

CHAPTER TWO

THE PAROUSIA AND THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH

We will now seek to construct an essential framework within which ecclesial and temporal matters will be viewed. Three issues relative to the Parousia will receive our attention: the *nature* of the Parousia, the *proximity* of the Parousia and the *contingency* of the Parousia. The Parousia event will anchor, moderate and direct the paper, also delimiting the aspects to be discussed in the ecclesial section of part 3. Firstly, the biblical character of this event will be analysed. Then it will be argued that the early church expected the Parousia of the Lord Jesus Christ to occur within a few decades or so – her ardent *Naherwartung* (German = near-expectation). Without modulating the frequency of the *Naherwartung*, we then look at those elements of *Fernerwartung* (German = distant-expectation) – factors which relativised the *Naherwartung*. These two dynamics provide us with a 'problem' that is synchronised in a salvation-historical approach. Lastly, the issue of the flexibility and contingency of the Parousia will be dealt with, providing a bridge into the role of the ecclesia with regards the Parousia.

Regarding the hermeneutical process, all effort will focus on what the narrative discourses affirm, i e, on the canonical and literary status of the text; details on the relevant issues of textual criticism, form criticism and the like are not warranted by the trajectory of this thesis. We will also be constantly interacting with the three traditional millennial views throughout the thesis.

2.1 The nature of the Parousia

The noun *parousia* generally denotes *presence* and *arrival* of a person (Braumann 1976:900). This Greek term keys in on the two aspects of 'presence' and 'appearing' of a person (Oepke 1977:859). Wright (1996:341) says the word 'denotes the "arrival" of someone not at the moment present; and it is especially used in relation to the visit of a royal or official personage'. This spatial term is more accurately translated 'arrival' than 'coming', for *parousia* accents more the personal presence of the visitor than his traversing movement. (The connotation 'coming' has also been unjustly spiritualised). Relative to Jesus Christ, the NT describes this event as the expected *presence* of his *person in power*. There are five fundamental aspects to the Parousial hope of the NT: it is optical, spatial, personal, social and universal.

2.1.1 Optical (glorious)

'...when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire...when he comes to be glorified [in] his saints and to be marvelled at on that day among all who have believed....' (2 Th 1:7-10. Most quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version).

From the above Scripture - probably from one of the earliest Christian letters - we have emphatic evidence of the apocalyptic nature of the faith of the early church. The Thessalonian correspondence reveals that 'the earliest NT documents are distinctly (though not entirely) apocalyptic in tone and content' (Dunn 1977:325).¹ This expectation of an imminent parousia, so axiomatic for apocalypticism (Oepke 1977:863), was integral to the foundational teaching Paul gave to his Thessalonian converts.² Jesus Christ was expected to return shortly, in a ubiquitous and visible display of glory, defeating the Antichrist and saving his saints from his tyrannical reign. This parousial hope was a Christological modification of the theophanic and

¹ However long Paul was in Thessalonica - Acts 17:2 mentions 'three sabbaths', which Wanamaker (1990:7) deems hardly sufficient for Paul to establish himself in his trade - it was certainly a period not long enough for Paul to establish his converts in the faith (1 Th 3:1-10). All this accentuates the importance of apocalyptic teaching in early Christian communities, which was part of the *foundational teaching* of Paul at this time.

² Hanson (1979:431) helpfully differentiates between *an apocalypse* (a literary genre), *apocalypticism* (a socio-religious movement) and *apocalyptic eschatology* (a religious perspective). The 'imminency' ingredient seems particularly acute in apocalypticism.

Messianic anticipations found in the OT canon and the apocalyptic writings of second-temple Judaism; which reached axiomatic status in the NT period.¹

2.1.1.1 The New Testament and apocalyptic

'Christianity began as an apocalyptic sect within Judaism, a sect which in its apocalypticism was in substantial continuity with the messages both of John the Baptist and of Jesus' (Dunn 1977:325). How true is this statement? Is there apocalyptic in the NT? Some scholars see Christianity as a child of apocalyptic (Käsemann 1969:137), whilst others are more cautious (Allison 1992:19: 'significant continuity beside significant discontinuity'). In broad terms, the Nazarenes could be denoted as an apocalyptic movement relative to first century Judaism. Yet narrowly defined, the *novum* of the NT revelation disallows imposing any pre-existing comparative-religious category onto the form of the new revelation. The answer seems therefore Yes and No.

The following factors identify Jesus and the early church as apocalyptic in theology and experience: imminent expectation (Mk 1:15; Lk 21:34-36)²; the hope for a new coming age (the temporal axis, Mk 10:30); dualism (the spatial axis, Mk 4:15); the wicked verses the righteous (the anthropological axis, Lk 14:14); pessimism (Mt 23:36)³; determinism (Mt 24)⁴, the resurrection emphasis (Mt 28); and the Messianic woes in the Olivet discourse (Mk 13:5-13).⁵ These elements characterise the content of Christ's teaching and experience and are not limited to his Olivet discourse. Yet a moderating factor enters if we acknowledge the reality of 'aberrant apocalyptic' and

¹ Oepke (1977:866) states: 'the whole thinking of Jesus is permeated by ideas of parousia'. Cf. Beasley-Murray 1986; Kreitzer 1997b; Niehaus 1995; and Oepke 1977.

² Beker (1990:21) mentions imminency as a characteristic of apocalyptic. Yet this is not always so for apocalyptic's schematisation is often given to portend a temporal duration between the present events and the future eschaton (as in Daniel and Revelation). De Vries (1975:342) thus says of apocalyptic: 'The future has become increasingly abstracted from the present. It is no longer an extension of the present but an epoch of its own, detached from the present and irrelevant to it'. For our purposes, the imminency factor is important for apocalypticism but not apocalyptic or an apocalypse (see p 16 fn 2).

³ Rowley (1944:163) prefers to see this pessimism as a realism that places its hope in God alone.

⁴ Here we notice that Jesus spoke of predetermined events to precede his parousia. So, according to Rowley (1944:152), apocalyptic is 'faith in the divine initiative in history for the attainment of its final goal'.

⁵ The three axes (temporal, spatial and anthropological) are taken from the article of Kreitzer (1997a:55-68). Cf. Kvanvig 1989.

'canonical apocalyptic', with Jesus being in line with canonical apocalyptic and his movement its child. Canonical apocalyptic disavows sign seeking (Lk 17:20-21), date setting (Mk 13:32), and modifies the pessimistic tenor with the presence of the kingdom in history prior to the end (Allison so 1992:18-19). Dunn (1977:335-336) mentions the elements of Christ-centeredness, the already/not yet tension and the cautionary note, as features that marked off earliest Christianity from extra-canonical apocalyptic.

The importance of apocalyptic in the Pauline world-view has been accented by Käsemann (1969:108-137) and Beker (1990). Beker sees apocalyptic as no mere husk to be 'cracked open' but the very center and periphery of Paul's gospel: 'Paul's coherent center is marked not only by an apocalyptic matrix and pattern but also by a future orientation which gives his thought its driving force' (:xii). For Beker, the primary coherence of the gospel is the apocalyptic interpretation of the death and resurrection of Christ (:20). The essential place of the resurrection of Jesus in Paul's theology stamps the Pauline *Weltanschauung* with an apocalyptic flavour. Paul's churches are thus sociologically definable as apocalyptic movements (Beker:34).¹

Although early Christianity can correctly be identified as apocalyptic, sharing the basic axioms of all apocalyptic thought, it is not *merely* apocalyptic. It brought a new theological reality that was not reducible to prior theological concepts and frameworks. If apocalyptic is seen as a mode of revelation relative to the domination by pagan powers, social alienation and religious apostasy, then the NT was written within an apocalyptic framework - though not specifically the child of two apocalyptic 'parents' (Käseman) but rather from parents of 'apocalyptic' and 'prophetic' stock (Hanson, *mutatis mutandis*) (see Addendum 1). The theological content of the NT does seem more in line with those, traditionally defined, apocalyptic elements rather than the classical prophetic forms. We agree with Ladd (1958:81) that 'the basic apocalyptic structure is fundamental to NT religion', being 'intrinsic to biblical religion'. - If apocalyptic elements are the extension of the prophetic in a more universal, transcendent, dualistic, Messianic, and angelic direction, then NT faith was inextricably apocalyptic. It was particularly in their expectation of the Parousia that

¹ Beker (:21) saw four elements of apocalyptic permeating Paul's thought world: the vindication of God; the universal salvation; the dualistic structure; and the imminent coming of God. Cf. Kreitzer 1993:254 and Aune 1993:25-35.

the early church offered a crystallisation of all these elements of the apocalyptists' symbolic universe.¹

Christianity can thus be described as an apocalyptic movement. If we accept these conclusions, then one is provided with a conceptual framework that helps to integrate the diverse strains of NT eschatology. In this way one begins to appreciate the crucial role that the Parousia played in the early church, and how they eagerly anticipated an impending Christological reality that would break into their present space-time universe and inaugurate the long awaited kingdom of God.²

Finally, the reasons for preferring the term 'apocalyptic' above 'eschatology' are shared by Beker (1980:14), who writes regarding the apocalyptic in Paul:

My reasons for using 'apocalyptic' are twofold: first of all, the term 'apocalyptic' guards against the multivalent and often chaotic use of the concept 'eschatology' in modern times. Eschatology refers to 'last things', but in modern use the 'last things' often refer not to things that come at the end of a series but to things that are final and ultimate. In other words, the use of the term apocalyptic clarifies the future-temporal character of Paul's gospel. Secondly, apocalyptic denotes an end-time occurrence that is both cosmic-universal and definitive. Paul expects the future to be an apocalyptic closure-event in time and space embracing the whole of God's created order. Thus the term 'apocalyptic' refers more clearly than the general term 'eschatology' to the specificity and extent of the end-time occurrence.

2.1.1.2 Theophany and Parousia

Having realised the apocalyptic nature of apostolic Christianity, we need to investigate the primary historical and conceptual antecedent to the NT Parousia: the OT theophany. This optical and glorious appearing of God in the OT is integrally linked to the apocalyptic elements of the OT. It might even be the historical and conceptual root for OT apocalyptic. Here, the dualistic, cosmic and transcendent elements of apocalyptic, break through with vivid cogency. In this action of Yahweh, the 'other world' breaks through in a visible, cosmic and glorious manner. This element is seen throughout the OT, reaching its zenith in the prophetic writings of Isaiah 64:1-4 and Zechariah 14:1-9. The 'conviction grew that as the Lord had come down at the

¹ Hanson (1979:432) defines 'symbolic universe' as, 'the system of concepts and symbols in which an apocalyptic movement codifies its identity and gives expression to its interpretation of reality'.

² Highlighting the apocalyptic nature of the Christian faith shows up the insufficiencies of the absolute preterist understanding of Mark 13 held by France (1971) and Wright (1996).

beginning of Israel's history, so he would come down at the end (Mi 1:3; Zch 14; Ps 96:13)' (Glasson 1988:259).

The theological matrix for these apocalyptic events of Yahweh is found in the Sinai theophany.¹ Niehaus (1995), after comprehensively treating the theophanic concept in his book *God at Sinai*, takes the Sinai theophany as crucial for understanding the theophanies in the OT: 'The Sinai theophany is taken as a touchstone for prior and subsequent glory theophanies in the Bible because the Sinai event was constitutive in Israel's history and crucial in salvation history' (:16). In these disclosures of God, the visible appearing of God is the *sine-qua-non* of a theophany. With the 'materialising' of God, nature is often dislocated and convulsed. Certain descriptions of nature's disruption at God's appearing may be more literary or poetic (Jdg 5:4-5; Ps 18). Beasley-Murray (1986:9) views much of the accompanying phenomena as parabolic. But many passages, such as 1 Kings 19:11-13 (cf. Gn 3:8; Ex 19:16-19 *et al*), 'portray stormy atmospheric disruptions attendant upon actual theophany' (Beasley-Murray:28). These 'natural' elements are 'calculated to enhance the supernatural power of the great Judge, whose appearance thus has implications even over the natural order' (:28). 'Nature is in convulsions at the appearance of the divine warrior. His power and his might are so great that creation withers in his fearful presence' (Longman & Reid 1995:43). Fertility ceases (Is 24:1-13; Hab 3:6) and the seas dry up (Nah 1:2-6; Hab 3:8). Although the Psalmists and prophets embellished their theophanies in hyperbolic fashion, the historical link with Sinai prevents the interpreter from dissolving the content signified in the power of the form and style of its signifier. The symbol must never lose its historical control. We can thus view such descriptions as dramatic portrayals of the theophanic irruption of Yahweh into history, expressing in hyperbolic fashion the majesty and unprecedented nature of the actual event. *How* it is described might not be literal, but *what* it describes points to a literal event: the entrance of Yahweh into history and nature.

At bottom, the actuality of such events is ultimately an assumption of faith grounded in one's doctrine of God *vis-à-vis* the preternatural. Those who do not

¹ Niehaus (1995:155-160) might be stretching his case somewhat in citing Genesis 1:2 as an 'avian' theophany and Genesis 3:8 as a storm theophany. Also, whatever the validity of ascribing the appearances of the angel of the Lord prior to Sinai as theophanies, it is clear that at Sinai we have a defining moment. Interestingly, Beasley-Murray (1993:424), in his definitive study on Mark 13, reasons that the modern revulsion over the cosmic dimensions of the Parousia is due to a neglect of the notion of theophany in the OT.

believe that God can 'inject himself theophanically into history' (Niehaus 1995:49-50) will have to reinterpret the Parousia of Christ, poetically or naturalistically. Von Rad (1975:119-125) has positively linked the concept of the Day-of-the-Lord with the theophanic wars of Joshua, also helping us ground the theophany concept in history. Apparently it was a part of Israel's tradition that 'Jahweh [came] specifically to wage war, with its accompaniment of miraculous phenomena' (:123).¹ These war theophanies were often linked to the *malak Yahweh* who went before Israel in the Exodus and Conquest (Ex 23:20-33; Jdg 2:1-5). The 'angel' manifested his power in the conquest through all manner of natural phenomenon, but typically in a thunderstorm, which, clogged the wheels of Sisera's chariots (Jdg 4:15; 5:19-23), hailed down on Adoni-zedek (Jos 10:11; Ps 68:7-10), 'thundered' at the Philistines (1 Sm 7:10) and assisted David in battle (2 Sm 5:24 (?); Ps 18:7-15, 144:5-7).² The Warrior God was employing nature as weapons in his battles (so Longman & Reid 1995:42-43).

In conclusion, the Christological Parousia can be seen as the apical Sinai theophany of God, thus continuing the salvation-historical line of God's acts in history.³ It is also the manifestation of the Divine Warrior, with attendant cosmic disturbances, in tune with its rich OT tradition (thus Longman & Reid 1995:124-135). When we add the eschatological ingredient to the theophany concept, 'the theophany concept stands for the coming of God into the world for the revelation of his glory and the accomplishment of his purpose for the world he has made' (Beasley-Murray 1986:10). When we speak of the theophanic Parousia, we refer to the expected arrival of Christ within history in a cataclysmic and cosmically 'disruptive' manner effecting global redemption. This does not necessarily mean the destruction of the elements, but the unprecedented personal entry of the Creator into his creation, announced with all manner of atmospheric and awe-inspiring effects. This event was proleptically experienced by the Israelites as they stood at the foot of Mount Sinai:

¹ Cf. Longman & Reid (1995:19-26) for this holy-war motif and OT scholarship. Zechariah 9:14 is a salient example of this Warrior God.

² Niehaus (1995:301) includes Psalm 18 within his description of 'ahistorical, imaginative theophanic portrayals'. There is undoubtedly hyperbolic and poetic colour used here, but was there not a historical event behind this Psalm *that demanded such vivid colour?*

³ 'God's self-disclosure in the Old Testament implies *Heilsgeschichte*, and *Heilsgeschichte* entails theophany' (Niehaus 1995:21).

On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, as well as a thick cloud on the mountain, and a blast of the trumpet so loud that all the people who were in the camp trembled....Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke, because the LORD had descended upon it in fire; the smoke went up like the smoke of a kiln, while the whole mountain shook violently. As the blast of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses would speak and God would answer him in thunder. When the LORD descended upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the mountain, the LORD summoned Moses to the top of the mountain, and Moses went up (Ex 19:16-20).

2.1.1.3 The synoptic accounts

Having dealt with the issues of apocalyptic and theophany, we now turn to the synoptic accounts. It will be assumed that this visible, theophanic and public appearance of Christ is integral to the theology of the synoptic gospels (as Oepke 1977:866). It is certainly not the heart of the gospel message - being more a 'creational' and 'covenantal' reality rooted in OT faith (Niehaus 1995) - yet it is an essential part of the tapestry of the world-view of Jesus Christ.

Within the synoptic tradition, Mark 8:38 speaks of this public day of Christ. Here Jesus expects to 'come in the glory of the Father with the holy angels'. This theophanic language might allude to Deuteronomy 33:2, Zechariah 14:5, as well as 1 Enoch 1, and designates the visible and glorious 'arrival' of the 'son of man'. In Mark 14:62 we have the statement of Jesus denoting a future glorious manifestation (see Beasley-Murray 1986:296-304). Beasley-Murray sees this statement as,

the ultimate confession of Jesus as to his identity and the goal of his mission....From a position of utter humiliation before his foes he claims God's vindication for himself in a coming revelation of his right to rule. The saying therefore brings to completion his instruction relating to the sufferings and the exaltation of the Son of Man in the predictions of his sufferings (:297).

This verse 'feeds into Mark's portraying Jesus as a figure who shares the power and glory of God himself, the appearance of a crucifixion to the contrary notwithstanding' (Gundry 1993:886). Gundry says that 'Jesus' prediction refers to a single, literal seeing of the Son of man at the last day' (:886) when Jesus will be seen sitting and then coming, a twofold movement visibly occurring to those on earth (also Lane 1982:537). This verse is often used by many to infer that Jesus would return within the lifetime of some alive in the Sanhedrin (favouring the preterist interpretation of Mark 13). However, Jesus could be speaking representatively (rulers = nation) or theologically, i

e, to the generation who rejects him, now and in the future.¹ Matthew 23:37-39 could be a link to Mark 14:62, which seems to be speaking of an expectation of the Jewish people to return to God along with multitudes from the nations.² To interpret the saying of Mark with less strength than a future Parousia 'is to diminish unrealistically the eschatological language employed and the significance of the situation out of which it proceeded' (Beasley-Murray 1986:302).

The theme of the optical and theophanic Parousia is continued throughout the rest of the NT (2 Th 1:7-8; 2:8; 2 Tm 4:1; Tt 2:13; Heb 9:28; 1 Pt 1:7; 5:1-4; 1 Jn 3:2 and Rv 1:7).³ The cumulative effect of these texts points to an ardent expectation of a future manifestation of Jesus Christ far beyond what had been or was experienced in the present. 'As things are, people do not see Christ, but at the Parousia He will become manifest to all and be manifest as a supreme, glorious being' (Morris 1986:664). The only analogous event within the NT period is the quasi-parousial transfiguration (2 Pt 1:16-18); an optical experience which certainly drove the early apostolic expectation (see sec 2.2.2.2.a).

2.1.2 Spatial (bodily, temporal)

In the light of a salvation-historical interpretation of the theophany concept, it would seem that theophany and historical termination are conceptually incompatible (*pace* Bauckham & Hart 1999:118).⁴ Yahweh needs a historical context to 'enter'. A 'melt-down' experience would be inconsistent with the salvation-history of the theophany, where, on all other occasions, God comes to enter our world, not destroy it. Beasley-Murray (1986:424-425) concludes that 'none of the descriptions of theophany in the

¹ In Matthew 26:64 Jesus speaks of his exaltation as receiving visible fulfillment 'from now on'. Gundry (1982:545, *et al*) sees a 'mental seeing of the Son of Man' that begins immediately as a result of the events of 27:51b-53, continuing in the church-age. Rather, Jesus could have seen his suffering as the inclusive introduction to his exaltation and therefore one of a piece with it.

² Cf. Beasley-Murray 1986:307 and note the sense of restoration in Psalm 118 from which Jesus quotes.

³ Stock apocalyptic terminology such as *apokalypsis* and *epiphaneia* signifies the unveiling and public visibility of the heavenly reality within the present world. The symbolic universe of the apocalypticist revolved around the axis of a spatial dualism, with the transcendent realities responsible for present disclosures and for the final inbreaking of the 'other world' into this world.

⁴ Bauckham & Hart (:18): 'It [Parousia] is the event which brings the temporal history of the world to an end....It cannot be an event in time and space like the other events of history, since it is the event that happens to all time and space and transforms them into eternity'. Also Oepke 1977:870.

OT envisage the destruction of the universe at the coming of God. The same applies to NT descriptions of theophany at the end of the age'. Here the Creator enters his creation and reveals his glory within our space-time framework.

