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The Historical Jesus' Death as 'Forgiveness of Sins'

A Comparative Study of Paul and Matthew

Mohr Siebeck

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Table of Contents

Abbreviations

Abbreviations follow those suggested in Billie Jean Collins, Bob Buller, and John F. Kutsko, *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: SBL, 2014), with exception of the abbreviations listed below.

AJEC	Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity
AKG	Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte
CTHP	Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy
HSHJ	Tom Holmén and Stanley E. Porter, eds. *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*, 4 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2011).
JHC	*Journal of Higher Criticism*
JSHJ	*Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus*
JSJSup	Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism
JTCT	Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies
JVG	N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, vol. 2 of *Christian Origins and the Question of God* (London: SPCK, 1996).
NCC	New Covenant Commentary
NGS	New Gospel Studies
NTT	New Testament Theology
PNTC	Pillar New Testament Commentary

Chapter 1

Thesis and Introduction

1.1. Thesis

This volume aims to discover whether the historical Jesus understood his death as a means of forgiveness by comparing Paul and Matthew's treatment of these themes. Despite the strong tie between Jesus' death and forgiveness of sin in nascent Christianity, of the close connection of the two themes is treated as a subsidiary issue in much historical Jesus research. This obvious attenuation of the significance of their close relationship leads us to question whether their close relationship originated with the historical Jesus: is this interpretation a true understanding of the historical Jesus, or a post-Easter theology? This central question demands an in-depth examination of their relationship in the historical Jesus' mind. The investigation will be conducted through a comparison of the earliest Christian documents written by Paul and the Gospel of Matthew. The result will then be compared against Jewish writings contemporary to Jesus, to uncover whether any martyrdom accounts attribute an expiatory effect to the deaths of the martyrs.

Therefore, the aim is twofold: (1) to trace the historical Jesus' understanding of his own death, and (2) to compare Paul and Matthew's treatment of Jesus' forgiving death. Just as current scholars express a diverse range of views on the relationship between Jesus' death and the forgiveness of sins, scholarly comparisons between Paul and Matthew yield diverse results. More importantly, none deals with the connection between Jesus' death and remission in Paul and Matthew as a discussion topic. Through comparing the views of Paul and Matthew on this specific issue, this volume aims to show that Paul and Matthew correspond to one another on the issue of the strong affinity between Jesus' death and forgiveness, and that the historical Jesus may have understood his death as a means of forgiveness, as they describe.

1.2. The Necessity of the Study

1.2.1. The Importance of Forgiveness for Early Understandings of Jesus' Death

1.2.1.1. The Earliest Confession – 1 Corinthians 15:3

"Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures," together with "he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3b, 4) are among the first Christian confessions. The NT gives ample evidence that the earliest Christian communities felt it was important to summarize their essential convictions in short creedal formulae. The confession in 1 Corinthians 15 is not only one of the earliest confessions but also one of the most important. The first portion of the received tradition is the so-called "dying formula" (see section 4.3.2). Hengel accurately indicates that this "is the most frequent and most important confessional statement in the Pauline epistles and at the same time in the primitive Christian tradition."[1]

It must be noted that this significant confessional statement is "the recitation of a very ancient Christian creed."[2] Two words require attention: 'recitation' and 'ancient.' First, the statement is probably Paul's *recitation* of an established tradition. The words "I handed on to you as of first importance what I in turn had received" (1 Cor 15:3a) indicate that, following the practice of Jewish teachers, Paul passed on to his converts the tradition that he received from others at the beginning of his Christian experience. This implies that the content was probably well-preserved in its original form. Because of this, the confessional statement naturally includes some un-Pauline idioms: "'sins' in the plural" and "'according to the scriptures.'"[3]

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[1] Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion in the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*, trans. John Bowden (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 37.

[2] John P. Meier, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, vol. 1 of *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 46.

