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IN MESSIAH

Messiah Discourse in Ancient Judaism
and “In Christ” Language in Paul

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New Testament and Christian Origins
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This is for Andrea.

neque aquae multae neque flumina
Declaration

This is to certify that the work contained within has been written by me and is entirely my own work. No part of this thesis has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

J. Thomas Hewitt
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Abstract

Modern interpreters of Paul, confronted with the ubiquitous and enigmatic phrase “in Christ,” have generally ignored “messiah” as a determinative category for explaining the idiom. This is due in part to a scholarly tradition which holds that Paul did not use χριστός with its conventional sense of “messiah.” However, recent scholarship on early messianology, emphasizing the creative interpretation of scripture in the production of messiah texts, has found that Paul’s usage follows the conventions of ancient Jewish messiah language. Drawing upon this revisionist model, I argue that Paul’s use of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ and its variants is explicable in terms of his messianic re-appropriation of authoritative literary traditions. Put differently, Paul’s “in Christ” language is an innovation that nevertheless follows the customs of ancient Jewish messiah speculation. Chapter one, recounting modern treatments of “participationism” and associated language in Paul, illustrates a virtually uniform neglect of messiahship in describing his “in Christ” language. Chapter two reviews the rise of revisionist accounts of ancient Jewish messiah language which eschew the totalizing concept of “the messianic idea” and emphasize instead linguistic conventions common to messiah texts: the creative re-appropriation of scripture, the reuse of messiah syntagms in new literary contexts, and the frequent recourse to a relatively small pool of literary sources to generate conceptions of messiahship. Chapter three, a study of Paul’s messianic interpretation of the promises concerning Abraham’s seed, concludes that the phraseology “in Christ” derives from the Jewish scriptural words “in your seed,” and that the use of the idiom to denote Christ’s instrumentality in God’s actions and the identification of people as believers arises from this tradition. Chapter four, a study of Paul’s messianic interpretation of the victory of the Danielic heavenly man, concludes that Paul’s concept of solidarity with the messiah is based on that between Daniel’s “one like a son of man” and the people of God and is often expressed with the phrase “in Christ.” Finally, chapter five is a two-part catalog of “in Christ” language in Paul’s letters, part one consisting of a syntactical analysis of every instance and part two a conceptual analysis of every instance in light of the findings of chapters three and four. In sum, Paul’s “in Christ” language, like ancient Jewish
messiah language generally, is the product of its author’s creative interpretative enterprise to understand and explain his messiah.
In the New Testament, in the letters written by the apostle Paul, the expression “in Christ” appears frequently. Despite being familiar both to scholars of Christianity and to Christians, the phrase is unusual when considered in its original historical context. In Koine Greek (the original language of the New Testament), just as in English, it is unusual for a person to be the object of the preposition “in.” Also, there are no texts that we know of that are older than Paul’s letters and that use the phrase “in Christ.” These factors raise questions about how Paul developed this new turn of phrase and what it means. Scholars have typically been more interested in the second question than the first. But this thesis answers the first question (How did Paul develop the expression “in Christ”?) in order to better answer the second (What does it mean?). I go about this by looking at the phrase “in Christ” from a new angle that has been neglected by other scholars. Specifically, even though the word “Christ” is not actually another name of Jesus but instead means “messiah,” most scholars ignore messiahship when discussing the phrase “in Christ” (or more accurately, “in messiah”). As it happens, though, there were other Jews around Paul’s time who also wrote about figures they called “messiah.” These other Jewish writings have certain characteristics in common that can help explain Paul’s unusual manner of speaking. These traits have to do with the way authors creatively re-used Jewish scriptural language. While each text developed a distinctive way of speaking about its messiah (for Paul, the phrase “in Christ”), they all drew from the same pool of words and phrases to develop those ways of speaking. Like jazz, every improvisation was different, but the “notes” and “scales” from which they were built were the same. When it comes to Paul, he developed the expression “in Christ” from his interpretation of two parts of Jewish scripture: the promise to Abraham that God would bless all nations “in his seed,” and a vision in the book of Daniel where God’s people experience the same things as a figure called the “son of man.” Paul read these scriptures as prophecies about the messiah. So instead of saying “in your seed,” Paul says “in Christ” to describe the way God blesses the nations and to designate the people who belong to him. And instead of God’s people experiencing the same things as the “son of man,” they experience the same
things as Christ, and they do so “in Christ.” In conclusion, Paul’s phrase “in Christ” is unusual, but its development and meaning can be explained by analyzing Paul’s messianic interpretation of Jewish scriptures.
Abbreviations

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Parts of chapters one and three have already appeared in a different form in J. Thomas Hewitt and Matthew V. Novenson, “Participationism and Messiah Christology in Paul,” in *God and the Faithfulness of Paul: A Critical Examination of the Pauline Theology of N. T. Wright*, ed. Christoph Heilig, J. Thomas Hewitt, and Michael F. Bird, WUNT 2 413 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016). That material has been reprinted here in revised form by permission of the publisher.
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INTRODUCTION

According to Codex Alexandrinus, Paul in Rom 3:22 did not write διὰ πίστεως ᾿Ιησοῦ χριστοῦ but διὰ πίστεως ἐν χριστῷ ᾿Ιησοῦ.\(^1\) What is interesting about this variant, for the purposes of this study, is not the scribe’s interpretation of the genitive relationship in the received text, but rather the care he takes with word order. Whatever his reasons for making the emendation, the scribe seems to have known that simply inserting ἐν into the phrase would result in the characteristically un-Pauline expression ἐν ᾿Ιησοῦ—a phrase which never appears in the undisputed Pauline epistles.\(^2\) In an apparent homage to Paul’s idiolect, the scribe also inverts the words ᾿Ηησοῦ χριστοῦ so the prepositional phrase reads ἐν χριστῷ ᾿Ιησοῦ.