The parousial foretastes of the transfiguration and resurrection all occurred *within our history* and showed the compatibility of the resurrection body with time. The resurrection of Christ occurred within our space-time continuum. It was not inconsistent with it. If we understand a theophany as an appearing of God in history (as seen in the OT precedents), then we must be careful to avoid philosophical assumptions that blur the historical reality of the impending Parousia. This is a point which is stressed by premillennialists in their avoidance of an amillennial historical termination, and is an interpretation more suited to the majority of OT texts on the parousial hope (e.g. Zch 14, the most explicit portrayal of the Parousia concept in the whole bible). What is expected in Zechariah 14 and in Matthew 19:28 and 25:31, is not a spiritual or cosmically diffused future revelation, but a specific, physical and 'local' appearance of Christ on this earth. Matthew, the most 'Jewish' of the gospels, links this future Parousia (ch 24) with the judgment of the nations (ch 25), which describes an assize occurring on our earth *after* the Parousia (ch 24). The premillennial interpretation seems most consistent with a Jewish reading of this text.¹

This brings us once again into the debate between prophetic and apocalyptic eschatology (see Addendum 1).² As intimated before, even within classical apocalyptic texts within the canon (Daniel and Zechariah) there is no mention of a cosmic dissolution. Many of the other texts that suggest such eventualities have been reinterpreted by scholars in terms of evocative poetical exaggeration or hyperbole. Although certain texts do seem to speak of such a dissolution (Is 24; 65:17), the predominant note of OT eschatology is that of future *historical* events. Even within canonical-apocalyptic, the final nuance is more on historical continuity than discontinuity. This is because, according to Freedman (1960:142), '[t]he God of the Bible is identified by his participation in human history' (also Freedman 1967). Modern scholarship has noticed that the prophetic 'typological' mindset, cast the future events in terms of past historical events. Carroll (1982) can assert that 'the

¹ Thus the millennium in the premillennial school, is seen 'on a level with other historical periods, such as the antediluvian, the postdeluvian, and the present Christian period of human history' (Kromminga 1945:17).

² For an excellent summation of the issues and approaches, see Le Roux [s a].

belief in the future arose in ancient Israel out of the belief in the past...Eschatological visions reflect a world constructed in terms of the first creation' (:48). De Vries (1975:341), nuancing the primacy of 'today' in Israel's consciousness, says that eschatology is 'an analogical projection of the past and present into the future, positing Yahweh's coming action on his action already experienced'. Further, Ladd (1958:142) affirms that 'the ultimate destiny of man in the OT remains earth-centered'. Wright (1996:202-209) has trenchantly shown that second temple Judaism did not expect an end of their space-time universe with the coming of the kingdom of God. He attributes the rise of this aberrant apocalyptic element to the popularity of Schweitzer's thesis (:207). Moltmann, in his book *The coming of God* (1996) favors a pre-millennial historical perspective, something consistent with his world-affirming and ecological concerns. Although he recognises the 'end-of-the-world' notes in Scripture, he correctly observes that 'the ideas about the end of the world appear on the fringes of the OT' (:227), and that 'apocalyptic ideas about the end of the world in the NT are clearly subordinated to the expectation of Christ's parousia, and therefore to the completion of his salvific work' (:231). Lindblom's following words are clearly one sided, yet nevertheless substantial: 'If eschatology is a doctrine of the end of the world and the history of mankind, there is no eschatology at all in the Old Testament prophets' (1978:360). He also reminds us that 'in Old Testament thought, what we call the normal historical process is the setting of supernatural actions' (:361).

Further, in OT theology, the transcendent and imminent, the 'supernatural' and natural are not mutually incompatible.¹ Von Rad has helpfully reminded us that 'the western concept of absolute time, independent of events...[was] unknown to Israel' (1975:99). He also interpreted the prophetic as describing events that would take place within history, though 'the new age would not be simply a continuation of what went before (:115). We may define this perspective as one of quantitative continuity (historical horizon) and qualitative discontinuity (the 'vertical' *novum* of the 'horizontal' event). The 'rupture', which Jacob (1958) saw as essential to an OT view of eschatology, need not be terminal, for Israel's hope was expected to occur within the arena of history, being analogous to all prior events of Yahweh in his history. Rowland (1985:135) sums up for us what many OT scholars would concur with:

¹ Besides the transcendent and imminent 'fusion' in OT theophany, is not the resurrection of Christ the ultimate *Gestalt* and conceptual story to reveal the unity of this biblical dynamic?

God's rule and authority were ultimately to be manifested in the physical world. Salvation for a Jew was not primarily some mystical deliverance for the spirit to enter a private communion with God in the world beyond, but the manifestation on earth of God's authority over the universe and the setting right of all that was wrong.

This bodily, spatial and temporal concept is the background to the apocalyptic phrase, 'the return of Christ'. It is the historical arrival of the Messiah into *our* world, *our* earth. The OT expectation of the coming of God (Beasley-Murray 1986:3-35) received significant Christological modification and motivation through the resurrection of Christ. The hope of certain Israelites (apostles) had materialised 'before their very eyes' and had departed in theophanic glory (Ac 1:9). They were convinced that the resurrected Christ, now inhabiting a quasi-physical body, would return in a local and focused manner, analogous to his departure (Ac 1:11). This spatial sense is also referred to in Thessalonians 4:17. Here in classic apocalyptic description and 'Sinaitic' allusion ('when the LORD descended upon Mount Sinai', Ex 19:20), Paul narrates the future 'rapture' hope of the church. His concern in this letter is pastoral, aiming to provide pastoral consolation regarding the future relations between the believers in Thessalonica who were alive and their deceased family or friends. 'His goal was to reassure the Thessalonians that their fellow Christians who had died would participate on equal terms with them in the salvation experience accompanying the parousia of the Lord' (Wanamaker 1990:176). He does not concern himself with details after this joyous reunion. We need to look elsewhere for that.¹ Whatever the nature of the Thessalonian concern over their dead, Paul's words reenforce the historicity of the Parousia. They appear to have expected to be assumed at the Parousia and were worried about their departed dead *who where not apparently in that space-time continuum* and who therefore would miss out on the event. Their worry stemmed from the thinking that only those alive at the imminent Parousia would participate in that historical event.² Paul assures them that Christ will bring them back with him when he returns to the earth. Behind Paul's theology lies the

¹ Wanamaker (1990) speaks of 'an assumption to heaven of the people who belong to Christ' (:175). Yet Longman & Reid (1995:173-174) note the spatial imagery and comment: 'Like those who welcome the arrival of a deliverer to a city held under siege, the saints are taken up, not to depart to heaven, but – it seems – to meet him and escort him on his victorious "march" to earth'.

² Walvoord (1999:141) calls this 'the central passage on the rapture of the church'. This is true. Yet the dispensational interpretation of a 'secret' rapture flies in the face of the theophanic nature of the described event, where Christ descends 'with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet' (1 Th 4:16). The clear allusion to Exodus 19 connotes a 'public' and 'audible' event.

reality that the transcendent and the imminent, the 'spiritual' and the physical, the departed and the living, time and eternity, all cohere and find their true identity in the theanthropic Person of Jesus Christ.

2.1.3 Personal

Beasley-Murray (1986:3) opens his section on theophany in the OT with the affirmation of Pidoux: 'The faith of the OT rests on two certainties, equally profound and indissolubly bound together. The first is that God has come in the past, and that he has intervened in favour of his people. The other... is the hope that God will come anew in the future'. This 'coming of God' is for Beasley-Murray the center of gravity for understanding NT eschatology (also Moore 1966:13). Relative to the Parousia, believers await that 'supreme moment of revelation of Jesus Christ as Lord for all created order to see' (Kreitzer 1997b:856; also Berkhouwer 1981:162-169).¹

Taking this as our point of departure, we can further see a development of this hope in the NT, as it grounds the Parousia in the resurrection of Christ.² This resurrection event is the emphatic unveiling of all that is essential to Christianity, being the universal vindication of the Son of Man.³ In Paul's eschatology, 'the impending return of Christ is made necessary by the central significance that Paul assigns to the resurrection of Christ' (Beker 1990:32). The Parousia event celebrates the 'reappearance' of Jesus Christ within the framework of this present space-time continuum, albeit in a different form. Sources of this apostolic hope are certainly grounded in the self-consciousness of Jesus (with his obvious theophanic

¹ Understanding the nature of the 'return' of Christ assists the apologetic for the deity of Christ in the NT. In the OT we have clear anticipations of the coming of *Yahweh*, far exceeding any anticipations of a 'Messianic' coming. Psalms 96, 97, 98 focus on the coming of *Yahweh*, as does Isaiah 35:4, 40:10, 66:15-16, the prayer of Isaiah 64:1-3 and Zechariah 14:5. Thus the Creator (Ps 96-98) was expected to return to his creation (in theophanic glory) and judge and deliver his covenant people. All this furthers our understanding of why this event is couched in such cosmic, atmospheric and 'warlike' terminology. Together with this coming of *Yahweh*, the traditions of the 'angel' of the Lord, the Divine Warrior, the Son of David, and the Son of Man, all seem to coalesce in the parousial hope of the NT.

² Filson (1948) showed how the resurrection event was the organising principle for the whole of the NT church and writings, the one presupposition and starting point that under-girds them all.

³ The fluidity and ambiguity of the term 'Son of Man' (taken as an authentic self-designation by Jesus), employed in a first person circumlocutionary fashion or in a third person form, was appropriate for Jesus: it encapsulated his humility, glory, secrecy and authority, being also conducive to both rhetorical conditioning and the theological nature of the present kingdom. For scholarly and conservative studies, see Beasley-Murray 1986:219-229 and Marshall 1990b *et al.*

expectations) and their own experience of the resurrected Christ. In the *logia* of Jesus we have clear indication that he expected to have a future glorious manifestation after his sufferings (Mt 24:27). This public appearing of the Son of Man was organically related to the full and final manifestation of the kingdom of God, a hope clearly articulated in the OT. If we take Jewish apocalyptic as the point of departure for understanding the message and ministry of Jesus, then this expectation of future glory was a 'fixed' event in the thought world Jesus inherited. This seems to be the case and is evinced by Jesus' apocalyptic discourse in Mark 13. He does not radically reinterpret, reject or merely accommodate himself to Jewish apocalyptic. He rather modifies it in light of who he is as the 'Son of man'.

Jesus' relation to this future coming kingdom is presupposed in the gospels (Lk 17:20-18:8); he is indissolubly linked to the concept of the kingdom of God. This makes explicit what was more implicit in the OT, where the Messiah was not directly related to the coming of God (Wright 1996:615-624). Jesus 'thought of the coming of YHWH as an event which was bound up with his own career and its forthcoming climax' (Wright:632). He saw himself as one who shared the throne of God, as one who would give ultimate expression to the future eschatological event of judgment and salvation in the kingdom of God. Messianic hopes during the second-temple period were quite diffuse (Wright 1992:307-320; 1996:624-629); yet the cumulative force of the OT, the Jewish apocalyptic writings and the NT witness, point to *the expectation of a reigning king who would act as God's vicegerent, restore Israel, vindicate God's people and usher in a new era*. This explains the facility with which the disciples expected a future parousia of Jesus to end this age (Mt 24:3).

In the NT the focus is clearly on the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not on the manner or attendant circumstances but on the expectation of the One who is the center and circumference of the church's life and faith. Paul therefore characterised the Parousia as 'the day of our Lord Jesus Christ' (1 Cor 1:8; 4:5; 5:5; 15:23; Phlp 1:6; 10; 3:20; 1 Th 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:16-17; 2 Th 1:7; 2:8; 1 Tm 6:14-15; 2 Tm 4:1; Tt 2:13). 'Here again we have proof of the extent to which the great future is in the epistles of Paul entirely concentrated about Christ, even though the terminology is not originally Messianic, but theological' (Ridderbos 1997a:530).

The saying in Matthew 10:23 rose to prominence in scholarly circles with Schweitzer's claim that Jesus here expected his apocalyptic appearing to occur during

his own lifetime and the mission of the disciples, and that he was not expecting the disciples back (1922:357). A mitigation on Schweitzer's claim, is the position of those who note a delimitation of Jesus' words, supporting the view that Jesus expected to return *within his generation*: '[T]he coming of the kingdom of God is transferred here also to the lifetime of Jesus' disciples, and moreover it is presumed as well that this coming may happen at anytime and suddenly within this period' (Kümmel 1957:63).¹ It seems preferable to maintain the apocalyptic overtones of the phrase 'the Son of man comes', paraphrasing it as Kümmel has done: 'in your flight you will not reach all the cities of Israel before the Son of Man appears in glory' (:61-62; also Beasley-Murray 1986:286 and Gundry 1983:194-195). Both Witherington (1992) and Beasley-Murray credit Matthew for the saying's present contextual position rather than Jesus. The immediate context is persecution arising from mission, and this context probably motivated Matthew to insert this *logion* there as he 'expatiated' upon the words of Jesus. The apocalyptic nature of the persecution (v 22, 'you will be hated by all on account of my name') would then naturally include a deliverance at the Parousia (Dn 12:1).

Yet the problem raised by Schweitzer is not solved, for Jesus addressed these words to the early disciples. If we accept the prophetic tendency to interpret coming historical events against an eschatological backdrop (Ladd 1981a:64-70) - and note the tendency of prophets to address their contemporary generation with the full weight of eschatology - then we can follow the salvation-historical line from the disciples through the early church (Matthew) and the contemporary church, to the climax of the terminal generation. Jesus could then be comprehending the whole line of salvation-history synchronically through the imminent historical mission of the twelve. His theological 'spectacles' viewed events synoptically, seeing the period between his earthly mission and the final Parousia in a qualitative fashion, rather than in a strict time-quantity and temporal fashion.² Because the present is eschatological, it characterises the whole interadventual age and particularly the latter period of that age. In this way Jesus can speak of present events in a foreshortened prophetic

¹ Beasley-Murray (1986:283-291) has provided a cogent scholarly response to both Schweitzer and Kümmel.

² As to be noted later, the understanding of Jesus' *logion* of 'this generation' provides a clue to synoptic eschatology. It is the essential correlation between the generation that rejected Jesus and the generation that will persecute his followers in the terminal generation that accounts for the foreshortening in Jesus' words.

manner.¹ This supports a contemporary reading of the words of Jesus which takes the disciples as typical and analogous of the church in every generation - something which Matthew himself was day.² This thus allows for an preterist, historicist and futurist interpretation, three views which have always vied for position in any prophetic/futurist interpretation, and which all have a contribution to make (see Diagram 2). We conclude with the interpretation of Witherington (1992:41) who lessens the temporal tension and heightens the indicativeness in Jesus' affirmation: 'it is possible that this verse simply means that the disciples [non-specific] shall not have completed the missionary work in Israel that the earthly Jesus sent them out to do before he returns again' (also Gundry 1983). He would personally return to a generation that would be characterised by mission (in Israel) and ecclesial persecution (analogous to his own persecution), a reality affirmed in this *logion*. Thus this degree of ambivalence in understanding Jesus' words is required not only by a retrospective analysis, but also by the prophetic nature of his sayings and the foreshortened eschatological tension.

Finally, if we understand Jesus and his ministry as the midpoint (sec 2.2.8), he and his generation together *comprehend the whole salvation-historical sequence of salvation and judgment*. The past, present and future are re-enacted, 'actualised' and anticipated in the events of his life and generation. He introduces all eschatological events, although their temporal sequence and specificity is foreshortened and undelimited. As Köenig (1989) reminded us, he himself is 'the Last', the *eschaton*, the One who has come, is coming and is yet to come.

¹ Berkhof (1966:44): 'Penetration of events to the great End are essential to the prophetic experience of history....[The] historical framework of the prophet changes into an eschatological event of the end time'. Also Hoekema 1994:119.

² Giles (1995:47): 'Each of the evangelists tells the stories about the disciples gathered around Jesus in such a way that they speak to the church community addressed'. A mild redaction criticism affirms that the evangelists keep to the historical setting of Jesus' lifetime, but at the same time they each reflect to some degree individual interests, concerns, problems and beliefs of the Christian community for whom they wrote.

2.1.4 Social

Christ is not portrayed as descending from heaven in isolation. He comes with the accompaniment of innumerable angels in resplendent glory (Mk 8:38; 13:27; 2 Th 1:7). Following on from our theophany theme, we notice a congruence between these NT references and texts such as Deuteronomy 33:2-3 and Daniel 7:10. The Deuteronomy reference is clearly linked to the Sinai theophany (Craigie 1976:392; Merrill 1994:434) and narrates the angelic presence at the Sinai 'parousia'.¹ Here Yahweh is seen as 'the Divine warrior marching at the head of his armies [angelic?] on behalf of those whom he had chosen for protection and blessing' (Merrill:433).² This link between the divine warfare and angelic assisting 'forces' accounts for the title 'Lord of hosts', an appellation that implies the appearance of the Lord as a warrior with his divine 'host' (Noll 1998:156). Another narrative that has the Yahweh-warrior motif is Judges 5:20. Here Deborah and Barak mention 'stars fighting from heaven' in the theophanic battle of Yahweh (5:4-5). This correlation between the angels and the stars is an understandably primitive idea and has a retained meaning in the apocalyptic symbolic universe, featuring in the book of Revelation (9:1 *et al*).

The conceptual derivation for the portrayal of angelic presence in Israel, as in the ANE in general, was that of the angelic court (Newson 1992:249). The angels are often cast in the 'role' of divine administrators who: render account of ('present evidence', Job 1:6; Rv 12:20 *et al*) and administer earthly affairs (Dn 4:13,17: 'watchers who decree'; Mt 18:10 *et al*); are sent as emissaries to do the divine will (Ps 103:20) and implement the judgment and decisions of God (Gn 19; Ez 9-10). They are the heavenly administrators of God's kingdom who 'function as a kind of heavenly police force, arresting offenders, presenting evidence and executing punishment' (Davidson 1992:8). This execution of justice is displayed in Daniel 7 where the

¹ Merrill (1994:434-435) deals with the textual issues, favouring 'myriads of Kadesh', meaning God's people who have come from Kadesh. The LXX reading is angelic, supported by Newson (1992:249) and Reid (1993:22, who also links this angelic accompaniment of the Divine warrior with Zch 14:5, 1 En 1:9 and Jude 14). Support for this 'angelic' reading (NRSV) is drawn from the verbal features of the text: Yahweh 'came', 'dawned' and 'shone forth'. If these are activities of God *for* his people, then 'the holy ones' cannot be included in this 'coming' action.

² Merrill mentions the related accounts of Ex 15:1-18, Jdg 5:2-5, Ps 68 and Hab 3:2-15 -'they all share in common...an explicit or implicit (as here in Dt 33) polemic against all hostile forces that seek to frustrate the Lord's purposes for creation and especially for his people Israel....The stylised or formulaic nature of such historical resumés allows them to depart from normal patterns of narration in which strict adherence to chronological and geographical sequence is expected' (:434).

angelic attendants destroy the beast and prepare the world for the 'son of man' to reign. Generically, they ensure that 'God's presence is mediated through unseen creaturely reality' (Noll 1998:172).¹ Noll (:154) distils all these various angelic activities down to four foundational functions of the angels in the OT: they reveal God's presence, accompany God's people, execute judgment and announce good news.² In general, they are messengers and militants (Noll:154).³ Reid (1993:20) provides a cogent summary of the OT 'job description' of angels:

Angels in the OT appear as messengers or representatives of the heavenly world, frequently sent by Yahweh himself. They are part of the created order and serve God's purposes, assisting and carrying out important transactions between God and humans, primarily between God and Israel.

Jesus' world view is in direct continuity with the angelology of OT apocalyptic. Mark 8:38 pictures a heavenly court room, a tribunal of angels in the apocalyptic Day of Judgment. They participate in the judgment, handing out what men deserve. They come with the Son of man to implement the decisions of the heavenly throne-room. Daniel 7 is once again crucial to understand this reference to the parousial event and its angelic character. The Christological modification casts the Son of man in the position of divine judge, in the role of the Ancient of days (note Mt 24:31: '*his* angels'). In Daniel 'the enthronement of the son of man is accomplished only by the coming of God himself to earth in the form of the ancient of days' (Noll 1998:66). Jesus then modifies this slightly and speaks of his coming and sitting on his glorious throne (Mt 25:31). This is another clear indication of the transcendent nature of NT Christology, being consistent with Zechariah 14:5 and the expectation of *Yahweh* to come in theophanic glory.⁴ At this event the angels will separate the righteous and the

¹ The ITP witnessed a surge in angelic literary stories. 'It is in the late second temple period...that the most developed speculation occurred' (Newson 1992:249). The angelic appearances in Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah could have been the taproot of ITP apocalyptic angelology. Angels often feature in apocalyptic literature, their presence being a corollary to God's qualitative transcendence, spatial dualism and temporal administration.

² The visions of angels in Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah 'serve as a counterbalance to misunderstanding of the firmament as utterly closed to anything genuinely new in history. Apocalyptic descriptions of an open heaven destabilise normal life and wisdom. They remind the Israelites of another side of the brazen firmament - a world of possibility and strangeness' (Noll 1998:67).

