



Jesus the Christ and the Judgment of God in New Testament Theology: A General Survey

Chandra Gunawan

Theologosche Universiteit Kampem

cgunawan@tukampen.nl

Abstract

Scholars disagree if there is a New Testament theology. While many scholars claim that there are diversities within NT, some argue that eschatology, especially the teaching about judgment probably can become a theological theme connecting the NT. This article will examine that proposal. The research question is how to understand the role of the teaching of Judgment in the New Testament theology. This article will employ historical-critical exegesis to investigate the teaching of judgment in the NT texts and will argue that, although the teaching of judgment is common in the NT, it is not a core of NT theology; the teaching about Jesus is the central theme of the NT theology.

Keywords: New Testament Theology, Eschatology, Judgment, Jesus, Soteriology

Abstrak

Para ahli tidak sepakat apakah ada yang disebut satu teologi dari kitab-kitab Perjanjian Baru. Sementara banyak sarjana mengatakan bahwa ada keberagaman dalam Perjanjian Baru, beberapa ahli berargumentasi bahwa ajaran tentang akhir jaman, khususnya pengajaran tentang penghakiman mungkin dapat menjadi sebuah tema teologis yang menghubungkan kitab-kitab Perjanjian Baru. Artikel ini akan menguji teori tersebut. Pertanyaan yang akan dijawab adalah bagaimana memahami peran ajaran penghakiman dalam teologi Perjanjian Baru. Artikel ini akan menerapkan pendekatan historis dalam memahami pengajaran tentang penghakiman dalam teks-teks Perjanjian Baru dan akan memperlihatkan bahwa walaupun ajaran mengenai penghakiman adalah umum dalam Perjanjian Baru tetapi pengajaran tersebut bukanlah inti dari teologi Perjanjian Baru; ajaran mengenai Yesus adalah tema utama dalam teologi Perjanjian Baru.

Kata-kata Kunci: Teologi Perjanjian Baru, Akhir Zaman, Penghakiman, Yesus, Keselamatan

A. Introduction

NT theology is a descriptive and prescriptive study.¹ While the prescriptive element leads scholars to develop a theology through NT teaching, the descriptive element makes NT theology should be understood in the context of its time.² The problem of anachronism will

¹ Cf. J.D.G. Dunn and J.P. Mackey, *New Testament Theology in Dialogue*, BFT (London: SPCK, 1987), 2–3.

² Cf. I.H. Marshall, *New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2004), 44.



arise when a different philosophical context that does not belong to the milieu of NT such as modern thought is used to understand NT teaching. It is questionable if modern scholars and NT authors have the same understanding about what is so-called “theology”?

In the context of modern thought, theology is demanded to be logically consistent. This means that modern thought cannot accept “dualism” and “paradox.” However, ancient people seem not to share the same view. For example, the community of Qumran believes that salvation is based on God’s grace but also considers that disobedience will exclude someone from the covenant membership.³ Modern people consider that logically inconsistent, but the community of Qumran does not share the same conclusion. The paradoxical thought in early Jewish theology indicates that “dualism” is considered normal and acceptable.⁴

A similar approach should be applied to understand the teaching of judgment in NT writings. Scholars are interested to relate this teaching to the teaching on justification or understanding it in context of the Early Judaism.⁵ Although most NT writers are Jewish, early Jewish thought is not the only background influencing them. The teaching of Christ gives the most significant impact on them. Therefore, the teaching of judgment should be viewed in relation to the teaching of Christ and in its historical context, namely, the pastoral context and evangelization. While in the context of evangelization, the teaching of judgment has a function to prepare people to believe in Jesus, in the pastoral context this teaching serves as an admonition for believers to keep their faith in Christ and as an encouragement for them to face persecution. Observing the context of the teaching of judgment in its relation to the Christological theme in NT writings, this article tries to understand the function of the teaching of judgment in NT theology. It will investigate the teaching of judgment based on NT corpus. NT writings could divide into some collective writings: the Canonical Gospels (including Acts), the Pauline Epistles, and the Catholic Epistles (including the letter to the Hebrews and Revelation).

³ Cf. T. Eskola, *Theodicy and Predestination in Pauline Soteriology*, WUNT 2.100 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 79–93.

⁴ Cf. M.A. Elliott, *The Survivor of Israel: A Reconsideration of the Theology of Pre-Christian Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 639–40; M. Bockmuehl, “1QS and Salvation at Qumran,” in *Justification and Variagated Nomism Volume 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism*, ed. D.A. Carson, P.T. O’Brian, and M.A. Seifrid, WUNT 2.140 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 381–411.

⁵ Cf. M.F. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God: Studies on Paul, Justification and the New Perspective*, PBM (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2007), 155–78.

B. God's judgment in the Canonical Gospels

1. The Gospel of Mark

Mark was written at the beginning of the Jewish war and during the last years of Nero when Christians faced suffering. It was written to present Jesus as the true Son of God and to respond to the claim that Caesar was the son of god. Nero considers himself a deity.⁶ If the gospel was written in a time of suffering, why Mark did not relate his writing to that condition? It is more reasonable to put the writing of Mark in the first five good years of Nero's rule (54-60 A.D.). According to traditions, the Gospel of Mark uses Peter's witness as the source, and Peter probably was in Rome at the end of Claudius' rule (54 A.D.), thus it is reasonable to date Mark at ca. 55 A.D.⁷ In this period, the Roman empire promotes peace in the empire and claims that Romans will lead humanity to a new age. The Gospel of Mark seems to be written to encounter this false hope.

The main theological theme of Mark is the identity of Jesus and the relationship between Jesus and the kingdom of God. The gospel shows that Jesus is Messiah, Son of God, and Son of Man (Mk. 1.1, 8.31). Jesus' coming to Jerusalem is important theme because it represents the coming of God's kingdom (Mk. 11.10). Jesus' suffering and death are also understood in the context of his aim to bring the Kingdom of God. Similarly, the rejection to Jesus is also seen as the rejection to the coming of God's kingship.⁸

The teaching of judgment is not prominent in Mark, but it does not mean that the author considers it unimportant.⁹ This teaching can be seen in the designation of Jesus as the Son of Man (e.g., Mk. 8.31). The title is rooted in Daniel 7 and is used in the context of judgment.¹⁰ Mark uses the notion to highlight Jesus as the one who has the authority on Judgment day. He must suffer on the cross, but he will be vindicated and exalted by God. His exaltation will consummate in his second coming to judge men and to restore his people.

⁶ C.A. Evans, "Mark," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 267–73.C.

⁷ E. Ferguson, *Background of Early Christianity*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 33; A.C. McGiffert, trans., *The Church History of Eusebius* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), 203–203.

⁸ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 78-85,88-91.

⁹ Cf. F. Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament: A Canonical and Synthetic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 68–71. Schnelle identifies that eschatology is the central theme in Mark because the kingdom of God is eschatological in essence. Udo Schnelle, *Theologie Des Neuen Testaments* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 396–97.