The significance of this would perhaps be lost on many modern readers of Paul, who, upon hearing the English transliteration “Christ,” hear only a second name of the man Jesus of Nazareth. What difference, then, would it make that Paul routinely wrote “in Christ” or “in Christ Jesus” but never wrote simply “in Jesus”?\(^3\) But of course the Greek noun χριστός also translates as “messiah,” which is something other than a name and is itself a transliteration of the Jewish scriptural word מְשַׁחְתָּם, “anointed one.”\(^4\) Paul, when using an expression built with the preposition ἐν and a personal object referring to Jesus, habitually

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1. See Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 388. The variant is not recorded in the apparatus of NA\(^{28}\).

2. It appears once in the disputed epistles, in Eph 4:21.

3. Paul also wrote “in the lord” roughly about half as often as he wrote “in Christ.” Cf. Rom 14:14; 16:2, 8, 11, 12, 13, 22; 1 Cor 4:17; 7:22, 39; 9:1, 2; 11:11; 15:58; 16:19; 2 Cor 2:12; Gal 5:10; Phil 1:14; 2:19, 24, 29; 3:1; 4:1, 2, 4, 10; 1 Thess 3:8; 4:1; 5:12; Phlm 1:16, 20 (thirty-two instances, though in some cases it could perhaps be debated whether the referent of κύριος is Jesus or God).

4. Χριστός is a common noun, not a proper noun, and it is used by Paul as an honorific. On this see Matthew V. Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
chose that scriptural word “messiah” as that object. My aim in the present study is to elucidate the import of this linguistic custom.

The Problem Stated

The problem can be stated simply: Modern interpreters of Paul have almost universally ignored the category “messiah” when describing Paul’s use of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ even though χριστός means “messiah.” A survey of these interpreters suggests there are at least two reasons for this. The first is a fixation on the word ἐν. What could Paul have meant by writing that something was done “in” Christ or even that someone was “in” Christ? Discussions of Paul’s “mysticism,” or doctrine of “union,” or concept of “participation” have continued apace sheerly by force of Paul’s seemingly odd use of the preposition ἐν with a personal object. The second and more significant reason for neglecting messiahship in accounts of Paul’s language is a longstanding assumption that Paul had evolved beyond any interest in it. Given this assumption, χριστός in Paul could not really have meant “messiah” because Paul’s ideas looked nothing like messianism. This, however, depends on the problematic premise that “messianism” in antiquity is an identifiable ideology that can be weighed in the scales with Paul’s christology and found wanting. Given the choice, then, between attending to Paul’s language or speculating about Paul’s ideological commitments, modern interpreters have typically chosen the latter.

This has created a methodological paradox in treatments of Paul’s “in Christ” language. Scholars have remained simultaneously interested in what Paul was saying yet predisposed against paying attention to what he was saying. And thus the cottage industry of research on Paul’s “in Christ” language has become self-sustaining. This is why, even after a century and a half of modern biblical research, Stanley Stowers explains that we still “need a discourse or discourses that provide the conditions of intelligibility for the language of

5. See ch. 1.
participation” (by which he means primarily the expression “in Christ”). This need is bound to remain unfulfilled as long as we overlook the foremost clue as to the discourse in which Paul was participating—the word χριστός, “messiah.” Alternatively, my thesis is that Paul’s use of “in Christ” language is part of a broader phenomenon of ancient Jewish messiah discourse, and that Paul’s development and use of the expression are accounted for by features of this discourse. In other words, I propose that ἐν χριστῷ means “in messiah.”

This claim is simple, but discerning its ramifications is not. I am not proposing that Paul was, after all, heir to a pre-formed messianic ideology to which his various uses of the word χριστός refer. That is to say, I do not think there was an extant messianic theology in Paul’s period that explains his use of “in Christ” language. Recent research on messianism in antiquity has demonstrated that there was no such thing. Instead, what we have is a variety of ancient messiah texts whose commonality consists not in a uniform conception of messiahship, but rather the markedly innovative interpretation of scripture in accordance with the varying historical realities of each author. This is the model of ancient messiah discourse I will use here. Accordingly, Paul may be understood as a participant in a recognizable Jewish interpretative enterprise, but a participant whose manner of speaking and ideas—like those of all the other participants—were nevertheless distinctive in light of the particularities surrounding the life of his messiah. Thus, Paul’s “in Christ” language may be said to be both conventional and innovative.


7. See ch. 2.
Methodology

The aim of this study is historical description, not theological synthesis. It is therefore to be distinguished from treatments of the Christian doctrine of “union with Christ.” Accordingly, I use the conventional linguistic, literary, and historical-inferential tools commonly deployed in the discipline of biblical studies. Additionally, within the general category of historical description I am specifically interested in Paul’s language rather than themes or motifs thought to be evinced in his writings. This study, then, is also different from research on participatory motifs in the Pauline epistles. Furthermore, my object of inquiry is neither ἐν-phrases generally nor χριστός-phrases generally. It is specifically the phrase ἐν χριστῷ and its variants. My defense for this decision is threefold: First, the study would grow too large if I attempted to conduct a thorough analysis of Paul’s “in Christ” language as a specimen of ancient Jewish messiah discourse in addition to conducting a comparison with lexically similar phrases within the corpus Paulinum. Second, such comparisons of Pauline expressions have already been undertaken by others, but the framework of messiah discourse as interpretative-linguistic phenomenon has been utterly neglected. And third, as concerns Paul’s overall use of “messiah” language, ἐν χριστῷ is the most frequently occurring syntagm built with the word χριστός after the appellative combinations Ἰησοῦς and Ἰησοῦς χριστός. In other words, aside from Paul’s axiomatic messianic designation of Jesus, “in Christ” is the thing Paul most frequently said about his messiah. It is therefore worthy of its own analysis.

8. Therefore, while surveys of phrases such as ἐν κυρίῳ or σὺν χριστῷ would no doubt be fruitful, they are outside the purview of this study.