[3] Dale C. Allison, *Constructing Jesus: Memory, Imagination, and History* (London: SPCK, 2010), 405n69. In his *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, trans. Norman Perrin (London: SCM, 1966), 104, Joachim Jeremias comments that these terms are "*foreign to Paul*." Gerd Theissen and Annette Merz also put these terms under '*un-Pauline phraseology*' (*The Historical Jesus: A Comprehensive Guide*, trans. John Bowden [London: SCM, 1998], 487), and contend that "its pre-Pauline origin is certain" (488). Other scholars who understand that the language of the text is not typically Pauline include, Paul J. Brown, *Bodily Resurrection and Ethics in 1 Cor 15: Connecting Faith and Morality in the Context of Greco-Roman Mythology*, WUNT II/360 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 116; Hans Conzelmann, "On the Analysis of the Confessional Formula in I Corinthians 15:3–5," *Interpretation* 20 (1966): 15–25, 18; Birger Gerhardsson, "Evidence for Christ's Resurrection according to Paul: 1 Cor 15:1–11," in *Neotestamentica et Philonica: Studies in Honor of Peder Borgen*, ed. David E. Aune, Torrey Seland, and Jarl Henning Ulrichsen, NovTSup

Second, the tradition is *ancient*. Paul clarifies that he also *received* this tradition as the first half of v.3 indicates. Since Paul explicitly introduces this as a received tradition, it is a pre-Pauline tradition. It is likely Paul delivered the tradition while he visited Corinth (ca.51 CE).[4] If so, its existence can demonstrate that, "within twenty years of Jesus' death, the belief that his death somehow dealt with sins was already widespread."[5] Moreover, it is likely Paul received this tradition in the 30s CE. As an option for the time of Paul's reception, Sim stresses that "it is probable that Paul received it when he visited Jerusalem some three years after his conversion around the year 36 CE."[6] Alternatively, considering the importance of the tradition, Paul may have received the tradition at the time of his conversion.

This well-preserved and widespread belief shows a close relationship between the concepts of Jesus' death and sin, through the assertion that Jesus' death was "for our sins": a direct correlation between the death of Jesus of Nazareth and the remission of sin. The widespread existence of this conviction in the rest of the NT[7] strongly supports the argument that the early church equated the death of Jesus on the cross with the solution to the abolition of sin. This inextricable link between the two continued well into the earliest post-NT literature.

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106 (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 73–91, 80. If Paul himself formulated this traditional statement, then he would have used different expressions. Günther Bornkamm, *Paul*, trans. D.M.G. Stalker (1971; repr., Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 133, states, for Paul, "sin practically always occurs in the singular." For Paul's use of ἁμαρτία, see Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 101–2. Moreover, instead of 'according to the scriptures,' Paul normally says 'as it is written' or similar utterances.

[4] That Paul "handed on to [the Corinthians believers]" hints at the time of his receiving the tradition.

[5] Tobias Hägerland, *Jesus and the Forgiveness of Sins: An Aspect of His Prophetic Mission* (Cambridge: CUP, 2011), 92. This received tradition is the very first and earliest creed of the early church and it "became the bedrock of [her] faith" (Bornkamm, *Paul*, 113).

[6] David C. Sim, "The Family of Jesus and the Disciples of Jesus in Paul and Mark: Taking Sides in the Early Church's Factional Dispute," in *Paul and Mark: Comparative Essays Part I Two Authors at the Beginnings of Christianity*, ed. Oda Wischmeyer, David C. Sim, and Ian J. Elmer, BZNW 198 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 73–97, 75. For a detailed discussion of the date of Paul's receiving the tradition, see section 4.4.1.1.

[7] For example, Matthew 26:28; Mark 10:45; Acts 5:30–31; Ephesians 1:7; Titus 2:14; Hebrews 9:28; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5. Indeed, as Roland Deines states, "the atoning death of Jesus on the cross for the remission of sins is the core of the message of salvation in the New Testament" ("Biblical Viewpoints on Repentance, Conversion, and Turning to God," in *Acts of God in History: Studies Towards Recovering a Theological Historiography*, ed. Christoph Ochs and Peter Watts, WUNT 317 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013], 255).

1.2.1.2. The Early History – the Epistle of Barnabas 5:1, 7:3

The Epistle of Barnabas, which is generally dated sometime between 70 and 135 CE, "was probably a popular text in the early Church."[8] Seen as the "[summary of] the events of the cross, [and being] inspired literally by Mt,"[9] this epistle closely relates the death of Jesus and forgiveness of sins in line with the *kerygma* preserved in 1 Corinthians 15. If this is "one of the earliest contributions outside the New Testament to the discussion of questions that have confronted the followers of Jesus since the earliest days of his ministry,"[10] and the idea of Jesus' death granting forgiveness was vital for them, we would expect to find the link between Jesus' death and forgiveness of sins expressed in this epistle.

