

The Torah of the Messiah and his two children – Summary

Overview

This study deals with two closely related themes which both can be found in the title.

The expression ‘the two children of the Messiah’ forms a biblically based figure of speech which helps to focus the attention on the two communities that seek the blessing of/in the Messiah. Starting with the biblical basis for this mode of speech the first part of this study deals especially with the legitimate place ‘in Messiah’ of a distinct messianic Jewish community alongside the community of believers from the nations.

The other half of the title, i.e. ‘the Torah of the Messiah’, draws attention to the question what place the Torah has in the life the Messiah Himself wants to live *in* those that are ‘in Messiah’. By looking at this question from this specific perspective this study hopes for a new and fresh understanding that is of relevance for the two communities of His followers. A cluster of shorter studies (the subjects of which have been chosen according to the different phrases which form together 1 Corinthians 1:30-31) deals with different aspects of this complex question. The study closes with a call upon the community of believers from the nations to accept and respect the biblically legitimate special place of the Jewish messianic movement. Also an fresh and thoroughgoing attention for questions related to the theme of the Torah within the life ‘in Messiah’ is being asked for.

Chapter 3 – The two children of the Messiah

In the second chapter of Hebrews a link is being found between Isaiah and his two sons and Messiah Jesus and those that believe and follow Him. Along this line also Paul links the (meaning of the name of the) eldest son of Isaiah to (Jewish) followers of Messiah Jesus.

It is therefore the contention of this study that both sons of Isaiah not only had a token-function in the 8th century C.E. but that they also form a prophetic symbol of the two communities that take shelter ‘in Messiah’. The character and history of these two ‘children of the Messiah’ have in a prophetic way significantly been described in the names of both sons of Isaiah. The name of the youngest son characteristically signifies the ‘robber’-attitude of the believers from the nations (the gentile church). The ‘robber’-life and -thinking of the gentile churches have been contributive in an enormous way to the history that had the Holocaust as its disastrous outcome. A humble recognition and confession of this collective guilt before God and man and a permanent conversion towards a humble attitude of learning from and together with the ‘eldest child of the Messiah’ form the prerequisite and condition sine qua non for a deeper understanding of our life, our ways ‘in Messiah’.

The separate identity of the Jewish messianic community in our times is in the process of formation. This process is a difficult one due to the influence of the gentile perspective on the minds and lives of Jewish believers ‘in Messiah’ on the one hand and the reality of non-messianic Jewry on the other hand.

Although the Scriptures are disclosed only fully ‘in Messiah’, still there is the relation of the Messiah with all Israel. He is standing – though partly unrecognized - in the midst of all Israel. The gentile church does not only need the fellowship in learning and understanding with the messianic Jewish community, but also there is the need of nearness to and learning from the non-messianic part of Israel. There are old treasures to be found in the storehouse (Mat 13:52). Since the existence of Israel is a token of God’s being the Sjomer of Israel (Ps 121), we should be anxious to learn what the God of Israel might want to teach us through the study of Scripture of all Israel.

The double loyalty towards both ‘parts’ of Israel could create tensions in this or that direction. In both cases however it is the faithfulness of God which causes and asks for just this loyalty on our side.

Although the ‘robbing’ character of the youngest child of the Messiah is being stressed in this chapter, there is all reason to confess that the faithfulness of the Lord, the God of Israel, is surpassing even our gentile Christian unfaithfulness. Although there has been much blindness on our side, He has been gracious in manifold ways in the midst of the community of believers from the nations.

Chapter 4 – structure of 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 to be followed

In 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 we find both Jews and gentiles being brought ‘into Messiah’.

Being ‘in Messiah’ seems to be some sort of definition of the goal of the history of salvation. To be given an existence ‘in Messiah’ seems to be not only the way but also the content of God’s salvation.

The structure and content of 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 can be used as the starting point for a series of shorter thematic studies in which the relations between Jews and gentiles ‘in Messiah’, the centrality of the Messiah in the whole of God’s salvation and the place of the Torah ‘in Messiah’, can be studied. The cluster of these studies forms the next chapter.