³ Noll (1998:154) refers to Karl Barth's two-fold identification of angels as *ambassadors of God* and *representatives of God*.

⁴ Noll (1998:162) notes the harder reading - 'and all the holy ones with *you*' - in Zechariah 14:5. This feminine pronoun could then refer to the daughter of Zion, i e, to the coming of the holy ones who are with Israel in their exilic trials.

wicked (Mt 13:36-42), gather the elect (Mt 24:31) and assist in punishing the evil doers (Mt 13:41-43) (Davidson 1992:8).

Together with the angels, Paul expected 'holy ones' to return with Jesus, that is glorified believers (1 Th 4:13-18 and 2 Th 1:10).¹ The apocalyptic scene that 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 prefigures for us is that of believers alive at the Parousia receiving an Enoch/Elijah type transportation in their transformed bodies, and angelic (Mk 13:27) elevation to meet the arriving King ('in the air') where the departed believers will have already been gathered in new resurrection bodies. Bruce (1982:101) unpacks Paul's particular application of this reality:

That the dead would rise was known already; what was now divulged was that the dead in Christ would rise first...that far from suffering any disadvantage at the Parousia, the faithful departed would actually have precedence over those still alive. *Their* resurrection would be the first result of the coming of the Lord; only after that would those still alive enter into their heritage.

Thus the comprehensive picture put together from these Scriptures is that of a global *theophany of Christ* coming in divine glory, being attended by a vast array of angelic hosts, and surrounded by the resurrected believing dead and believing living. Conceiving of such a reality is beyond the present capacity of the human mind and requires a new symbolic redrawing of reality - something which is attempted in apocalyptic literature.

2.1.5 Universal

The NT hope of the Parousia of Christ is placed within the framework of the whole of the creation. Certain texts speak of an astronomical and terrestrial shaking and dislocation (Is 13, 24; Zph 1; Mk 13:25; Heb 12:26), whilst others (though fewer) appear to suggest a total dissolution (Is 34:4; 2 Pt 3:10). The amillennialist focuses on the total annihilation, whilst the premillennialist looks for first a partial and then an ultimate fulfillment beyond the Parousia, i e, after the millennium. Attempts to solve this 'history verses eschatology' tension are controlled by wider theological issues.

¹ Bruce (1982:73-74) comments on the fluidity of 'holy ones'. In 1 Thessalonians 3:13 it seems to refer to angels (cf. Zch 14:5; 1 Enoch 1:6-7; Rv 19:14) whilst here in 2 Thessalonians 1:10 Paul intends that we interpret the term as 'saints', i e, believers. The context is the final arbiter in each case.

However, all are agreed that the Parousia of Christ will be a cosmic event in which the universe *as we now know it* will be qualitatively and irrevocably changed. It will be an 'earth shaking' event, but how far one must press home the literal 'surface meanings' of the 'cosmic' literary material is debated. The question is one of degree. The premillennialist interpretation seems the most comprehensive and provides space for both the 'literal' and the 'metaphorical' to be given full justice.

Once again, the theophany of Sinai will be used as a 'paradigm' for interpretation. Niehaus (1995) has documented the role that the Sinai-theophany played in the prophetic tradition (:280-332), observing that 'both the Psalms and the Prophets cast God's greatest possible act of salvation, his eschatological invasion of history and judgment of all nations, in terms of Sinai-like theophany' (:281). That 'primitive' experience was both intensified and universalised and came to express the reality of the coming apocalyptic day. Judges 5, Micah 1:2-4, Habakkuk 3:6 and Nahum 1:5 all use stock theophanic phraseology, allusive to Sinai *where the earth did quake and the heavens did display the glory of God*. That experience provided the conceptual framework for interpreting, directing and describing the hope of the future coming of Yahweh into history. The Sinai-event was indelibly incorporated into the *heilsgeschichte* of the OT, forming 'the basis of appeal to Yahweh' (Niehaus:288). It was the root of all future eschatological 'comings' of Yahweh. Both Isaiah 64:1-4 and Hebrews 12:18-29 correlate the Sinai theophany with the eschatological theophany, showing the integral relation between the two. If salvation-history progresses with an analogy/typology application of repetition, heightening and consummation (Cullmann 1967:127-135), then the future Parousia need not necessarily include the annihilation of the cosmos, as much as Mount Sinai was not destroyed at the 'parousia' of Yahweh. Historical-grammatical exegesis has also shown how the OT prophets described imminent historical events (e.g. Is 13) in hyperbolic and dramatic colour with 'eschatological' intensity. If those prophecies were exhausted by those historical events, then the literal interpretation of total global annihilation is untenable. If however, the historical events did not exhaust the meaning of those predictions, then the door is left open for a future 'literal' interpretation. Yet because the NT antitype always fulfills the OT prototype 'at a higher level' (Goppelt 1982:12), the degree of heightening in this case is ambiguous. The amillennial interpretation is possible, but may not be probable.

In order to interpret such cosmic language, it is essential to retain the core semantic content whilst recognising the presence of hyperbole as well as figurative and poetic language.¹ All these Scriptures of both OT and NT refer to a future event that is discontinuous with any past experience, thus resulting in the use of rich descriptive language. They describe global events that are awesome in their nature, thus straining the language stock of the prophet. Beasley-Murray (1993:425-426) states that,

the function of this ancient mythological language is purely to highlight the glory of that event and set it in its proper category: it represents the divine intervention for judgment and salvation....Denial of the pictorial nature of biblical descriptions of the climax of the ages overlooks that in the OT theophanic language is used of historic events of the past, in a manner that cannot possibly be interpreted literally.

The prophets employ cosmological metaphors which elaborately describe a theological core, often with a historical referent (Is 13 and 536 BCE). Greenspoon (1981:263) comments on these 'cosmic dimensions' found in Judges 5:

The term 'cosmic', as we use it, refers to the introduction of descriptive language which not only affirms God's role at this particular moment, but connects it with the totality of God's action – both past and future – through which He manifests Himself. Thus, the imagery of Judges 5:4ff links this event with the theophany and revelation at Sinai.

A realistic interpretation will want to identify the presence of hyperbole and metaphor ('wrapping', framework, form) and yet still hold to the historicity and reality of the predicted event(s). The path between crass literalism (amillennialism?) and mere poetic symbolism (preterism?) needs to be cautiously trod (premillennialism?). The key might be a salvation-historical recognition that allows the Sinai theophany and the historicity of the OT prophets to control our interpretation of the future eschatological events, whilst also allowing for new events, *sui generis*, to enter into the line.

What Niehaus (1995) has done for the concept of theophany in eschatology, Von Rad (1975) did for the Day-of-the-Lord in eschatology. He has shown (:119-125) the *typical* connection between the conquest wars of Yahweh and the subsequent theophanies, culminating in the concept of the Day-of-the-Lord:

Yahweh's final uprising against foes would take the same form as it had done in the days of old....The prophetic vision of the concept of Jahweh's intervention in war became greatly intensified; war to effect all nations, even the fixed orders of creation, and even

¹ This hyperbole and rich inclusive language could be a result of the prophet speaking *sub specie aeternitatis*.

Israel herself. The event has been expanded into a phenomenon of cosmic significance. Thus, under the influence of this traditional element, the prophetic concept of the eschaton was also to some extent systematized (:124).

This Day-of-the-Lord and Sinai-theophany terminology is clearly alluded to in Mark 13:24-25. Here the sun, moon and stars are thrown into convulsion at the return of Christ. Beasley-Murray (1993:423) unpacks the OT allusions in these verses:

- 'the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light' = Is 13:10.
- 'and the stars will be falling from heaven' = Is 34:4.
- 'and the powers of the heavens will be shaken' = Is 34:4, Jl 2:10, 3:15-16.

These words in Mark contain no intimations of dissolution, and the semantic content can be found in the words 'the powers of the heavens will be shaken'. It could reasonably imply a global/universal disruption at the entrance of the Son of man and the new age. There would surely not be a need for such language if all was merely to be 'deleted' at the Parousia. Rather, it is the convulsion of the old order making way for the new order.¹

The equivocation in the language of Mark 13 lies in the observation that it can fit *both* historical and 'terminal' occasions, being drawn from prophetic sections that speak of an imminent historical event. Such language can describe an historic event (Is 13) as well as a more terminal event (Is 34). Both Joel 2:10 and Isaiah 13 refer to an invading army, helping anchor interpretation within history. Thus the preterist school interprets Mark 13:24-25 in terms of these past historical clues, that is, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. France (1971:227-239) and Wright (1996:220-268) have helped popularise this preterist interpretation. To them, these words of Jesus predict a *natural disaster* as much as Isaiah 13 (concerning Babylon), Ezekiel 32:7 (concerning Egypt), Amos 8:9 (concerning the Northern Kingdom of Israel) and Joel 2:10 (concerning Judah) predicted God's judgment on unbelieving nations (France:233). Here in Mark 'Jesus is not predicting that strange astronomical events will occur; he is predicting the judgment of God on the Jewish nation' (France:234). He is speaking of the events of 70 CE in terms of 'theological rhetoric', and is not intending a crass literal meaning. We believe that this school of interpretation is right in what it affirms but wrong in what it denies. It rightly identifies the historical nature of these events yet wrongly precludes any theophanic or

¹ This premillennial interpretation relegates the 'dissolution texts' (2 Pt 3:7,10) to the final destruction of the heavens and the earth at the end of the interregnum.

eschatological interpretation. The prophets have theologically interwoven both history and eschatology into one poetic masterpiece, making the interpretation more difficult.¹ However, the clue to interpretation can be found in the prophetic interplay between history and eschatology.

Ladd (1981a) has given constructive analysis to this historical-eschatological dynamic (:64-70, 320-326). He notices how the prophets directly related the ultimate eschatological hope to the immediate historical future (:64), showing that the prophets had a single hope which encompassed both the immediate historical and the ultimate eschatological future (:65). The immediate future was interpreted in terms of God's ultimate purpose. The historical day of the Lord was painted against the backdrop of the eschatological Day of the Lord - the two being seen as one visitation of God without a detailed chronology of the future. Ladd seems to be noticing the theological thematic approach to the interpretation of prophecy, which allows the prophet's mind to easily move from historically differentiated events along the line of a 'controlling theological idea'. It is often the idea of judgment that inspires the prophetic consciousness, allowing a correspondence and 'transparency' between imminent, future, and eschatological events. They are all tied together thematically not chronologically. The prophets 'viewed the future as a great canvas of God's redemptive working in terms of height and breath but lacking the clear dimension of depth' (Ladd:64-65). He perceptively comments on this tension:

The prophets usually saw in the background the final eschatological visitation of God; but since they primarily concerned themselves with God's will for his people in the present, they viewed the immediate future in terms of the ultimate future without strict chronological differentiation and thus proclaimed the ultimate will of God for his people here and now (:65).

Because the prophet's main job was to interpret the present in the light of the future, the near and the far are not differentiated in time but often blend together. Ladd sees this 'tension between the imminent historical and the indeterminate eschatological

¹ Thus Beasley-Murray (1948:221-229) mentions four 'canons of interpretation' for prophetic texts: (1) a prophet always sees the Day as close at hand, impinging on his generation; (2) all descriptions of the Day of the Lord and the age it initiates are given in terms of the prophet's circumstances and environment; (3) the Day of the Lord is certain, but its effects, both for judgment and blessing, depend on the attitude adopted by the subjects of prophecy, whether it be repentance or hardening of heart; and (4) descriptions of the Day of the Lord and its issues are subject to modification by fuller revelation given to subsequent generations.

event' as the genius of the prophetic perspective (:322). This 'two-eyed' focus renders 'it difficult to say where the historical leaves off and the eschatological begins' (:323).

If the salvation-historical line places all events 'in a continual forward movement toward a temporal end' (Cullmann 1967:167), then each historical prediction is orientated from the initial historical event to the future eschatological event, only reaching a point of rest once the terminal/eschatological point is reached. To ignore these wider referents or to delimit the prophecy to a narrow historical event, is in danger of muting the full impact of the prophetic message and of dissolving the apocalyptic elements in the historical solution. France (1971) and Wright (1996) tend only to see the historical but not the larger eschatological backdrop that encompasses and drives the prophetic prediction, whether of Isaiah or Jesus. They lose the tension so essential to the prophetic mind.¹ Our interpretation of Mark 13 (sec 2.2.2.2.b) can thus include a historicity (France) and an eschatology (Beasley-Murray) which predicts a future theophanic and cosmological disruption to attend the inbreaking of the glorious Son of Man into history - without necessitating universal annihilation. The Parousia will be an event accompanied by universal *disruption* yet it need not be associated with universal *dissolution*.

We believe that the apostolic church looked forward to such a glorious historical reappearing of Christ. He would come again, yet at that time optically, gloriously, socially and globally. However, right from the start, Christ organically linked his future coming to his first coming. His very appearance in such a veiled and mysterious form suggests that God desires to accomplish certain ends before this terminal theophanic event. We now look at this temporal relation between these two comings, being essential to understand the role of the church in NT eschatology.

¹ Ladd (1981a:320) notes that the apocalyptists also lost this tension. For them eschatology stood in the future, unrelated to present historical events, which contributed to their flight from history. Both France and Wright seem to have moved it the opposite direction, seeing the present as unrelated to the eschatological future.

2.2 The time of the Parousia

2.2.1 *Naherwartung*

It is clear from the NT documents that the apostolic church lived with an acute sense of the nearness of the Parousia, and that this aspect of their eschatology was an integral component of their proclamation. We believe that this imminent hope belongs to the very fabric and substance of the NT in all its parts, being rooted in Jesus' own thought and consciousness. From the words of Jesus to his Galilean disciples to be ready for his return (Lk 12:40), to his words to his church in Roman Asia Minor (Rv 22:12), we can fittingly see that the whole of the NT proclamation is enveloped within a sense of the temporal nearness of the consummation of the kingdom of God.¹

Within the twentieth century, the debate has climaxed over the nature of this *Naherwartung*. Did Jesus expect the End within his own life time (as Schweitzer 1922), within his own generation (Kümmel 1957; Cullmann 1956b), or the not-too-distant future (Moore 1966)? Although there is this diversity, nearly all are in agreement that 'in the early Church...no one reckoned on the period between the ascension and the return of the Master [as] lasting for centuries' (Cullmann 1956b:152; also Ridderbos 1997a:489). Moore's moderate approach speaks for many:

Jesus and the early church as a whole, based their future expectation upon the conviction that the End in its manifest, unambiguous, universal form could not be far off. But they persistently refused to allow the sense of nearness to be turned into a belief that the End would definitely come within a certain number of years (:207-208).

In this section, we will briefly analyse the nature of this expectation in two parts: (1) in the historic Jesus as found in the synoptics; and (2) in the early apostolic church as recorded in the material outside the gospels.²

¹ See Berkouwer 1981:83-84; Dunn 1977:325-334; König 1989:193-202; Kreitzer 1997b:869; Moore 1966:4-51, 160-164.

² The writer is aware of all the critical synoptic issues regarding the authenticity or non-authenticity of the words of Jesus, aligning himself with the traditional position that the reports in the gospels represent the substance of the words of Jesus (although sensitively redacted to meet contemporary concerns). A literary and canonical approach is followed which argues for the necessity of taking the canon and writings of the Bible *as they now stand*, obviating the need for the textual meaning to be located in its pre-history. The traditional/conservative position of the authenticity of the Pauline

2.2.2 *Naherwartung* and Jesus

2.2.2.1. Jesus and the kingdom of God

Of vital significance for the understanding of the nature of Jesus' expectation is an understanding of the kaleidoscopic term *kingdom of God* as found within the synoptic tradition. Scholarship has pointed us to at least five dynamics requisite for unpacking what Jesus meant by 'the kingdom of God':

- (1) The idiom 'kingdom of God' has a Jewish background, being the hope of Israel. Most Jesus scholars appear to accept that the primary context for appreciating the earthly mission of Jesus is that of first century Judaism, and that this Judaism, despite its variety, also bore the imprint and influence of Jewish apocalyptic' (Aarendse 1988:251).¹ Jesus' proclamation therefore had 'theo-political' connotations (Beasley-Murray 1986:19). The term 'kingdom' would thus 'raised high hopes in Israel of blessing and prosperity in a national sense' (Vriezen 1970:439).² The sense of 'fulfillment' in the preaching of Jesus (Mk 1:15) carries the idea of the actual arrival of these long-awaited promises.³
- (2) The kingdom is eschatological, in that it was linked with the Day-of-the-Lord, the public kingship of Yahweh (Vriezen 1970:439), the final and unambiguous manifestation of God's kingship (Moore 1966:15). This consummate expectation, as delineated throughout the OT, was intensely comprehensive and eclectic. In the NT, this composite hope was carried in one cipher, a term which carried a central unitive idea: the kingship of God. God's eschatological rule was to be national and international, spiritual and physical, individual and communal, ethical and

authorship of 2 Thessalonians, Ephesians, Colossians and the Pastorals is assumed, together with the Petrine authorship of 2 Peter.

¹ Cf. Meyer 1979; Ramsey Michaels 1987; Saucy 1993:83-90; Wright 1992:280-338.

² Saucy (1993:83) recites the words of Buchanan: 'Scholars have internalised, de-temporalised, de-historicised, cosmologised, spiritualised, allegorised, criticised, psychologised, philosophised, and sociologised, the concept of the kingdom of God. This has all been done for the purpose of denationalising it'.

³ Most modern scholars have distanced themselves from Schweitzer's radical interpretation of the non-arrival of the kingdom of God (1922), acknowledging a tension between the kingdom sayings, which oscillate between the 'now' *logia* and the 'not-yet' *logia*. For a recent return to consistent eschatology, see Allison 1994.

universal, geographical and ecological - and whatever else was vital to the hope of Israel (cf. Kaiser 1991; Ramsey Michaels 1987). Further, this term had nothing to do with the end of the world *per se* (so Wright 1992:285) nor did it imply a radical dualism (*pace* Schweitzer).¹ These were to be the *final* acts of God, characteristic of the age to come, in which all natural phenomenon would witness a 'future inbreaking of God into history in an unmistakable manner' (Moore 1966:17).

- (3) Quintessentially and generically, the kingdom of God has an abstract dynamic meaning of rule, sovereignty, kingship, or dominion (Ladd 1989:63). It is a 'state of affairs' (France 1990), a comprehensive term that could include a broad range of nuances. When expected or hoped for, the term connotes the active exertion of the kingship of the Lord. Yet in the OT it is inclusive of both God's *de jure* rule and his *de facto* rule. It can refer to his sovereign overarching kingship (Ps 145:13), and to that state of affairs directly brought about by that rule of God (Ps 72:8). It is the 'hidden', equivocal, and provisional nature of this *de jure* rule that demands a more public *de facto* vindication (so Moore 1966:15). Seemingly, it is particularly in this latter sense (*de facto*) that the sayings of Jesus receive their most common application: 'The emphasis falls upon God who *is* doing something and who will do something that radically affects men in their alienation and rebellion against God' (Lane 1982:64). Thus, standing in isolation, the word is polysemous and one needs to judge from the co-text the nature or *mode* of this rule of God. Because Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God *comprehensively*, it is difficult to identify which salvific nuances of this one picture are to be fulfilled. The *ordor salutis* comes only with hindsight.

The above three ideas seem to be inextricably related to most of the *logia* regarding the kingdom. Yet from a temporal perspective, so integral to this thesis, the saying denotes either the present fulfillment of this 'Israelite' eschatology or its future apical fulfillment.

¹ If we take Schweitzer's radical end-of-the-world apocalyptic view, then 'we at once create a distance between them [2nd Temple Judaism] and ourselves far greater than that of mere chronology. We know that they were crucially wrong about something they put at the center of their world-view, and must therefore either abandon any attempt to take them seriously, or must construct a hermeneutic which will somehow enable us to salvage something from the wreckage' (Wright 1992:285).

(4) The kingdom sayings are essentially linked to the presence of the ministry of Jesus. 'The divine reign is God's triumphant consummation of his lordship over events in Jesus' own ministry' (Dumbrell 1994:188-189). It is operative *spatially* in Jesus' person and ministry, and in this sense inaugurated. Because Jesus is *Autobasileia* (Ireneaus), we can thus say that the kingdom is present in his earthly ministry in a narrowly temporal sense. Cullmann (1951), Kümmel (1957) and Ladd (1981a) went far to popularise the 'now' and 'not-yet' tension characteristic of Jesus' kingdom sayings. This approach has been termed 'inaugurated eschatology'.¹ The gospels speak of two movements or modes of the kingdom: its presence displayed in the Son of Man prior to his glorification (the 'now'), and the kingdom displayed in the Son of Man expected in his future glorious manifestation (the 'not-yet'). However, these two modes are organically linked, for with the presence of the kingdom in Jesus, 'an anticipation of the end already exists, [for] when Jesus is present the end irrupts into the very heart of the present' (Cullmann 1956b:154). The End has come *in a hidden manner* (Moore 1966:207). For understanding NT eschatology, it is therefore vital to correlate the presence of the kingdom in Jesus Christ with the future presence of the kingdom. Indeed, *it is the presence of the eschaton in Jesus which brings the future into sharp focus*. 'The eschatological consummation of the Kingdom is inseparable from and dependant upon what God is doing in the historical person and mission of Jesus' (Ladd 1981a:324). There is thus an essential and organic relation between the two, and, as to be shown later, it is primarily the presence of the kingdom in the life and ministry of Jesus that accounts for the *Naherwartung* in the NT.