In *Barnabas* 5:1, the author states that "it was for this reason that the Lord endured the deliverance of his flesh to corruption, so that we might be cleansed by the forgiveness of sins, that is, by his sprinkled blood (Εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ ὑπέμεινεν ὁ κύριος παραδοῦναι τὴν σάρκα εἰς καταφθοράν, ἵνα τῇ ἀφέσει τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἁγνισθῶμεν, ὅ ἐστιν ἐν τῷ αἵματι τοῦ ῥαντίσματος αὐτοῦ)."[11] There can be little doubt that this verse assumes a clear connection between the two concepts, Jesus' death and forgiveness. The phrases 'his flesh to corruption' and 'his sprinkled blood' denote the death of Jesus, and the ἵνα-clause, which contains the traditional NT phrase of 'forgiveness of sins,' sees the purpose of Jesus' death specifically in terms of forgiveness. Therefore, as Massaux puts it, "the destruction of the flesh of the Lord is related to the remission of sins as it is in Paul."[12]

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[8] James Carleton Paget, "The *Epistle of Barnabas*," in *Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Paul Foster (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 72–80, 72. Bart D. Ehrman cautions that "the Epistle of Barnabas was a popular writing in *some circles* of early Christianity" (*The Apostolic Fathers II: Epistle of Barnabas, Papias and Quadratus, Epistle to Diognetus, The Shepherd of Hermas*, LCL 25 [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003], 3 [emphasis mine]). However, "the fourth-century Codex Sinaiticus, an important early version of the New Testament, concludes with the texts of Barnabas and the Shepherd of Hermas," which "suggests that they too were held in very high esteem" (Clayton N. Jefford, *The Apostolic Fathers: An Essential Guide* [Nashville: Abingdon, 2005], 7, 8 respectively).

[9] Édouard Massaux, *The First Ecclesiastical Writers*, vol. 1 of *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature before Saint Irenaeus*, trans. Norman J. Belval and Suzanne Hecht, ed. Arthur J. Bellinzoni, NGS 5 (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1990), 64.

[10] Michael W. Holmes, ed., *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 370. Unless otherwise stated, quotations and English translation of *Barnabas* are taken from Holmes's volume.

[11] Ibid., 390–93. Anthony C. Thiselton interprets this text as referring to "the substitutionary death of Christ" (*The Hermeneutics of Doctrine* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 40).

[12] Massaux, *First Ecclesiastical Writers*, 79.

The same interconnection between forgiveness and Jesus' death is apparent in *Barnabas* 7:3b. In the context of Jesus' crucifixion, it states "[the Lord] himself was planning to offer the vessel of his spirit as a sacrifice for our sins (αὐτὸς ὑπὲρ τῶν ἡμετέρων ἁμαρτιῶν ἔμελλεν τὸ σκεῦος τοῦ πνεύματος προσφέρειν θυσίαν)." Here one can easily find two shared features with 1 Corinthians 15: (1) the phrase "for our sins" with a slight difference, and (2) its connection to Jesus' death ("a sacrifice," and clearly implied by the third word of v.3a 'crucified [σταυρωθεὶς]').[13] On the close link between Jesus' death and forgiveness, Hvalvik comments on the effects of Jesus' suffering for the Christians and for those who refuse to believe its effects:

> almost everywhere when Christ's suffering is mentioned, it is related to this topic: the forgiveness of sins (cf. 7:2, 3, 5; 14:5) or the fulfilment of their sins (cf. 6:6–7; 14:5). This reveals a basic theological dogma in *Barnabas*: to "us" the cross of Christ means salvation; to "them" the cross means damnation.[14]

In chapters 5 and 7 of *Barnabas*, its author "pays particular attention to Christ's passion and death,"[15] and his death is closely linked to the concept of forgiveness. Hence, in the epistle, the author intends to "connect [Jesus' death] very clearly with the forgiveness of the believer's sin."[16]

If we follow "the developing consensus . . . for a Hadrianic date some time in the 130s,"[17] about a century after Jesus' crucifixion, an inseparable link between his death and remission of sins appears to be fully established and undisputed.