¹⁰ Cf. Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 69–70.

Despite that the teaching of judgment is implicit, it is significant. It will prepare believers to face the catastrophe that will happen soon. Mark emphasizes that although Satan and his followers have been determined to be destroyed, the kingdom of Satan is still active.¹¹ In Mark 1.24, when Jesus released a man in Capernaum from a demon, the demon asked if Jesus comes to destroy them. The demon knows Jesus and his mission that will bring the punishment to them.¹² Mark seems to believe that Satan's work is still active; their opposition is seen, for example, in the attempt to make Jesus deviate from his mission (Mark 8.33). Their works will consummate in the catastrophe described in Mark. 13.¹³ Although the condition in Roman Empire was restored after a disaster made by Caligula,¹⁴ Mark believes that another catastrophe will happen (Mk. 13); and the teaching on the coming of the Lord and judgment will anticipate that event and be a reminder that the kingdom of Satan has been lost and will be destroyed in Lord's coming.

2. The Gospel of Luke-Acts

The gospel of Luke was written during the early persecution of Nero (ca. 62 A.D.) was written to ascertain Theophilus' faith (and others who have a similar struggle) in Christ (Lk. 1.4).¹⁵ However, it seems that there are other motifs implicitly existed beside this explicit objective above, such as the hostility faced by Christians from unbelievers (particularly the Jews) (e.g., Acts 14.4), the increasing of pagan belief, the relationship problem between Jewish and Gentile Christians (e.g., Acts 6.1; 15.1-2).¹⁶

Luke's main theology is related to Christ as the center of God's plan in human history. Luke's theology highlights the "salvation history." Luke was not only interested to search for historical facts about Jesus but also emphasizes the history of God's work in this world.¹⁷ Marshall shows that the time before Christ (the time of promise) had been fulfilled in

¹¹ Cf. Evans, "Mark," 270.

¹² Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, BENTC (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 87; G.H. Twelftree, "Demon," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospel* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1992), 169.

¹³ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 86–88.

¹⁴ Cf. Ferguson, *Background of Early Christianity*, 32–34.

¹⁵ For discussion of the date of Luke's Gospel, see I.H. Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 33–35. For the different positions of Luke's date, see, e.g., Udo Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, trans. M.E. Boring (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 463.

¹⁶ Cf. D.L. Bock, "The Gospel of Luke," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1992), 498.

¹⁷ See Schnelle, *Theology of the New Testament*, 465–70. Schnelle argues that in his gospel, Luke emphasizes God as the one who controls human history. The theme of universality is also important in Luke. Discussion of

the coming of Jesus Christ; Jesus is God's agent who fulfills God's purpose in humanity, namely, to bring salvation to both Jews and Gentiles who are a sinner in essence.¹⁸ To fulfill his mission, Jesus has taken his role as a "humble servant," son of man, messiah, and prophet; but above all, Jesus was also recognized by his disciples as the Lord (Lk. 7.13). Jesus entrusted his mission to bring salvation to the world to his disciples. They will be rejected by the world when the gospel is proclaimed; while the poor, the weak and the needy get mercy because of their openness to the gospel, the strong and wealth will get punishment because of their rejection (Lk. 7.29-30).¹⁹ A similar emphasis exists in the book of Acts that God makes "the salvation-history" through Christ, and in the Gospel of Luke, the author gives more emphasis to the Holy Spirit, who is given to all believers so that they will be able to accomplish the mission entrusted by the Lord.²⁰

In the gospel of Luke, the teaching of judgment is given mainly in relation to people who reject Jesus and the gospel (e.g., Luke 3.7-9).²¹ The teaching is also used as a preparatory when the gospel is preached (e.g., Acts 17.30),²² as an encouragement to the believers (e.g., Luke 6.35; 12.4-6), and as a warning to people who make deception (e.g., Luke 20.27). Luke's main purpose in connecting the teaching of judgment to the response of people who reject Jesus/the gospel probably is closely related to the historical context faced by Luke i.e., hostility faced by the Christians. Since the gospel of Luke was written when he accompanies Paul in his missionary works, Luke's experience, how he sees people rejecting the gospel, influences his way to tell the story of Jesus in his first work. In this context, the teaching of judgment has a function as a pastoral teaching that encourages believers to be faithful to their mission, preaching the gospel, and trust God when they are under persecution.

the universality on Luke's Gospel, see C.W. Stenschke, *Luke's Portrait of Gentiles Prior to Their Coming to Faith*, WUNT 108 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999).

¹⁸ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 140–41.

¹⁹ For discussion of the salvation to the poor, see MiJa Wi, *The Path to Salvation in Luke's Gospel: What We Must Do?*, LNTS 621 (London: T&T Clark, 2019), chap. 5.

²⁰ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 171-172, 180.

²¹ The aspect of "judgment" in this passage should be understood in the context of Jesus' coming; this warning was directed to those opposing God's work through Jesus. Luke 10.12 emphasizes that the judgment would be applied to the towns that reject the gospel. J.B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 177, 416..

²² Fitzmyer identifies the aspect of "judgment" used here by Paul becomes the basis for repentance (cf. Acts 24.25). J.A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ABC (New Haven: Doubleday, n.d.), 611–12.

3. The Gospel of Matthew

Matthew was written for the Jewish-Christian community.²³ Based on its theological emphasis, it seems that Matthew and his community facing the challenge to reinterpret their Jewish heritage and tradition (e.g., Mt. 5.38-42).²⁴ This could indicate that Matthew and his community were more and more separated from early Judaism;²⁵ the hostility that increases from Jewish people and the destruction of the temple probably pushed Matthew and his community to reformulate and reconfirm their identity as a Jewish-Christian community. In this context, the gospel seems to be written in the context of edification and evangelization (Mt. 28.19-20).²⁶

Matthew has a strong emphasis on describing Jesus as the messiah who fulfilled the OT teaching, promises, and prophecies (Mt. 5.17).²⁷ There are fifteen descriptions used by Matthew to show that Jesus' life fulfills the scripture.²⁸ On the other hand, Marshall shows that Matthew describes Jesus as the king, the Lord, son of man, son of God, son of David, son of Abraham, the wisdom and new Moses; on the other hand, Jesus' teaching is used to interpret the Law so that it could be understood correctly.²⁹

In this gospel, the teaching of judgment is prominent³⁰ and is used mainly in the context of pastoral/ethic and evangelization.³¹ In the context of ethics, Matthew emphasizes that judgment will be applied both to the believers and the unbelievers (including the false

²³ Scholars disagree in determining the identity of the Matthean community whether they are Christian Judaism or Jewish Christian. Cf. W. Carter, "Matthew's Gospel," in *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts*, ed. M.A. Jackson-McCabe (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 155–79. For current discussion of gospel audience, see E.W. Klink III, ed., *The Audience of the Gospels: The Origin and Function of the Gospels in Early Christianity*, LNTS 353 (London: T&T Clark, 2010).

