22–23)	124
(51:6)	51n92	9:23	64n164
51:7	51n92	11:20	64n164
(51:8)	51n92	12:1	64n164
51:11	173	17:19–20	64n167
52:3	173	17:24–27	64, 64n164
52:7	89, 91	20:12	64n164
53:10	62	21:1–10	67n182
53:10–11	62	21:11–14	64, 64n164
53:10–12	52n94	21:12	64n169
53:11 (53:11)	32, 51n92, 60, 62–63, 99	22:1–4	64, 64n164
53:11a	62	22:1–30	64
53:11–12	61	22:3	64n164, 64n169
53:12 (53:12)	61, 179	22:13	64n164
(54:14)	51n92	22:13–19	65
(54:17)	51n92	22:13–30	66
(56:1)	51n92	22:15	64n164, 65
56:1–8	173	22:24–30	65
57:1	51n92	22:30	66
(57:12)	51n92	23:1–2	65
58:2	51n92	23:3–4	65
58:8	51n92	23:4–5	65n172
(59:4)	51n92	23:5	26, 64n164, 72, 79n16, 88
(59:9)	51n92	23:5a	65, 66
(59:14)	51n92	23:5b	66
(59:17)	51n92	23:5–6	32, 33n12, 64, 64n164, 65, 72, 83, 87–88, 94, 112, 119n7, 124–25, 139, 189
(60:17)	51n92		
60:21	51n92, 52n94	23:6 (23:6)	64n164, 66, 66n179, 88
61:1	91–93	24:8–10	67n182
61:1–2	91–92, 94, 112	25:9–12	68
61:1–3	94	27:12–22	67n182
61:2	89, 91	29:10–14	68
61:3	51n92	29:15–16	64n164
(61:8)	51n92		
(61:11)	51n92		

29:20–23	67n182	(9:9)	68n187
30:8–11	64n164	9:11	61n151
31:23	64n164	(9:13)	68n187
33:14–16	64	9:14	68n187, 69
33:14–18	64n164	9:15–19	69
33:14–22	33n12	9:16	68n187
33:15	64n164	9:18	68n187
33:15–16	64, 65, 65n172	9:20–27	69
33:15–17	87	9:24	68, 68n187, 73, 103, 191
33:16	64n164	9:24–27	32, 68, 89, 112, 144, 189
33:19–26	64	9:25	70, 89, 91, 94
34:21–22	67n182	9:25–26	71
36:27–32	64	9:26	20n85, 70
42:5	64n164	12:1	89
50:7	64n164	12:1–3	94
51:10	64n164	12:3	68n187, 103n118
<i>Lamentations</i>		<i>Amos</i>	
4:20	20n85, 33n8	4:13	20n85
<i>Ezekiel</i>		9:1	174n97
20:11	182n134	9:11	26, 57n124
20:13	182n134	9:11–15	33n12
20:21	182n134	<i>Micah</i>	
34:23	79n16, 82	5:15	119n6
37:24	82	<i>Nahum</i>	
38–39	88	1:2	119n6
43:12	70n204, 174n97	<i>Habakkuk</i>	
45:3	70n204	2:4	152, 190
47:21	79n16	3:13	20n85
48:12	70n204	<i>Haggai</i>	
<i>Daniel</i>		1:1	66n179
whole	26	1:12	66n179
1–6	68	1:14	66n179
(3:27)	68n187	2:2	66n179
(3:86)	68n187	2:4	66n179
(6:23)	68n187	<i>Zechariah</i>	
7	106	4:11–14	85
7–12	68	4:14	70
7:9	98n99, 104	6:11	66n179
7:13	26, 104	6:12–13	33n12
7:14–15	112	12:7	57n124
(8:12)	68n187	<i>Malachi</i>	
8:14	68n187, 70	4:4	61n151
9	70		
9:4–19	68		
9:5–15	69		
9:7	68n187		

New Testament

<i>Matthew</i>		1:2–4	22
3:16–17	109	1:3–4	166
4:17	9n46	1:4–5	166n68
5:21–22	9n46	1:5	155, 175n102
5:31–37	9n46	1:7	175n102
8:14–17	27, 60n149	1:16–17	166, 166n68, 167n69
11:2–6	92	1:17	23, 126, 162, 179, 185
11:5	92	1:18	172
13:43	103n118	1:18–32	168
22:34–40	9n46	1:18–3:20	167
		2	164
<i>Mark</i>		2:5	172
1:9–11	109	2:7	175n102
1:15	9n46	2:27–29	141n103
10:17–22	182n134	3:1–20	168
10:19	9n46	3:3	159
12:36	39n47	3:9	137n88
12:29–31	9n46	3:16	175
		3:17	175
<i>Luke</i>		3:18	175
1:51	44n67	3:20	137n87, 137n88, 143
3:21–22	109	3:20–22	168
7:18–23	92	3:21	126, 162, 167, 175,
7:22	92		184–85
10:25–28	9n46	3:21–25	168, 174
10:28	182n134	3:21–26	27, 137n90, 149,
20:42	39n47		166–67, 174, 185, 186,
22:35–38	27, 60n149		189, 193
		3:22	16n70, 145n115, 158,
<i>John</i>			167
1:33–34	109	3:24	16n70, 173, 175n102
12:37–41	27, 60n149	3:24–25	171, 175
		3:24–26	130, 173
<i>Acts</i>		3:25	129n47, 160, 167,
1:16	39n47		169–70
2:25	39n47	3:25–26	168, 174
2:30	44n67	3:26	16n70, 145n115, 154,
3:14–15	193		158–59, 167
4:25	39n47	3:30	158
7:52	193	4:3	23, 153
8:26–35	27, 60n149	4:4	175n102
13:32–37	33n12	4:6	39n47
		4:7	137n87, 137n88
<i>Romans</i>		4:7–8	137n90, 170
1–4	176	4:8	137n87, 137n88
1:1	155	4:12	159
1:1–4	166n68	4:13	137n87