9. See ch. 1.

10. Χριστός is Paul’s preferred designation for Jesus. The word occurs some 269 times in the undisputed epistles compared to 142 uses of Ἰησοῦς and 188 uses of κύριος (not all of which refer to Jesus). The combinations χριστός Ἰησοῦς and Ἰησοῦς χριστός occur 106 times altogether. There are 56 instances of ἐν (τῷ) χριστῷ.
As a contribution to an ongoing scholarly conversation, this study uses as evidence for Paul the seven epistles which are widely considered to be of undisputed Pauline authorship: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, and Philemon.\(^{11}\) The data of primary interest within these writings are Paul’s sixty-three uses of “in Christ” language, by which I mean the expressions ἐν χριστῷ, ἐν τῷ χριστῷ, ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, and ἐν αὐτῷ where the pronoun’s antecedent is χριστός.\(^{12}\)

Additionally, in describing the pertinent ancient literature I use several phrases containing the word “messiah.” Given the extensive secondary literature devoted to the study of “messianism” in antiquity, my terminology bears explaining. When speaking of “messiah texts” I mean texts that use the words מֶשֶׁחַ, χριστός, unction, or other translation equivalencies. I do not mean texts about eschatological figures sometimes considered to be “messianic” but never called “messiah.” The authors of messiah texts engaged in “messiah speculation”—that is, the activity of characterizing a figure or figures called “messiah” and describing events, activities, and implications pertaining to that figure.\(^{13}\) In so doing, these

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11. For the NT I follow the Greek text of Kurt Aland, et al., eds. Novum Testamentum Graece, 28th ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2013). The one exception to this is that unlike NA\(^{28}\) I do not capitalize the noun χριστός. On this note Giorgio Agamben, The Time that Remains: A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans, trans. Patricia Dailey (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), 16–17: “The distinction between Χριστός (capitalized) and χριστός as an appellation was introduced by modern editors. Not only do the most ancient manuscripts fail to distinguish between capitalized and noncapitalized words, they also write χριστός—as with other nomina sacra such as θεός, κύριος, πνεῦμα, Ιησοῦς, and so on—in an abbreviated form … But, in the preface to the Nestle-Aland edition, we read ‘χριστός will be written in lower case when it signals “the official designation” (Amstbezeichnung) of the Messiah …, and in upper case when it has clearly become a proper name …. The real difficulty with this more or less conscious transgression of the most basic philological principles, lies in determining this self-evident ‘when.’”


13. On the few occasions I employ the word “messianism” for the sake of concision, it is synonymous with “messiah speculation.”
authors participated in “messiah discourse” understood as the linguistic and literary conventions common to communication about messiahs. As we will see, the most prominent of these conventions is “messianic interpretation” by which I mean the reading of an antecedent scriptural text as pertaining to a “messiah” (regardless of whether that antecedent text is itself actually a “messiah text”).\textsuperscript{14} Finally, it is possible to describe an ancient author’s “messianology.” This does not refer to widespread beliefs about a messiah, but rather the sum total of what one given author writes about a messiah. As concerns Paul, “messianology” is not synonymous with “christology,” which typically refers to all of Paul’s beliefs about Jesus. Rather, messianology is what Paul believes about the messiah, whom he identifies as Jesus.\textsuperscript{15}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Conceptual Models}
\end{center}

My overarching conceptual model is that I count Paul’s letters as ancient Jewish literature. Ancient “Judaism”—the historical, cultural, religious, and literary factors pertaining to ancient Jews—is therefore a context for Paul, not a “background.”\textsuperscript{16} Thus, for this study the analysis of other Jewish literature roughly contemporary to Paul’s letters is valuable, not primarily for pinpointing linguistic “parallels” or ostensible conceptual “parallels,”\textsuperscript{17} and not primarily for tracing the purported history of a tradition that Paul appears to espouse. Rather, contextualizing Paul within Judaism is valuable for describing shared discourses in which Paul participates, and by which aspects of his writings are elucidated—messiah discourse in

\textsuperscript{14.} See ch. 3.

\textsuperscript{15.} “Messianology” is therefore synonymous with the tautological expression “messiah christology.”


this case. Nevertheless, two caveats are in order: First, this study will propose that certain antecedent scriptural texts shaped Paul’s messianology. That, however, can be said of any messiah text in and around the first century CE. Second, this study is primarily interested in re-describing Paul, not ancient Jewish messiah discourse generally. In itself, however, that stated purpose does not devalue other Jewish literature; it merely focuses the object of inquiry.

Outline

Chapter one, recounting modern treatments of “participationism” and associated language in Paul, illustrates a virtually uniform neglect of messiahship in describing his “in Christ” language. Chapter two traces the rise of revisionist accounts of ancient messiah texts which eschew “the messianic idea” as an explanatory category and emphasize instead the interpretative-linguistic conventions common to ancient messiah discourse. Chapters three and four explore Paul’s participation in that discourse with special reference to his use of “in Christ” language. Chapter three traces Paul’s messianic interpretation of scriptural traditions concerning Abraham’s seed, and chapter four assesses his messianic interpretation of the Danielic “one like a son of man.” Finally, chapter five is a two-part examination of every instance of “in Christ” language in light of the findings of chapters three and four, part one consisting of a syntactical analysis and part two a conceptual analysis.
THE MODERN PROBLEM OF “IN CHRIST” IN PAUL

I have claimed in the introduction that in some important respects Paul’s “in Christ” language has been misconstrued in modern scholarship. Whatever the causes of this, a lack of attention to the phrase has not been one of them. On the contrary, it rarely goes unmentioned in treatments of Paul and early Christianity. The idiom, however, is very rarely dealt with in its own right. Rather, discussions of it are logged in broader accounts of Paul’s thought, or worse, it is uncritically treated as a cipher for some theological or religio-historical concept.¹ This latter scholarly habit is especially problematic because it confuses Paul’s idiom with various modern constructs thereby distorting the results of historical inquiry. Despite the relatively copious attention given to the phrase, one of the effects of this scholarly habit is a neglect of one of its constituent lexemes, the noun χριστός. Because in modern parlance, scholarly and popular, “Christ” usually simply and uncontroversially denotes Jesus of Nazareth without evoking the meaning “anointed one” or “messiah,” there results a fixation on the preposition ἐν and what it might mean for concepts of “union,” “participation,” or “mysticism.” These are ideas worthy of study, but they are conceptual constructs of a higher order than an ancient author’s manner of speaking. And in this case, however else it might be described, that manner of speaking is consistently messianic.