Chapter 5 – an analysis of the spectrum of the ‘light’ of 1 Corinthians 1:30-31

5.1 – The initiative is in every respect totally God’s. He elects, calls and brings Jew and gentile ‘into His Messiah’. He has to reveal Himself and to grant us revelation. Human pride has caused a lot of misunderstanding and misconduct in the circle of gentile believers regarding God’s faithfulness towards Israel.

5.2 – Jews and gentiles were at that time being brought into Messiah. This has to be understood against the scriptural background of the history of the nations of this planet in respect to its Creator. The scriptural revelation regarding the place of the nations in respect to God has to mold our thinking. Without humble recognition of this revelation we will lack the profound astonishment about the possibility for the nations to enter into a relationship with the God of Israel. The nearness of Israel was granted out of God’s love for and election of Israel. The being ‘afar’ of the nations has to be understood against the background of the revelation given to Israel concerning this subject. The nations without God were without hope. They were ‘not My people’. Through God’s gracious initiative they have the possibility of coming ‘into the Messiah’ and as such into God’s salvation. The flock of the Messiah consists of two herds. Through a whole series of causes gentile churches have lost this view. Replacement theology, anti-Judaist and anti-Semitic tendencies have contributed in creating an interpretative paradigm that ultimately has been contributive towards the Holocaust. This interpretative paradigm is being challenged both from Jewish and Christian quarters. The rise of the Jewish messianic movement contributes also towards a fresh rethinking of fundamental questions, amongst which there is the quest for the legitimate and distinct place of the Jewish messianic community ‘in Messiah’.

5.3 – The ‘theology’ of the New Testament did not originate on a theological drawing table, but stems from the mighty deed of the Lord in the life, death and resurrection of His Messiah Yeshua/Jesus. The Messiah is the essence of God’s salvation and redemption. God’s gracious acting gives human beings a place ‘in (His) Messiah’. A study into the background of the expression ‘in Him/in Messiah/Christ Jesus’ has been done. This study has also dealt with the question if there are any Tenach/ OT contributions in this respect. We come across the reality of the ‘all-in-one’ (corporate personality-type of thinking). The Messiah can be called the second Adam. It could be that the expression ‘in the/His

image' in Gen 1:26-27 contributes to the deep insights of Colossians 1. Also the use of 'seed' and the promise that 'in Abra(ha)m' all nations will be blessed are contributive to the centrality of the Messiah for the salvation of God. Some typological connections are being shown. In this chapter there is also a short survey of Jewish thinking from Tenach/OT and later periods regarding the theme of Jewish expectations regarding the Messiah and the Age to come. Especially the relation of the Messiah to the Torah has received attention. Nowhere can be found the thought that the Messiah would put the Torah to an end.

- 5.4 – The Messiah is the fullness of God's salvation. 1 Corinthians 1:30 speaks in a fourfold way about the content of Gods salvation 'in Messiah'. These four categories form also together the expression of the life the Messiah Himself lives in His followers, i.e. in those who are 'in Him'. In other words: the reality of Galatians 2:20 has been described. The salvation and the new obedience are both created by God! This is fundamental. In this context attention has been drawn to the expression *berit 'am* (Isaiah 42:6; 49:8). It becomes clear that by this expression God's Messiah has been designated as 'the covenant-in-one person'. The Messiah fulfills the covenant in every respect and thereby fulfills the calling of Israel and receives all covenant blessings. When the Messiah Yeshua/Jesus is everything that Gods asks for, being 'in Him' is the only way a new obedience of faith can grow in our lives. There still is nothing to be 'merited' by this obedience of Messiah in His followers. The working of the Spirit of God and His Messiah does not give any reason to pride to Jews and/or gentiles.

Starting from this perspective of the Messiah still living (in His 'children') *His* life of fulfillment of Torah and prophets until the time of restoration of all things, it can be hoped for to find a fresh and more *biblical* way of thinking about questions regarding the place of Torah in the life of both 'children of the Messiah'. Attention is being asked for the specific ways 'in Messiah' of these two communities 'in Messiah/Christ'.