4:16	159, 175n102	6:22–23	180
4:17	165	6:23	127, 175n102
4:24–25	121n12, 166	7:4	121n12
4:25	129n47, 178–79	7:5	137n88
5–8	175	7:7	137n88
5:1	16n70, 172	7:7–8	142
5:2	175n102	7:8	137n88
5:9–10	180	7:9	137n88
5:9–11	172	7:10	175n102
5:10	175n102	7:11	137n88
5:10–12	137n90	7:12	144
5:12	137n88, 178	7:13	137n88
5:12–21	175	7:14	137n88
5:13	137n88	7:17	137n88
5:14	127	7:20	137n88
5:15	175n102, 178	7:23	137n88
5:16	175n102, 176–77, 178, 185	7:25	137n88, 175n102
5:16–21	27, 149, 167, 175, 185, 186, 189, 193	8:2	127, 137n88, 175n102
5:17	16n70, 127, 175n102, 180, 186	8:3	137n88, 137n90
5:18	175n102, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 185–86	8:6	175n102
5:18–21	190	8:10	16n70, 137n88, 175n102
5:19	178, 180	8:11	121n12, 165
5:20	137n88, 175n102	8:12–21	136
5:21	16n70, 127, 137n88, 175n102, 180	8:14–17	132n59
6:1	137n88, 175n102	8:29	130
6:1–14	129	8:30	154
6:2	137n88	8:33	154
6:3–4	127, 129n47	8:34	121n12
6:4	121n12, 130, 175n102	8:28	175n102
6:6	137n88	9–11	155, 157, 181
6:7	137n88	9:4	182
6:9	121n12, 127	9:6	182
6:10	137n88	9:30	181
6:11	137n88	9:30–31	157, 181
6:12	137n88	9:31	181
6:13	137n88	9:33	181
6:14	137n88, 175n102	10:1–4	157
6:15	175n102	10:3	181
6:16	137n88	10:4	16n70, 181–82, 193
6:17	175n102	10:4–7	149, 167, 186
6:18	137n88	10:4–10	27, 180, 185, 189, 192n5
6:20	137n88	10:5–10	182
6:21	127	10:5	181, 182, 183
6:22	137n88, 175n102	10:5–6	184
		10:6	16n70, 181
		10:6–7	184
		10:6–10	183

- | | | | |
|----------------------|---|----------------------|--|
| 10:9 | 121n12, 132, 166, 184 | 5:7 | 173 |
| 10:10 | 181, 184 | 5:9 | 147n119 |
| 10:11 | 23 | 6:1–2 | 128, 128n39 |
| 10:11–21 | 60n149 | 6:1–11 | 128 |
| 10:13 | 132 | 6:7 | 128 |
| 11:1 | 142 | 6:7–8 | 128 |
| 11:5 | 175n102 | 6:9 | 128 |
| 11:6 | 175n102 | 6:9–10 | 128 |
| 11:9 | 39n47 | 6:11 | 16, 27, 118, 122,
122n15, 127–29,
129n47, 130, 132–33,
139, 146, 189, 193 |
| 11:13 | 155 | | |
| 11:15 | 175n102 | | |
| 11:17 | 191 | | |
| 11:26 | 23 | 6:11b | 128 |
| 11:27 | 137n87 | 6:14 | 121n12 |
| 12:3 | 175n102 | 7:14 | 128n39 |
| 12:6 | 175n102 | 9:2 | 155 |
| 13:11–14 | 138 | 10:2 | 127 |
| 14:17 | 191 | 11:25 | 191 |
| 14:23 | 137n87 | 12:3 | 132 |
| 15:8 | 141 | 12:13 | 127, 129, 132 |
| 15:8–12 | 54n107 | 15:2 | 128n39 |
| 15:12 | 22, 26 | 15:3 | 22, 137n87 |
| 15:15 | 175n102 | 15:4 | 121n12 |
| 15:16 | 155 | 15:12–17 | 121n12 |
| 16:20 | 175n102 | 15:17 | 137n88 |
| | | 15:20 | 121n12 |
| <i>1 Corinthians</i> | | 15:20–28 | 145 |
| whole | 118, 149 | 15:21 | 127 |
| 1–4 | 123 | 15:22 | 165 |
| 1:11–17 | 122 | 15:23 | 121 |
| 1:12–17 | 129 | 15:24 | 147n119 |
| 1:12 | 128n39 | 15:23–28 | 186, 190 |
| 1:17 | 129 | 15:24–28 | 147, 191 |
| 1:22 | 1 | 15:26 | 127 |
| 1:24 | 136 | 15:29 | 127 |
| 1:26–31 | 124 | 15:34 | 118 |
| 1:29 | 122 | 15:45 | 23, 165 |
| 1:30 | 1, 16n70, 27, 118, 122,
122n15, 124, 126, 128,
129n47, 130, 133,
136, 138–39, 146, 189,
190n1, 192, 193 | 15:47 | 126 |
| | | 15:49–53 | 192 |
| | | 15:54–56 | 127 |
| | | 15:56 | 137n88 |
| 1:31 | 122, 124 | | |
| 2 | 126 | <i>2 Corinthians</i> | |
| 2:6–7 | 126 | whole | 118, 149 |
| 2:10 | 126 | 1:1 | 128n39, 134n70 |
| 3:2 | 127 | 1:19 | 134n70, 139 |
| 4:4 | 122n15, 147 | 1:19–22 | 134 |
| 5:5 | 1 | 1:21–22 | 129n47 |
| | | 2:13 | 134n70 |