Given that the earliest written confession clearly expresses that Jesus' death is for "our sins" and this was still valid some time later in early church history, the very close relationship between the two seems to have been natu-

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[13] Moreover, it is likely that by employing αὐτὸς, the author emphasizes Jesus' own willingness to die.

[14] Reidar Hvalvik, *The Struggle for Scripture and Covenant: The Purpose of the Epistle of Barnabas and Jewish-Christian Competition in the Second Century*, WUNT II/82 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1996), 145.

[15] Carleton Paget, "*Barnabas*," 79. Moreover, Jefford, *Apostolic Fathers*, 88, also puts it, "while our author is largely concerned that each reader should pay particular attention to a triptych of key Christian virtues (faith, righteousness, joy), the role of the Messiah's death is central to an understanding of these elements."

[16] James Carleton Paget, "The *Epistle of Barnabas* and the Writings that later formed the New Testament," in *Reception of the New Testament in the Apostolic Fathers*, ed. Andrew Gregory and Christopher Tuckett (Oxford: OUP, 2005), 229–49, 247.

[17] James Carleton Paget, "The *Epistle of Barnabas*," *ExpTim* 117 (2006): 441–46, 442–43. Concerning the date, John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 149, prefers its early date and states, it is written "toward the end of the first century." After limiting its dating to between AD 70 and 135, Holmes, *Apostolic Fathers*, 373, admits that "within these limits, it is difficult to be any more precise."

ral and crucial in primitive Christianity. They did not dispense with the issue, but rather had been proactively talking and writing about it.[18] This confessional statement has been positioned as one of the firmest and innermost convictions of the followers of Jesus, which was not changed one iota. It never appeared ahistorical or unrealistic for individuals in the days of the historical Jesus. If so, historical Jesus research should consider "forgiveness of sins" as a relevant topic. However, the volumes written by the contemporary questers do not reflect this.

1.2.2. The Unimportance of Forgiveness for Contemporary Understandings of Jesus' Death

1.2.2.1. Post-Easter Theology?

The connection between Jesus' death and forgiveness of sins is a neglected feature in Jesus scholarship. In fact, the explicit correlation between the two so evident in the early church has almost disappeared. What is more, there are many scholars who contend that the traditional confession, "Christ died for our sins," is post-Easter theology.

It is not too strong to say that this close correlation has been deliberately sidelined since the beginning of the so-called First Quest. Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768), who can be considered one of the intellectual forerunners of the modern quest for the historical Jesus, states that "the new system of a suffering spiritual saviour, which no one had ever known or thought of before, was invented after the death of Jesus," and one of its core beliefs was "that Christ or the Messiah was bound to die in order to obtain forgiveness for mankind."[19] Reimarus thus suggests that the historical Jesus did not relate his death and forgiveness in his own mind.

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[18] In addition to Barnabas, there are numerous texts from the writings of the Apostolic Fathers which explicitly or implicitly connect Jesus' death to forgiveness: 1 Clem. 7:4; 12:7b; 16:5a, 9, 13b–14; 21:6a; 49:6; 2 Clem. 1:2; Did. 9:3; 10:3; Diogn. 9:2b; Herm.Sim. 5.6.2–3(59.2–3); Ign.*Eph*. 18:1; Ign.*Magn*. 9:1; Ign.*Phld*. 9:2a; Ign.*Rom*. 6:1; Ign.*Smyrn*. 2:1a; 6:2b; Ign.*Trall*. 2:1b; Mart.Pol. 17:2b; Pol.*Phil*. 1:2; 8:1; 9:2b; *Fragment of Papias* 24:8. Having consulted these writings, one can concur with Charles E. Hill: "the saving effects of Jesus' death are, of course, a common theme in early Christian writing. That Christ died 'for us' or 'for our sins' is taught repeatedly by Paul and is echoed by Barnabas (*Barn*. 5.5; 7.3), Ignatius (*Pol*. 7.1) and others." (*From the Lost Teaching of Polycarp: Identifying Irenaeus' Apostolic Presbyter and the Author of* Ad Diognetum, WUNT 186 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006], 140). Moreover, in the Apostolic Fathers, a significant correlation is found between forgiveness of sins and Jesus' death, but not between Jesus' healing ministry and forgiveness. Forgiveness through Jesus' death remained significant, but surprisingly forgiveness by his healing vanished.