²⁴ Cf. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 125.

²⁵ Cf. Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 84.

²⁶ Cf. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 158.

²⁷ Cf. Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 84–97. Also see C.L. Blomberg, "Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 1–109.

²⁸ For discussion of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Matthews, see Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 85; M.P. Knowles, "Scripture, History, Messiah: Scriptural Fulfillment and the Fullness of Time in Matthew's Gospel," in *Hearing the Old Testament in the New Testament*, ed. S.E. Porter (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 59–82.

²⁹ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 111–21. Another important theme is the kingdom of God.

³⁰ Cf. F.J. Matera, *New Testament Theology* (Louisville: WJK, 2007), 47–48.

³¹ Matera describes the teaching of Judgment is closely related to the gospel that becomes the central message of the kingdom of God. Matera, 48.

teacher);³² he also describes a sharp distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness; and the unrighteous life will lead to judgment and punishment.³³ This warning clearly has bifunctional purposes; on the one hand, it is used to encourage believers to be faithful and have a righteous life, on the other hand, it is also used to warn the unbelievers, particularly the Jewish people to repent and believe in Jesus.³⁴

Although Matthew emphasizes God's judgment and the importance to have righteous life, it does not mean that Matthew believes in salvation based on merit. The Christological element in the gospel indicates that Matthew believes that only Jesus could bring salvation. In Mt. 1.21, Matthew explains the meaning of Jesus's name i.e., "αὐτοῦ ... σωσει τον λαον αυτου απο τwn α`μαρτιwn αυτων"; this indicates soteriological teaching in Matthew that only Jesus could save men from sin (cf. Mt.26.28). Therefore, while Matthew emphasizes that unrighteous life will lead to punishment, he also emphasizes that salvation comes from God through Jesus Christ.

4. The Gospel of John

The Gospel of John is used in various contexts.³⁵ Based on its purpose (Jo. 20.30-31).³⁶ The Gospel was written to encourage his reader to continue to believe in Jesus Christ; therefore, the gospel was written in the context of edification.³⁷ On the other hand, there is also an indication that the gospel is used in the context of evangelization (e.g., Jo. 3.16).³⁸ Furthermore, the hostility faced by the community of John seems to be the background of the gospel (e.g., Jo. 15.18-25); in this context, the gospel was written to comfort the reader.³⁹

³² E.g., Mt. 3.7-10; 5.11-12; 19-20, 22, 29-30.

³³ Cf. Mt. 13.36-43, 45-50; 23.33; 25.31-46.

³⁴ Cf. Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 215. In the OT prophetic tradition, critics were used to call Israel to repentance such as in Isa. 1.1-31; Matthew and his community seem taking the same role to call Jewish people to repentance.

³⁵ See, e.g., U.C. Von Wahlde, "The Johannine Literature and Gnosticism: New Light on Their Relationship," in *From Judaism to Christianity: Tradition and Transition: A Festschrift for Thomas H. Tobin, S.J., on the Occasion of His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, NovTSup 136 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 221-54; Sjef van Tilborg, *Reading John in Ephesus*, NovTSup, vol. 83 (Leiden: Brill, 1996).

³⁶ Some variants use "πιστευσητε" and others use "πιστευετε." External evidence supports the second one.

³⁷ Rekha M. Chennattu, *Johannine Discipleship as a Covenant Relationship* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006).

³⁸ Cf. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 512.

³⁹ Scholars disagree over the author of John's Gospel and its audience. On this issue, see R.E. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple* (London: Chapman, 1979); R.J. Bauckham, *The Testimony of the Beloved Disciple: Narrative, History, and Theology in the Gospel of John* (GR: Baker, 2007).

The main theology of the gospel is centered on the belief that Jesus is the Messiah,⁴⁰ son of man,⁴¹ and son of God⁴² who reveals the truth and dies for human sin so that whoever believes in him will receive eternal life (Jo. 1.1-18).⁴³ John believes that salvation comes from God, yet man needs to respond to it through true faith; the most radical sin is to reject Jesus, and it will lead man to punishment (Jo. 3.39).⁴⁴

John uses the teaching of judgment a few times (e.g., Jo. 3.18, 36; 5.22-30) in the context of evangelization. John emphasizes that men basically are under condemnation and punishment because of sin (Jo. 8.24;⁴⁵ 9.39⁴⁶), and Jesus came to save men; the punishment will take a place in the future, yet the verdict had been given to men because of sin (cf. Jo. 3.18);⁴⁷ the Father is the Judge who will judge men according to their response to the gospel (Jo. 12.47-48),⁴⁸ but he appoints Jesus to be his agent in the judgment day (cf. Jo. 5.27);⁴⁹ without believing in Jesus, no one will be saved from the judgment. Thus, the teaching of judgment is used to warn the unbelievers that they are terribly in danger because they are sinners, and sin will lead them to punishment; this is the reason why they have to believe in Jesus; on the other hand, John also warns those who hear the gospel that the rejection to the gospel will lead them to punishment.

⁴⁰ Some descriptions are used to describe Jesus as the messiah i.e., (i) God's agent who founds salvation, (ii) the final prophet with supernatural knowledge and power, (iii) the king who rules as a shepherd. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 512–14.

⁴¹ The notion of the son of man refers to "God's representative and messenger who brings salvation." Marshall, 515. In his work, Burkett argues that the title refers to Jesus' humanity as man's son. D.R. Burkett, *The Son of the Man in the Gospel of John*, JSNTSS 56 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991).

⁴² This designation is used to express Jesus' special position in his relation to the Father. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 515–16.

⁴³ Cf. Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 175–203.

⁴⁴ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 517–18.

⁴⁵ John reminded that becoming Abraham's descendants is not enough because they are a sinner in essence. This teaching is rooted in the OT and early Jewish tradition. A.J. Köstenberger, *John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 262–63.

⁴⁶ J. M. Michaels identifies Jesus' remarks that he will make those who see to be blind is rooted in Isaiah's words (Is. 6.10). J. R. Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 572–73. In my opinion, John used the OT quotation to emphasize that a response to the gospel will lead one to salvation or punishment; those who reject the gospel will harden their own heart and lead themselves to punishment.

⁴⁷ Cf. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 518; Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 204.

⁴⁸ The words "I do not come to judge the world" are used in the context that Jesus does not judge someone based on his own will but according to God's judgment. Cf. Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, 716.

⁴⁹ John uses the phrase "υἱος ἀνθρώπου"; although this is used without the article "ὁ", the meaning refers to "the son of man" in Daniel's tradition. Cf. Michaels, 318–19.