3:3	184n146	1:12	151
3:6	134, 184n146, 191	1:16	155
3:7–8	138n91	2	156, 157
3:8	137	2:3–5	151
3:9	122n15, 137	2:7–9	141
3:9b	138n91	2:8–9	151
3:18	138	2:11–14	150
4:5	139	2:12	141, 151
4:11	127	2:12–14	151
4:14	121n12	2:13	151
5:2	138	2:14	151, 156
5:4	138	2:15–16	158
5:5	138	2:15–17	156
5:10	147	2:15–21	150, 153
5:11–21	138	2:16	16n70, 27, 143, 145n115, 149–50, 152, 154, 156–58, 165, 168, 186, 189, 193
5:15	121n12	2:16–17	156
5:17	130, 136, 138, 191	2:17	16n70, 137n87, 150, 156
5:18–19	135, 138	2:18–21	156
5:18–6:1	134	2:20	145n115, 156, 158
5:20	135	2:21	16n70, 27, 149–51, 162, 163, 166, 186, 189, 193
5:21	1, 27, 118, 122, 122n15, 133–35, 137–39, 140, 141n103, 146, 184n146, 189, 193	3:2	157
5:21–6:1	184n146	3:5	157
5:21b	134, 135	3:6	150, 153
6:1	135	3:8	23, 150, 154
6:7	122n15	3:9	153
6:14	122n15	3:11	150
7:6	134n70	3:13	23, 136
7:13–14	134n70	3:16	153
8–9	135	3:21	27, 149, 150, 162–66, 186, 189, 193
8:4	128n39	3:22	23, 137n88, 145n115, 158
8:6	134n70	3:23	161
8:16	134n70	3:23–24	27, 149, 161, 166, 186
8:23	134n70	3:23–25	158, 161
9:1	128n39	3:23–26	127
9:9	122n15	3:24	16n70, 150
9:10	122n15	3:25	182
11:7	137n87	3:26	129, 160
11:15	122n15	3:26–28	129n47
11:22	142	4:24	191
12:28	134n70	4:26	165
13:12	128n39	5:2	151
<i>Galatians</i>			
1–2	151		
1:1	121n12, 155		
1:4	137n88		

5:2–3	164	2:10	118
5:3–4	27, 149, 166, 186, 189, 193	2:14	120n11
5:4	16n70, 150	2:15	119n6
5:4–5	162	2:16	119, 137n87
5:5	150, 163, 165	2:19	119n6
6:15	166, 191	3:8	119n6
		3:11–13	119n6
		3:13	143
<i>Philippians</i>		4:1–2	119n6
whole	118, 140, 149	4:3–8	119
1:6	143, 145	4:6	27, 118–19, 121, 146, 147, 172, 190, 190n1
1:7	140	4:8	121
1:11	16n70, 140, 145–46	4:13	121
2:5–11	190	4:14–17	121
2:6–11	186	4:15–17	119n6
2:9–11	184	4:16	1204
2:12	143	4:17	192
2:15	143	5:2	119n6
3:2–11	141	5:9	119, 119n6
3:2–21	141n98	5:12	119n6
3:3	144	5:23	119n6
3:3–4	143	5:27–28	119n6
3:4–6	142		
3:6	140, 143	<i>2 Thessalonians</i>	
3:7–9	144	whole	119n9
3:9	16n70, 27, 118, 140, 142, 145, 145n115, 146, 158, 185n149, 189, 192n5, 193	1:5–6	119n9
3:9a	140	1:8–9	120n9
3:9b	140	<i>Hebrews</i>	
3:10–11	144	1:5–13	33n12
3:11	144	7:1–3	47, 47n77
3:14	145	11:36	44n67
3:17	141n103		
3:20	145	<i>1 Peter</i>	
3:21	145	2:19–25	27, 60n149
4:8	140	3:18	193
		4:14	44n67
<i>1 Thessalonians</i>			
whole	118, 149	<i>1 John</i>	
1:1	119n6	2:1–2	193
1:3	119n6		
1:6	119n6	<i>Revelation</i>	
1:8	119n6	19:11–16	193
1:10	119–21, 126		

Apocrypha

<i>Wisdom of Solomon</i>		6:2	66n179
1:1	195	9:19	66n179
1:15	195		
<i>Sirach/Ecclesiasticus</i>		<i>1 Maccabees</i>	
whole	76	14:35–41	48
46:19	20n85, 33n8	16:23–24	48
47:11	33n12	<i>2 Maccabees</i>	
48:10	94	whole	76
49:12	66n179	1:10	20n85
<i>1 Esdras</i>		<i>4 Maccabees</i>	
5:5	66n179	6:28–29	171
5:47	66n179	17:22	171
5:54	66n179		

Pseudepigrapha

<i>2 Baruch</i>		37:3	98n99
whole	26, 76	37:4	98n99, 131n56
51:5	103n118	38–44	96, 98
51:10	103n118	38:1	96n87
<i>1 Enoch</i>		38:1–3	98
whole	26, 76	38:1–6	97, 98
1:1	96n87	38:2	96n87, 98n99, 131n56
1:2	96n87	38:2a	98, 98n96, 106, 112,
1:7	96n87		120, 189
1:8	96n87	38:2a–5	113
5:6	96n87	38:3	96n87, 126, 132
10:16	96n88	38:4	96n87, 98n99, 131n56
10:17	96n87	38:4–5	98
10:18	96n88	38:5	96n87, 98
10:21	96n87	38:6	98n99, 131n56
12:4	96n87	39:4	96n87
15:1	96n87	39:4–5	103, 113
22:13	96n87	39:4–8	97
22:14	96n87	39:6	96n87, 98n96, 103,
25:4	96n87		104, 106
25:7	96n87	39:6–7	103, 104, 126, 189
27:3	96n87	39:7	96n87, 98n99, 103,
32:3	96n88		131n56, 131n57
37–71	95, 96	39:8	98n99, 131n56
37:1	96	39:9	98n99, 131n56, 131n57
37:2	98n99, 131n56	39:12	98n99, 103, 131n56
		39:13	131n57