- 5.5 – In this paragraph a study can be found into the decision taken by the apostles in Acts 15. God has brought gentiles 'into Messiah' without prior obedience to the Torah. This act of God forms the basis of the consultations and of the halachic decision as the outcome. Although the formulation of the category of Noachide Commandments is of later date, we find here the influence of the Jewish scriptural based thinking about the relations of the nations to God and His revelation that resulted in a later period in the formulation of the Noachide Commandments.

When gentiles are being brought 'into Messiah' by a new act of God, they are not to be bound by anything that was not already binding upon them. The decision of Acts 15 is seen by some messianic Jewish thinkers/leaders as a minimum. There was and still is the possibility of a voluntary obedience to other commandments. There is the possibility of learning more. When we follow a line of interpretation that is not narrow, we can say that both 'tables of the Law' and the summary of the Torah given by Jesus are present in the decision.

No part of biblical revelation is at any point being discarded in God's salvation-history. To think about a messianic halacha for gentiles is not the same as going back to the period before the election of Abram/Israel. The revelation to Israel comprises also the Adamite and Noachide purposes of God. The purposes of God with gentiles are spoken of in the language of the revelation to Israel. The Messiah for the nations is the Jewish Messiah. We shall have to rethink our attitudes towards and methods of interpretation of the Torah from this perspective. At the end of this paragraph different opinions within the

Jewish messianic movement regarding the place Torah could and/or should have in the lives of gentile-believers are being described.

- 5.6 – The words *wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption* can be seen as a summary of the different aspects of Torah which Messiah has fulfilled. Also they can be seen as a designation of four areas in which the Messiah wants to live His life of obedience in us. There is a series of such summaries to be found in Scripture. In this paragraph these four words are being studied as sketching in outline the way which the Messiah is walking in the life of His two ‘children’. Specific attention is being paid to the possibility of differences in this respect between the two ‘children’ (a double halacha)..
- Wisdom* characterizes the Messiah as being everything that God expected and looked for in His creatures. Also wisdom signifies the life Messiah Yeshua/Jesus wants to live in His ‘children’ by His Spirit. This will be a life of intense attention for the revelation which has been given in Tenach/OT and NT.
- Righteousness* also speaks about the obedience of the Messiah unto God *and* about His obedient life being lived by Himself in His followers. A study in the biblical connotations of the word righteousness has been done. Also attention has been given to a strict biblically based interpretation of texts of the Torah. This interpretation has to reckon with the possibility that by the mighty act of God in the coming, life, death and resurrection of His Messiah texts from the Torah appear in a new light. As an example: the phrase “ all *your* days” in Deut 23:6 can be seen as the counterpart of the ‘days of the Messiah’. In *His* days things which are forbidden in Deut 23:1-8 will be allowed (blessing for eunuchs, and for Moab and Ammon, cf Is 56 and Jer 48:47 and 49:6). A detailed study of the Torah in the community of both ‘children of the Messiah’ can show in unexpected ways the Torah to be today still the Torah of the Messiah. Study concentrated on the theme of righteousness can create a strong bond between both ‘children’ since being brought ‘into Messiah’ means becoming partakers in the calling of Israel. And although that calling is much more, it certainly also comprises the calling of Adam and Noah and their descendants (cf Jewish thinking about God reaffirming at Sinai also the precepts given to mankind up to that moment.)
- Sanctification* again speaks about the sanctification of the Messias unto God *and* about the sanctification by the Messiah of our lives. He Himself is the sanctification which He Himself wants to work out in our existence-in-Him. Regarding the sanctification of our lives we will discover that here more of a ‘double halacha’ can, will and may be found. Some study has been done in the areas of *sanctification of the Name* (commandments relating to the humble service of the One God and to idol worship), *sanctification in ministry* (commandments relating to sacrificial service, prayer, the Word of God and laws relating to ‘blood’), *sanctification of time* (festive calendar, shabbat, rhythm of day and night), sanctification of life (circumcision, sexuality, commandments relating to purity and unpurity), *sanctification unto communion with God* (fellowship with the joys, sorrows and suffering of God and his Messiah, cf Jer 45 and Col 1:24).
- Redemption*. Also in this word the meaning of the Messiah *for* us and *in* us is being described. The Messiah is in Himself the most complete fulfillment of the calling of Israel. By His obedience and fulfilling of the whole of Torah and prophets He has received from God all blessings promised to Israel. As *partakers* in His life we are entitled to taste the first fruits of the redemption He brought about. His redemption comprises the overcoming of sin and death, but also the return to the land and restoration of Israel. Thinking and speaking along this line of covenantal fulfillment by the Messiah it becomes possible to speak also in Messiah-related terms about the return and restoration (cf the Messiah as *berit ‘am* in Is 49:8-26). The Messiah gives his ‘children’ a