[19] Charles H. Talbert, ed., *Reimarus: Fragments*, trans. Ralph S. Fraser (London: SCM, 1971), 151. According to Reimarus, it was "clearly not the intention or the object of Jesus to suffer and to die, but to build up a worldly kingdom, and to deliver the Israelites from

According to Albert Schweitzer, Jesus "did not regard [his death] as an atonement which in any way effected the forgiveness of sins."[20] His reasoning is based on the 'forgiveness' in the Lord's prayer (LP hereafter), where Jesus mentions divine forgiveness prior to his death; if Jesus himself states that God's forgiveness can be given without his own death, Jesus did not feel the necessity of a means of forgiveness, and thus he did not need to die for the forgiveness of sins.

Rudolf Bultmann, who was a contemporary of Schweitzer, shows his scepticism regarding the idea of Jesus' death as remission originated with the historical Jesus, by saying "we cannot know how Jesus understood his end, his death."[21] For him, it is a primitive mythology "that a divine Being should become incarnate, and atone for the sins of men through his own blood."[22]

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bondage" (150). Furthermore, he contends that Jesus' intention was different from that of the disciples, and thus it was his disciples who "brought out a new creed of Jesus as a spiritual, suffering Savior" (242). According to Reimarus, the disciples invented it because they faced "poverty and disgrace" after Jesus' death.

In a similar vein, David Friedrich Strauss (1808–1874) includes Jesus' atoning death as an example of "the dogmatic import of the life of Jesus" (*The Life of Jesus, Critically Examined*, trans. George Eliot [London: Chapman, 1846], 758). He further comments that in addition to Jesus' atoning death and the tenets of Christology, "every trait in the image of the Messiah as sketched by the popular expectation, was attributed with necessary or gratuitous modifications to Jesus; nay, the imagination, once stimulated, invented new characteristics" (759). Again, it was the earliest community which invented this dogma. However, he suggests the possibility that Jesus might have come "to the idea that his messianic death would have an expiatory efficacy," but still contends that the notion of Jesus' death "as a sin offering . . . belong[s] rather to the system which was developed after the death of Jesus" (573).

[20] Albert Schweitzer, *The Kingdom of God and Primitive Christianity*, ed. Ulrich Neuenschwander, trans. L.A. Garrard (London: Black, 1968), 128. He states that "Jesus cannot regard his death as a sacrifice necessary for the forgiveness of sins. His view of the unconditional forgiveness that comes from God's compassion precludes it" (127–28). Schweitzer argues that "the real meaning of his death, however, he finds in its effect in meeting the conditions needed for the coming of the Kingdom" (128, see also 123–25).

[21] Rudolf Bultmann, "The Primitive Christian Kerygma and the Historical Jesus," in *The Historical Jesus and the Kerygmatic Christ: Essays on the New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, ed. Carl E. Braaten and Roy A. Harrisville (Nashville: Abingdon, 1964), 15–42, 23. Similarly, but more broadly, Bultmann also asserts that "we can now know almost nothing concerning the life and personality of Jesus" (*Jesus and the Word*, trans. Louise P. Smith and Erminie H. Lantero, 2nd ed. [1934; repr., New York: Scribner's Sons, 1958], 8). In this sense, he is considered a representative of the 'No Quest' period. However, Bultmann traces the origin of Jesus' atoning death to the Palestinian and the Hellenistic Church because of the *Kerygma* (especially 1 Cor 15:3).

In some sense, Marcus J. Borg adopts Bultmann's pessimistic and sceptical view of the significance of historical Jesus' death. Conceding that "the stories of Jesus' death took shape very early," Borg claimed those stories "have also been affected by the faith of the church to such a degree that it is difficult to separate historical happening from theological

The list could go on. These scholars express their negative views on the issue, but seldom provide proof for their overarching premise. Their views on the issue actually originate from their overarching proposition rather than the result of their argumentation. It is true that unlike mathematicians, historians "cannot formulate proofs for our theorems."[23] However, it is fair to request that theologians and historians provide plausible reasons for their basic proposal. Most scholars who see the matter as an innovation of Jesus' followers after Easter do not suggest any plausible reasoning for their claim. Most of all, they do not provide sufficient reasons why the followers of Jesus, after his death on the cross, felt the need to tell the message of Jesus in the manner as 1 Corinthians 15:3 suggests. The reasons given by Reimarus are hardly sufficient for such a dramatic prioritization of the kerygma. What about the most recent historians in the field of Jesus studies? Do they see this differently?