40:1	98n99, 131n56	47:3	101
40:2	98n99, 103, 131n56	47:4	96n87, 96n88, 98n99, 99, 131n56
40:4	98n99, 131n56		96n87, 96n88, 104, 126
40:5	98n96, 131n56	48:1	104
40:6	98n99, 131n56, 131n57	48:1–7	98n96, 98n99, 131n56
40:7	98n99, 131n56	48:2	101, 120
40:10	98n99, 131n56	48:2–3	98n99, 131n56
41:1	96n91	48:3	96n87
41:2	97, 98n99, 131n56, 131n57, 131n58	48:4	100
41:3	96n91	48:4–5	100
41:6	98n99	48:4–7	100
41:7	98n99	48:5	98n99, 101, 131n56, 131n57
41:9	97	48:6	96n87, 98n96, 101, 120
42:1	126	48:7	96n87, 98n99, 100, 104, 105, 130, 131n56, 131n57, 132
42:1–2	104		100
42:6	131n56, 131n57	48:7–10	96n87
42:7	131n56	48:9	98n96, 98n99, 99, 100, 106, 112, 131n56, 131n57, 132, 189
42:8	131n57	48:10	54n107
43:4	98n99, 131n57		96n91, 104
43:41	131n58	49:1	96n87, 98n96, 98n99, 131n56
44:4	131n56	49:2	105
45–57	96	49:2a	105, 106, 144, 189
45:1	98n99, 131n56, 131n57	49:2–3	96n87, 105, 113, 120
45:2	98n99, 131n56, 131n57, 131n58	49:3	105
45:3	98n96, 101, 131n57	49:3c	96n91, 98n96, 98n99, 131n56
45:4	98n96	49:4	131n57
45:6	96n87	50:1	96n87
46:1–2	98n99, 104	50:2	98n99, 131n56
46:2	98n96, 120	50:3	98n99, 130, 131n56, 131n57
46:3	96n87, 96n88, 98n99, 104, 106, 126, 131n56, 144, 186, 189	50:4	96n87
46:3a	104	50:5	98n99, 131n56
46:3b	104	51:1–5b	97
46:4	98n96	51:2	96n87
46:5	101	51:3	96n91, 98n96, 98n99, 101, 104, 131n56
46:6	98n99, 131n56, 131n57	51:5	96n87, 98n96
46:7	98n99, 98n99, 131n56, 131n57	52:4	98n96, 100n106
46:7–8	131n58	52:5	98n99, 131n56, 132
46:8	98n99, 131n56, 131n57	52:6	98n96
47:1	96n87, 98n99, 99, 131n56	52:9	98n96, 98n99, 131n56
47:2	96n87	53:1	98n99
47:2c	98n99, 131n56, 131n57	53:1–7	97
47:2bd	98n99, 131n56		
47:2d	99		

53:2	131n56	61:11	104, 131n57
53:6	96n87, 98n96, 98n99, 99, 113, 131n56, 131n57	61:12	131n57
		61:13	98n99, 131n56, 131n57, 132
53:7	96n87	62:1	98n99
54:1	98n99, 131n56	62:2	96n87, 101, 102, 106, 112, 119n7, 126, 189
54:5	112, 126		101, 102, 154
54:6	98n99	62:3	98n96
54:7	98n99, 131n56	62:5	98n96, 126, 132
55:1	98n99	62:7	101, 120
55:2	131n57	62:7–8	98n96
55:3	98n99, 131n56	62:9	97
55:3–56:1	97	62:9–12	98n99, 131n56
55:4	98n96, 98n99, 101, 102, 112, 126, 131n56, 131n57, 154	62:10	96n87, 98n99, 131n56
		62:12	96n87
		62:13	97
56:5–7	97n92	62:13–16	98n96, 98n99, 131n56
57:3	98n99, 101, 131n56	62:14	96n87
58–69	96	62:15	98n99, 131n56
58:1	96n87	62:16	98n99, 101, 131n56
58:2	96n87	63:1	98n99, 131n56
58:3	96n87	63:2	96n87, 96n91
58:4	96n87, 98n99, 131n56, 131n57	63:3	131n57
		63:7	98n96
58:5	96n87, 96n91, 131n56	63:11	98n99, 131n56
58:6	98n99, 131n56	64:12	96n91
59:1	98n99, 131n56	65:6	98n99, 131n56
59:1–3	96n91	65:9	98n99, 131n56
59:2	98n99, 131n56	65:11	96n87, 131n57
60:1	98n99	65:12	98n99
60:2	98n99, 101	66:2	131n57
60:6	98n99, 131n56, 131n57	67:3	98n99, 131n56, 131n57
60:8	98n99, 131n56	67:8	96n91
60:10	98n96	68:1–2	98n99, 131n56
60:12	96n87	68:4	126
60:22	98n99	69:2	96n87
60:23	96n87	69:11	96n91
60:24	98n99, 131n56	69:16	98n99, 131n56, 131n57
60:25	98n99, 131n56	69:22	98n96, 131n57, 132
61:3	96n87, 98n99, 131n56, 131n57	69:26	102, 154
		69:27	98n99, 102, 103, 131n56, 154
61:4	96n87	69:29	98n96
61:5	96n91, 98n96, 98n99, 131n56	69:29b	96
		69:29e	98n96, 98n99, 131n56
61:8	98n96, 98n99, 101, 131n56	70	96
		70:1	98n96, 98n99, 131n56
61:8–9	102, 154, 186	71	96
61:9	98n99, 131n56, 131n57	71:1	98n99
61:10	98n96		