(5) Finally, the term on the lips of Jesus carries a strong future-temporal sense. Caragounis (1992:425) sums up the general thrust of this future orientation in Jesus' sayings regarding the kingdom:

By way of conclusion it may be said that during Jesus' ministry, the kingdom of God is spoken of always as a future event. It is expected, hoped for and prayed for. But it is never said explicitly to have arrived, not even at the Last Supper. What is present is the agent of the kingdom of God, Jesus. But because the agent of the kingdom of God is present and active through his teaching and mighty works, the kingdom of God may

¹ An important aspect of this 'school' is the emphasis that *no more of the kingdom of God is present in history than that which was seen in the historical life of Jesus Christ*.

also be said to be potentially present. However, the decisive event for its coming, that is, for the release of the powers in salvific blessings, still lies ahead.

It is most often used in this broader temporal sense in the gospels. Due to the overemphasis of realised eschatology, Buzzard (1992) has re-emphasised this future sense of the kingdom in Jesus' teaching, believing that the gospel of the kingdom is essentially an adventist message summoning us to take with utmost seriousness not only that which God has done in Christ but what he is going to do by sending his Son back to earth.¹ Although what was future to Jesus' earthly ministry certainly received a fulfillment consequent to his death and resurrection (Wright), much of his words imply a fulfillment concordant with Jewish expectation, which looked for a new age beyond the present experience of history.² Essential to note is that for Jesus, these events were not for some 'far removed' period, but were 'at hand' and pressing in on the present. The many warnings to be vigilant in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21 are conclusive proof of a spirit of *Naherwartung* in Jesus. Yet if we observe the many 'consistent' eschatological sayings in the synoptics and do *not* interpret the death, resurrection and Spirit-baptism events as fulfilling vital aspects of Jesus' anticipated kingdom, then we are bedfellows with Schweitzer who said that Jesus proclaimed a reality that never materialised. It seems preferable therefore to see the fulfillment of Jesus' future sayings as 'touching down' in those great Easter/post-Easter events *and* in the expected coming future kingdom. The cross and post-cross 'downpayment' therefore adds an inaugural element to some of Jesus' future kingdom sayings. We conclude that the future *logion* of Mark 1:15 is inclusive of both the Easter/post-Easter and Parousial period.³

¹ We believe with Buzzard that an *integral part* (though not the primary part) of the meaning of the kingdom acquires its significance from the future determinative event of the global apocalyptic kingdom. Thus Guelich (1989:43) states that this first declaration [Mark 1:15] is set against a prophetic-apocalyptic background that corresponds to the expectation of Daniel 7:22 and Ezekiel 7:12 *et al.* Yet for us, the *primary* aspect of the kingdom is that which is seen in Jesus in his earthly and Easter ministry period and is not seen in the final public manifestation.

² Cf. Mt 5:5; 8:11; 19:28; 20:21; 25:34; Lk 12:32; 13:29; 14:14-15; 19:11; 21:31; 22:29; 23:51 *et al.* See Beasley-Murray 1986:147-218 and Ladd 1981a:307-328.

³ Kümmel's interpretation of *eggus* in Mk 1:15 is followed here (1957:20): 'The New Testament usage is...completely uniform as regards the temporal use of *eggus*: it denotes that an event will happen soon, by which it is meant or presumed that there will not be a long time to wait before it happens'. Also Lane 1982:65.

For this thesis, it is those irreducibly future elements that warrant our concern. Although the referents to many of his kingdom *logia* are found in his pre- and post-Easter experiences, there is a residue of future referents which are still unfulfilled. The question is: when did Jesus expect this future theophanic Parousia to take place?

2. 2. 2. 2 Did Jesus expect the consummate mode of the kingdom to arrive in his generation?

In answering the question of when Jesus expected the consummate mode of the kingdom to arrive, there have been three basic answers since Schweitzer. Firstly, there are those who believed that Jesus expected the apocalyptic kingdom to arrive within his own lifetime (Schweitzer). This has always been an eccentric position and has never entered into the mainstream of scholarship. Secondly, there are those who believed that Jesus expected the Parousia within the lifetime of his own generation (Kümmel, Dunn, Cullmann – a narrow delimitation). Thirdly, there are those who maintain an imminent expectation but credit the NT with no delimiting factors (Moore, Witherington *et al*). The middle group reckons on the reality that Jesus was mistaken in his expectation, yet not however with the severity of Schweitzer. Others in this middle group (Wright, France, and many preterists) have modified the futurism of Jesus and bifurcated that hope into two streams: the events of 70 CE as the *terminus ad quem* of much of Jesus' future *logia* (determinate) as well as a final End of history (indeterminate) as a termination for some of his sayings. We believe though that there are only four viable views: those of a *narrow delimitation* (Kümmel *et al*), a *modified delimitation* (Wright), an *undelimited* view (Moore) and that of this thesis, being a *conditional delimitation*. The view taken in this thesis is in substantial agreement with Moore and Witherington, yet with the added emphasis of key *conditional-delimiting factors* relative to the timing of his return.

We must now look at the two Scriptures that ostensibly support a narrow delimitation.

a) **Matthew 16:28**

- 'Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom' (Mt 16:28).
- 'Truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God has come with power' (Mk 9:1).
- 'But truly I tell you, there are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God' (Lk 9:27).

This is a (if not *the*) *crux interpretum* of NT eschatology. J S Russell, seen by many as the father of radical preterism, regarded the interpretation of this verse as *the* key to a right interpretation of the NT doctrine of the Parousia (quoted in Sproul 1998:55).

The diversity of the above synoptic nuances reflect its referential equivocacy. It is particularly the Matthean account that links the words of Jesus with the Parousia (Cullmann 1956b; Kümmel 1957; Gundry 1983:340-341). These commentators rightly nuance the prediction of a visible revelation of Jesus in his kingdom. Yet if this saying can *only* refer to the Parousia, then the affirmative and solemn force of Jesus' words (*amen*) radically undermine the veracity of Christ's words: for the Parousia did not come within the lifetime of some of those standing there.¹

In order to exonerate Jesus, scholars have offered various exegetical solutions.² Moore (1966:125-131), on contextual grounds, understands Jesus' words as pointing to *his transfiguration*: 'If the context is taken fully into account, it suggests that the early church, so far as its views are reflected in the Synoptic tradition, did *not* regard this saying as a community-formulation sustaining it in its crisis, but as a promise fulfilled in some sense in the Transfiguration' (:127).³ This is supported by the tight contextual placing and redaction of Jesus' words, particularly noticeable in Luke. Also, 2 Peter 1:16 speaks of the transfiguration of Jesus as a *parousia*, and later (3:4,12) uses the

¹ Sproul (1998:11-26) has shown how these words and others of Jesus have contributed to the entire modern controversy over the inspiration of Scripture and the deity Jesus.

² For a list of expositors in antiquity up to the early part of the 1900's, see Biederwolf 1972:320-322. For more recent views, see France 1990:69 and Sproul 1998:27-90.

³ For a more detailed analysis of the correspondence between Mark 9:1 and 9:2-8, see Beasley-Murray 1986:188. Green (1997:376) interprets the Lukan account as transfigurational (yet proleptic of the Parousia) as does Lane (1982:312-314) in regards to Mark 9:1. Marshall (1989:377-379), in regards to Luke, points to the events of the resurrection and Pentecost. The problem with Marshall is that the discourse constraints strongly favour an optical seeing of Jesus in power by only *some* of the twelve. France (1990:64-74) understands the fulfillment as a process, inclusive of the transfiguration, of the powerful implementation of the divine government over time.

same term to refer to the 'second-coming' of Jesus (Morris 1986:664). This shows the early church's theological correlation between the transfiguration and the future final Parousia.¹ However, according to Beasley-Murray (1986:188), 'the scholar who supports this view regarding the *intent* of the saying is the exception rather than the rule'. The vitiating point is that the transfiguration is too proximate for the words 'shall not taste death', being 'hardly compatible with the strange statement that some would live to see it' (Hagner 1995:486).

Some therefore posit 70 CE as the *terminus ad quem* (as Hagner and Wright *et al*):

Because the coming of the kingdom by definition means not only blessing but judgment and because the destruction of Jerusalem can be conceived of as the judgment of God upon national Israel for her unbelief, this event can be thought of itself as a form of the coming of the kingdom of the Son of Man in power (Hagner:487).

Thus, Jesus did not speak here of his parousial appearance, but his coming to judge Israel for her rejection of his gospel. This is a most attractive solution, and harmonises with the lapse of time inherent in Jesus' words. Yet there are still some tenacious problems, the foremost of which is again raised by Beasley-Murray (1986:189-190): 'it is one thing to acknowledge that the tribulation of Israel and the destruction of Jerusalem are set in an eschatological context...; it is another thing to *identify* the judgment on the Jews and their city and temple with the coming of the kingdom of God'. Compounding this, the words of Jesus in Matthew's account - 'see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom' - are suggestive of a more personal and glorious manifestation of Jesus, something which did not occur with the destruction of the temple. These aspects lessen the force of this preterist interpretation.

In conclusion, we could say that in this saying Jesus expects the kingdom to come in visible power - in a manner analogous to the Parousia - within the lifetime of some of his listeners. He was not mistaken, for a 'parousia' did appear. However, it is not so much the pin-pointing of the event than its certainty and nature - a glorious *seeing* of the Son of Man by *some* of his followers - that occupies the mind of Jesus. In following the emphasis of the synoptic gospels, we therefore take it to refer to the

¹ The transfiguration 'is probably presented [as] a foreshadowing of the parousia, not the resurrection' (Witherington 1992:38). The link with the Parousia is also maintained by noting the theophanic nature of the transfiguration (Niehaus 1995:336-339), having clear overtones suggestive of parousial manifestation, such as 'cloud', 'voice' and dazzling power (Moore 1966:128).

transfiguration (Mk and Lk's account) *and* to the future Parousia of the Son of man (Matthew's inclusive account).¹ It is a theological prediction with a dual application – for Jesus is speaking *sub specie aeternitatis*. A salvation-historical interpretation makes room for both referents. Here Jesus looks *through* the transfiguration to the ultimate analogical and teleological reference: the reality that some of Jesus' disciples would be alive at a theophanic Parousia (cf. Mk 13:13; Lk 21:36 *et al*). To hold to both interpretations (the historical and eschatological, preterist and futurist) seems consistent with the non-specific and descriptive nature of the prophetic consciousness. Once again, 'Jesus' saying cannot be reduced to a simple calendric statement' (Ladd 1981a:323), and, as with most prophetic discourse, the imminent historical and indeterminate eschatological are fused together in one comprehensive picture.

So this *logion* of Jesus tells us little of the temporal placing of his Parousia, only the affirmation that it *will* come in power and that *certain* of his followers will be alive to witness it once they have withstood persecution.

b) Mark 13:30

'Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place'

The words of Christ in the Olivet Discourse crystallise all prior mention of his anticipated global vindication. All the synoptics contain this discourse and it is the *sine qua non* for understanding Jesus' perspective on his own Parousia.² Here Jesus foretells and forearms his disciples, in typical prophetic perspective, of the looming destruction of Jerusalem. Whereas both Mark and Matthew organically synchronise the Parousia with a future *religious* defilement of the holy place, Luke disengages the pending political invasion of the *city* (21:20-24) from the more distant Parousia (vv 25-33).³ For Luke, 'it is only *after* these events [in Jerusalem] that the final,

¹ This seems consonant with Luke's redaction of the tradition (cf. Hiers 1974:147-148). He redacts Jesus' words of prediction to the phrase to 'see the kingdom of God', and then mentions how the disciples 'saw' the glory of Jesus (Lk 9:27-32).

² For the most comprehensive and exhaustive treatment of this discourse, see Beasley-Murray 1993. For a credible treatment of Mark 13's authenticity, see Wright 1996:339-343. In France (1971:228-231) there is a good synopsis of the proposed solutions to the problems in this discourse.

³ This synchronising is seen in the specific temporal indicators of Mark 13:24, 'but *in those days*, after *that suffering*' and Matthew 24:29 '*immediately* after the suffering of those days'. France (1971:229) speaks of a 'very definite temporal link which Jesus made between the events of verses 5-22 [Mark] and those of verses 24-27...verses 24a and 30...leave no room for a time-lag of 2,000 years'.

unmistakable cosmic phenomenon that heralds the Parousia will occur' (Hiers 1974:151-152; also Conzelmann 1960:126). This synoptic diversity of presentation has engendered a plethora of interpretations and accusations. For those who hold to the integrity of both the Markan and the Matthean accounts, some integration is necessary.

Since the time of Strauss in the mid 1800's, many NT scholars have correctly noted that in both Matthew and Mark Jesus implies that his public and cosmic vindication will occur simultaneously with the defilement and destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Strauss' words are conclusive:

It is impossible to evade the acknowledgement that in this discourse, if we do not mutilate it to suit our own views, Jesus at first speaks of the destruction of Jerusalem and farther on, and until the close, of his return at the end of all things, *and that He places the two events in an immediate connection* [italics mine] (quoted in Beasley-Murray 1993:3).

Beasley-Murray (:110) further highlights this sticking point: 'The chief cause of perplexity in the eschatological discourse lies in the fact that statements concerning the end of the age are apparently intertwined with an event that for us has been removed to the distant past'. This factor is crucial to note for a correct interpretation of the above verse.¹ Thus in the Matthean and Markan discourses, *the events surrounding the temple constitute the horizon and boundary for Jesus* (cf. France 1971:227). The preterist answer to the problem, which directly answers the preceding crux, lies in collapsing *all* of this material into the historical events of 70 CE – effectively joining the 'coming' of the Son of Man with the destruction of Jerusalem. Yet, if the material is seen as parousial, then the debate focuses either on the non-fulfillment of the Parousia in 70 CE or the 'error' of prophetic perspective or the futurist solution to the problem.

The preterist view is a radical departure from the traditional understanding but has gained currency in certain theological circles. It is trenchantly represented by

¹ Many scholars take the words of Mark 13:24 as having an ambiguous and 'more distant' chronological connection. The events beyond the 'abomination' are telescoped together, and for this reason *seem* proximate (cf. Hurtado 1998:222). This interpretation has been refuted by France (1971) and others. Gedert (1992:22) sees neither 'a conjunction or disjunction of the two great events predicted (the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the age)'. To him 'it rather teaches that the relationship between them is unknowable'. He concludes: 'The overall message of Mark 13 seems to be that since no one knows when the end will come, vigilance is required at every moment'. Such an agnostic stance is needed for those who avoid the apocalyptic nature of Jesus' Olivet discourse.

France (1971), Lane (1982) and Wright (1996), originally being proffered by J S Russell in 1878 (according to France:229-230 and Sproul 1998:24-26). However, as has already been said, the terminology used by Jesus is clearly apocalyptic and it cannot be reduced to *mere* 'this-worldly' historical events, no matter how calamitous. The 'mediating position' and modification of this apparent fusion credits Jesus with an 'error of parallax' resulting in an optical illusion – common in the prophetic perspective. Jesus thus sees the events of 70 CE against the backdrop of the terminal ('temple-less') pre-parousial tribulation.¹ Yet this view drives a wedge into what Jesus joined, effectively divorcing the destruction of Jerusalem from the Parousia.² The futurist view ('terminal-generation') sees these events as wholly future and related to the destruction of the Jewish rebuilt temple immediately prior to the Parousia. Although it has much to support it, it fails to relate these predicted events with the generation contemporary to Jesus (Mt 23:36). The disciples clearly took their point of departure from Jesus' clear prediction that the Herodian temple was soon to be destroyed (Mk 13:2). Strict futurism forgets this historical rootage. (Due to the importance of this debate and the writer's belief that *only the preterist and futurist views are viable options*, a summary of Wright's salient features is given in Addendum 2).

Futurism's validity is in its identification of the 'all these things' of Mark 13:30 as being inclusive of the Parousia of vv 24-27.³ Although this discourse has an obvious relevancy to the destruction of the temple in 70 CE (the proto-fulfillment of Luke's account), these words of Jesus in Mark 13:30 are placed in a co-text containing a strict

¹ According to Beasley-Murray (1993:127-128) this view was launched by Bengel. See Ladd (1981a:307-328) for comment on prophetic perspective.

² Beasley-Murray (1993:422) displays some evasive and sophisticated exegesis. He avoids the chain textual sequence of Mark 13:24 and v 30 with what precedes, by arguing from a redactional position that views the sayings as fragments that do not necessarily flow into each other in their present form - concluding on v 24: 'whereas the *text leaves the impression* [italics mine] that the parousia is expected to occur "in those days" of tribulation, Mark's redaction had a quite different purpose'. This brings into question the whole textual meaning of Mark 13. Who decides when and where the Markan form-critical 'pericopes' end and whether their introductory words are related to the Markan context or rather to some prior textual pre-history? We strongly affirm that a text-literary reading of Mark 13 is to be the exegete's point of departure.

³ Gedert (1992:22) comments: 'Mark 13:30 does not indicate what is included in "all these things" which must happen within one generation' (also Gundry 1983:490-491). Such scholars seem to be avoiding the clear meaning of the text. A contextual reading of 'all these things' must include both the destruction of Jerusalem and the 'coming' of the Son of man, as all preterists argue. To preclude the 'coming' in the phrase 'all these things' - especially in its co-textual position immediately prior to this saying - reveals a logical reticence that seems to be intimidated by the apparent reading of the text.

imminency of the Parousia, suggesting an ultimate reference to the terminal generation. The emphasis in Jesus' words on *seeing* certain events (v 29) links v 30 both linguistically and textually with v 14, the *seeing* of the 'desolating sacrilege'. That the Son of Man is 'right at the door' (v 29) is linked to v 24, 'in those days, after that suffering'. Thus vv 28-29 do not introduce us with any new information. They merely reinforce what Jesus has just said. The same can be said for v 30 (also Lane 1982:479-480). Thus, *the Son of Man will come within the lifetime of the generation that sees the desecrating sacrilege*. Jesus refers here to the generation of the desecrating sacrilege and of its certain experience in seeing the Son of man coming on the clouds. This is consistent with v 32, which says that Jesus does not know the *day* or *hour* of the coming of the Son of Man *within the existence of that generation*.¹ Within the co-text of vv 28-32 and the context of Mark 13, the saying of Jesus makes full sense when referring particularly to the generation alive at his Parousia.

Now to the meaning of 'this generation will not pass away until all these things take place' (Mk 13:30). The following are considered to be axiomatic for any solution: the veracity of Jesus' words; the setting up of the 'desolating sacrilege' fused with the Parousia of vv 24-26; the Herodian temple's destruction (v 2); the traditional meaning of *genea* as 'generation' (Beasley-Murray 1993:444); and the words 'all these things' including vv 24-27. With these as a given, we are faced with only two options. The first option is the preterist position – the 'Jesus-generation'. Here the events of Mk 13 do not refer to some future Parousia but exclusively to the historic events of 70 CE and a spiritual 'coming' of Christ. The statement then comes to mean: within the lifetime of this present generation, all these things will take place. This 'narrow' interpretation is quite acceptable syntactically and historically but not theologically (see Addendum 2). The second option is a modified 'inclusive' futurism which incorporates the events of the 'Jesus-generation' into its largely futurist purview of the 'terminal generation'. The phrase then refers to *both* the generation of Jesus and to the terminal generation alive at the Parousia, in classic prophetic fashion – a 'broad' interpretation (so Alford 1958a). We believe that this dual reference interpretation does justice to all the indicators in the text.

¹ Jesus knows the 'when' but not the specific day or hour, i e, the calendar day within that generation. Alford (1958b:449) in commenting on Romans 13:11-14 adds: 'the *day and hour* formed no part of their [church] inspiration: - the *details of the event did*'. The same can be said in this instance.

Nelson (1996) has incisively picked up on the 'generation' theme and shown how it provides the link between the 'historical' and 'eschatological'. He takes Jesus' word about 'this generation' (Mk 13:30) to point more to a *quality of generation* than to a specific generation:

The kind of people referred to are characterised as those who reject Jesus and his messengers and the salvific message they preach, who remain unbelieving and unrepentant, who actively oppose Jesus and his messengers through testing and persecution, and who will face eschatological judgment...."This generation" that opposes the coming of the kingdom in Jesus' ministry stands in solidarity with those who reject and oppose God and his judgment to the end (:375-383 *passim*).