1.2.2.2. 'Third Questers' on the Relationship between Jesus' Death and Forgiveness

After pointing out that the 'New Quest' had "downplayed to a large extent the significance of Jesus' death," N. T. Wright continues by saying, "the present 'Third Quest', by and large, will have none of this."[24] His contention seems to be right because the significance of Jesus' death can easily be found in most of the recent monographs and articles on the historical Jesus. With "the renaissance in Jesus research,"[25] most recent historical Jesus academics consider Jesus' intention towards, and understanding of, his own death.

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interpretation" (*Jesus, a New Vision: Spirit, Culture, and the Life of Discipleship* [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1987], 178).

[22] Rudolf Bultmann, "New Testament and Mythology," in *Kerygma and Myth: A Theological Debate*, ed. Hans Werner Bartsch, trans. Reginald H. Fuller (London: SPCK, 1953–62), 1: 1–44, 7. Bultmann presents as an example of the mythical worldview of the New Testament the notion that: Jesus "dies the death of a sinner on the cross and makes atonement for the sins of men" (1:2). For Bultmann, the event of redemption itself is mythical, and is a syncretized product of Jewish eschatology and Greek Gnosticism. Therefore, "*the kerygma is incredible to modern man, for he is convinced that the mythical view of the world is obsolete*" (1:3).

[23] Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 35.

[24] *JVG*, 86.

[25] Marcus J. Borg, "Portraits of Jesus in Contemporary North American Scholarship," *HTR* 84 (1991): 1–22, 1. Ben Witherington has recently indicated that "though interest in the topic of the Historical Jesus continues, its celebrity status has waned a bit in the last few years" ("The Historical Jesus – Sean Freyne's View," Beliefnet http://www.beliefnet.com/-columnists/bibleandculture/2010/11/the-historical-jesus-sean-freynes-view.html, accessed December 2, 2011,).

To survey forgiveness in relation to Jesus' death in the recent historical-Jesus research trend, I have selected several volumes which can be considered the most relevant historical Jesus books.[26] This is not to say that these constitute a representative sample of the historical Jesus guild, nor that other contributions are insignificant, but the books and scholars considered here are well-known and influential in recent historical Jesus research.[27]

Each author's views on the following questions are significant for this study: (1) Did Jesus acknowledge that his death was impending? If so, did he intend to die? (2) How did Jesus understand his death, with regard to forgiveness of sins? Did he interpret his death as means of bestowing forgiveness? There can be three possible sets of answers: 'No' and 'No'; 'Yes' and 'No'; 'Yes' and 'Yes.' If an author gives a negative answer to the first question, it is almost certain that the author answers 'No' to the second question because he is not interested in the meaning which Jesus may have attached to his own death. Yet an author who answers 'Yes' to the former question can answer either 'No' or 'Yes' to the latter.

Thus, these questions can sort the opinions of these scholars regarding the relationship between Jesus' death and forgiveness in his own understanding

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[26] Allison, *Jesus*; Borg, *Jesus*; Maurice Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth: An Independent Historian's Account of His Life and Teaching* (London: T&T Clark, 2010); John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); John P. Meier, *Mentor, Message, and Miracles*, vol. 2 of *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1994); E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin, 1993); Jens Schröter, *Jesus of Nazareth: Jew from Galilee, Savior of the World*, trans. Wayne Coppins and S. Brian Pounds (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014); Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (London: SCM, 1998); Wright, *JVG*.