71:2	131n56	100:5	96n87
71:3	96n87, 96n88	100:7	96n87
71:3–4	96n91	102:4	96n87
71:10	98n99	102:6	96n87
71:12	98n99	102:10	96n87
71:13–14	98n99	103:1	96n87
71:14	96n87, 98n96	103:9	96n87
71:15	131n57	104:2	103n118
71:17	98n96, 98n99, 131n56, 131n57	104:6	96n87
77:3	96n88	104:12	96n87
81:4	96n87	104:13	96n87
81:7	96n87	106:18	96n87
82:4	96n87, 96n88	108:14	96n87
84:1	96n87	<i>4 Ezra</i>	
85:6	96n87	whole	26, 76
90:40	96n87	7:21	182n134
91:3	96n87	7:26	110
91:4	96n87, 96n88	7:26–36	109, 110, 111, 121, 189
91:10	96n87	7:26–42	110
91:12	96n87	7:28	109
91:13	96n87	7:28–29	109, 110
91:17	96n87	7:28–32	144
91:18	96n88	7:29	109
91:19	96n88	7:31	110
92:3	96n87, 96n88	7:32	110, 113
92:4	96n87	7:33–36	110
93:2	96n87	7:35	110
93:5	96n88	10:27	110
93:6	96n87	10:44	110
93:10	96n87, 96n88	11:37–12:1	109
94:1	96n87, 96n88	12:31	111
94:3	96n87	12:31–34	109, 111, 186, 189
94:4	96n87	12:32	109, 111
94:11	96n87	12:33	111
95:3	96n87	12:34	111
95:7	96n87	13:3–13	109
96:1	96n87	13:25–52	109
96:4	96n87	13:36	110
96:8	96n87	14:9	109
97:1	96n87		
97:3	96n87	<i>Jubilees</i>	
97:5	96n87	whole	76
98:12	96n87		
98:13	96n87	<i>Pseudo-Philo (LAB)</i>	
98:14	96n87	whole	76
99:3	96n87	23:10	182n134
99:10	96n88		
99:16	96n87		

<i>Letter of Aristeeas</i>		8:22	79
127	182n134	8:23	77n8, 79n15
		8:24	77n8, 79n15
<i>Odes of Solomon</i>		8:25	77n8, 79n15
3:10	20n85	8:26	77n8, 79n15
4:13	20n85	9:2	77n8, 79n15
14:14	20n85	9:3	77n8
14:27	20n85	9:4	77n8
		9:5	77n8, 79n15
<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>		9:7	77n8
whole	26, 76, 112, 113, 120	10:3	77n8, 79
1:2	77n8	10:5	77n8, 79n15
1:3	77n8	13:0	77n8
1:8	79	13:6	77n8
2:3	79	13:7	77n8
2:10	77n8, 79n15	13:8	77n8
2:11–14	79	13:9	77n8
2:15	77n8, 79n15	13:11	77n8
2:18	77n8	13:12	79
2:32	77n8, 79n15	14:1	79
2:33	79	14:2	77n8
2:34	77n8	14:2–3	182n134
2:35	77n8	14:9	77n8
2:36	79	15:3	77n8
3:0	77n8	15:6	77n8
3:3	77n8	15:7	77n8
3:4	77n8	15:8	79n15
3:5	77n8	15:12	79n15
3:6	77n8	16:7–8	79
3:7	77n8	16:15	77n8
3:11	77n8	17	77, 77n9, 81, 87, 154, 186, 189
4:4	79		
4:6	79	17–18	33n12
4:8	77n8	17:4	82n29
4:24	77n8, 79, 79n15	17:4–20	82
4:25	79	17:7	82
5:1	77n8, 79n15	17:19	77n8, 77n9
5:5	79	17:21–32	54n107
5:6	79	17:21–40	77, 79, 83, 119n7
5:17	77n8	17:22	81
6:1	79	17:23	77n8, 77n9, 80, 80n18, 81
6:4	79		
7:2	79	17:24	81
7:12	79	17:23–25	80
8:6	77n8	17:26	77n8, 77n9, 82
8:7	77n8	17:29	77n8, 77n9, 80, 82
8:8	77n8, 79n15	17:32	20n85, 77n8, 77n9, 77n10, 83, 112
8:10	79		
8:11	79	17:35	81, 102

17:35–40	79, 80	<i>Testament of Judah</i>	
17:37	77n8, 77n9, 80	whole	76
17:40	77n8, 77n9, 80, 82	21:1–4	108
18	77, 77n9	24	107, 112, 125
18:0	20n85, 77n10	24:1	108, 112, 125
18:5	20n85, 77n10	24:1–6	107, 108, 109, 186, 189
18:7	20n85, 77n8, 77n9, 77n10, 80, 81, 82	24:2	108
18:7–8	77n9, 79, 80	24:6	108, 125
18:8	77n8	25:3	112
		<i>Testament of Levi</i>	
<i>Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs</i>		18	107
whole	106, 112	18:2	112
		18:3	108
<i>Testament of Dan</i>			
5:10–11	90n65, 112		