Nelson's conclusions are strengthened once the literary connection between Matthew 23 and 24 is noted, where the term 'generation' appears in both chapters (also Kidder 1983:203). Garland (1979:32) expands this context to include chs 21 to 25, with ch 23's verdict of 'guilty' against Israel providing the literary center of gravity. Jesus announces the 'sentence' in ch 23 and the execution of that sentence in ch 24.¹ Garland's comments on 'this generation' are helpful: '[It] represents Israel at the point when its guilt had finally reached the full mark with the rejection of God's last messengers and when God's judgment finally descended, as concretely manifest in the destruction of Jerusalem (:187). Thus, the type/quality of generation that rejects the gospel of Jesus is doomed to receive the judgment of God. This judgment is *eschatological*, for 'the judgment Jesus announces for Israel as a whole and for every individual is closely related to himself and his message' (Reiser 1997:310).

In the light of the above, Jesus' prophetic words in Mark 13 and Matthew 24 can thus partially 'touchdown' on both the events of 70 CE and on events beyond that initial and immediate historical horizon (cf. D Turner 1989; Ladd 1981a:64-70; 320-326). 'The prophetic words of Christ pertain both to the present *and* the future' (Berkouwer 1981:88). His words comprehend the whole of the salvation-history line of the interadventual period; thus he speaks as if his Parousia is imminent and is part of his purpose in the Incarnation (Lk 12:49). The two horizons are indissolubly presented, and because of the theological correspondences, were announced as one composite imminent event. Yet the two are not exactly symmetrical and the

¹ The imprecationary 'woe' of Jesus 'connotes a powerful and denunciatory judgment akin to a curse. This denunciation was more than a prophetic warning of imminent calamity; it was a pronouncement of judgment by the Son of God...a woe which promoted and affirmed their destruction' (Garland 1979:87).

provisional nature of the one portends the ultimate fulfillment of the other. Many biblical prophecies were not exhausted by their imminent historical events and they remained in force, awaiting similar events in the future to consummate and exhaust the prophecies (Dunn 1996b:152-153). Thus the 'abominating sacrilege' in Daniel can 'touch down' in 167 BCE, in 70 CE and in a final terminal event. The Olivet discourse is a case in point. Here both generations seem to be in view, though only the terminal-generation completely fulfills Jesus' words. The present (Jesus-generation) is thus theologically transparent and 'prophecies' of the future (terminal-generation) by being its prototype.

Lastly we note that, because the discourse is more descriptive than prescriptive, Jesus' words paint a scene rather than mark a calendar. This accounts for the historical equivocity. However, when historic (calendar) times do correspond to the scenario painted by Jesus, then we have the particular generation referred to by Jesus. Thus *the nature of the generation spoken of* allows Jesus' words a full application inclusive of, yet beyond, his own generation (Nelson 1996). It is the generation that rejects his gospel (cf. Green 1997:742; Hoekema 1994:115) and witnesses the placing of the 'desolating sacrilege' in the temple, that will not pass away until *all* these events take place. This inclusive approach allows the events of 70 CE to receive a substantial yet partial application in Jesus words, which also proleptically fulfills the ultimate and plenary eschatological event referred to. Thus Jesus' words in Mark 13:30 answer the question of the three disciples (v 3) as to when all these things will be fulfilled: they will all be fulfilled during the lifetime of the generation that witnesses the placing of the desolating sacrilege in the temple.¹ Given this dual generation view, it will be argued that the *Zwischenzeit* and interadventual church-age is bracketed with the reality of such a generation, one in Jesus' time and the other in the 'terminal' time. Jesus, standing in the midpoint, comprehends both in his statement.

¹ This predominant futurism of Mark 13:30 is reinforced by the Lukan account, where this saying of Jesus is divorced from the defilement of the temple and linked to the generation which will experience the Messianic Woes (21:25-28) and observe the signs (vv 29-31) in the last time.

c) Apocalyptic tradition

Understanding the nature of apocalyptic provides us with further hermeneutical keys. If Jesus spoke within the framework of the Danielic apocalyptic field of meaning (which seems probable), then we gain further insight into the nature and sequence of events of Mark 13.¹ Jesus was expecting the kingdom to be fully manifested amidst the 'Messianic woes' of this age, which were inaugurated by his coming and ministry. Speaking of the 'desolating sacrilege' in Mark 13:14, Daniel 9 and 11:31 are clearly in his mind. He thus anticipated a 'double' fulfillment of Daniel's words.

Here in Daniel we have the classic periodisation and forecasting that epitomises the apocalyptic mindset. The event of the 'abomination that desolates' would occur simultaneously with the destruction of the 'prince who is to come' and the full restoration of Israel (9:24) and thus the end of this age (so Mt 24:3).² Taking our clues from the context of the whole book of Daniel, the events of Daniel 9:27 would occur together with: 'the coming of the son of man' (7:13); the destruction of the fourth kingdom (2:44); the 'tribulation' (7:21; 8:24; 11:35; 12:1); and the 'resurrection' (12:2) (cf. Hagner 1995:699). All these events clustered around what would happen 'at the end of the days' (2:28) and probably provided the structural material for Jesus' discourse in Mark 13. Jesus places himself within the magnetic field of those truths, inaugurating the 'end of the days' (Dn 2:28). It seems most plausible then to take these events of Mark 13 as referring to the pre-eschatological 'pains' that the Jews expected to occur prior to the glorious new age. To modulate the tone of these words (Wright 1996) or to simply limit Daniel's words to the Maccabean period, seems to do injustice to the apocalyptic nature of these truths. Thus with Daniel as the conceptual precedent, the apocalypse of Jesus is set within a framework of the final consummative events of this age.³

¹ Cf. Hagner 1995:691 for sources of apocalyptic imagery and thought. Moltmann (1967:320) believed that the apocalyptic interpretation of time was the context for the early Christian sense of mission.

² The patent reason why the Jewish people did not see Antiochus as exhausting the meaning of Daniel's words is because after 167 BCE, Daniel 9:24 still remained unfulfilled.

³ Zechariah 14 is also essential for our interpretation of Mark 13. Here the theophanic coming of God (v 5) is set within the framework of a Jerusalem that is being destroyed by its enemies (vv 1-3). Here we have biblical precedent for Jesus' inextricable connection of the destruction of Jerusalem with his theophanic return.

Lastly, even understanding the apocalyptic framework within which Jesus spoke does not furnish us with clues as to *when* Jesus is returning. It rather characterises and sets the scene for us, allowing the calendar time and the temporal factors to unfold in their own time. This framework is not rigidly determined, but rather (in Mk 13) affected by other factors, primarily that of ecclesial mission (Mt 24:14). The described scenario and anticipated promises await the accomplishment of a certain task.

In conclusion, we have then in Jesus both the prophetic and the apocalyptic perspective. He expected certain events to transpire before the event and for his Parousia to occur within a 'predetermined' framework. Yet he did not slip into a fatalistic inertia but instructed his disciples to go out and preach the gospel to all the nations. The preaching of the gospel must precede those apocalyptic events, showing its priority and determinativeness. It will be argued later, that those apocalyptic events are directly related to the intensive and extensive spread of the gospel through all the earth. The extension of the kingdom's presence in Jesus could precipitate the final events prior to the arrival of the future kingdom of God and bring with it terminal and apocalyptic occurrences - just as his ministry precipitated the 'final' events of 70 CE. If our understanding of 'this generation' is correct, that it refers to a *quality of generation* that will experience eschatological judgment, then this insight helps us to notice a correlation and analogy between the 'Jesus-generation' and the 'terminal-generation'. They are generations that are characterised by a rejection of the gospel of Christ and consequently receive the judgment of God before it passes away. The midpoint period (Jesus' baptism to 70 CE) of history will once again 'replay' itself in the terminal-generation, a veritable goal for the whole of the church-age - a concept that helpfully provides us with a hermeneutical paradigm for more effectively interpreting and applying the message of the NT.

We have seen that in Matthew 24 and Mark 13, Jesus clearly deals with the question of 'when' by linking it to that optical spectacle that is to occur in the temple in Jerusalem. Yet this event *would not occur* prior to the preaching of the gospel amidst an age that was fraught with natural calamities and antichristian persecution (Mk 13:7-13). He predicted the globalisation of the gospel as the necessary event prior to the terminal woes; *the apocalyptic framework being subject to the missionary task of the church*. The disciples were not to be duped into believing that the natural

calamities were portents of the end, for they characterised the entire period within which their mission must take place. There may be an intensification (Mk 13:8) of these calamities - something concomitant with apocalyptic thought - yet it is not the calamities that *must occur*, but the preaching of the gospel to all nations that is the key event. We can conclude by saying that Jesus expected the end to occur consequent to the preaching of the gospel to all nations and to a generation arising that would witness the desolating sacrilege in Jerusalem. We do not see any verses that demand that Jesus predicted that his Parousia would occur within his lifetime or generation. He expected the Parousia to arrive in response to the terminal woes and persecution of his saints, at the sunset of this age. Yet this period was not the distant 'background' of the horizon but in the proximate 'foreground', close enough to warrant constant vigilance. We believe that he had a moderate *Naherwartung*.

2.2.3 *Naherwartung* in the early church

The modern eschatological debate has been preoccupied with the apparent non-arrival of the kingdom and its subsequent vacuum. The impending kingdom, according to Schweitzer, was to irrupt within the life time of Jesus. It did not. Schweitzer's famous statement in his *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (1922:369) crystallised the consequences of this non-event:

The whole history of 'Christianity' down to the present day, that is to say, the real inner history of it, is based on the delay of the Parousia, the non-occurrence of the Parousia, the abandonment of eschatology, the progress and completion of the 'deeschatologising' of religion which has been connected therewith. It should be noted that the non-fulfillment of Matt. 10:23 is the first postponement of the Parousia. We have therefore there the first significant date in the 'history of Christianity'; it gives to the work of Jesus a new direction, otherwise inexplicable.¹

¹ Torrance (1953a:51-52) criticises Schweitzer for overstating his case and giving a very one-sided view of the NT. He accuses him of misunderstanding the nature of eschatology itself, which Schweitzer thinks of only in a 'narrow apocalyptic sense' (:52). Thus Schweitzer 'rejects eschatology almost *in toto* as primitive mythology'. Torrance believes that his uneschatological views were founded on Harnack's views, 'which prevented him from apprehending the inner eschatological form of faith, apart from which apocalypse can only appear rather crude' (:52). Although Schweitzer was 'one-sided', he did effectively reawaken the concept of Jesus as a prophet preaching an *imminent irruption of the kingdom of God*, whatever its form might be.

Some modern theologians, correctly perceiving the radical nature of this *Naherwartung*, have sought to attribute any *Fernerwartung* elements to an early Catholic tendency to 'cover up' the authentic immediacy of Jesus ministry (*pace* Cullmann 1967:28-32; 40-47). Luke is blamed for introducing a lengthy interim of salvation-history into a simple and radical immediacy - a solution which filled the vacuum. In response, Cullmann's whole book (1967) is a justification of this Lukan perspective and effectively shows how a period of salvation-history was implicit even within the preaching of Jesus - albeit only initially limited to the generation of Jesus' contemporaries. Rather than seeing salvation-history as a 'catholicising tendency', we can see a continuity between the hope of Jesus and the hope of the early church (Cullmann 1956b:154), characterised by a intense expectation of the proximate return of Christ. There is no 'early Catholic' modification but rather an organic relation between Jesus and the church in their eschatological hope.¹ It is thus now axiomatic for NT scholars to speak of both a fulfillment and an anticipation of the OT hope within the New.²

2.2.3.1 Biblical evidence of sustained *Naherwartung*

It will be shown that the early church had an imminent expectancy. This expectancy was undelimited (Moore 1966:108-174) in that it did not require that Jesus *had to* return in either their generation or the next. There were elements of *Fernerwartung* that 'de-immediatised' their hope, but we believe did not deflate their ardour. We will briefly analyse this expectancy according to Luke, Paul, John, and the General Letters.

Taking Luke-Acts as presenting one harmonious thought pattern, we have the following texts to consider: Luke 1-3; 3:3-18; 10:1-24; 12:1-13:35; 17:20-18:8; 21:5-36; Acts 1:6-11; 2:17-21; 3:19-26; 14:22 and 17:31.³ It is not so much in the individual texts but in the overarching scheme that we have a presentation of Luke's

¹ Cullmann (1956b) has shown that even if one accepts a delimitation of the Parousia in the expectation of Jesus (*pace* Moore 1966), the early church did not experience any turmoil at its non-arrival, for 'the essential element in the nearness of the kingdom is...not the final date but the certainty that the expiatory work of Christ on the cross constitutes the decisive stage in the coming of the Kingdom of God' (:153-154). Because the midpoint of salvation-history *has occurred* in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (Cullmann 1951), the non-arrival of the kingdom presented no problem for the early church.

² For summaries of the modern eschatological debate, see Brown 1976, Ladd 1974:3-42 and Torrance 1953.

³ For a review of certain salient issues in Lukan eschatological, see Brown 1976:917-921.

eschatology. Since Conzelmann's epochal study of Lukan theology (1960) there has been a recognition of the salvation-historical framework within which Luke wrote. Thus an apparent *Fernerwartung* has come to characterise Lukan studies, ostensibly de-eschatologising the initial apocalyptic ardour. Franklin (1975:9-47), Mattill (1979:41-112), Hiers (1974) and Nolland (1998:65-67), *et al*, have all challenged this assumption, believing that 'there is no evidence that Luke meant his contemporaries to understand that the Parousia would occur only in the remote future' (Hiers:152).¹ According to Nolland, 'as in the Gospels, so in Acts, Luke continued to expect the parousia within his own generation' (:65), a case he constructs from Luke's gospel. Mattill (:6) characterises Luke's gospel as 'the most apocalyptic of all four gospels'.² It seems likely though that Luke did not limit his expectation to the Jesus-generation but could well have expected the gospel mission to the 'known world' *to have been completed in a relatively short period*. His very mention of the visitors to Jerusalem in Acts 2:9-11 reveals the reality of the explosive extension of the gospel within the first decades of the church's existence. His account ends with Paul preaching in the capital of the empire - an event which could be interpreted as an epochal phase in the fanning out of the gospel of Jesus Christ (so Bauckham 1995a). To Luke, all nations were closer than ever to hearing the good news – a fact which suffused his theology with a relative imminent eschatological expectation.³

All of Paul's epistles were written under the conviction that the return of Christ was 'just around the corner'.⁴ 'One will thus be allowed to conclude that living to see

¹ 'If there is a consensus it would be that Conzelmann has rightly emphasised the role of salvation-history in Luke's thought, but that he was wrong to identify it as a distinctive of Lukan thought, and that, though he was right to note a delay, he has overplayed the role of delay of the parousia in Lukan thought' (Nolland 1998:64).

² Mattill's exegetical discussion on the adverb *mello* results in the conclusion that it should be translated in the sense of '*to be on the point of doing or suffering something*'. Of the 108 times of *mello*'s occurrence in the NT, 85% of the times it is used in the eschatological sense of 'soon' (:43-49). Thus the NRSV's translation of Lk 21:36 ('things that will take place') differs from the NASB and NIV ('things which are about to take place').

³ Mattill (1972:136-145), Hegler (1993) and Buzzard (1994) convincingly argue for a reading of Luke-Acts within the framework of the hope for a national restoration (*pace* France 1975 and Dumbrell 1994:207-225). Lk 24:21 and Ac 1:6 (even after Jesus had 'opened their minds to understand the Scripture') imply the resilience and compatibility of this hope during the earthly ministry of Christ.

⁴ Dunn 1998:310-315; Beker 1995; Kümmel 1978; Towner 1986,1989; Mounce 2000; Plevnik 1997; Ridderbos 1997a:487-497; Witherington 1992. This 'near expectation' is found in Gl 6:9-10; 1 Cor 1:7-9; 4:9; 7:25; 10:11; 11:26; 15:50-58; 2 Cor 1:13; 4:14; 5:2-5, 10; 10:6; 11:2; Rm 8:16-25; 11:32; 13:11-14; 16:20; Eph 5:16; Col 1:5, 28; 3:4; 4:5; Phlp 1:6, 9-11; 3:20; 4:5; 1 Tm 4:1; 6:14-15; 2 Tm 3:1; 4:1-3, 8 and Titus 2:13.

the parousia was for Paul indeed a real possibility...but that both for his own faith and for his paraenesis this expectation was in no way a *conditio sine qua non*' (Ridderbos 1997a:492). Although Paul thought that Jesus' return within his lifetime would be probable, he never affirmed that it would be a certainty. In the final analysis, a sense of imminency is sustained throughout his letters, although with varying degrees of intensity (so Dunn 1998:312-313).¹

The Johannine corpus holds the realised and futurist eschatological aspects in tension, although there is a foregrounding of the vertical, realised elements (Beasley-Murray 1946:99 and Pamment 1982:85). Focus on the Parousia is implied in John 14:3, 16:20-22 (?), 21:22 and 1 John 2:18, 28; 3:2-3.² That this gospel does not contain explicit detail documenting a *Naherwartung* does not imply that it was written as an alternative to an imminent parousial expectation. Its distinct theological focus can account for certain theological 'omissions'.

In the general letters the following Scriptures witness to a *Naherwartung*, showing once again the prevalence of this temporal eschatological hope: Hebrews 1:2; 9:26-28; 10:19-12:29; James 5:3-11; 1 Peter 1:3-9, 13; 2:12; 3:20; 4:5-7, 17-18; 5:10; 2 Peter 3:3-14 and Jude 14-25. The whole book of Revelation is enveloped in and charged with the reality of *Naherwartung* (1:1-3 and 22:12), and 'in no other writing in the New Testament is the imminence of the Advent more clearly marked' (Beasley-Murray 1951:40).³ It fittingly ends the canon with a note of imminence (21:20).

In the light of the above, 'the assumption of a marked difference between the eschatology of Luke, Acts and John and that of Paul and Mark, due to the delay of the Parousia, is open to question and not an assured result' (Cranfield 1982:502). There does seem to be 'an insistency on the nearness of the end, on the shortness of the time which remains, [that] is characteristic of the NT as a whole' (:510). A non-specific,

¹ Mearns' contention (1980) that Paul's eschatological outlook went under substantial modification (from a thoroughly realised to an imminent Christian apocalyptic to a final Christian apocalyptic scheme of signs) is novel. Remembering the occasional nature of Paul's letters accounts for his diverse eschatological landscape. Cf. Plevnik 1997:272-276 for a response to Mearns.

² Curiously, dispensationalists have cited John 14:3 as proof of a secret rapture. Jesus, they say, takes the church to heaven, whilst at the Parousia, the clear movement of Christ is *from heaven to earth* (cf. Brindle 2001). However, the 'place' where Jesus is, is not necessarily situated cosmo-topographically but spiritually – it is the place in the Father's bosom (1:18) where we can see the glory given him by the Father (17:24). Cranfield (1982:501) believed that John 16:20-22 was 'evidence that the fourth evangelist shared the near expectation of those who had gone before him'.

³ Thus Beasley-Murray sees the term 'shortly' (1:1) made meaningless if the 1000 years is interposed between the time of the revelation and the Advent (:40). This is an aspect seemingly incompatible with postmillennialism.

undelimited *Naherwartung*, always implicit and often explicit, is woven into the warp and woof of the whole NT canon.

2.2.4 Grounds for *Naherwartung*

Granted that there is an imminent expectation in the early church, we now want to find out *why* the church had such an ardent hope. We mention here six interrelated factors that fuelled this hope.

2.2.4.1 The presence of the kingdom in Jesus

The reality of the presence of the kingdom in Jesus is the 'first factor upon which the NT insistence upon the nearness of the End is based. It is a specific understanding of the past phase of salvation-history as these have been brought to a head in Christ' (Moore 1966:168). It is this reality which accounts for all the points below. The midpoint (Cullmann) of the whole sweep of God's temporal redemptive purposes, was attained in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. The NT is therefore replete with a substantial realisation of the OT hope and emphatic that the last-days have begun (König 1989:2-6; Beale 1997).

The words of Christ discussed above (Mk 8:38 and Mk 13:30) were no doubt a kerygmatic root in effecting the tone and frequency of the early church's understanding of the *Naherwartung*. The degree to which these and other words of Jesus could have been misconstrued to imply a return within their generation is seen in John 21:23, for 'late in the first century it was still expected that at least *one* venerable apostle would live to see the Parousia' (Hiers 1974:153). As much as contemporary scholarship differs over the exact interpretation of Jesus' words (and other NT sayings) so the early church probably shared similar misunderstandings (also Cranfield 1982:510). From the preaching of John the Baptist to the words of Christ, the church inherited a *Naherwartung* consciousness.

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead announced the inauguration of the kingdom of God. We might say that the optical experience of the disciples of the *first-fruits* of the kingdom expedited their expectancy of the *full harvest*. The first

swing of the sickle began, and the rest of the crop was expected to quickly follow (Dunn 1975:159). This event caused time to 'strain toward its actualisation' (Beker 1995:32), for 'the resurrection of Christ is...not so much an event *in the midst* of history as an event that inaugurates the *end* of history' (Beker:73). Christ was raised from the dead in order to judge the world (Ac 17:31); the purpose of the resurrection was for a Parousial event – once again implying an imminent execution of this task. Their experience of *adventus* was the taproot of the *futurum*.