C. God's Judgment in Pauline Epistles

1. The Christological Emphasis in Pauline Epistles

The main theological theme in Galatians is Christ as the redeemer. Marshall describes the gospel as basically the center of Paul's theology in Galatians, and Paul describes it, according to Marshall, as "an understanding of Jesus as the Son of God sent into the world to redeem people from the curse of the law, and God's Spirit sent into the hearts of believers to make them children of God."⁵⁰ To respond to the issue of circumcision, Paul teaches that no one could become God's people because of circumcision (Ga. 2.16); Paul's experience is the evidence that circumcision is not a mark of God's people (Ga. 1-13-15); it is *πιστεως Χριστου*⁵¹ (Ga. 2.16) and the Holy Spirit who stays in believers that become the mark of God's people (Cf. Ga. 3.26-29; 5.2-6).⁵²

The letters to the Thessalonians have a theological emphasis on Jesus as the central message of the gospel and central to believers' life. In 1 Thessalonians Paul exposes the concept of mission and salvation to the congregation based on Paul's experience and their experience (1Tes. 1.4-10). Paul describes the gospel that becomes the core of his missionary works as based on Jesus' work (1Tes 5.9-11).⁵³ In the 2 Thessalonians Paul addressed the teaching of the second coming of Christ as the center of Christian hope (2Tes. 1.5-10); this teaching was also given because there was a misunderstanding that could lead to false hopes on the time of Christ's coming (2 Tes.2.1-2).⁵⁴

The main theological theme in the letters to the Corinthians is the cross of Christ. Marshall believes that the cross (the crucifixion and resurrection) is the center of the gospel

⁵⁰ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 234.

⁵¹ This phrase could be understood as the faith in Christ (objective genitive) or the faithfulness of Christ (subjective genitive). Cf. D.B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (GR: Zondervan, 1996), 58.

⁵² Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 233. New Perspective argues that Paul's teaching on justification should be understood in the context of religious identity. Marshall also identifies this issue of identity is behind the Galatian controversy, but the phrase "works of law" refers to the Mosaic Law. It is important to distinguish Paul's view on the Law based on its role in the salvation history and ethical guidance. In Ga. 3-4 Paul talked about the "law" mainly in the context of salvation history, and the role of the law as custodian is ended because Christ has come; but in the context of ethics, OT law is used by Paul as a foundation of his moral teaching. Cf. F. Thielman, *Paul & the Law: A Contextual Approach* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1994), 240-41.

⁵³ Thielman, *Paul & the Law*, 240-42.

⁵⁴ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 246-48. Sumney concludes that Paul faced those who hold on "over-realized eschatology," and there is an indication that they are influenced by Cynicism. Jerry L. Sumney, *"Servants of Satan", "False Brothers" and Other Opponents of Paul*, JSNTSS 188 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 250-52.

that underlying theology of 1 Corinthians; the cross is the message of the gospel that is taught by the apostles and rooted in Scripture (1Co. 15.3); it teaches the apostle and believers how to be humble and learn to look for God's wisdom and power rather than to look for spiritual achievement (1Co. 2.6-16; 9.1-22); and it also leads believers to understand Christ's work in the believers (1Co 1.2; 30).⁵⁵ On the other hand, Marshall describes that the main theological theme in 2 Corinthians is "suffering." God is described as the comforter (2Co 1.3); Christ came and died in weakness (2Co 8.9), but he rose in power and authority; Christ's experience becomes Christians' experience that through the weakness, they gain strength because they learn not to depend on human strength (2Co.11.30-31); 12.7-10).⁵⁶ Other important themes are Christ's works in the new creation and the reconciliation (2Co. 5.11-21), human life after death (2Co. 5.1-10), and believers as the ministers of the new covenant (2Co 2.12-3.13).⁵⁷

In Romans, Paul emphasizes that the core of the Gospel is Christ (Rom. 1.2-4). Marshall sees that there are five theological themes in Romans i.e., the sovereignty of God, righteousness, and faith, Israel and Gentiles, the Law of Moses and the Holy Spirit; Paul understands righteousness as "the doing what is right in God's eyes as opposed to doing what is evil"; in this context, the crucial element that should be existed in the human side in justification is faith⁵⁸ in Jesus Christ (Rom.3.22). Paul uses the issues of sin and judgment to show that both Jews and Gentiles need the salvation that is only found in Christ (Rom. 1.18-3.20); on the other hand, Paul believes that although God's people are not only Israel,⁵⁹ but they are still his people, and Paul believe that someday they will repent, believing in Jesus and return to God (Rom. 11).⁶⁰ The law of God was given not to solve the problem of sin; it could not give the ability to man to fulfill its requirements, and did not give to earn forgiveness (Rom. 7.7-25); this is the reason why men need salvation because only Christ

⁵⁵ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 262–72. The theme of Jesus as the Lord and the resurrection of Christ also exists in the letter; Jesus' designation as the Lord is used to show Jesus' authority over the church, and the teaching on the resurrection becomes the basis of Christian hope.

⁵⁶ Marshall, 290-294,302.

⁵⁷ Marshall, 294–301.

⁵⁸ Marshall, 336–37. In Rom. 1.5 Paul used the phrase "ὑπακοήν πιστεως" to describe true faith; this term indicates that Paul does not separate between faith and obedience. For further discussion, see Don B. Garlington, *The Obedience of Faith: A Pauline Phrase in Historical Context*, WUNT 2 38 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1991); Don B. Garlington, *Faith, Obedience, and Perseverance: Aspects of Paul's Letter to the Romans*, WUNT 79 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1994).

⁵⁹ Cf. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 338.

⁶⁰ Marshall, 337–39.

could lead them to salvation and only the Holy Spirit could help them to fulfill God's requirements (Rom. 8). Jewish law is not absolute in the Church. The Jews could keep it, but the Gentiles are not required doing it and have to respect the Jewish believers (Rom. 14).⁶¹

Furthermore, in Colossians Paul focuses on Christ who has the ultimate power and authority in the world, the church, and the believers' life. Paul shows that Christ has the ultimate power over other powers in the world, in fact, all these powers have been defeated by Christ (Col. 1.15-18; 2.9); on the other hand, Paul also emphasizes that through Christ's work, believers receive forgiveness and peace with God, and this makes the believers fulfilled by the fullness of God; therefore, they do not need to submit to any kind of worldly power or any kind of worldly requirements such as doing the ascetic ritual (Col. 2.6-23).⁶² A similar theological emphasis is seen in Ephesians; Paul emphasizes that grace and the power of God that is bestowed in Christ should make believers worship God; and Christ's ultimate supremacy should influence the life of the believers and will help them to defeat the worldly powers (Eph. 1.15-23).⁶³ In Philippians, Paul then emphasizes that Christ is the center of the gospel (Phil. 1.15-18); knowing Christ is also important because it will lead believers to have a close relationship with Christ (Phil. 3.7-11); this relationship happens when someone is in Christ; being in Christ will make believers to experience the life of Christ in him and to share the suffering of Christ (Phil. 1.29).⁶⁴

In the letter to Philemon, Paul shows how Christ should become the foundation of Christian relationship; Paul used the teaching of Christ to encourage Philemon to forgive Onesimus and accept him as a brother in Christ (v.1, 16); Paul believes that Christ who saves all believers could unite all believers including a slave such as Onesimus and his master Philemon.⁶⁵ In the Pastoral Epistles, Paul emphasizes that Christ is God's "epiphany" (one who presents God), underlining the relationship between Christ and the Father. The salvation in this letter is understood as the work of God and Christ (Tit 2. 11,13; 2 Tim 1.8-10).⁶⁶

⁶¹ Marshall, 340–41. Also see Stephen Westerholm, *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith: Paul and His Recent Interpreters* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988).