Dead Sea Scrolls

<i>CD</i>		3:20	89
whole	26	4:2	84
1:1	84	5:2	86n48
1:16	84	5:4	84
4:3	86n48	5:6–8	182n134
5:18	89	5:9	86n48
7:14–21	107	6:11	84
7:18–21	86n48	8:2	84
12:23–13:1	84	9:11	84
14:19	84	9:14	84
19:10–11	84	10:20	84
20:1	84	20:20	84
20:20	84		
		<i>IQSa</i>	
<i>IQH</i>		1:2	86n48
xv(vii) 24	103n118	2:3	86n48
		<i>IQSb</i>	
<i>IQIsa</i>		2:27	107
whole	86n48	3:22	86n48
		<i>IQM</i>	
<i>IQIsaa</i>		whole	26
whole	60n147	1:1	89n63, 90n65
		1:3	89n63
<i>IQIsab</i>		1:4	87n54
whole	60n147	1:6	87n54
		1:7	89n63
<i>IQS</i>		1:9	87n54, 89n63
whole	26		
1:5	84		

1:10	89n63	<i>4Q161</i>	
1:11	89n63	whole	86n48, 87, 112, 125
1:12	87n54	11–21	54n107
1:13	89n63	8–10 III, 15–19	87, 87n52
1:14	89n63	8–10 III, 3, 7–8	87n54
1:15	112		
1:16	89n63	<i>4Q174</i>	
3:6	89n63	whole	33n12, 86n48, 87, 125
3:9	89n63		
11:6–7	107	<i>4Q252</i>	
11:11	87n54	whole	26, 33n12, 87, 94, 112,
13:2	112		119n7, 125, 139, 189
13:9	90	6 V, 1–5	86, 112
13:10	84, 89, 89n63, 90		
13:16	89n63	<i>4Q259 [1QSe]</i>	
14:17	89n63	2:10	84
15:2	87n54		
16:3	87n54	<i>4Q266</i>	
16:6	87n54	whole	84
16:8	87n54	11	182n134
16:11	89n63		
17:5–9	89	<i>4Q269</i>	
17:6–7	90	whole	84
17:8	90, 112		
17:14	87n54	<i>4Q270</i>	
18:1	112	whole	26
18:2	87n54		
18:4	87n54	<i>4Q285</i>	
19:10	87n54	whole	86n48, 87, 90n65, 112,
19:13	87n54		125
		4, 5	87n54
<i>1QpHab</i>		5 VII, 1–6	88, 88m56
2:12	87n54		
2:14	87n54	<i>4Q287</i>	
3:4	87n54	whole	26
3:9	87n54		
4:5	87n54	<i>4Q375</i>	
4:10	87n54	whole	27
6:1	87n54		
6:10	87n54	<i>4Q377</i>	
9:7	87n54	whole	27
<i>1Q28b</i>		<i>4Q381</i>	
2.22–5.29	54n107	whole	27
<i>1Q30</i>		<i>4Q382</i>	
whole	26	whole	27

<i>4QPseudo-Ezekiel</i>		<i>11Q13</i>	
whole	94	whole	27, 90, 94, 112, 119n7, 120, 125, 144, 154, 186, 189
<i>4Q458</i>		2:5	89
whole	27	2:6–8	90
<i>4Q495</i>		2:7	91
whole	84	2:7–18	88, 112
<i>4Q504</i>		2:8	89
6	182n134	2:9	89–91
<i>4Q521</i>		2:13	89–91
whole	27, 94, 125, 144, 154, 186, 189	2:13–14	89
2 II, 1	93	2:14	90, 112
2 II, 1–12	92, 112, 113	2:18	91
2 II, 2–3	93	2:19	91
2 II, 4–6	93	2:19–20	91
2 II, 4–7	93	2:20	91
2 II, 5–7	125	2:24	84
2 II, 6	93	2:25	89
2 II, 7	93	<i>11Q14</i>	
2 II, 8	92–93	whole	86n48, 87, 125
2 II, 12	92–93	<i>11Q19</i>	
7 II, 4–7	91, 113, 120, 125	whole	86n48

Early Jewish Literature

Philo		Josephus	
<i>On the Decalogue</i>		<i>Jewish Antiquities</i>	
19	9	1.180	46
<i>Allegorical Interpretation</i>		13.301	86n43
3.79	46, 46n74	14.487–15.10	86n48
<i>On the Life of Moses</i>		18.116–19	9
1.290	107n131	<i>Jewish War</i>	
2.2–3	46	6.310–12	107n131
<i>On Mating with the Preliminary Studies</i>		6.438	46, 46n73
86–87	182n134		
<i>On Rewards and Punishments</i>			
95	107n131		
<i>On the Special Laws</i>			
263	9		

Rabbinic Literature

<i>Genesis Rabbah</i>		<i>b. Meg.</i>	
49:8	44n67	12a	58n138
97	54n107		
<i>Exodus Rabbah</i>		<i>b. Sahn.</i>	
13:1	44n67	93b	54n107
		97a	44n67
<i>Song of Songs Rabbah</i>		Targumim	
2:13	44n67	<i>Targum of the Writings</i>	
<i>Ruth Rabbah</i>		Ps 72:1	44n65
8:2	54n107	Ps 89:51–52	44n67
<i>Midrash Psalms</i>		<i>Targum Jonathan</i>	
1:2	39n47	Isa 52:13	27, 60n150
8:1	39n47	Isa 53:10	60n150
18:1	39n47	<i>Targum Onqelos</i>	
72:6	44n65	Gen 49:10–11	86n47
<i>Babylonian Talmud</i>		<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>	
b. B. Bat.		Gen 49:10	86n47
14b	39n47		
15a	39n47		

Christian Literature

Polycarp		Justin	
<i>The Letter to the Philippians</i>		<i>Dialogue with Trypho</i>	
8:1	1	whole	68
8:1–2	1	13	194
11:1	1	52	194
Clement of Rome		Aquinas	
<i>1 Clement</i>		<i>Summa Theologica</i>	
31:2	194	whole	166
32:4	194		