¹. Note for instance the title of a recent collection of essays, “In Christ” in Paul, the subtitle of which is Explorations in Paul’s Theology of Union and Participation (ed. Michael J. Thate, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and Constantine Campbell, WUNT II 384 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014]). This is a fine anthology, but it contains no substantive discussion of “in Christ” language in the undisputed Pauline epistles.
Nevertheless, modern treatments of Paul’s “in Christ” language, almost without exception, ignore messiahship. I intend the present study as a corrective to this oversight. This is not then a treatment of participation, union, or the like, but rather of one very common example of Paul’s messiah language. Discussions of these more comprehensive topics, however, necessarily entail analyses of relevant language, among which the Pauline idiom “in Christ” is frequently (and perhaps correctly) considered preeminent. It is therefore neither possible nor desirable to pass over such treatments while recounting the modern problem of Paul’s “in Christ” language. This study does do something different, though. While its findings may be pertinent for an understanding of “participation” in Paul, I do not assume that a particular conception of participation is operative in Paul’s thought, nor am I interested in the phrase mainly as it pertains to participation. Rather, I am interested in the phrase as it pertains to messiahship. And as will become evident in what follows, the modern problem of Paul’s “in Christ” language is largely a problem of disinterest in messiahship. This trait has been endemic in the modern, critical study of Paul from its inception, and therefore it is appropriate to begin our survey with the self-designated Herr of the Tübingen School of biblical criticism, Ferdinand Christian Baur.2

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**Into the Age of Mysticism**

Baur is (in)famous for his view that Paul’s letters represent one side of a two-sided dispute between Peter and Paul, that is, between Jewish Christianity and gentile Christianity. This theory is based largely on Baur’s construal of the factions in the Corinthian church, a perspective first laid out in his 1831 article “Die Christuspartei in der korinthischen

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“Gemeinde” and developed in his 1845 *Paulus, der Apostel Jesus Christi.* Baur finds evidence in the Corinthian correspondence not of four factions, but of two—those claiming “ἐγὼ Παύλου, ἐγὼ Ἀπολλῶ” and those declaring “ἐγὼ Κηφᾶ, ἐγὼ χριστοῦ” (1 Cor 1:12). Left with the awkward question of why Paul would oppose a group professing to be Christ’s, Baur leverages the concept of messianism to explain the problem: The members of the Petrine party were Jewish Christians, who, per their Jewishness, were claiming closer association with the messiah than gentile believers enjoyed, and thereby superiority over the gentiles loyal to Paul (and Apollos). Thus, on the problematic nature of the expression ἐγὼ χριστοῦ Baur speculates,

> Among such proud men as these Jewish Christians, would not the presumption arise that Christ, the Messiah, belonged to them alone? Exactly in this manner the presumption did arise …. They called themselves τοὺς τοῦ Χριστοῦ—disciples of Christ—disciples of the Messiah,—or, changing slightly the name, χριστιανοῦς.

According to Baur, such messianic fervor was an issue of contention for Paul because he, confronted with the previously unthinkable notion of a crucified messiah, saw in Jesus’s death “the purification of the Messianic idea.” Baur explains,

> With this death everything that the Messiah might have been as a Jewish Messiah disappeared; through his death, Jesus, as the Messiah, had died to

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Judaism, had been removed beyond his national connexion with it, and placed in a freer, more universal, and purely spiritual sphere.\footnote{Baur, \textit{Paul}, 2:125.}

Paul had thus “passed far beyond” interest in a messiah \textit{katà σάρκα} (2 Cor 5:16).\footnote{Baur, \textit{Paul}, 2:126. On this problematic reading of 2 Cor 5:16 see ch. 3.} Therefore, the Petrine party’s claim of allegiance to the messiah—or, as Baur puts it, “the idea of the \textit{Χριστοῦ ἐἶναι}”—is at the root of the “dispute between the Apostle and his opponents.”\footnote{Baur, \textit{Paul}, 1:297. Here, Baur is attuned to the meaning of \textit{χριστός}. See also 1:277–278: “On this account also [Peter’s party’s] designation, evidently intentionally chosen, was \textit{τοῦ Χριστοῦ} not \textit{τοῦ Ἰησοῦ or τοῦ κυρίου}.”}

In drawing up this historical reconstruction, Baur gives a brief but telling analysis of the genesis of Paul’s “in Christ” language. Having contended that “the \textit{Χριστοῦ ἐἶναι}” is the rub for Paul, Baur infers that

> [t]he peculiar circumstance from which the \textit{ἐἶναι ἐν Χριστῷ} must have been derived … was not so much the earthly and national appearance of Jesus … but rather the death of Jesus …. That which essentially distinguishes the national Jewish Messiah from the Christ of the true Christian consciousness, is the sufferings and death of Christ.”\footnote{Baur, \textit{Paul}, 1:283–284.}

In other words, Paul’s notion of being “in Christ” is a one-upping of his opponents notion of being “of Christ”—it is “the true \textit{Χριστοῦ ἐἶναι}.”\footnote{Baur, \textit{Paul}, 1:284. Note also 2:176: “[t]he name \textit{χριστιανοῖ} … expresses nothing but the external side of this relation … but the \textit{όντες ἐν Χριστῷ} … expresses its most intimate principle.”} In this, Baur severs Paul’s “in Christ” language from the category of the “Jewish messiah,” and indeed the phrase “in Christ”—despite its plain meaning—is taken as a rejection of messiahship. Grammatically speaking, Baur fixates on the preposition \textit{ἐν} (on the assumption “in” is better than “of”) and ignores its object, \textit{χριστός}. This state of affairs would obtain in treatments of the idiom for more than a generation to come.