share in His ministry of redemption. This is a costly way to go! *Partakers* we may be in His *ministry towards Israel* (zionism, facilitating aliyah and all sorts of ministries of compassion as expression of His working!). Also we are called to be *partakers in His ministry of the jubilee-year* (by His sacrifice the jubilee-year has been inaugurated). Now He becomes a 'multitude' (the restoration of Israel and the multitude from all nations, cf Lev 26:9 and Is 53:10-11). *Partakers* we become also *in His ministry of reconciliation*. This ultimate goal of reaching out to the end of the earth has been the purpose of the calling of Israel. Also the *ministry of renewing/renewal* is a road the Messiah wants to go in us and through us. *Healing* and *deliverance* are two other aspects of the redemption the Messiah has brought about and wants to bring about through our lives. The healing is the blessing granted to this obedient 'Israel-in-One' (cf the touching of the tzitzit, Luk 8:44). The ministry of healing and deliverance is Torah-fulfilling and also a Torah-blessing. *Partakers* may both 'children' be in this respect too. The *ministry* of the Messiah is also directed towards *unity* (as the counterpart of Gen 11). Our calling is to call all peoples of the earth to seek the blessing 'in Abraham's seed', and to partake in His *ministry of blessing*.

5.7 – No merits are to be gained because the Messiah is all that God asks and looks for in our lives. His giving the Messiah is His sovereign act of grace. This orientation towards the honor and glory of God is central in all of Scripture.

Chapter 6 - a call upon the gentile churches

At the end of this study it will not be a surprise that I call upon the churches from the nations to give the biblical message of the 'two children' the attention it deserves. I call upon the gentile church to recognize and give due honor and its legitimate place to the Jewish messianic movement (with all its differences) as the eldest 'child of the Messiah'. Prerequisites are a humble recognition of the 'robbing attitude and behavior' of the youngest 'child', and a confession of this guilt before God and man. This priestly humbling under this collective guilt *and* under the guilt towards the whole of Israel is not to be seen as a foregoing phase but should be the atmosphere we live in and from. I plead for a fellowship of the two 'children' as being an expression of the closing verses of Ephesians 3.

In the process of seeking this new mutual fellowship it will be of the utmost importance that no impression will be created of the Jewish messianic movement as a new 'horse of Troy' in which the robber-nations have hidden themselves! This will be of the utmost importance. This is essential for our relations with *all* Israel.

Further I plead for a renewed study of and attention for the Torah of the Messiah along the lines I have described above. This will have to be a study along strictly biblical lines of interpretation. The learning process will have to be a process embedded in the fellowship of the two 'children' of the Messiah. But since God and the Messiah have not abandoned Israel as a whole but have been active in guarding its continuing existence among the nations we should also be open to learning from Israel as a whole.

This whole process of learning should lead to the seeking of the guidance of the Spirit of God in regard to questions of reformation of practices and modes of thinking which have evolved in the circle of the 'youngest child'. The history of two thousand year of alienation from God's purposes is a fact. The question of what the Lord asks from us is not something that can be easily and lightly decided upon.

May the Lord, God of Israel, use this study for His work.

Edjan Westerman, January 2005