Graeco-Roman Literature

Dio Chrysostom

Orations (The Trojan Discourse)

11.121 174n97

Livy

Ab Urbe Condita

8.9.9–10 172

Plutarch

De recta ratione audiendi

whole 12

Seneca

De clementia

whole 12, 166

Inscriptions

Bullettino del Museo dell'Impero Romano

11 174n97

Cos

80 174n97

347 174n97

Lindos

2.425 174n97

Tempelchronik von Lindos

B 49, Z. 48–50 174n97

*SEG**LIV.796* 174n97

Index of Modern Authors

- Achtemeier, Elizabeth R. 32, 72
Atkinson, Kenneth 80
Auld, A. Graeme 36–37
Austin, J. L. 14
- Baltzer, Klaus 61
Barclay, John M. G. 9, 156, 160
Bates, Matthew W. 160
Baur, F. C. 3, 4
Beker, J. Christiaan 7, 12
Bender, Wilhelm 123
Bird, Michael 10, 180
Block, Daniel I. 61
Boakye, Andrew K. 165
Bockmuehl, Markus 142
Brueggemann, Walter 37
Bultmann, Rudolf 4, 14, 192
- Campbell, Douglas 8, 16–19, 190, 193
Carson, D. A. 10
Chae, Young S. 81
Collins, John J. 68, 80, 82, 85–86, 94, 100, 109
Conzelmann, Hans 4
Craddock, Fred B. 141
Cremer, Hermann 32, 72
- Dahl, Nils Alstrup 8, 9, 127, 129, 130
Das, A. Andrew 10
Davenport, Gene 80–81, 83
Davies, W. D. 5
de Boer, Martinus 8
de Jonge, Marinus 80–81, 108–9
deSilva, David 80
Donaldson, Terence L. 163
Dunn, James D. G. 6, 7, 136, 143, 160, 177, 191
- Ehrensperger, Kathy 187, 191
Eisenbaum, Pamela 187, 191
- Elliott, Neil 187, 191
- Fahlgren, K. H. 32, 72
Flowers, Michael 89, 90
Fredriksen, Paula 9, 10, 187, 191
- Gaventa, Beverly Roberts 8, 191
Gaston, Lloyd 163, 187, 191
Gathercole, Simon J. 10, 169, 181
Goldingay, John 61, 62, 69
Gray, Alison Ruth 42
Gupta, Nijay 160
- Hamilton, Mark W. 34
Hannah, Darrell D. 96, 101
Heil, John 123
Hooker, Morna D. 135–36, 160, 180
Hugenberger, Gordon 61
- Jeong, Donghyun 130
Jewett, Robert 166, 177
Jipp, Joshua W. 16, 17, 18, 19, 180, 190, 193
Johnson Hodge, Caroline E. 163, 187, 191
- Kautzsch, Emil 31, 72
Käsemann, Ernst 4, 7, 14, 161, 191–92
Keck, Leander E. 178
Keener, Craig S. 135, 136
Kim, Seo-Jun 173, 174
Kim, Seyoon 10
Kirk, J. R. Daniel 178
Klausner, Joseph 80
Koch, Klaus 32, 72
Kruse, Collin 136
Kugler, Robert A. 106
Kwakkkel, Gert 40
- Lappenga, Benjamin 24
Lee, Max J. 13, 129, 152, 153

- Lee, Sang Mok 160
 Litwa, M. David 136, 146
 Longenecker, Bruce 12

 Martyn, J. Louis 8, 117, 161, 191–92
 Maston, Jason 136
 Mays, James L. 50–51
 McDonough, Sean M. 11, 12, 14, 195
 McMurray, Patrick 172–73
 Meeks, Wayne 9
 Merz, Annette 1
 Meyer, Nicholas A. 179
 Montefiore, G. Claude 4
 Moo, Douglas J. 177
 Moore, George Foot 4
 Morgan, Teresa 160
 Mroczek, Eva 40

 Nanos, Mark D. 187, 191
 Newsom, Carol A. 69, 70
 Nickelsburg, George W. E. 99, 103, 106
 Novenson, Matthew V. 21, 23, 85

 Oakes, Peter 160
 Oegema, Gerbern S. 85

 Payne, David 61, 62
 Pomykala, Kenneth 81
 Puech, Émile 84, 91, 93

 Rad, Gerhard von 32, 72
 Rainbow, Paul 90
 Roberts, J. J. M. 45, 52, 58
 Rosenberg, Joel 35

 Sanders, E. P. 6, 7, 117
 Schliesser, Benjamin 127, 161–62

 Schmid, Hans Heinrich 32, 73
 Schnelle, Udo 126, 127, 129–30, 132
 Schreiber, Stefan 172
 Schreiner, Thomas R. 10, 169
 Schultz, Richard 61
 Schweitzer, Albert 5, 6, 14, 191–92
 Seifrid, Mark A. 10, 180, 184
 Sharp, Matthew 172
 Smith, Henry P. 31, 72
 Smith, Jonathan Z. 19
 Smith, Richard G. 32, 38
 Stegman, Thomas D. 136
 Stendahl, Krister 5, 6
 Stone, Michael E. 110
 Stowers, Stanley K. 147, 163, 170–71, 173, 187, 191
 Stuhlmacher, Peter 4, 10
 Summer, Stephen 55
 Sweeney, Marvin 66

 Thielman, Frank 10
 Thiessen, Matthew 157, 163, 187, 191

 VanderKam, James C. 97, 99, 103, 106
 VanLandingham, Chris 13, 14, 192

 Wagner, J. Ross 184
 Weinfeld, Moshe 32, 37, 72
 Westerholm, Stephen 10, 156, 170
 Whitlam, Keith W. 32, 37, 72
 Willgren, David 43
 Williams, Sam K. 165
 Williamson, H. G. M. 54
 Wolter, Michael 11, 12, 14
 Woude, A. S. van der 85, 89
 Wrede, William 4, 5
 Wright, N. T. 6–7, 14, 117, 192, 193