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8. Baur, \textit{Paul}, 1:297. Here, Baur is attuned to the meaning of \textit{χριστός}. See also 1:277–278: “On this account also [Peter’s party’s] designation, evidently intentionally chosen, was \textit{τοῦ Χριστοῦ} not \textit{τοῦ Ἰησοῦ or τοῦ κυρίου}.”
10. Baur, \textit{Paul}, 1:284. Note also 2:176: “[t]he name \textit{χριστιανοῖ} … expresses nothing but the external side of this relation … but the \textit{όντες ἐν Χριστῷ} … expresses its most intimate principle.”
The work of Adolf Deissmann exemplifies this. Deissmann has been dubbed a “discoverer” of the Pauline concept of participation in Christ, an epithet earned by his theory of “Christ-mysticism” set forth in his 1909 Uppsala lectures and published the following year as Paulus: En kultur- och religionshistorisk skiss. There Deissmann builds his account of Paul’s thought around “the primitive Pauline watchword ‘in Christ,’” a “formula” which “is meant vividly and mystically” and is the “characteristic expression of his Christianity.” Deissmann arrives at this perspective in two steps. First, leaning on the inverse expression “God revealed his son in me” (Gal 1:16), Deissmann finds in Paul’s Damascus road experience the catalyzing inception of his mystical thought. And second, perceiving in Paul a “Hellenistic-mystical tendency of the experience of Christ,” Deissmann finds in the identification of κύριος with πνεῦμα in 2 Cor 3:17 the key to understanding Paul’s idea of mystical communion. “Christ is Spirit; therefore He can live in Paul and Paul in Him. … Just as the air of life, which we breathe, is ‘in’ us and fills us, and yet we at the same time live in this air and breathe it, so it is also with the Christ-intimacy of the Apostle Paul: Christ in him, he in Christ.”

Deissmann’s explanation of Paul’s “in Christ” language entails functionally re-defining χριστός as something other than “messiah”—in this case, Deissmann conception of the πνεῦμα of Hellenistic mysticism. Whereas for Baur, Paul left behind “the national Jewish messiah” in favor of “the Christ of the true Christian consciousness,” for Deissmann, “[t]he

spiritual Christ was able to do what a dogmatic Messiah could not have done."18 Accordingly, Deissmann throughout sees Paul as a religious and linguistic innovator. His Damascus road apocalypse was “the basal mystical experience of a religious genius.”19 And having thus been “thrown open to creative energy,”20 “Paul himself created the significant formulæ” of his mysticism.21 Following suit, Deissmann himself introduces two nova into the analysis of Paul’s language, one grammatical and one lexical. Again like Baur, Deissmann’s attention is drawn to the genitive χριστοῦ and the preposition ἐν, which he dubs the “mystical genitive” and the “mystical in.”22 He finds it necessary to coin these new categories because Paul’s usage is “wholly peculiar,” and, “[w]ithout fear of schoolmasterish criticism,” he is unrepentant of doing so.23 As for his critics, Deissmann avers, “[t]here is nothing to prevent them making merry if they like, but I cannot give them the feeling for language which they lack. It is something one either has or has not.”24 Deissmann’s rare grasp of language, to his mind, renders his description of Paul unassailable.

This perspective is rooted in Deissmann’s 1892 Die neutestamentliche Formel „in Christo Jesu,” a philological treatment of the phrase “in Christ.”25 Despite conceding there is no Koine parallel to Paul’s use of ἐν with personal singular dative,26 Deissmann sets out to demonstrate that Paul’s syntax is not influenced by “Semitic Greek,”27 that is, the Greek of

20. Deissmann, Paul, 152.
22. Deissmann, Paul, 163 and 297 respectively (italics original).
23. Deissmann, Paul, 162, 162n1.
26. Deissmann, Die neutestamentliche Formel, 93.
27. Deissmann, Die neutestamentliche Formel, 66.
the LXX. Thus, although Deissmann would presumably concede Paul’s indebtedness to the Jewish scriptures in Greek for the lexeme χριστός, the idioms in which the word appears are not to be attributed to Jewish literature. No, Paul “had no need to squint at a template like an anxious pedant” for he “was not so foolish as to offer the gospel to the Greeks in an un-Greek garment.” Instead, Paul displays “a delicate sense of the distinct pithiness [individuelle Prägnanz] of particular prepositions” as opposed to the “‘arbitrariness and imprecision [Willkür und Unsicherheit] in the use of prepositions,’ one of the ‘characteristic marks of Semitic vulgarism.’” And as for the phrase ἐν χριστῷ, Paul “ist der Bildner der Formel.”

In sum, by separating out the syntax of the LXX from its glossary and by emphasizing Paul’s creative genius, Deissmann is able to unfetter Paul’s “in Christ” language almost completely from his Jewish literary heritage despite the fact the use of χριστός to refer to a person is a linguistic phenomenon of distinctively Jewish, and indeed Septuagintal provenance. And in the end, Deissmann even discards Paul’s “Semitic” vocabulary, glossing χριστός with the putative πνεῦμα of Hellenistic mysticism. Deissmann thus deploys philological and religio-historical theory to lift Paul’s “in Christ” language out of Jewish messiah discourse and embed it in invented discourse of Pauline “Christ-mysticism.”