The gift of the Spirit also acutely accelerated the sense of being the terminal community. The promises were being fulfilled. 'The Spirit is the "already"...He is the element of the end time' (Cullmann 1967:305). This is what seems to have fired the lifestyle and consciousness of the early church (Fee 1994:803-806; Moore 1966:168-172). The Spirit also focuses on the second coming of Christ and the presence of the kingdom in its consummate form (Moore:168). 'This forward look arises from the conviction that the presence of the Spirit is a sign of the End and an assurance that the present is already somehow *an anticipation of the Last Age* [italics mine]' (Moore:169). The 'all embracing turning point' of the ages had occurred (Ridderbos 1997:493), time would never be the same again. Cranfield (1982:504-505) sums up the cumulative effect of the past three points:

Naherwartung...is the expression of the recognition that history's most significant events have already taken place in the ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, so that all that remains between the ascension and his parousia can only be a sort of epilogue, during the whole of which, whether the actual length of time involved is short or long, the end presses upon the life and concerns of the believer as something urgently relevant to the present.

Besides the NT teaching, Christ's appearance, ministry, death, resurrection and gift of the Spirit, were together the genesis of this NT *Naherwartung*. Because the End has come in Christ, the End is soon to come for the world.

2.2.4.2 Apocalyptic tradition

The first century Judaism was a period of cognitive dissonance.¹ Israel was chafing under the Roman yolk. This condition engendered a sense of imminency and an ardent expectation that God was soon to throw off the Roman oppression and liberate his people. Godet, quoted in Biederwolf (1972:330), characterised the pre-70 CE apostolic period thus:

The time which preceded the Destruction of Jerusalem was signalized in the east by many calamities, a dreadful famine which took place under Claudius, and by the earthquake which destroyed Laodicea and other cities in A.D. 68. At Caesarea 20,000 Jews were massacred in a fight with the Gentiles, and 30,000 died in Rome of a pestilence.

Famines and earthquakes were all portents, though occurring intermittently.² The presence of Rome provoked the possibility of another 'abomination of desolation', and another Antiochus the 4th. The Caligula crisis (40 CE) 'was the first potentially cataclysmic situation to confront the Palestinian Christians since their Easter experience, and it would have seemed to them precisely the crisis which would bring their eschatological hopes to fulfillment' (Taylor 1999:39).³

The empirical condition of the churches also expedited the eschatological expectation. Timothy, 2 Peter and Jude witness to the presence of apostasy and heresy

¹ Cognitive dissonance is a (corporate or individual) psychological condition that arises from a contradiction(s) between deeply held beliefs and expectations and the actual state of affairs. Thus Beker: 'The church eagerly waits the coming of Christ because there is a contradiction between its empirical existence in the world and the promise epitomised in the resurrection of Christ' (1995:33). Taylor (1999:36) reminds us that in the agrarian society of the first century, there was a much shorter life expectancy - something which fed apocalyptic hope. Also, the socio-economic experience of the early believers no doubt added to their longing for a better world to come.

² Winter (1994) chronicles the affect of the drought during the reign of Claudius and the Judean famine (46-47 CE) as well as the economic affects of grain shortages (Ac 11:28). Pliny recorded the flooding of the Nile in the mid forties. 'At present what we do know from extant Graeco-Roman evidence of the period is that it was a shortage of an uneven intensity spread over a number of years' (:68). Winter sees a linkage between Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 7:26 and a grain shortage/famine (:65). Winter mentions the earthquakes during the reign of Tacitus in 51 CE; 'an ominous year' (:71). 'Tacitus gives us a narrative full of earthquakes, wars and crimes, and describes the period [prior to 70 CE] as one "rich in calamities, horrible battles, rent with seditions, and even savage in peace itself"' (Biederwolf 1972:330).

³ Taylor (1996, 1999) has suggested that the Caligula crisis of 39/40 CE initially reinforced the imminency of the early church, yet also was the first event that 'disconfirmed' the early church's ardent eschatology. Bruce (1982:180) comments that the words of Mark 'let the reader understand' could have been a reference to this period. Mearns (1980:148-147) suggests that this event stimulated NT apocalyptic, and particularly affected Paul prior to writing 2 Thessalonians. Against Taylor, we might rather consider the possibility that this event intensified and confirmed the expectation of a literal defilement of the temple rather than weakened it.

within the churches, something also connected with a temporal expectation of living in the latter end of history.¹ If apocalyptic eschatology is an answer to the cognitive dissonance often experienced by God's people - a 'problem' caused by the disparity between what was believed and what was experienced - then the early church certainly had empirical grounds for its *Naherwartung*; for 'Christian hope occurs wherever there is a gap between a state of affairs as it is, and God's declared will for his people' (Thiselton 1976:51).

2.2.4.3 National renewal

The concept of a glorious national renewal prior to the Day of Yahweh (Mt 4:5-6; Jl 2:28-32) was integral to the eschatological hope of Israel. The call for national repentance was summoned by John the Baptist, Jesus and the apostolic church. The book of Acts witnesses to a substantial number of Jewish people becoming obedient to the faith.² Acts 15 gives us an insight into the self-consciousness of the early Jewish church. Although they recognised the validity of the Gentile mission, the Jew and Gentile distinction was still present in their experience. God was restoring his (Jewish) people, and the Gentile mission was a corollary of it. Bauckham (1995a) has shown how the centrality of the Jerusalem church must have had an incredible theological, psychological and geographical affect on the early Christian movement (:425). Yet after 70 CE, 'the centrality of Jerusalem lost much of its meaning for most Christians' (:426).

If we argue for an approach to the gospels through the OT and second temple Judaism (Wright 1997), it seems consistent to deduce that the dawn of the new age was interpreted as a consequence of the nation's repentance. This had been the whole of the OT hope: a redeemer coming to repentant Zion (Is 59:20) to bring in everlasting peace and righteousness. Joel 2:12-27 pictures the blessings the nation would receive if they had then returned to God. The same 'offer' of the kingdom was presented to Israel by John, Jesus and apostles. This call for *national* repentance was continued by

¹ 2 Timothy 4:3 speaks of a 'coming time' in which people will be led astray from the truth. This expectation of 'apostasy' was linked to the seeds that were present (1 Tm 4:1-4). Is the 'latter times' speaking of the present or future, or both? It could be referring to a future time, the dawn of which was being experienced in Ephesus (cf. Towner 1989:73). Daniel 11:29-35 could have been influential in this apocalyptic expectation.

² Acts 2:41, '3000'; 4:4, '4000'; 5:13, 'but the people held them in high esteem'; 9:31, 'the church...increased in numbers'; 21:20, 'how many thousands of believers there are among the Jews'.

the apostles, the twelve Jewish Christian leaders - Acts 3:17-26 clearly articulates this fact. Here Peter expected a national restoration - on a larger scale than he was experiencing - prior to the Parousia, an event that would trigger the Parousia (see Alford 1958b:36-39; Hegler 1993 and sec 2.3.2.1). Does not then the fact of the obduracy of Israel furnish us with a clue as to the reason for the delay of the Parousia in the NT period? (cf. Barrett 1988:72; Rabali 1992:183-186).

2.2.4.4 The Christian mission

A last reason for the *Naherwartung* was the preaching of the gospel to all the nations. The missionary task was seen as part of the final fulfillment of this age and a sign of the process of eschatological realisation. 'The incorporation of the Gentiles in the Kingdom of God promised by the prophets, was expected and announced by Jesus as God's eschatological act of power, as the great final manifestation of God's free grace' (Jeremias 1967:70). The aspect of discontinuity however, was the change from the OT's centripetal Gentile movement to the NT centrifugal emphasis. This missionary movement was carried out within the purposes of God and the end-time ingathering of Gentiles promised by the OT (Köstenberger and O'Brien 2001:164-173, Aus 1979; Barrett 1988). Within the NT period, the progress of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome witnessed thousands of inter-national conversions, testifying to the dramatic power in Christianity: Acts 2:5, 41; 4:4; 5:14; 9:35, 42; 11:24-26; 17:4; 18:8, 10; 19:18, 26 (so Gentry 1999:47). The end-time mission to the Gentiles had begun and had spread rapidly into the known Gentile world. This was itself to be a last-days event (Is 66:18-21).

There are also texts in the NT that indicate that *all nations had already heard*, albeit only representatively (Rm 10:18;16:26 and Col 1:6, 23). Thus Bilezikian (1993:327) can write: 'Paul makes several statements indicating that the early church considered this condition to have been sufficiently fulfilled to justify the imminent expectancy of the Parousia'.¹ Thus linking Acts 2:5 with Colossians 1:6 and 1:23 could witness to the accomplishment of the completion of the gospel coming to all

¹ Bruce (1985:197) sees Romans 16:26 as 'representative universalism' in that most of the nations in the Mediterranean where Jews were had heard. Thus these verses point to the already 'universal' sweep of the gospel, something clear from Col 1:6.

nations in the Mediterranean in a representative fashion.¹ A salvation-historical point was reached and all nations 'representatively' present in the Mediterranean heard the gospel (so Bruce 1985:197 and Aus 1979:234). This can also be seen as a proleptic event (O'Brien 1987:13), foreshadowing the quantitative correspondence in the terminal generation (see Diagram 1 and 2). This accomplishment (prior to 70 CE) must certainly have contributed to the apostolic church's *Naherwartung*.

The above factors show that there were warranted grounds for an ardent, imminent (though indeterminate) near-expectation. Because some of these factors have reoccurred over the entire church-age, at times stronger than others, the age has frequently witnessed similar periods of imminency. Hoekema (1994:130) has gone so far as to say that 'all the signs of the times described in the NT characterise the entire period between Christ's first coming and second coming, and every decade of that period' (also Cullmann 1956b:157). These words of Hoekema need regulating (what of the 'abomination', and other more cosmic apocalyptic signs (Lk 21:25-26)?), yet he and others have successfully showed why we can characterise the entire interadventual age as 'the last-days' (also König 1989 *et al*).

This *Naherwartung* has certain implications. Firstly, it inclines the NT scholar more in the direction of dispensational 'any-momentism' than a protracted postmillennialism. The believer is more in tune with the NT if he or she lives with a *Naherwartung* consciousness. Also, the NT contains an imminency that makes its contents and theology *directly applicable to the terminal generation in a unique way*. Although the imminency characterises the *Zwischenzeit* and charges it with a fervent forward look, *yet it finds a particular relevancy to the generation that is to experience the return of Christ*. We can say that a *Naherwartung* brackets and characterises the church-age, although uniquely in the former sense. Besides this, and important for this thesis, we note that the *Naherwartung* also affects ecclesiology. It brings a focus onto the terrestrial church and its condition relative to the pending Parousia - the horizontal horizon of the church's mission and condition is foregrounded. Lastly, the *Naherwartung* provides us with a hermeneutical control for interpreting the NT. All of the books of the NT, and especially those portions of futuristic anticipations, need to be rooted and understood in this light. Realising this, invalidates the historicist

¹ Preterists such as Chilton (1987:90-91) use these verses to point to the fulfillment of Mt 24:14 prior to 70 CE.

school of interpreting Revelation, for that hermeneutic is an effective denial of the *Naherwartung*. However, a typological and prophetic interpretation of NT eschatology helpfully retains the preterist control and futurist horizon without sacrificing this ardent *Naherwartung*.

Finally, we conclude that the NT writers did not expect their present to extend indefinitely into the future, climaxing in a 1000 years of terrestrial prosperity (postmillennialism), nor that she would be removed from tribulation prior to the end (dispensationalism). As Robinson Gregory has noted:

Amplly sufficient evidence remains to warrant the statement that the NT teaches us to regard the return of our Lord as always near, and to be ever looking and longing for it. The argument is irresistible, that you cannot watch and hope for an event which you *know* to be at least a thousand years distant (1887:331).

Christ was returning very soon - for the end-time birth pains had arrived. The Parousia was on the near side of the horizon and not in the unobservable distance.

2.2.5 *Fernerwartung*

Although *Naherwartung* and *Fernerwartung* are terms that appear to be mutually exclusive, we believe that the NT sustains a *Fernerwartung* within a *Naherwartung*. The *Fernerwartung* factors help explain the non-fulfillment of the Parousia within the NT period and mitigate the intensity of the *Naherwartung*. These factors in no way lessen the reality of the *Naherwartung* (König 1989:198), but they do modulate and condition the degree of imminence. The theological expedients of the *Zwischenzeit* that account for non-arrival of the Parousia now receive our attention.

Some scholars have taken the 'non-arrival' of the kingdom as 'the single most important factor for the transformation of early Christian eschatology from an emphasis on the *imminent* expectation of the end to a vague expectation set in the more distant future' (Aune 1992:606). They have thus taken the intense imminency as characteristic of authentic 'Christianity', and have ascribed all elements of *Fernerwartung* to a Catholic tendency to reinterpret Jesus' mistaken expectation. To

them, salvation-history is not a part of authentic primitive Christianity (Conzelmann 1960).¹ As we noted, Schweitzer (1922:369) saw the whole of the church-age as a rationalisation for the non-fulfillment of the expected end. Others have lived with the tension, noting that both primitive *and* catholic diversities inhere within the unity of the NT (Dunn 1977). The most satisfying theological interpretation, *mutatis mutandis*, has come from Cullmann (1951, 1967) who has effectively shown that the 'already/not-yet' tension in the ministry of Jesus incorporated eschatology into redemptive history. He has argued that the work of Christ was the midpoint of the whole process of biblical time and the center of redemptive history (1951).² Because the midpoint now lies in the past, the future is merely the unfolding and consummation of that which is already accomplished. D-day has occurred and we await V-day. In the early church there were naturally some hasty calculations of the imminence of the 'end of the war' - a foreshortened perspective was characteristic of primitive Christianity - yet this tendency is merely a slight aberration of an otherwise healthy perspective. That the End has already occurred within time and history, charges the present with eschatological significance (incorporating the time-process of salvation-history into our present age), qualifying the 'church-age' as one of a 'now' and 'not yet' overlap. What has arrived in Christ acted not merely as a counterpoise to the expectation of the 'not yet' elements, but rather *integrated the 'delay elements' into the very nature of primitive Christianity*. Cullmann has helpfully shown that a relativising of the imminency of the Parousia is not inconsistent with classical Christianity but integral to it. He combats his existentialist critics by showing that even if Jesus expected the imminent end of the world, there was still an irreducible 'present of salvation' in Jesus' ministry:

If the expectation of the imminent end is accompanied by the idea of a brief present indicating precisely the same essential characteristics as the prolonged interval of the

¹ Besides Cullmann's magisterial refutation of Conzelmann (1967), see Moore (1966:84-88) who suggests that 'Luke's emphases are only emphases and not the result of a quite different or new standpoint'.

² Moltmann (1996:10-13) has characterised this outlook as 'a *transposition of eschatology into time*'. His three objections to Cullmann are: (1) If the time now is too long, has D-day really occurred?; (2) Linear time is modern science and not biblical; (3) Salvation-history is Enlightenment theology, historical deism that offers no freedom to God. For Moltmann, 'Christ does not come "in time"; he comes to transform time' (:13). These are pertinent observations, yet they seem to arise from the tendency to qualitatively separate God and man, so that there is no correlation between the two. Did Christ enter *our* time or did he bring about a totally 'new time', *his* time? Cullmann's thesis seems more realistic, rooting the incarnation and eschatology within *our* time and history (which is itself God's time).

later salvation-historical conception, then we have a starting point for incorporating the present into salvation-history. That is where the continuity between Jesus and Luke lies (1967:181).

Finally, we note that this 'delay' presented no crisis to the apostolic church; for 'in the light of this Primitive outlook, the entire complex of questions concerning the expectation of the imminent end and the delay of the Parousia has lost its importance in Primitive Christianity' (Cullmann 1951:90). Besides their enjoyment of a spiritual presence of Christ, 'the lack of specificity with regard to the exact date of the Parousia made it impossible for its non-occurrence to become a critical problem at any point in the subsequent history of early Christianity' (Aune 1975:98; also Berkhof 1966:77 and Berkouwer 1981:129). Bauckham (1980:3) believed that, because early Christianity was both continuous and discontinuous with first century Judaism, the 'problem of the delay of the parousia was the same problem of eschatological delay which had long confronted Jewish apocalyptic eschatology'. For Bauckham, eschatological delay in Jewish apocalyptic (:4-10) was the salient issue which spawned Jewish apocalyptic. There was a continual conjugation of the theological factors which promoted imminent expectation (apocalypticist's intense perception of the sheer contradiction of present historical facts with the righteousness of God (:9)) with those that accounted for the fact of delay (mere existence of the present facts *et al*). Yet this dialectic was not harmonised to produce a compromise, it rather remained a feature of Christian theology (:9). Bauckham observes that 'the characteristic tension of imminency and delay in Jewish apocalyptic seems to be, if anything, sharpened by the "already" of Christian faith, since it contributes to *both* sides of the tension' (:29). Given the presence of this tension, it seems likely that the elements of eschatological realisation in the NT (crystallised in Johannine theology) provided the early church with a foundation of truth and experience, on which they could stand and wait the eagerly anticipated King. What *had happened* had a primacy over *what had to happen*.

2.2.5.1 Scriptures of *Fernerwartung*

Here follows some of the pertinent Scriptures relative to the expectation of an 'extended' period prior to the Parousia. Even in those letters which carry the most intense *Naherwartung*, we notice elements which help explain the Parousia's non-

occurrence. In a certain sense *the whole of the NT* is an implicit reason for *Fernerwartung*. The letters were written to churches and believers in order to facilitate and direct them into the maturity of Christ. The following are explicit texts which provide patent clues as to why the expected Parousia was held at bay.

In the synoptics and Lukan material, we have support for Cullmann's thesis that 'not yet' elements coexist with the 'now' elements. Kümmel (1957:65-72) lists Mark 2:18-20, 14:25, Luke 18:1-8 and Matthew 23:37-39 as intimating an interadventual period of delay. To these we can add the following key references: the parables (Mt 13); the gospel mandate (Mt 24:14); the warnings for vigilance (Mt 24:36-25:30; Lk 12:38);¹ Jesus' words that the end is not yet (Mk 13:7) and his deflating of imminency (Lk 17:22-18:8); Luke 19:11-27; and the Olivet discourse which, particularly in Luke, anticipates a period of time before the Parousia.² His words on prayer in Luke 12:41-48 also relate directly to the *Fernerwartung* (cf. Hoekema 1994:120). To these we can add the famous missionary farewell discourses (Mt 28:16-20, Lk 24:44-49 and Ac 1:1-11), as well as the mission charge of Matthew 10 - which all imply an intervening activity and task to occur prior to his return.

In the Pauline corpus, the following Scriptures all speak of factors which must occur prior to the Parousia: Romans 1:5; 5:12-21; 11:11-32; 15:8-13; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Ephesians 1:10; 4:1-16; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1 Timothy 1:15; 2:1-7; 4:1; and 2 Timothy 4:3. It is particularly in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 that Paul seeks to 'inject a note of eschatological reserve into a group of Christians with some form of over-realised eschatology' (Witherington 1992:162). In the Johannine gospel, 10:16, 11:52, 12:32, 16:8-11, 17 and 20:21 mention certain salvation-historical events which are to transpire before the manifestation of Jesus Christ. *Fernerwartung* in the general letters includes Hebrews 10:12-13, 1 Peter 4:17 and 2 Peter 3:9.³ The Revelation narrates events 'that must soon take place' (1:1). The whole book contains the tension of *Naherwartung* and *Fernerwartung*. In true apocalyptic fashion, it gives

¹ 'It was the error of the foolish virgins to expect the imminent coming of the bridegroom', Bahnsen 1976:60.

² The classical section of Lk 19:11-27 need not imply *Ferherwartung*. Cf. Nolland (1998:66) who dismisses this verse as one which slackens imminency. This verse merely tells us that 'the consummation of the kingdom of God will not come as the culmination of Jesus' ministry, but must first be preceded by Jesus' journey through death and resurrection to enthronement at the right hand of God'.

³ Bauckham (1983:310) rightly comments that 2 Peter 3:8-13 does not 'imply that Christians should discard the imminent expectation so characteristic of primitive Christianity...The author in fact continues to speak as though his readers will be alive at the Parousia (1:19; 3:14).

the suffering believers insight into the events which are to transpire throughout the church-age and particularly at the end of history as we now know it. Besides Revelation 6:11 (see Bauckham 1980:15), 11:1-13 speaks of the church mission to the world which in turn justifies the delay of the Parousia (Bauckham:32-33). The book also suggests that it is in the purpose of God to allow his people to share in sufferings that accounts for a 'delay': 'God delays the *parousia* not simply in spite of his peoples suffering, but actually so that his people may suffer that positive, creative suffering which comes to the followers of the cross of Christ' (:36).