Index of Subjects

- Abraham 6, 44, 46–47, 50, 153, 164–65, 194,
Adam 175–79
ancient Jewish messianism 2, 14–15, 19,
22–23, 27, 40, 77, 117, 130, 191–92
ancient Jewish texts 2, 19, 27–28, 33, 113,
117, 120, 144, 146, 166, 189
Antioch 151, 156
Antiochus IV. 68, 71
apocalyptic, apocalypticism 2, 5, 7–8, 10,
14, 68, 89, 95, 103, 105, 110, 113, 117,
125, 127–28, 130, 132–33, 135, 139,
145–46, 161–62, 165–66, 185, 187, 189,
191–92
Apologist Fathers 193–94
apostolic 134–35, 138–41
Apostolic Fathers 193–94
Azazel 97, 102, 113, 126
- baptismal, baptism 109, 127–33, 138–40,
149, 157, 189–91, 193
Belial 88–90, 94, 113
believers 18, 119–23, 126, 129, 130,
132–35, 138, 140, 151, 153–56, 158,
160, 163, 166, 179–80, 186, 190, 193
- celestial immortality 184, 189, 192, 195
Christ-followers 6, 9, 120, 128, 130, 135,
139, 141, 146, 151, 156, 160, 163, 179,
180
Christ-event 130, 156, 167, 173, 175, 184,
186, 189
Christianity 3, 4, 83, 96, 193, 195
Christology 2, 10, 16, 18, 28
circumcision 141, 150–51, 157, 163–64,
191
covenant 36, 72, 191
covenant membership 7, 14, 192
- eschatological, eschatology 5, 7, 10, 14,
16, 17, 20, 22, 40, 69, 70–71, 73, 75,
84–89, 94–96, 98–99, 103–13, 117–28,
137, 139–40, 146, 149, 154, 158,
161–62, 164–66, 168, 174, 176, 182–92
eschatological life 137, 140, 158, 164–65,
168, 174, 176, 183, 185–87, 190–91
eschatological righteousness 69, 103, 113,
117, 139, 146, 149, 154, 158, 165, 168,
186, 189–92
- David 26–27, 33–50, 52–65, 71–72, 75,
77, 82, 86–88, 90, 125, 170
David king 44, 47, 50, 52–58, 62, 79–80,
83, 94, 112, 124
Dead Sea Scrolls 83, 94–95, 107
- flesh 142–44, 150, 156–57, 168
- gentile(s) 6, 7, 22, 26, 50, 59–60, 77,
79, 82, 120–21, 127–29, 143, 150–51,
154–58, 163–68, 172, 174, 181, 187,
191–94
grace 3, 5, 15, 89, 91, 135, 167, 175, 178
Greco-Roman 16–18, 129, 153, 172, 174,
179
Grundbegriff 13–14
- Hasmoneans 82
- Jerusalem 36, 46–47, 49, 57, 69, 71,
77–78, 81, 86, 110, 151, 165, 187
Jews 8, 22, 79, 147, 150, 154–58, 164–68,
181–82, 187, 191–92
Joshua 70
Judaism 3–6, 22, 73, 77, 83
justice and righteousness 17, 36–38, 44,
50–54, 64, 72, 75, 87–88, 112, 119–20,
168, 190

- justification 2–19, 24, 28, 31, 117, 149–50, 156, 165, 169, 176–77, 190, 192
- law 3, 5–6, 9, 15, 37, 42, 46, 64, 86, 89, 126, 140, 142–45, 150–68, 175, 181–87, 189, 191
- Melchizedek 45–50, 69, 72, 86, 88–91, 94, 112, 125
- messianic figure(s) 26, 27, 70–73, 75–76, 86, 94, 95, 98, 104, 108, 109, 112
- pagan(s) 9, 121, 128–30, 137–38, 147
- participation 6, 7, 49, 117, 127, 130, 132, 136, 139, 160–61, 179, 180, 193
- Peter 151, 155–57
- pneumatic, pneuma 1, 121, 126, 128, 130–40, 144–46, 149–50, 157–58, 162–66, 172, 186–87, 189–92–193, 195
- resurrection 7–8, 18, 93, 106, 110, 120–21, 127, 130, 132, 137, 140, 144–46, 149, 159, 165–66, 175–76, 179–80, 185–86, 190–91
- Righteous One 17–18, 60–62, 72, 98–100, 106, 112, 168, 193
- righteousness language 2, 13–15, 23, 27, 31, 39, 44, 61, 71–73, 75, 77, 82, 84, 104, 112–13, 118, 121–22, 129, 134, 149, 152, 167, 181, 189, 192–193, 195
- salvation 6, 20, 59–60, 66, 69, 72, 91, 100, 109, 123, 143, 164, 174, 177, 182–84
- Saul 34–36, 49
- Second Temple period 49, 96, 109
- Septuagint 25, 46, 48, 152
- Silvanus 134
- Son of Man 26, 97, 95, 100–102, 104, 112, 120, 132
- spirit 10, 54, 60, 78–80, 89–93, 98–107, 125–27, 131–32, 138, 140, 165
- temple 46, 57, 59, 70–72, 171
- theology 3–7, 12–14, 19, 68, 192
- Timothy 134
- Titus 134, 151
- transfer 6, 117, 130, 132–33, 140, 166, 171, 187, 192–93
- Zedekiah 66–67
- Zerubbabel 70
- Zion 57, 110