A similar view is taken by the philologist Richard Reitzenstein. Crossing disciplinary lanes, Reitzenstein delivered a lecture to the Clergy Theological Association of Alsace-

32. Deissmann, *Die neutestamentliche Formel*, 70.
33. See LSJ, s.v. χριστός and Walter Grundmann, “χρίω,” *TDNT* 9:493–496 (esp. 495). A TLG search confirms only two instances antedating the LXX, both of the neuter χριστόν, meaning “ointment” (Aeschylus, *Prom.* 480 [sixth to fifth century BCE] and Euripides, *Hipp.* 516 [fifth century BCE]).
Lorraine which, along with various “elucidations,” would comprise his 1910 *Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen*.34 There Reitzenstein argues that Paul’s “entire distinctive train of thought” as well as his specific language arise from “the spirit of Hellenistic mystery-religions.”35 By way of biographical explanation for this, Reitzenstein proposes that after Paul’s Damascus road experience and during his subsequent excursion into Arabia (Gal 1:17), he joined a Hellenistic community of believers where he received formative training.36 In particular, it was during this period that Paul’s parochial messianism evolved into a belief in a universal redeemer of humankind.37 That this advancement is attributable to the influence of Hellenism is something Reitzenstein says he “would have to presuppose, even if the history of religions did not demonstrate to me the possibility, and even the probability.”38 Indeed, Paul’s vision of a worldwide redeemer is regarded by Reitzenstein as “the greatest and most significant impact for world history of the ancient mystery-religions.”39


It was not just this universalist (read: non-messianic) concept of a redeemer, however, which Paul adopted from the Hellenistic community. He also undertook “a systematic study of their religious language and of the world as they perceived it.”⁴⁰ This primarily refers to a concatenation of terminology within which Reitzenstein locates Paul’s statements about πνεῦμα.⁴¹ Like Deissmann, Reitzenstein draws on this notion of πνεῦμα to explain a constituent part of Paul’s “unitary train of ideas” which he believes could not have “arise[n] simultaneously and yet independently” from the mystery religions—that is, the interchangeability of “in Christ” and “Christ in me.”⁴² Thus Reitzenstein: “I note the remarkable fact that the ideas of ‘entering into God’ and of receiving into oneself God or the spirit or the holy spirit are just as readily alternated in the pagan literature … as are the ideas of ‘being in Christ’ and of having Christ in oneself in the thought of Paul.”⁴³ In sum, the notion of “being in Christ” is comprehensible against the backdrop of Hellenistic mysticism and the protognostic myth of a universal redeemer, but not that of a Jewish messiah.⁴⁴

One of the dedicatees of Reitzenstein’s third edition of Die hellenistischen Mysterienreligionen was Wilhelm Bousset,⁴⁵ whose 1913 Kyrios Christos is one of the school’s most enduring contributions to the study of early Christianity.⁴⁶ There, Bousset argues that the emergence of the cultic worship of Jesus in early Christianity occurred not in

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⁴⁰ Reitzenstein, Hellenistic Mystery-Religions, 536.
⁴¹ Reitzenstein, Hellenistic Mystery-Religions, 87.
⁴² Reitzenstein, Hellenistic Mystery-Religions, 81.
⁴³ Reitzenstein, Hellenistic Mystery-Religions, 71 (italics original); cf. 427.
⁴⁴ On the implausibility of pre-Christian gnostic redeemer myth see Carsten Colpe, Die religionsgeschichtliche Schule: Darstellung und Kritik ihres Bildes vom gnostischen Erlösermythos, FRLANT 60 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1961).
⁴⁵ Reitzenstein, Hellenistic Mystery-Religions, x.
the earliest Palestinian community of Jesus-followers but in the Hellenistic communities of believers. 47 This was catalyzed by the Hellenistic communities’ designation of Jesus as κύριος, a title which, in that cultural milieu, was traditionally ascribed to gods receiving veneration. 48 Additionally, argues Bousset, the distinction between the Palestinian messianic “Son of Man” and the Hellenistic “Kyrios” was a distinction between absence and presence, determining whether Jesus was an object of expectation or a recipient of worship. Bousset explains:

The *Son of Man* of the primitive community stems from Jewish eschatology and remains an eschatological entity. … the heavens have taken him up until the restoration of all things …. He is the future Messiah who is to come in glory, and the fundamental attitude of his disciples is the fervent expectation of his coming. But the *Kyrios* of the Hellenistic primitive community is a being who is present in the cult and in the worship. 49

For Paul, “out of the future Messiah Jesus, the present cult-hero as Kyrios of his community came into being.” 50 Bousset argues that Paul developed his thought on the basis of this conviction:

*[F]or Paul Christ becomes the supra-terrestrial power which supports and fills with its presence his whole life. And this Christ piety of the apostle is summed up for him in the one great ever recurring formula of ἐν κυρίῳ (Χριστῷ) ἐἶναι.* 51

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51. Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 154. Even if the phrases ἐν κυρίῳ and ἐν χριστῷ are taken to be synonymous, Bousset’s use of brackets in the expression “ἐν κυρίῳ (Χριστῷ) ἐἶναι” is odd (perhaps misleading?) since ἐν χριστῷ is roughly twice as common as ἐν κυρίῳ in the undisputed epistles. This fact alone ought to have cast doubt on Bousset’s hypothesis or at least on the opinion that ἐν χριστῷ aptly summarizes Paul’s κύριος-mysticism.
Thus Bousset, like those discussed above, redefines χριστός as something other than “messiah” in order to explain the “formula” en χριστῷ, and he claims that this redefinition is catalyzed by ideas from Hellenistic mystery-religions rather than conceptions within Jewish tradition.

Bousset’s distinctive variation on this theme is his appeal to the presence of the “Kyrios” in worship, but the sidelining of the influence of Paul’s Jewish literary heritage and his conviction of the messiahship of Jesus is a constant in the proposals surveyed thus far. Bousset of course admits the prevalence of references to Jewish scriptural texts containing the word κύριος in Paul’s writings, but he denies that Paul was influenced by those texts. Instead, the influence ran in the other direction since Paul “only followed an interpretation of the Old Testament which naturally had to be introduced once the connection of the title κύριος to Jesus was fixed.” In other words, Paul was the relatively passive heir of the results of a Hellenistic Kyrios-hermeneutic, and his citations of, and allusions to Jewish texts should not be mistaken as evidence that his Jewish literary heritage was formative in the development of his christology.