The rest of this thesis will be an attempt to relate all the above to the Parousia of Christ.

2.2.6 Grounds for *Fernerwartung*

We now look at three theological factors that account for the *Fernerwartung* in the NT (cf. Moore 1966:208-218 and Berkouwer 1981:96-139). They are: (1) apocalyptic events; (2) missiological events; and (3) ecclesial events.

(1) Certain events were expected to occur before the End (thus 2 Th 2:1-12 'that day *will not come unless...*'). This includes factors such as the Antichrist, the apostasy, the temple desecration, persecution and the events predicted in Revelation. Berkhof (1996:696-703) enumerated five great events expected prior to the Parousia, factors which 'de-imminentised' the Parousia: the calling of the Gentiles, the conversion of the *pleroma* of Israel, the great apostasy and great tribulation, the revelation of Antichrist and false signs and wonders. Luke portends great cosmic signs (21:25-28). We might call these factors the 'apocalyptic structurization of the eschatological promise' (Berkouwer 1981:453), a framework providing a more rigid/deterministic setting within which the contingent salvation-history line flows.

(2) Jesus expected the grace of God to reach out to all nations (Berkouwer 1981:129-133). This factor of the extensive upbuilding of the church has received the most attention, and rightfully so. The end is held back 'in the interests of grace, allowing opportunity to be given to men to repent and believe (Moore 1966:207). The delay is a time to facilitate repentance and faith, an age of grace that is eschatologically charged, for 'it is man's *final* chance, because the End *is* held

back...the End delays not naturally' (Moore:209). God has allowed for a period of divine waiting that reveals and manifests his compassion (Berkouwer:123 on 1 Pt 3:9). This mission is grounded in the eschatological framework of the NT: *the theological reality, reason and character of the 'now' in the 'now-not-yet' tension contains the rationale for missiology*. The kingdom is present in a veiled manner, creating the space for human volition and response. This 'now' reality runs from Christ into the church, and finds its finest articulation in the midpoint - the ministry of Christ. This eschatological tension, seen in Christ's earthly ministry, continues in the church and her preaching to the world. It is thus this character of the ministry of Christ that accounts for the delay. The whole reason for God bringing in the kingdom in such an incipient and hidden form - giving room for response - accounts for the delay. Thus 'it might be said that the meaning of the present dispensation becomes visible in the church' (Berkouwer 1981:132). The present is thus the era of the church, 'the community specially established to further the purpose of grace by participating in furthering the occasion of repentance and faith through constant witness' (:209). If therefore this post-cross pre-parousia period is specifically *salvific time*, then this period is subservient to the outworking of God's divine purpose. Its end will come when this purpose is achieved (see Robert Nelson 1964:226). Mission does not subserviently take place between two fixed periods; it rather takes place filling, characterising, legitimising and determining this particular period. Once the *raison d'être* for this period is achieved, then the End will come.

(3) The last reason is the ecclesial factor of the intensive upbuilding of the church. Whilst the apocalyptic aspects and missiological aspects have received most attention, this ecclesial aspect has been neglected. This thesis will attempt to show how this aspect is essential in understanding the nature of the interim period. It will be argued that *the obedience of the church is crucial for understanding the temporal delay of the Parousia of Christ*.

2.2.7 Salvation-history

Salvation-history is an important conceptual framework for understanding the timing of the Parousia.¹ For many this 'divine program' provides a, if not *the*, hermeneutic for interpreting the whole Bible (Hughes 1976:80-81). It is a biblical-theological methodology to comprehend the whole sweep of the purposes of God in history, and to identify patterns within it that often work toward a teleological consummation. In synoptically viewing the whole bible, theorists note that 'each event has its roots in the past, its meaning in the present, and portends a further development in the future' (Hughes:80). Salvation-history stresses the 'horizontal' aspects of the acts of God in history, integrating each temporal period along a divine line that *embraces the biblical movement of protology to eschatology in sequential order*.² It connects events 'according to a divine plan...stretch[ing] back to the beginning and forward to consummation' (Peter 1970:8). This organic, linear and temporal path of divine saving history has received the technical German term *Heilsgeschichte*, which has been translated as 'salvation-history' or 'economy of salvation' (cf. Cullmann 1967:74-78). Its theological rise can be traced back to Cocceius in the 17th century, Bengel in the 18th and people such as Von Hofmann in the 19th century. Although accused of being a 'biblicist systematisation' by some, their aim was to grasp the totality of the organic flow of salvation as it was temporarily mediated, 'as the whole which is disclosed from its conclusion as a unity' (Sauter 1988:511). Their efforts were aimed at constructing a context for universal history (Sauter:511).

This movement of salvation has its primary purpose in the salvation of mankind, following the biblical path and principle of election and representation: of World > Israel > Remnant > Jesus Christ > Church > World (Cullmann 1951:115-118; Davies 1979:362). Although salvation-history culminates in the NT in Jesus Christ (the 'midpoint' or 'plan compressed in one event', Cullmann 1951:100), it does not stop there but unfolds further until it reaches its *terminus ad quem* in the kingdom of God. From a hermeneutical perspective, this approach does justice to the historical

¹ Cf. Moore 1966:80-91; Cullmann 1951, 1963:315-328, 1967; Maier 1994:195-202; Hughes 1976:79-89; Piper 1958; Peter 1970; Davidson 1981:388-397.

² Salvation-history is thus 'the extreme opposite position to existential interpretation' (Maier 1994:197) which accents the more 'vertical' aspect of eschatology. It is thus organically related to biblical theology. Cf. Vos 1980:3-24 for a classic understanding of biblical theology.

structure of revelation as well as embracing the fullness of that revelation; it is most suited to express the unity of revelation in all its complexity (Maier 1994:195-202). A key aspect in this interrelationship between the various parts of Scripture is found in typology. Maier (:198) highlights the essential connection between salvation-history and typology: '[The] connection of the stages of God's action concretises itself in the phenomenon of "types" ... Because God gives history a purpose, each individual event and its respective form lie in a more or less direct connection to that purpose'. Also, according to Cullmann (1967:130), 'typology is embedded in a total salvation-historical understanding'.¹

Thus the NT continues the temporal-historical line of God's working in history, which reaches its center in Jesus Christ, running 'backward through the covenant to creation and beyond, and forwards through the church and its mission to the Parousia and beyond' (Moore 1966:90). Cullmann's greatest contribution has been his emphasis on the *present existence of salvation-history through the church and its mission*. 'The New Testament man was certain that he was continuing the work of God that began with the election of the people of Israel for the salvation of mankind, which God fulfilled in Christ, which he unfolds in the present, and which he will complete in the end' (Cullmann 1967:13).² Taking this ecclesial factor into account, Cullmann has also noted that 'within the divine plan a place is left for historical contingency, for human resistance, sin and the mysterious "detours" taken because of this resistance and sin' (1967:78). The salvation-history line is therefore a fluctuating line.

Relative to the Parousia, most of the scholars above underscore the importance of the *temporal mission of the church*. They see this occurrence as consistent with God's overall purpose in history, being interpreted as the organic extension of the kingdom of God in time. The 'delay' of the Parousia is comprehended as the elongation of a period of salvation for all mankind, and is in no way an embarrassment for Christianity.

¹ This aspect is vital for this thesis and important for correcting the dispensationalist divide of Israel's mission and the church's mission in eschatology.

² On the theme of how the church in the post-biblical period continues the mission of Christ, see Cullmann 1967:292-338, 1953; Köstenberger 1998 and Hartwig 2000.

2.2.8 Salvation-history and the church period

This thesis is in substantial agreement with the direction of the thesis of Cullmann and the salvation-historical school. This salvation-history hermeneutic provides us with the key for the non-arrival of the kingdom - the temporal extension of the midpoint through history. This also allows the early church to be 'exonerated' for their ardent expectation, causing no alienation between them and us. Being situated in the midpoint, they *rightly* grounded their expectation in certain events, events which were to characterise the last-days and the terminal generation. *What was lacking was only the quantitative extension of the gospel and the corresponding events, and not the qualitative events themselves.* The fact of the End being imminent was warranted, but the needed global 'depth' and extension of those events was not yet fully revealed.

Cullmann (1951) correctly notices the temporal centrality of Christ's earthly ministry, death and resurrection. For him, those events constituted the midpoint period. Yet might we not slightly extend the midpoint period up to at least 70 CE, including the period of the apostles, the writing of the NT letters and Paul's unique ministry? (see Diagram 2). Matthew 23:34-36 understands the period of the apostolic church and the apostolic ministry to Israel after Pentecost as being inclusive of the generation that rejected Jesus' historic ministry. We can call this the 'midpoint-generation'. Garland (1979:172) correctly notes: 'Matthew...makes it most clear that it is the generation of Jesus and of the early church immediately thereafter which has incurred the wrath of God beyond the point of redemption'. If this is so, we can have three main periods of salvation-history (all rooted in and qualified by the midpoint period) which correspond to the preterist, historicist and futurist schools of interpretation: We have one midpoint period (Christ's ministry and apostolic church), followed by a general period of the *diffusion, radiation, unfurling or fanning out* of the midpoint throughout the church-age (to a greater or lesser degree), and *the apical climax of an essential qualitative 'repetition' or 'echo' of the midpoint on a universal level in the terminal generation* (see Diagram 1 and 2). The midpoint is thus programmatic for the canon and the interadventual age.¹

¹ Beale (1997:50) speaks of Christ as 'a formative microcosmic model which determines the nature and destiny of people, and the rest of creation, on a macrocosmic scale'. Christ is the launch of God's new creation, which includes 'the entire network of ideas that belong to the renewal of the whole world, of Israel, and of the individual' (:49).

Berkouwer (1981) speaks of a movement from the particular (Israel) to the universal (all nations) in which we find the great secret of the history of salvation (:130-131). This particular/universal movement is all one of a piece and is the organic continuation of the history of salvation. Thus we can understand the church dispensation and the *Zwischenzeit* as a period that makes room for the universalising of the particular. There needs to be a ubiquitous and universal realisation of what was locally realised in the first century.¹ The Christ-Event (*Gestalt*) needs to be analogously realised throughout the world, ensuring that the history of the kingdom in this age is analogous to what happened at the time of Christ (so Berkhof 1966:79). The interadventual period can so be seen as a period which is 'bookended' and bracketed by two generations that apocalyptically affect their respective contexts. We call these two generations, the 'Jesus-generation' (midpoint) and the 'terminal-generation'.

Further, we suggest that *the extensive and intensive outreach of the midpoint period* - the 'Christ-process' (Cullmann 1951:21) - *accelerates the timing of the Parousia*. If 'what has happened in Christ must [now] unfold in the direction of the consummation' (Cullmann 1967:293), then this process can progress or regress along with all the zigzags, bends, detours and gaps that have been characteristic of the contingency of salvation-history.² Consequently, we maintain that the process toward the Parousia and the duration of the *Zwischenzeit* can be lengthened by the retention of 'midpoint activity' and shortened by the expansion of 'midpoint activity'. Thus the timing of the Parousia can be accelerated when the church's mission occurs expeditiously and decelerated when that mission slackens or hibernates. Also, it will be argued that when the 'now' and 'not-yet' tension again reaches its fullest stretch - this time in global history analogous to the 'local' apex of the midpoint period - we can then expect to be in the terminal generation. This 'universal' zenith of salvation-history needs to be attained prior to the End - a fact dependent upon the obedience of the church.

¹ Thus Alford (1958a:235), in commenting on Matthew 24, brings out a helpful insight: 'the Jewish Church and its fortunes...represent the Christian Church and its history'.

² Cullmann (1967:158): 'In salvation-history we are in fact dealing with *the amalgamation of a constant*, namely, the divine plan, *with a contingency* [italics mine], that is, the development of...individual events, unforeseen by this plan itself (above all the opposition to God's plan)'.

Thus the missionary enterprise can be understood as the great precondition for the consummation of the ages. The early church's aggressive missionary enterprise fuelled the *Naherwartung*, making it potentially possible (at least in their eyes) that the 'great commission' could be (or was?) fulfilled within their generation. It is possible that the midpoint of Christ's ministry reached a high-point or rather a sufficient 'echo' within the first century and that this dynamic was (as we have seen in 2.2.4.4) partially responsible for the reality of the *Naherwartung* in the early church. In order to sustain this thesis, we plausibly deduce that the apostolic church deemed it quite possible that the salvation-historical mission of the church *could well have been completed in their time*.¹

As we have observed, Christ did not delimit the intervening period with a *date* but with a *task*: 'And this good news of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the world, as a testimony to all the nations; and then the end will come' (Mt 24:14). He expected a replication of his ministry through the church to the world, 'for Jesus was... undoubtedly convinced that his message concerning the kingdom of God was of decisive importance for the Gentiles also' (Kümmel 1957:85). It was his awareness of the future mission of the disciples that caused him to anticipate a period between his resurrection and Parousia. The coming kingdom was therefore to be contingent upon the proclamation of the gospel in all nations (so Hagner 1995:696).

Mark 13:10 mentions the requisite preaching of the gospel in all nations, adding the sequential time indicator '*first*'. For those who do not hold to a *heilsgeschichte* sequence, this verse is an embarrassment (if taken as authentic). It unequivocally states that certain events must transpire before the Parousia. Jesus was focused on the globalisation of the gospel and expected all nations to be evangelised prior to his return. Matthew adds the demonstrative pronoun '*this*' to identify the nature of the gospel. All this implies that Jesus expected *the gospel preached and demonstrated by him* (midpoint) to radiate out into all nations *before* the End was to come. The agenda of the church has for this reason been set in the parameters given by Jesus.² *What was*

¹ So Hagner (1995:696) comments: 'But "the end" *could* already have come in the first century. The required conditions were all present. All the sufferings in [Mt 24] vv 5-12 were experienced in the years prior to A.D. 70 and the fall of Jerusalem, and in varying degree they have been signs experienced by the church down to the present era. The signs of the end have been present to every Christian generation'.

² 'The fourth evangelist conceived of the mission of the Christian community as ultimately the mission of the *exalted Jesus* carried out through his followers' (Köstenberger 1998:210). The mission of the church is to be the mission of Jesus as historically began and 'toned' in his ministry in Israel. O'Toole

done in Israel by Jesus and the apostles must be done by the church in the world; and as the Israeli period terminated with eschatological judgment on Jerusalem in 70 CE, so the 'world period' will terminate with eschatological judgment. Not until the church's task is completed will the Son of man return in judgment. The obedience of the church can thus justly be seen as a necessary prelude to the Parousia.

(1983) shows how Luke-Acts is one of a piece in ministry relative to Jesus and the church. 'Luke predicates the same action...places, words, descriptions, and ill-treatment...of Jesus and two or more of his followers' (:196), all to show that 'what God began in Jesus he continues in Jesus' followers' (:211). Also Kingsbury (1973) notes how Matthew has a 'formal coalescence of the time of Jesus and the time of the church' (:471), dividing the history of salvation into only two epochs: the time of Israel and the time of Jesus. This continuity is grounded in the fact that the earthly Messiah is the exalted Lord.

2.3 The contingency of the Parousia

We will now look at the contingency of the timing of the Parousia. If we take the *Naherwartung* Scriptures seriously and not just as revealing a quixotic or misdirected hope of the early church, then the reality of the 'delay' of the Parousia takes on a new meaning. *The Parousia can be seen as a flexible event with certain events bringing that day closer than at other times.* All the factors discussed in the grounds for *Naherwartung* had a magnetic affect upon the return of Christ, bringing that Day nearer in the first century than maybe any other time in the interadventual period – bar the terminal period. It is our conviction that the events of the first century 'pulled forward' and expedited the Parousia of Christ *in a way unparalleled throughout the church-age.* The possibility of other *kairoi* throughout the church-age can similarly affect the nearness of the Parousia. These expeditious dynamics will now be explored.

2.3.1 Explicit Scriptures of expeditious periods within the New Testament

The relative flexibility and intensity of the Parousia is seen in various Scriptures. In Romans 13:11 Paul states that 'salvation is now nearer than when we first believed'. Here Paul speaks of the Parousia being *more imminent now* than a decade or so ago. It was closer then than a few years prior.¹ Alford (1958b:449) proffered that 'a fair exegesis of this passage can hardly fail to recognise the fact that the apostle here as well as elsewhere (1 Th 4:17; 1 Cor 15:51) speaks of the coming of the Lord *as rapidly approaching*'. Godet (1979:449) observes that the apostle speaks of the

¹ Curiously, most modern exegetes seem to avoid commenting on the clear meaning of the text. Moo (1996:819-822) makes no mention of the 'movement', Dunn (1988b:786) merely speaks of an 'overtone of heightened imminence', Fitzmyer (1992:682) disarms the verse by saying 'every step the Christians take brings them closer to "the day of the Lord"'. The immediate sense of urgency - *not necessary when they first believed* - precludes the saying as referring to the passage of time that inevitably brings one closer to the End. The nearness had not always been equidistant, for it was *now* shorter. Also, the individualistic and spiritual interpretation of this verse that understands these words as referring to the believer's approaching death is untenable, for Paul goes on to unpack the meaning of 'salvation' as 'the day', the coming new age. For the various interpretations, see Biederwolf 1972:425-426.

interval separating us from the Parousia as being 'sensibly diminished since he [Paul] and his readers were brought to faith'. The reasons for Paul's contraction of the time *then* are not specified, yet Godet (:450) offers some solution:

The apostle, looking back on his career, and seeing in a sense the whole known world evangelised by his efforts (Col 1:6), might well say without exaggeration that the history of the kingdom of God had made a step in advance during the course of his ministry.

A unique *kairos* had occurred that was not present when Paul first believed. This once again reinforces the degree to which the particular elements responsible for the *Naherwartung* affected their understanding of the Parousia. They expected certain events to transpire and signify the nearness of Christ. When those particular *kairoi* occurred, salvation was then nearer than before. It was not that this proximity was a mere mirage of an apparently imminent Parousia – the event of the Parousia itself was actually closer than before

1 Corinthians 7:25-35 contains another instance of temporal shortening due to increased imminency. Here the 'present crisis' has 'limited' and 'compressed' the *kairos*.¹ Some interpret this as the quality rather than the quantity of interadventual time.² However, Paul implies that the 'church-age' time had been shortened by the 'present crisis', and not by the Christ-event or time in general. This seems consistent with the words in v 29 'from *now* on' – a state of affairs having arrived that was not present when they first believed. The duration of time left up until the expected Parousia had been shortened through certain events in Corinth or in the wider Mediterranean world. Once again, certain *Naherwartung* factors were occurring (persecution?) that forecasted the imminent return of Christ. Thus singleness was encouraged *at that peculiar period*. We conclude that here we have a period where there is again a *temporal intensification of the Naherwartung* due to certain undisclosed factors.

¹ Fee (1989:329) points out that both words – 'present' and 'distress' – are employed elsewhere in the NT to speak of the great eschatological woes that precede the Parousia'. Luke 21:23 is the only other mention of *anagke* in the NT.

² Witherington (1997:173) thinks that Paul has in mind an eschatological process already set in motion by the Christ-event. This Christ-event has 'relativised the *schema* of this world and the significance of all worldly relationships'. Also Fee (1989:339): 'Paul's concern...is not with the *amount* of time they have left, but with the radical new perspective the "foreshortened future" gives one with regard to the *present* age'.

Lastly, in Hebrews 10:25 the writer exhorts his readers not to neglect meeting together but to do so with greater frequency '*as you see the Day approaching*'. The writer: (1) expected his readers to determine the degree of imminency through objective criteria, thus: '*as you see*' (apocalyptic indicators?); and (2) reckoned that those events were expeditious, thus: '*the day approaching*'. Here we have the twin factors of *observation* and *acceleration* that charged that epoch of the interadventual period with apocalyptic urgency. Through observable criteria, the writer calculated that the Parousia was closer then than it was previously.¹ The time of the *Zwischenzeit* had been shortened.

2.3.2 Explicit Scriptures of expeditious conditions

Scripture not only contains verses that mention expeditious epochs, it also mentions certain conditions that act directly upon the timing of the Parousia. To these we now turn.

2.3.2.1 The repentance of Israel

Together with the above, we analyse the account of Peter's second sermon in Acts 3:17-21 and Stephen's vision in 7:55, for we believe that they speak of the potential possibility of the return of Christ in that period, yet dependent upon the repentance of Israel.