The subject index and (sub)headings in the works are helpful for locating the topic of Jesus' death. Then portions related to Jesus' death were further examined to investigate whether his death is linked to the forgiveness-theme. Alternatively, one can look at the treatment of the New Testament passages below, which should give at least a slight hint about the author's view on the relationship between the two themes: the Ransom passage (Mark 10:45; Matt 20:28), the cup-saying (Mark 14:24; Matt 26:28; Luke 22:20), 'saving from sins' (Matt 1:21), and Luke 24:46–47, where Jesus' suffering and forgiveness appear together. Moreover, the passages concerning healing and forgiving like "your sins are forgiven" were consulted in case an author related it to Jesus' death, or made his view known about the issue of forgiveness. Finally, the treatment of the passages in which Jesus predicts his suffering and death (Mark 8:31; 9:9–10, 31; 10:32–34 and parr.; Luke 13:33) were also consulted.

[27] Moreover, these scholars' reconstructions of Jesus have become the most iconic, e.g. Allison's Jesus is an apocalyptic prophet, Crossans' a Galilean peasant and Jewish Cynic, Meier's a "marginal Jew", Vermes' a charismatic Jew, and Wright's Messiah of Israel. Mark Allan Powell, *Jesus as a Figure in History: How Modern Historians View the Man from Galilee* (Louisville: WJK, 1998), presents a similar list: The Jesus Seminar, Crossan, Borg, Sanders, Meier, and Wright.

into three main categories: no relation, no direct relation, and direct relation. According to the scholars in the first group who answer 'No' to both questions, Jesus did not know of his impending death, and so he might not have intended to die. Consequently, the early church *made up* a fictional story that Jesus "died for our sins," misleadingly claiming it as Jesus' interpretation of his own impending death.[28] 'No direct relation' group members would say that Jesus expected to die, or that he at least allowed death to occur to him. However, it was not Jesus' intention to "die for our sins," implying that this death "for our sins" again is a later interpretation of the early church. The scholars in the last class argue that Jesus envisaged his death and embraced this death wholeheartedly as a part of his mission, and, more than likely, with an assurance that his death is "for our sins."[29] To begin with, let us turn to the 'No relation' group.

1.2.2.2.1. No Relation – Jesus Did Not Intend to Die at All

First in this group is Geza Vermes, who appropriately calls attention to the Jewishness of Jesus in historical Jesus study. In his *Jesus the Jew*, he accepts the possibility of Jesus' passion prediction in the light of Peter's rebuking his master (suggesting that Luke 9:44 is closer to the original saying), but he dismisses Jesus' prediction of his resurrection.[30]

However, in a later paper which shows his "latest stage of thinking on controversial issues,"[31] Vermes completely denies the possibility of Jesus' foreknowledge of his impending death. He states that "the apostles, and even Jesus himself, had no foreknowledge of the passion and the resurrection and that anything stating the contrary in the Gospels must be qualified as inauthentic."[32] He found a dilemma in the contradictory ideas of Jesus clearly

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[28] Strauss, *Life of Jesus*, 566, states that "the minute predictions . . . must be regarded as a *vaticinium post eventum*." Cf. Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. Kendrick Grobel (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2007), 29. For a fuller discussion, see Hans F. Bayer, *Jesus' Predictions of Vindication and Resurrection: The Provenance, Meaning, and Correlation of the Synoptic Predictions*, WUNT II/20 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986).

[29] This does not mean that they share the same understanding what "for our sins" signifies to Jesus. For the probable meaning of 'forgiveness of sins,' see chapter 3.

[30] Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, 37–38. However, he further indicates that the suffering of the Messiah, his death and resurrection do not "appear to have been part of the faith of first-century Judaism" (38; cf. Bultmann, *Theology of the NT*, 31). Therefore, Vermes seems negative towards the possible authenticity of Jesus' passion prediction, although he does not completely negate its possibility.

[31] Geza Vermes, *Jesus in the Jewish World* (London: SCM, 2010), xi.

[32] Ibid., 234–35. Here he also suggests that "Jewish tradition knew nothing of a dying and rising Messiah." As Vermes mentions, this view is not without opponents (e.g. Israel Knohl, *The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, trans. David Maisel [London: University of California Press, 2000]).

Index of References

Old Testament

Deuterocanonical Books

Pseudepigrapha

Dead Sea Scrolls

Ancient Jewish Writers

New Testament

Rabbinic Works

Apostolic Fathers

Ancient Christian Writings, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

Greco-Roman Literature

Index of Modern Authors

Subject Index