The general contours of Bousset’s proposal—that a pre-Christian, Hellenistic, non-Jewish, non-messianic, mystical mythology exerted influence on the development of early christology as evinced, inter alia, in Paul’s writings—may be considered representative of


53. Deissmann, Paul, 125 differs from Bousset on when and where Hellenistic religious influence entered the stream, suggesting it had already occurred in what Bousset calls the “Palestinian primitive community” by means of contact there with the “sediment of primitive cult-religion.” The details of this aside, Deissmann was ahead of his time in questioning a strict boundary between Hellenism and Judaism in antiquity. On this see the seminal study, Martin Hengel, Judentum und Hellenismus: Studien zu ihrer Begegnung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung Palästinas bis zur Mitte des 2 Jh.s v. Chr., WUNT 10 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1973); and the more recent essays in Troels Engberg-Pedersen, ed., Paul Beyond the Judaism/Hellenism Divide (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001).

the religionsgeschichtliche Schule. Despite the ascendency of this approach, however, it did not go unchallenged in its day.

Enter the renowned Alsatian scholar and Nobel laureate, Albert Schweitzer. In his 1930 Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus, Schweitzer retains mysticism as the central tenant of Paulinism, but he sets out to correct what he considers to be a major error common to Deissmann, Reitzenstein, and Bousset—their neglect of Jewish eschatology in accounting for Paul’s thought. Schweitzer admits, “How could it have been expected that the way to the rich fields of Pauline Mysticism should lie through the rugged heights of the Late-Jewish Eschatology?” But finding that hypotheses of Hellenistic influence lead to an impasse, he declares that “there remains nothing for it but to try the so unpromising road through” those rugged heights of Judaism.

As Schweitzer sees it, one of the obstacles of Jewish eschatology that must be surmounted to explain mysticism is the Jewish deity’s “transcendental character.” He explains, though, that “as a matter of fact what we find in Paul is not God-mysticism but Christ-mysticism.” In framing the issue this way, Schweitzer sidesteps a problem that dogs his contemporaries. Because they explain Paul’s thought on analogy with a putative Hellenistic mysticism involving deities (a “Kyrios”) or divine substances (“Pneuma”) while also attributing to Paul a Jewish sensitivity to the transcendence of the deity, they must take


56. Albert Schweitzer, Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus (Tübingen: Mohr, 1930); ET Schweitzer, Mysticism of Paul. Famously, Schweitzer designates justification a Nebenkrater in the rim of the larger caldera of Pauline mysticism (Schweitzer, Mystik, 220), thereby anticipating a major debate in Pauline studies of the last four decades. This issue was made current especially by Sanders’s retrieval of Schweitzer, on which see below. On the history of Schweitzer’s engagement with Paul see James Carleton Paget, “Schweitzer and Paul,” JSNT 33 (2011): 223–256.

57. See Schweitzer, Mysticism of Paul, 26–36.

58. Schweitzer, Mysticism of Paul, 36.

59. Schweitzer, Mysticism of Paul, 37.

60. Schweitzer, Mysticism of Paul, 36.

61. Schweitzer, Mysticism of Paul, 37.
great pains to distinguish between Pauline mysticism and a Hellenistic notion of unio mystica. In the end, the purported analogy between Paul’s mysticism and that of his Hellenistic context breaks down under the enormous weight of Jewish monotheism. Schweitzer, however, circumvents this self-defeating explanation by never drawing the analogy in the first place and looking instead to Jewish messianic conceptions. Thus for Schweitzer, Paul’s χριστός is not “Pneuma” or “Kyrios” but “Christ”—the messiah. Whatever criticisms have been levied against Schweitzer’s project in the century since, there is an attractive linguistic simplicity to its starting point.

Schweitzer proceeds from here by describing what he sees as the messiah myth current in the Jewish eschatology of Paul’s era. The aspect of this belief crucial for Paul is “the preordained union” of the elect with the messiah. This idea is extant, argues Schweitzer, in both the Hebrew prophets (esp. Daniel) and later texts such as 1 Enoch and 4 Ezra. Paul, however, had to reckon with a theretofore unanticipated state of affairs—the coming of the messiah, his death, and the inception of the resurrection of the dead in his resurrection, all before the end-time manifestation of the “Messianic kingdom” of the elect. How could Paul explain this in light of the union of the elect with the messiah? The answer, says Schweitzer, is “Christ-Mysticism”—“the concept of a fellowship with the Messiah, which realises itself already in this natural world,” and the participation of the elect in the messiah’s “corporeity which is capable of resurrection.” According to this schema, “these Elect are in reality no longer natural men, but, like Christ Himself, are already supernatural beings, only that in them this is not yet manifest.”

Thus the concept of Pauline “Christ-mysticism.” But what of Paul’s mystical language? Here too Schweitzer is unimpressed by his peers:

62. See Deissmann, Paul, 150 and Bousset, Kyrios Christos, 166.
64. Schweitzer, Mysticism of Paul, 101–103.
67. Schweitzer, Mysticism of Paul, 110.
Reitzenstein the linguistic scholar is so completely under the influence of Reitzenstein the champion of Comparative Religion that he ... never mentions the fact ... that from the side of Hellenism nothing can be adduced tending to explain Paul’s “in Christ.”

Despite this focus on the idiom “in Christ”, Schweitzer considers the expression relatively insignificant for comprehending Paul’s mysticism. "Ἐν χριστῷ is “merely a brachyology,” “the commonest, but not the most appropriate, expression for union with Christ,” and its ubiquity is a function of its convenience for drawing antitheses between mystical union with the messiah and being “in the flesh,” “in sin,” and, above all, “in the law.” Thus while Schweitzer’s reconstruction of messianic ideology is subject to criticism, his work stands out as an effort to explain Paul’s language as it is—messiah language.