Acts 3 speaks of the promised coming of the Messiah consequent upon the repentance of Peter's hearers. Peter grounded his statement in his belief that Christ will only return once all things have been restored (thus Mt 17:11). Firstly, the text speaks of the *apokatastasis* ('restoration', 'establishment' or 'fulfillment', Bruce 1988a:85) as the condition which triggers the return of Christ. The text implies that it

¹ Ellingworth (1993:530) suggests the observable signs may be related to the persecution suffered by his readers. Lane (1991) makes no comment. Alford (1958d:198) refers to the signs of the times, for 'these Hebrews lived actually close upon one of those great types and foretastes of it, the destruction of the Holy City'. Wescott (1974:326): 'The beginning of the Jewish war was already visible to the Hebrews'. Whatever the referents, the objectivity implied in the phrase '*see drawing near*' implies such apocalyptic indicators.

is a condition to occur immediately prior to the Parousia, and not a consequence of the Parousia (as the NIV implies). The phrase 'until the times of restoration' 'has in view a return of Jesus after the completion of the times of restoration' (Carroll 1988:124). We can paraphrase Peter's affirmation as: 'Him heaven must receive until after the times of restoration' (Carroll:145).¹ Peter's exhortation for the representatives of Israel to repent and the times of refreshing to ensue (Ac 2) are not necessarily simultaneous with the Parousia, but preparatory to it (vv 19-20) – for the 'Jewish church' was already experiencing this refreshing (so Bayer 1994:246). Also, vv 22-26 speaks of the *present time* as the beginning of that restoration, for God had *already* raised up a prophet, and judgment in the community (v 23) had been inaugurated (Ac 5:1-11; cf. Ac 2:35). It is clear that the periods of restoration 'that God announced long ago through his holy prophets' (v 21) is the inaugurated post-Pentecost period, for v 22-26 appear to be epexegetical of the restoration of v 21 (thus Ac 15:13-18 speaks of the inaugurated restoration of the Jewish). God is now restoring all things (Jew and Gentile) and will consummate this work to precipitate the Parousia of Christ, 'a consummation which is being gradually accomplished now, and shall be quickly brought about at some future time' (Bengel 1877b:546) (cf. Mt 17:11; Ac 2:35; Rm 11:11-27; Heb 10:13; Rv 11:3-13; 14:14-20; 19:7).² The last-days, which include the days of restoration of Israel (Jl 2:28; Ml 4:5-6), have begun and the process will reach a fulfillment prior to the Parousia.³ Bayer (1994:248) unpacks the full impact of this verse in the light of its co-text:

The sequence of events leading to the parousia can thus be identified as events commencing with the present healing of the lame man and the proclamation of repentance

¹ Bruce (1988a:85) writes: 'If Jesus must remain in heaven until this consummation, this is in line with Paul's exposition of Ps. 110:1: Christ must reign (at the right hand of God) until all hostile powers are overthrown....the gospel blessings destined to flow from Jesus' death and resurrection must spread throughout the world; then, and not till then, will he return from the right hand of power' (also Bengel 1877b:545-546). The sense of the adverb 'until' in this verse is thus: 'Mandela was in prison *until* De Klerk made his radical reforms'. He came out once all things were made ready for his release. Bayer (1994:248) writes that 'it is probable that it [the restoration] includes events prior to the parousia', then paraphrasing v 21: He must be received into heaven until all will have been restored of which God spoke through his holy prophets from the beginning of the world. So also Meyer 1879b:115, Charles 1913:432-433 and particularly Carroll 1988:137-154.

² Thus Meyer (1879): 'Christ stays in heaven until the moral corruption of the people of God is removed, and the thorough moral renovation of all their relations shall have ensued. Then and only then is the exalted Christ sent from heaven to the people' (quoted in Biederwolf 1972: 410).

³ The nature of this 'restoration' lies in the inaugurated aspects of the kingdom of God, just as John the Baptist was to 'restore' Israel prior to Christ's ministry. It will be shown that these 'midpoint' aspects are to be fully internationalised and affected before the Parousia by the church's 'Elijah' mission.

leading up to repentance with remission of sins. This will lead to times of divine relief from suppressing burdens and refreshing....Prior to the parousia, restoration of Israel (as well as the Gentiles) to God and to its land will take place.

In conclusion, this pericope 'goes to show that the question of time-frames is clearly secondary. Rather, repentance as the igniting factor for the future deeds of Christ is the real concern' (Bayer1994:244). Acts 3:19-21 implies that 'the repentance of the hearers will hasten on the process of the conversion of the nations which must precede the return of Jesus' (Marshall 1992:200). When 'the fullness of Israel comes in', and experiences times of national refreshing, the Messiah will be close at hand.

In Acts 7:55-56, the martyr Stephen sees Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Mattill (1979:148-150) understands the rising of Christ as preparation for his parousia, something which can be expedited by Israel's repentance' (:62). Owen's study on the nature of the 'standing Son of Man' (1954:224-226) produced a literary analysis of the various temporal movements of Christ in Luke-Acts ('departure', 'entered glory', 'received up', 'to sit' at the right hand, 'standing' and 'coming to judge') and concluded that here in Acts the physical posture of Jesus conveys the following sense: 'Christ rises in preparation for his Parousia. The Son of Man in Stephen's vision is the Christ who is about to return' (:225). Some however understand the vision in non-parousial terms; thus Loader (1978:204): 'The standing seems best understood as belonging to court procedure and would mean that Jesus stands before God speaking on Stephen's behalf'. The most common interpretation being that Jesus is 'rising up from the throne of God to greet his proto-martyr' (Bruce 1988a:156). In support of Mattill and Owen is the co-textual reference of Acts 3:19-21 and the link between the Parousia and Israelite repentance – all nuanced with the fact that Stephen is standing before the Sanhedrin, the national representatives. Also, it seems superfluous and overly indulgent for Stephen, brimming over with mercy toward his persecutors, to have declared to all around his own heavenly vindication. Lastly, the public nature of Stephen's declaration of 'the Son of Man standing' seems more significant for Stephen's earthly persecutors than for his own heavenly sanction.

Lastly, we note that Mattill (1979) believed that Luke wrote his two-volumed work to promote mission, believing that 'the Son of Man could not return in fiery glory (Lk 12:49a) until that mission had been completed' (:233). Along with prayer (18:1-8), world mission, and his own literary contribution, Luke believed these

elements could expedite the Parousia. According to Mattill, Luke's two-volume work is thus an eschatological phenomenon. He even goes as far as to say that 'it may even be that Luke had hopes of bringing about the day of the Lord ahead of schedule - Acts 3:19....Peter implies that repentance would speed up the coming of the end' (:233-234).

In the light of the above, it is not unreasonable to conclude that these two texts imply that the Parousia is speeded by Israel's acceptance of Jesus. If this is so (as we believe) then it is in direct harmony with what is stated in Romans 11: all Israel will be saved after the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. This is a scenario which motivated the apostle in his apostolic labors amid the Gentiles (see sec 3.2.2.5).

2.3.2.2 The condition of the church

Understanding the nature of the contingency of the Parousia results in a more flexible interpretation of the issue of the timing of the Parousia. This approach ('conditional delimitation') attributes the reason for the delay to human factors, specifically the condition of Christian church. We believe that the empirical condition of the church is an integral ingredient in understanding the delay of the Parousia.

2 Peter 3:3-13 'contains the most explicit treatment of the delay of the *parousia* in the NT' (Bauckhman 1980:19).¹ In v 8, Peter informs us that the 'delay' has nothing to do with the temporal factors of clock or calendar. Rather, *God has a theological interpretation of time, seen here as a merciful intent to obviate the destruction of many*. Verse 9 deals with the key factors which are responsible for the reason of the present temporal duration: repentance and God's mercy. Thus, for a proper understanding of NT eschatology it is vitally important to recognise the connection between the contingency of the end-time and the patience of God (so Cranfield 1982:511). Interestingly, the repentance of the Christian community is addressed here: 'God's tolerance...with His own people, delaying the final judgment to give them opportunity to repent, provides at least a partial answer to the problem of eschatological delay' (Bauckham 1993:310).

¹ Bauckham believed that 2 Peter 'met the problem of delay as posed by the "scoffers" from the perspective of the Jewish apocalyptic tradition' (1980:27).

Rabali's salient monograph (1992) dealt specifically with the role of the church in the timing of the Parousia. One of his conclusions is that the reason for the delay lies in the need for the repentance of 2 Peter's Christian readers.¹ Rabali (1992:147) observes:

The longsuffering which 2 Peter associates with the parousia 'delay' concerns the Christian community and not everybody...2 Peter seems to be pointing out to the believing community being addressed that their attitudes and conducts would have implied their being adversely affected by the Day of Judgment if it had occurred earlier and that they...should be grateful for God's patience towards them in this connection.

This patience of God is not a general unending patience directed to all but is rather specifically ecclesial in orientation. Rabali believed that the patience of God is purposeful, and that, because God has a *purpose* in delaying the Parousia, *he will achieve his goal*: vv 8-9 speak of an 'implicit involvement of God in the execution of the parousia's precedents' (:149).² God will ensure that these essentials are met by holding back his wrath. Rabali continues:

The text seems clearly to teach that the Judgment Day...comes when divine patience has achieved its objectives [italics mine]....This implies that the repentance and service which are essential precedents of that day will be achieved. The flood analogy is again helpful here because Noah and those associated with him did get saved and they certainly completed what had to be achieved by the day when the Flood came (:149).

God is ensuring that the pre-parousial precedents are being met, by holding back the End. Thus lack of repentance can defer the parousia, whilst repentance can hasten it (also Bauckham 1993:313).

2 Peter 3:12 includes the renowned 'hastening motif' (Bauckham 1980:1983:325; Rabali 1992:120-159). Rabali's singular study of the 'hastening motif' in 2 Peter 3:12 supports the traditional interpretation of 'speeding up' the Parousia.³ Commenting on v 12, he writes:

The meaning of the words seem to be that of drawing the attention of the readers to the fact that their duty is not just that of awaiting the future but also of doing something which will speed up its arrival and which because of it being primarily in the sphere of obedience to God may lead to their being spotless and blameless (:117).

¹ Bauckham (1983:313) lists Hermas Sim. 9; 2 Clement 8:1-3; 12:6; 13:1; 16:1 and 17:1 as other primitive Christian literary sources that place the reason for delay in the state of the Christians.

² He also mentions 1 Peter 3:20, where 'the patience [of God] was primarily directed towards Noah who had to complete the ark (1993:147). God delays his wrath for the salvation of those who will repent.

³ He deals with the alternative reading 'wait eagerly' on p 118.

He masterfully links 2 Peter 3:12 with 1 Peter 3:20, providing a typological understanding of the former reference. His conclusions are worth quoting in full:

The Day of God is hastened by the Christian community's diligence in connection with the tasks and responsibilities which God has given. Like Noah, the Christian community would 'delay' that Day if what needs to be done is not undertaken with utmost seriousness and diligence; and like Noah, the Christian community 'hastens' that Day when what needs to be done is undertaken with diligence. This would include self-discipline as well as ecclesiastical discipline... (:148).

Rabali (:182-211) also mentions the following texts which contain the hastening motif: Mt 6:10; 24:14; 28:19-20; Mk 13:10, 20; Ac 3:19-20; 1 Cor 16:22; 1 Pt 2:12; Rv 8:4; and 22:20. The uniqueness of 2 Peter's hastening motif seems to lie in the fact of it being an explicit statement of an implicit theme seen elsewhere in the NT.

Finally, we can also relate the contingency of the Parousia to the mission of the church. In Matthew 24:14 we see that the kingdom will not come in its fullness until *all peoples* have had the opportunity to embrace or reject the King.¹ The rest of the thesis will be substantiating this requisite responsibility of the church to be the fulcrum that determines the relative timing of the Parousia.

2.3.3 Implicit theological factors

A way to understand the dynamic of how human repentance can effect the arrival or non-arrival of prophecies is found in the analogous event of Jonah and his preaching in Nineveh (also Dunn 1996b:158; Kümmel 1957:65). Here Jonah announces the *imminent* judgment ('in forty days') on Nineveh - imminent by virtue of the human condition. But we see that the very announcement brought an opportunity to respond, a 'space' that affected the predicted imminent event. Judgment was temporally *imminent* when Jonah first preached, *yet it was delayed because the moral conditions subsequently changed*.² God 'repented' because the Ninevites repented. Jonah and other prophets thus reveal to us a God who is 'unpredictable in terms of human schematization' resulting in a 'biblical hope [that] is not rigid or fixed' (Dunn

¹ Thus Keener (1997:346-347) can say: 'Perhaps...the Lord's return has been delayed and the world's suffering prolonged by the church's disobedience to the Great Commission'.

² 'Such prophecy was given in order that it might not be fulfilled' (Beasley-Murray 1948:224).

1996b:158).¹ Further analysis into the workings of the OT promises can also provide us with keys for understanding how the ultimate Day of the Lord is correlated to the human condition.

If we inquire into the timing of the fulfillment of the promises of the OT, the *when* question, Odendaal (1970:60) correctly answers for the prophets: 'It is at hand, pressing in on the present reality for fulfillment and realization'. The events predicted by the prophets are presented as imminent events, though a drastic foreshortening can be identified only with hindsight. God was about to act – even if it was in the indeterminate future. Their program did not however provide a static futurology but rather a dynamic eschatology. They did not simply predict; they rather *preached* the proclamation of impending judgment and nuanced that message for present salvific effect. *The relation of Yahweh to his people was revealed to be the primary variant in the unfolding of the predicted events.* Consequently, God can either 'slow down' or 'speed up' his purposes according to the human moral condition (so Jr 18:1-12). So in the prophets we see less of a deterministic view (which may be an apocalyptic aberration) than a flexible and highly nuanced forecast of events. Certain things will happen - for he is Lord of History and knows the true condition of the people addressed - yet their pace of approach is far from uniform and has all the contingencies of history and humanity build into it.² God's mercy not only delays but even changes his own predicted judgments. The intercessions of Moses (Ex 32:11-14), Joel (2:12-13) and Amos (7:1-9) bear this aspect out well.

Although the prophets preached of impending doom, they all contained the '*yet even now*' ingredient that would arrest the march of judgment. Certainty of coming judgment is matched by a contingency that obviates the immediacy of the judgment. The future thus never evacuates the present of meaning. Rather, *God's future predictions are a just response to the present; and if that present situation changed (the situation that precipitated the prophetic Word), then that Word will no longer be applicable under these new conditions.* Similarly, we believe that *the future Parousia event will be suited to the historical nature of the terminal generation.* It is the Day of

¹ Even in Daniel, with its highly 'schematised' predictions, there is evidence that if the moral conditions change, God would 'defer' or change his pre-announced 'predictions' (e.g. Dn 4:27).

² Thus Cullmann has repeatedly urged for a 'fluctuating' salvation-historical line that allows historical progress to unfold through all the vicissitudes caused by sin and unbelief.

the Lord and will come when the conditions are right.¹ If the conditions are not right, the Parousia will not come. The *adventus* (that which grows out of the past) will dovetail with the *futurum* (what comes from the other side) (Moltmann 1996:25). The *futurum* is not some 'inevitable' and static event, but conditional and flexible, for the theological reciprocity between the Parousia judgment and the condition of the world requires a contingency and conditioning. In the light of OT eschatology, the Parousia is not a rigidly predetermined isolated event, but *a flexible and assured future event that will arrive as the response of God to the condition of the world at that time*. Understanding how all the previous days-of-the-Lord worked, helps us understand this great Day-of-the-Lord.

Theological justification for the non-fulfillment of anticipated prophecies is a part of the biblical tradition. A paradoxical tension is prevalent in both testaments, with a 'theodicy' developing concurrently with the experience of Israel. According to Bauckham (1980:5) and Dunn (1996b:154), Habakkuk 2:3 was the *locus classicus* in this theodicy during the ITP. There it is noted that God has a sovereign 'appointed time' and that the ultimate fulfillment of the prophecies 'will not be late according to the timescale which God has determined' (Bauckham:6). The Apocalypse of Baruch draws on this (Bauckham:14-19) and ascribes the imminence to the righteousness of God and the delay to the long-suffering of God. The classical Rabbinic debate between Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus and Rabbi Joshua ben Hanachiah (Cullmann 1961:47; Bauckham 1980:10-14; Rabali 1992:222-230) was a debate over these very issues: whether Israel's sins were responsible for the delay (Eliezer) or whether it was due to the sovereign purpose of God (Joshua).² In a certain sense, this debate is the Rabbinic equivalent of the Calvinistic and Arminian debate, where the debaters are struggling to integrate both human responsibility and divine sovereignty into the workings out of God's purposes.³

¹ Cullmann (1963:157-158) has shown how the 'Son of Man' *logia* reveal that the primary eschatological function of the coming of the Son of Man is that of judgment. Christ comes to a world ripe for judgment.

² Rabali, noting its provenance at Jamnia, stated that the issue revolved around the question of whether eschatological redemption had to be merited or not.

³ These issues impinge on one's theological stance. Yet even though God certainly knows the 'calendar date', these texts and the other salvation-historical factors (mission) imply a contingency of timing. A mediating position believes that 'God's sovereign determination takes human affairs into account' (Bauckham 1993:325).

Jeremias (1971) has given attention to this *plasticity* with regard to the temporal aspects of the Parousia in the NT. After noting that Jesus mentioned that God could *shorten* the future time of distress for the sake of the elect (:139-140), that God could hear the request 'let it alone this year also' (Lk 13:6-9) and *lengthen* the period of grace, he concludes that,

Jesus takes into account the possibility that God may rescind his own holy will...[for] God's will is not unalterable...He is not a God to whom it is pointless to pray...Jesus sets God's grace above his holiness. It [prayer] can shorten the time of distress for his people and lengthen the opportunity for the unbelievers to repent (:140).

Dunn (1996b:158) also uses this Lukan text to show that God can repent and change his mind. Further, the focus on prayer for the kingdom to come - Matthew 6:9, Mark 13:18, Luke 11:2 and 18:1-8 - implies that *God can regulate the 'date' of the final Parousia in answer to his people's prayer*.¹ The Paternoster prayer 'bring[s] out the role of the church in the fulfillment of these hopes. God and His people become partakers in bringing these hopes...into full realisation' (Rabali:189). Rabali includes the prayers of 1 Corinthians 16:22, Revelation 8:4 and 22:20 under the same theme.²

Finally, and most essentially, we believe that the NT understanding of the temporal extension and contraction in regards to the period of grace prior to the Day of the Lord is grounded in the theological relationship between the present aspect of the kingdom and its future manifestation. What is already-realised is organically linked to the *when* and the *what* of the yet-to-be-realised kingdom. *The 'not-yet' is determined by the 'now'*. The temporal relation between the two comings of Christ is grounded in the interaction between the present mode and nature of the kingdom and its future nature and mode. Thus Oepke (1977:870) sees the Parousia as 'the definitive manifestation of what has been affected already as an eschatological reality'. To Küng (1968:68), the future Parousia is 'a consummation of something that already exists'. Berkouwer (1981:157) states that 'the last judgment will not appear as another, a second judgment, but will reveal the reality of the crisis of this present existence – *vis-à-vis* Jesus Christ – and raise this reality above all ambiguity and

¹ For the link between the Parousia and the Paternoster, see Rabali 1992:186-190; Nolland 1993a:620; Conzelmann 1960:123-124; Berkouwer 1981:450-453 and Beasley-Murray 1986:142-157. The reality of prayer implies the active, contingent, response of God in answer to the specifics of prayer. If he is not affected by his people's prayers in regards to the coming kingdom, then these Scriptures are meaningless.

² This theme of prayer for the Parousia is also seen in the OT: Is 62:1-9, 63:15-64:12 *et al.*

doubt'. As the present kingdom works its way fully in the church and the world, so it inevitably conditions them; for in the gospel, people are confronted with the kingdom of heaven, the *eschaton*, with God himself.

Torrance (1953) has also expanded upon this correlation between the present form of the kingdom and the future consummative form. According to him, the genius of these two modes is that the breaking in of the kingdom in veiled oblique form is 'to bring men face to face with the last things in crucial decision and yet to leave them room for decision, which could not be if the *eschaton* were wholly realized' (:168). He concludes that the consummation of the workings of the present kingdom 'will therefore at one and the same time mark the end of this world and be the fulfillment and justification of it' (:174). What we have called the extension of the midpoint period, he calls the 'eschatological repetition of the Incarnation' (which he sees enshrined in the sacrament of holy communion (:175)).

These contingency factors are ultimately grounded in the nature of the first form and mode of the kingdom. The present kingdom can 'suffer violence' (Mt 11:12), is equivocal (Mt 11:2-6), veiled (Lk 17:20-21), nondescript (Mt 13), temporally 'frustrated' (Lk 7:30; 19:42) and even 'defeated' (the crucifixion of Christ). Yet once the world is given sufficient exposure to the kingdom in its primary nature, then the final manifestation of the kingdom will occur - being a just response to a world *already exposed and decided in regard to God and his kingdom*. Kümmel (1957), who has also given significant treatment to this theme, brings us to the conclusion of this section with the following words:

The eschatological Day of judgment [the 'not-yet'] will judge a man according to the attitude he has taken up towards Jesus in his present guise [the 'now'], and it is the same Jesus, with whom a man has to establish a relationship in the present, before whom he will have to justify himself in the future (:39).

By God's grace, he has not come first in judgment or with overbearing power. He has come in humility, 'seated on a donkey'. But once this tender grace of God has been extended to all, God will come again, but that time, 'seated on a white horse' and in heavenly splendor.