⁶² Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 376–78.

⁶³ Marshall, 345–54. Cf. J.D.G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 230–31.

⁶⁴ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 353–54.

⁶⁵ Marshall, 362–64.

⁶⁶ Marshall, 409–10.

2. The Teaching of Judgment in Pauline Epistle

The teaching of Judgment in Thessalonians was used in the pastoral context. In 1 Thess 2.14-16 Paul describes that Jews not only crucified Jesus but also restrained God's mission to Gentiles, and this will lead them to punishment. Similarly, wicked men such as those who live in adultery (1 Thess. 4.3-6) will not be prepared when Christ comes and they will face destruction on that day (1 Thess. 5.1-3; 2 Thess. 1.9).⁶⁷ The true and faithful believers will escape from punishment (1 Thess. 1.9-10) and receive glory and salvation in that day (1 Thess. 2.19; 5.9; 2 Thess. 2.10).⁶⁸ In this context, the teaching of judgment in Thessalonians is used to encourage the congregation living in holiness, to warn that the ungodly life will lead to condemnation, and to teach that there is God's judgment that will be faced by those who reject the gospel and persecute believers. In short, the teaching of judgment in Thessalonians is used mainly in the context of pastoral or ethics.

In Corinthians, Paul also used the teaching of judgment in the pastoral context. This teaching could be seen clearly, for example, in 1 Cor. 3.1-4.5.⁶⁹ Paul exhorts the Corinthians not to judge God's workers by their own criteria because it is God's prerogative to assess each worker based on their own work (1 Co. 3.13, 4.5);⁷⁰ then Paul warned that improper work namely ministry that is not built based on Christ will lead to destruction in the Lord's day, and this will put the congregation in danger and will lead the worker to punishment (1 Co.3.10-17).⁷¹ However, this warning seems not to be directed to Apollos (and Peter) who is recognized as God's worker (1 Co. 3.5-9) but to some people who make factions in the church so that they come to repentance. Furthermore, in 2 Co. 4.16-5.10 Paul emphasizes that sincere motivation and responsibility in ministry will help believers to be confident to face the day of the Lord; it is not rhetorical ability, worldly wisdom, and spiritual experience that

⁶⁷ C.A. Wanamaker, *The Epistles to the Thessalonians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 173,180.

⁶⁸ Cf. Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 246,254-255.

⁶⁹ K. L. Yinger shows that there are other texts that emphasize Paul's teaching of judgment i.e., 1 Co. 5.5, 6.9-11, 9.24-27, 10.1-22, 11.29-32, 16.22; his observation leads him to a conclusion that "Nowhere does Paul give a hint of theological tension with his doctrine of justification. Judgment functions in many these texts in a manner quite similar to the OT summons to repentance." Kent L. Yinger, *Paul, Judaism, and Judgment According to Deeds*, SNTSMS 105 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 236-59.

⁷⁰ Yinger, 204-15.

⁷¹ Yinger, 215-26. Yinger interprets 1 Co. 3.15 in relation to verses 16-17; and this leads to the conclusion that those whose works are found failed, will receive punishment.

will prepare believers to face God's judgment⁷² but the faithfulness to God's calling that will determine one's position in front of God.⁷³ In short, the teaching of judgment in Corinthians was used to rebuke a congregation who lives in sin, who contributes to making factions, and who serves God in an improper manner so that they will return and repent.

In Romans, the teaching of judgment is given together with Paul's teaching of the gospel. The theme of judgment is addressed in Romans 1.18-3.20. Romans 2.6 gets scholars' attention because of Paul's statement that God will judge men based on deeds.⁷⁴ This teaching basically is not new in Paul's teaching because he had talked about it beforehand such as in Corinthians. Although Paul emphasizes that God's judgment is based on one's deeds, however, it does not mean that Paul believes that human deeds could save someone from God's judgment; we have discussed beforehand that in this letter Paul emphasizes that it is solely Christ and faith in him that will lead someone to salvation; therefore, the teaching of judgment in Rom. 2.6 is not given to answer the question of "how men could be saved" but to answer the question of "why men need salvation."

D. God's Judgment in Catholic Epistle, Hebrews, and Revelation

1. The Letter of James

The context of James is difficult to be determined. The readers who are not staying in only one place probably become the main reason why James did not mention much information on a specific local issue.⁷⁵ However, there is a possibility that James sent the letter to help the Jewish congregation from Jerusalem which is scattered (cf. Acts 8.1; 11.19),⁷⁶ faces an economical problem, and gets oppression by the rich unbelievers.⁷⁷

⁷² Yinger, 260–61.

⁷³ Yinger, 260–70.

⁷⁴ Cf. Bird, *The Saving Righteousness of God*, 155–78; Chris VanLandingham, *Judgment & Justification in Early Judaism and the Apostle Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2006).

⁷⁵ James was written to "ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ διασπορᾷ χαιρεῖν." Although it is possible to interpret this phrase as a metaphor, there is no reason why James used it in that manner; therefore, the phrase should be interpreted literally to refer Jewish-Christian community outside of Palestine. Cf. P.H. Davids, *The Epistle of James*, NIGTC (Exeter: Paternoster, 1982), 64; R. Bauckham, *James: Wisdom of James, Disciple of Jesus the Sage*, NTR (London: Routledge, 1999), chap. 1.

⁷⁶ Cf. Bauckham, *James*, chap. 1.

⁷⁷ Davids argues that the Old Testament and Jesus' teaching on the poor are behind James' exhortation to the poor and his rebuke to the rich. Davids, *James*, 72, 112, 175–176. Also see D.H. Edgar, *Has God Not Chosen the Poor? The Social Setting of the Epistle of James*, LNTS 206 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001).

Marshall describes that the letter of James does not emphasize Christological teaching.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, it does not mean that James does not hold Christology.⁷⁹ In his letter, James repeatedly calls Jesus the Lord (Ja. 1.1, 2.1, 5.7, 8, 14, 15);⁸⁰ James gives emphasis on the theme of Christian perfection⁸¹ as the goal of Christian life because it is probably more relevant to the context of his readers.⁸² On the other hand, the teaching of judgment gets much attention in the letter of James;⁸³ James believes that judgment comes from God, and Jesus is assigned to take God's role as the Judge when the time comes (Ja. 4.12; 5.7-9).⁸⁴

The teaching of Judgment mostly appears in relation to the issue of the rich who oppresses the poor (e.g., Ja. 1.10-11; 2.5-7, 12; 5.1-9).⁸⁵ It seems that the rich that causes a problem is primarily from outside of the congregation; in his rebuke to the rich (Ja. 2.5-7), James distinguishes between the congregation that is called by “ὁμολογῶντες” and the evil-rich men called “αὐτοὶ..” It is not clear whether the Christians rebuked by James are also rich, yet they seem to put themselves on the side of the evil-rich men.⁸⁶ James sent this letter to help the congregation to understand that their difficulty is basically the test from God that will lead them to perfection (Ja. 1.2-4); on the other hand, James also emphasizes that the oppression and evil deeds directed to the Christians will lead the doers to the punishment in the judgment day when Christ coming. In this context, the teaching of judgment is used in the pastoral context to give encouragement and strength to believers facing difficulty because of their faith in Christ.

⁷⁸ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 633.

⁷⁹ In James, the author seems reluctant to use the name of Jesus. However, the teaching of Jesus significantly influences James' teachings. Bauckham demonstrates that there are similarities between James and other wisdom literature, in which the author freely uses sources and mixes them with his writing. Bauckham, *James*, 108–11.

⁸⁰ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 663.

⁸¹ Marshall, 632–41.

⁸² The theme of suffering is important in James and wisdom traditions. The book of Job also handles a similar issue. For discussion of James' use of Job in his letter, see K.A. Richardson, “Job as Exemplar in the Epistle of James,” in *HOTNT*, ed. S.E Porter (GR: Eerdmans, 2006), 213–29.

⁸³ For example, see James 5.1-6. In This section, James probably makes use of the traditions of Cain and Abel to show that God hears the suffering of the poor and will bring judgment to the oppressor. See J. Byron, “Living in the Shadow of Cain: Echoes of a Developing Tradition in James 5:1–6,” *NovT* 48, no. 3 (2006): 261–74.

⁸⁴ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 633–34..

⁸⁵ Cf. S. McKnight, “Poverty, Riches, and God's Blessings: James in the Context of Biblical Story,” in *Reading the Epistle of James: A Resource for Students*, SBLRBS 94 (Atlanta: SBL, 2019), 161–75.

⁸⁶ Davids, *James*, 112–13.

2. Letters of Peter

1 Peter was written to give advice and encouragement to the Jewish-Gentile believers in Asia Minor who faces hostility from the unbelievers so that they could become effective witnesses to Christ. If the letter was correctly written ca. 55 A.D.,⁸⁷ it was written around the same time as the gospel of Mark.⁸⁸ And if the word “diasporaj” (1. Pet.1.1) refers to the same word used by James (Ja.1.1) and Luke (Acts 8.1, 11.19), this letter probably was sent to the Jerusalem congregation who is more spread (probably because of the persecution under Caligula) and becomes mixed (because of the gentile believers who join in their community). This community seems facing difficulty from their neighbor (1Pet. 3.9,14).⁸⁹ 2 Peter was written ca. 64 A.D., by Peter⁹⁰ before his death in Rome to deal a heresy in the church. Many scholars believe that the heresy faced by Peter holds a kind of eschatological skepticism. However, the main teaching that becomes characteristic of this movement was not related to the rejection of Christ’s coming but the rejection of God’s judgment.⁹¹

The teaching of Christ is important in the letters of Peter. Marshall shows that there are two Christological elements in 1 Peter: the suffering of Christ and Jesus as the source of the salvific blessing.⁹² God initiates, plans, and fulfills salvation through Christ’s suffering on the Cross (1Pet 1.10-11).⁹³ His death is seen as a proclamation of his victory over the evil power (1Pet. 3.19-22, 4.6).⁹⁴ On the other hand, Peter also emphasizes the meaning of being in Christ; in Christ, believers do not only get heavenly blessings (1Pet. 5.14) but also learn

⁸⁷ Many scholars, except those who reject Peter’s authorship, insists that this letter is written ca. 62 A.D. This conclusion is influenced by the assumption that Peter wrote this letter from Rome and he was not in Rome before Paul’s arrival ca. 60 A.D. However, according to P. H. R. Van Houwelingen, there is a possibility to interpret the word “Babylon” (1Pet 5.13) literally as the area around Mesopotamia. P.H.R. Van Houwelingen, “The Authenticity of 2 Peter: Problem and Possible Solution,” *ETJ* 19, no. 2 (2010): 119–29. In addition, even if the letter was written in Rome there is a possibility to date the letter ca. 55 A.D., because, as we have discussed beforehand, Peter was probably there at that time.

⁸⁸ Since Mark was written the gospel based on Peter’s witness, there is a possibility that 1 Peter has a connection to the gospel. But it is beyond the scope of this essay to deal the topic.

⁸⁹ 1 Pet. 2.13-14 (Cf. Rom. 13.1-7) indicates that the persecution did not come from the state.

⁹⁰ Many scholars believe 2 Peter is pseudonymous; however, Van Houwelingen argues that there is no solid evidence to reject Peter’s authorship in 2 Peter. Van Houwelingen, “The Authenticity,” 119–29.

⁹¹ Van Houwelingen, 125.

⁹² Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 651–52.

⁹³ Marshall, 651–52.

⁹⁴ See P.H.R. Van Houwelingen, “Descended to Hell or Ascended to Heaven,” *Lux Mundi*, 2014, 25–26; Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 582.

how to live in accord with Christ's life especially in facing suffering (1Pet 4.13-16).⁹⁵ In 2 Peter, the author emphasizes that Jesus is God, the savior, and Lord (2 Pet 1.1, 11). Peter also teaches that Christ's righteousness makes believers receive salvation (2Pet. 1.1); it seems that Christ's righteousness refers to Christ's work at the cross. Christ's second coming is also important, and this teaching is used by Peter to argue against unbelievers and false teachers who ignore God's judgment and have an ungodly life (2Pet. 3).⁹⁶

The teaching of judgment is prominent in the letters of Peter and used in the pastoral context to encourage them to face suffering and to warn believers not infected by the false teachers and their followers. In 1 Pet. 4.5, Peter encourages the believers not to live in sin as the unbelievers because there will be God's judgment on the living and dead (cf. 2 Pet. 2.1, 13, 3.11). Christ's victory that is proclaimed in his ascension is proof that the evil powers have been defeated and every evil deed done will lead to punishment.

3. The Letter of Jude

Scholars disagree over the literary characters of the letter of Jude.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, there is sufficient evidence that indicates the letter is not mainly a polemical document.⁹⁸ Jude was written as a pastoral letter from the Jerusalem leader to the Christian congregation in the diaspora to deal with the false teachers (Jud. 4),⁹⁹ who were derived from the Christian communities. Jude seems to interpret this situation as the fulfillment of OT prophecy and Jesus' prophecy (vv. 3, 17).¹⁰⁰ This could be an indication that the letter reflects the situation around after the fall of Jerusalem. Based on its content, Jude had a particular interest in two aspects, i.e., (i) to identify the false teacher (vv. 4-16),¹⁰¹ (ii) to exhort the believers in dealing with the deception (vv. 17-22).

⁹⁵ Cf. J.B. Green, "1 Peter," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 346–49.

⁹⁶ P.H. Davids, "2 Peter," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 350–51.

⁹⁷ For discussion of Jude's literary characters, see, e.g., D.F. Watson, *Invention, Arrangement, and Style: Rhetorical Criticism of Jude and 2 Peter*, SBLDS 104 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1988), chap. 2; J.D. Charles, *Literary Strategy in the Epistle of Jude* (Cranbury: Associated University Presses, 1993); A. Robinson, *Jude on Attack: A Comparative Analysis of the Epistles of Jude, Jewish Judgment Oracles, and Greco-Roman Invective*, LNTS 581 (London: T&T Clark, 2019).

⁹⁸ See Watson, *Invention*, 78–79; Charles, *Literary Strategy*, 167–71.

⁹⁹ Discussion on Jude authorship, see R. Bauckham, *Jude and the Relatives of Jesus in the Early Church* (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 171–78.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 516–17.

¹⁰¹ Jude describes the character of the false teachers as boastful (v. 16), selfish (v. 12) scornful authority (vv. 8–10), Greedy (v. 12), and sexually immoral (vv. 4, 8).

The Christological emphasis of Jude focuses on the unified work of Jesus and the Father.¹⁰² According to Marshall, in this letter, God and Christ described having a very close relationship both in authority, works and judgment; for example, in Jud.1, 24, it is said that God is able to keep the believers, yet it is Christ who does it.¹⁰³ In addition, Jude also identifies Jesus as Christ (vv. 1, 4) and Lord (vv. 4, 17, 21).¹⁰⁴

Jude used the teaching of judgment in the pastoral context. Jude warns that ungodly life is the mark of deception or heresy that will lead doers to God's judgment.¹⁰⁵ He used the story of the unbelievers who are punished on the day of the Exodus, the tradition of the rebellion of angels, and the story of Sodom and Gomorrah as a model of God's judgment in the Lord's day (vv. 5-7); this warning has two functions; it is used to remind the congregation about this menacing movement and to encourage them not following the false teachers but to build their faith in the sound teaching, not to be obsessed by preaching that claims having "Spirit-inspired prophecy," and living in the God's love (vv. 20-21);¹⁰⁶ on the other hand, this warning is also used to call the false teachers to repent.¹⁰⁷ In Jude 22-23, the author exhorts his audience to have mercy on the false teachers and those, who receive their influence.¹⁰⁸ The letter of Jude highlights that God is just and he will bring judgment to those living in sin; therefore, believers should keep themselves and their fellow Christians.

4. Letters of John

The historical context of Johannine letters is ambiguous. Scholars disagreed over many introductory issues in these writings.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, it is still reasonable to argue that these texts were written ca. 90 A.D., and were sent to help the church to deal a heresy. P. J. Lalleman argues that heresy is related to a kind of belief that is existed in the Acts of John;

¹⁰² P.H. Davids, *A Theology of James, Peter, and Jude*, BTNT 6 (GR: Zondervan, 2014), 282–85.

¹⁰³ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 665.

¹⁰⁴ Jude used the same designation to call God (vv. 5, 9); this could indicate that Jude identifies the unity of the Father and Jesus, or it is used to show Jesus' existence and work in the OT times.

¹⁰⁵ P.H. Davids, "Jude," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 335.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 519–20.

¹⁰⁷ J.H. Neyrey, *2Peter, Jude: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 37C (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 46. Neyrey identifies that the word "ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ ἡγαπημένοις" (v.1) is in parallel to "ἐν ἀγαπῇ θεοῦ τηρησατέ" (v.21); this is used to emphasizes that the congregation need to love their brother and sister including those who follow the false teacher. (cf. vv. 22-23)

¹⁰⁸ See D. Lockett, "Objects of Mercy in Jude: The Prophetic Background of Jude 22-23," *CBQ* 77 (2015): 322–36.

¹⁰⁹ For current discussion on Johannine Epistles, see R.A. Culpepper and P.N. Anderson, eds., *Communities in Dispute: Current Scholarship on the Johannine Epistles*, SBLECIL 13 (Atlanta: SBL, 2014).

similar characters found in First John and Acts of John may indicate that the heresy refers to a kind of docetic movement, which denies the human nature of Christ.¹¹⁰ Among the three, 3 John seems to have a clear historical context, which indicates that it was written to give pastoral advice to Gaius dealing with Diotrephes, who has become a problem in the church.

In the prologue of First John, the author explains that he is a member of the body of first-hand eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ.¹¹¹ The description that the author used regarding their physical experience to live with Jesus indicates that the humanity of Jesus becomes the main issue in the audience. Nevertheless, that theme is not the only subject in the letters of John. The deity of Jesus is also important teaching in these letters.¹¹² The central teaching of the letters of John is Christ as the source of salvation, the principle of Christian teaching, and a model of the Christian life. Besides describing Jesus as the savior who brings forgiveness (e.g., 1Jo. 2.2, 3.14), John also emphasizes that Jesus is the son of God (e.g., 1Jo. 5.20). On one hand, the teaching of Christ is important to test the false teachers (e.g., 1Jo. 2.22; 2 Jo. 7);¹¹³ on the other hand, Christ's life and teaching become a model for believers to live in God's love (e.g., 1Jo. 3.16; 2 Jo.5-6; 3 Jo. 6-8).¹¹⁴

The teaching of judgment is seen more clearly in First John. In 1Jo 3.8 John reminds his readers since Christ's mission is to destroy evil's work, believers should not continue living in sin; although the final punishment of the evil will happen on Lord's day, the evil has already been destroyed in Christ's first coming.¹¹⁵ John also reminds his readers that God's judgment is based on whether believers live in Christ's love (1Jo. 4.17).¹¹⁶ In this context, the teaching on judgment is given in the pastoral context to encourage believers to have a good

¹¹⁰ P.J. Lalleman, "Adversaries Envisaged in the Johannine Epistles," *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 53, no. 1 (1999): 17–24. For a comprehensive discussion of Johannine heresy, see D. Streett, *They Went out from Us: The Identity of the Opponents in First John*, BZNW 177 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), chap. 1.

¹¹¹ On the eyewitnesses of Jesus, see R. Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (GR: Eerdmans, 2006); P.H.R. Van Houwelingen, "John and the Others: To Whom Does 'We' in the Fourth Gospel's Prologue and Epilogue Refer?," *Fides Reformata* 19, no. 2 (2014): 95–115.

¹¹² See A.J. Köstenberger, "The Deity of Christ in John's Letters and the Book of Revelation," in *The Deity of Christ* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 151–67.

¹¹³ Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 558–59.

¹¹⁴ Thielman, 558.

¹¹⁵ S.S. Smalley, *1, 2, and 3 John*, Revised, WBC 51 (Waco: Word, 2008), 169–70.

¹¹⁶ Smalley describes that in the letter of John, living in God's love involves obedience to God's truth; this leads believers to have the confidence to face God's judgment. Smalley, 256–58.

life based on God's love.¹¹⁷ Another dimension of Johannine eschatology is the hope that believers will receive eternal life from God as their reward (1Jo 2.25;5.11-13).¹¹⁸ Johannine ethics does not focus only on present realities but also focuses on the future state of believers.

5. The Letter to Hebrews

The letter to the Hebrews was written to give encouragement to the congregation of Jerusalem in facing the difficult time related to the fall of Jerusalem. There is a possibility that the letter was written around the fall of Jerusalem (70 A.D.); if the letter was written before the fall, its purpose must be to prepare the Jewish believers facing the catastrophe that comes shortly;¹¹⁹ but if it was written after the fall, it is sent to help them to interpret that event in the light of Christ's teaching and to build a solid hope based on Christ's works.

The author emphasizes that Jesus is the son of God who is superior to other figures such as Moses, Joshua, etc., and is the highest priest. Marshall describes that the author of Hebrews taught that Christ and his works have been portrayed in OT, therefore, Christ did not only open the new covenant but he fulfilled and perfected the old covenant (Heb. 9.11-14).¹²⁰ Salvation is worked only by Jesus; he has become a priest who sacrifices himself to set free men from sin (Heb. 10.1-18); this work is perfect and there is no other way for men to be saved apart from Christ, and no forgiveness to people who rejects Christ (Heb. 6.4-6).¹²¹

The teaching of judgment in Hebrews is used in the pastoral context. The author warns believers that God is the judge, who will punish every transgression; the description of God as *πῦρ καταναλίσκων* (Heb 12.29) expresses his serious response to sin and his powerful judgment.¹²² Based on this belief, the author warns believers that disobedience, unfaithfulness, and unbelieving will be punished by God (Heb. 3.7-11); Israel's experience should remind the congregation that they should not ignore God's warning and follows the path of the "wilderness generation" who is punished because of their disobedience.¹²³

¹¹⁷ See G.C. Kenney, *The Relation of Christology to Ethics in the First Epistle of John* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2000).

¹¹⁸ See D.W. Mills, "The Eschatology of 1John," in *Looking into the Future: Evangelical Studies in Eschatology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 97–111.

¹¹⁹ Cf. P.H.R. Van Houwelingen, "Riddles around the Letter to the Hebrews," *Fides Reformata* 16, no. 2 (2011): 151–56.

¹²⁰ Marshall, *New Testament Theology*, 611–13.

¹²¹ Marshall, 617–20.

¹²² Marshall, 620.

¹²³ Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 609–11.

6. Revelation

The book of Revelation was written in the midst of difficult times. There are two alternative references that probably become the background of the book: the persecution of Nero (ca. 65 A.D.) or Domitian (ca. 95 A.D.). Revelation probably was written after 70 A.D., because (i) the expectation described in Rev. 21.1-4 seems more relevant if the Revelation was written after the fall of Jerusalem, (ii) the deception described in Revelations seems to have similarity with heresy facing in 2 Peter and Jude, (iii) the description of punishment used in Rev. 6.1-15¹²⁴ echoing Jesus' warning on the fall of Jerusalem. Based on the internal evidence, it is clear that the deception in morality and teaching endangers the believers (e.g., Rev. 2.14, 20). The idolatry becomes a serious issue and persecution of the church that increasingly leads many believers to be martyrs (e.g., Rev. 7.13-17).

Revelation emphasizes that Christ is the center of the kingdom of God. Marshall describes that in the book of Revelation, John portrays God as "a powerful creator and potentate whose throne dominates the heavenly scene;" and Jesus is described in the OT language as the Messiah, Son of Man, Lion of Judah, the Lamb who is slain, and the witness. However, there is an important theme namely God's kingdom through Jesus that cannot be ignored in understanding the Christology of Revelation. John emphasizes that the kingdom of God through Christ is the central message of his book (Rev. 1.1-3); in fact, Revelation is about Christ who brings God's kingdom into the world.¹²⁵

The teaching of judgment is prominent in Revelation. It encourages believers facing persecution and trusting God, who will not let the evil powers win but will control and destroy them. For example, in Rev. 6.1-17, John emphasizes disasters are used to punish evil, and the Jesus' second coming will end and destroy the evil.¹²⁶ Based on the plague sequences (e.g., Rev. 8.6-9.21), Thielman identifies that the teaching of judgment is also used to summon unbeliever to repent.¹²⁷ The teaching of judgment is also used to warn Christians who are tolerant of evil that this will lead them to punishment. In short, the teaching of judgment in Revelation is used in the pastoral context and evangelization.

¹²⁴ Cf. G.K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 370–71.

¹²⁵ Cf. Beale, 282–84. The word "ὁ δὲ γενοσθαι ἐν ταχὺ" is rooted in Dan. 2.28-29, 45; John emphasizes that Revelation is the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy on God's kingdom.

¹²⁶ Cf. Thielman, *Theology of the New Testament*, 622–24.

¹²⁷ Thielman, 614–26.

E. Conclusion

The main and central theme of NT theology is Jesus Christ. Although the teaching of judgment is important, it is not the core of NT theology. Jesus Christ is the heart of NT teaching and theology. The teaching of judgment sometimes is used to lead people to Christ, is used to call believers to repent from their sins, and is also used to encourage and ascertain believers that God is just and his justice becomes believers' hope to face injustice and persecution. There is a pattern in which the teaching of judgment is used in the pastoral context and evangelization. This seems to be the feature of NT teaching on God's judgment in the context of NT theology.

The teaching of judgment indicates that the Christian belief that Jesus is Christ and the judge had existed since the earliest Christian literature. This indicates that the lordship of Jesus had been recognized since the beginning of the early Church. The letter of James is possibly the earliest NT writing and sees Jesus as the Judge. That theological perspective was not created by Paul,¹²⁸ it had existed since the beginning of the early church, in fact, it is rooted in Jesus's own teaching.

This observation also reminds us that there is a different question between NT authors and us. It is clear that NT authors truly believed that salvation comes from God through Christ; on the other hand, they also believed that believers need to repent whenever they sin because living in sin will lead them to punishment. Responding to this, we probably ask whether NT authors consider that their teaching on the judgment will imply that salvation is based on human works; however, it is doubtful that this question becomes the question of NT authors; because paradox is common and acceptable in that time.

There are still further aspects that need to be observed to understand NT teaching of judgment. The "deeds" that will be considered in the judgment should be clarified; does it refer to obedience to the law or good works as the fruit of repentance, or it refers to integrating life? Does NT teaching require perfection? In addition, the NT teaching on judgment has two elements i.e., punishment and reward; we have discussed the teaching mainly in the context of punishment, but the other element is also important to be observed.

¹²⁸ Cf. J.D.G. Dunn, *Beginning from Jerusalem*, CM 2 (GR: Eerdmans, 2009), 17–28.



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