Schweitzer did not unseat the proposals of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule, whose influence continued beyond the World Wars in, for example, the work of Rudolf Bultmann and of his student Ernst Käsemann. While both rejected a “mystical” interpretation of Paul’s language, they otherwise recapitulated and affirmed the explanations of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule, especially its eschewing of Paul’s belief in the messiahship of

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68. Schweitzer, Mysticism of Paul, 27. Cf. Reitzenstein, Hellenistic Mystery-Religions, 87 and Bousset, Kyrios Christos, 166n34.

69. Schweitzer, Mysticism of Paul, 122.

70. Schweitzer, Mysticism of Paul, 122–123.


72. Käsemann is well known to have differed with his teacher Bultmann on many issues, but here they follow similar lines. See Ernst Käsemann, Leib und Leib Christi: Eine Untersuchung zur paulinischen Begrifflichkeit, BHT 9 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933), 163–168, 183–186; Ernst Käsemann, “A Critical Analysis of Philippians 2:5–11,” trans. Alice F. Carse, JTC 5 (1968): 83–88; and Ernst Käsemann, Commentary on Romans, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (London: SCM, 1980), 220–223. Käsemann, similarly to Bousset, claims that Paul uses “the language of the mysteries” in order to speak “about the actual presence of salvation” since the framework of “Jewish apocalypticism” portrays salvation “as a future event merely to be initiated by the messiah” (Käsemann, “Critical Analysis,” 85).
Jesus and his Jewish literary heritage as catalysts of his thought and language. However, Schweitzer’s efforts, especially on the front of situating Paul in his Jewish context and emphasizing the importance of his “participatory” motifs, presaged a major shift that would eventually reset the terms of discussion about Paul.

Post-war Reactions

In his essay “‘In Christus’ bei Paulus,” completed in the midst of World War II and published posthumously in 1949, Friedrich Büchsel signals a turn away from the category of mysticism that had become prevalent in treatments of Paul’s “in Christ” language.73 He takes issue especially with Deissmann’s account of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ, arguing that the preposition ἐν does not always have a spatial connotation and that the phrase is therefore not a formula with uniform meaning.74 In fact, having analyzed the syntactical functions of the various instances of the phrase, Büchsel finds that almost every possible connotation of ἐν is attested except the spatial.75 Similarly, Büchsel also questions the Pauline conception of χριστός espoused by Deissmann, asserting it is more variegated than Diessmann allows. Beyond “the pneumatic Christ,” Paul also regards Christ to be “the crucified and risen one, the teacher, the preexistent son of God, the one coming to judge the world.”76 Thus, “different individual conceptions [verschiedene Einzelvorstellungen] of Christ stand behind each instance” of Paul’s “in Christ” language.77

This more critical interrogation of what χριστός means in the phrase ἐν χριστῷ is an unusual and welcome development. Büchsel’s stance, however, makes it all the more odd.

73. Friedrich Büchsel, “‘In Christus’ bei Paulus,” ZNW 42 (1949): 141–158. According to Büchsel, Paul’s rejection of mysticism is “the basis of the greatness and significance of his piety” (156).
75. Büchsel, “In Christus,” 156. On the syntactical functions of the phrase see ch. 5.
that he does not raise the question of Paul’s understanding of messiahship or at least include “Messias” in the above list of epithets. In the end, this may be attributable to the overall aim of his essay, which is deconstructive vis-à-vis the pre-war majority opinion on Paul’s “in Christ” language: ἐν is not local, χριστός is not pneumatic, ἐν χριστῷ is not a formula, and, above all, Paul was not a mystic. And as for the cultural or literary impetus for Paul’s manner of speaking—Hellenistic, Jewish, or otherwise—Büchsel warns that “we will hardly get beyond guesswork.”

This rejection of Pauline “mysticism” marked a shift in scholarly opinion for decades to come. Such is the case for Welsh clergyman and scholar W. D. Davies in his influential book *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1948). Contending with Schweitzer, Davies finds his account of mysticism “grotesque,” “mechanical,” “magical,” and ultimately “very unsatisfying.” Unlike Büchsel, however, Davies is less skeptical about the possibility of discerning a catalyst for Paul’s thought and language. In accordance with his overall aim to relate Paul’s thought to his Jewish background, Davies is sympathetic with Schweitzer’s general approach. And despite finding Schweitzer’s messiah concept “too mechanically applied,” he thinks it has explanatory potential. For Davies, though, the significance of messiahship for Paul does not have to do with the predestined union of the elect with the messiah, but rather the messiah’s role as “the representative leader and head of Israel.”

Davies explains:

> The formula which Paul most frequently used to describe the nature of the Christian man was that he was “in Christ.” ... by this Paul meant that the individual who accepted Christ was part of a new humanity of which He was

the head; that he was being ingathered into the true Israel of God. … In short ἐν Χριστῷ is a social concept.84

Being “in Christ” had supplanted being “in Israel.” Or, put differently, being “in Christ” meant being in “the New Israel,” of which the messiah Jesus was head.85 In line with this social conception, Davies offers an alternative theory to mysticism based on an understanding of how authentic membership in Israel was established.86 He points specifically to the idea, attested in m. Pesaḥ 10:5, that a participant in the Passover “has appropriated to himself the history of his people.”88 Thus “just as the true Jew is he who has made the history of his nation his own history, so the Christian is he who has made the history of Christ his own.”89 Paul captures this dynamic, claims Davies, with the terse expression ἐν χριστῷ.

Davies arrives at this line of reasoning via the idea of the messiah as the representative head of a “new Israel,” but his description is actually twice removed from the question of messiahship. First, “in Israel” and “in the messiah” are not truly analogous expressions; one refers to an ethno-religious group and the other to an individual. It is conceivable the phrase “in Israel” trades on some notion of the headship of Jacob, aka Israel, but Davies makes no

84. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 86.
86. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism*, 102, cf. 75. Davies explains, “It was at this one point that Paul parted company with Judaism, at the valuation of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah with all that this implied” (115). On the thorny question of what, if anything, messiahship necessarily implied, see ch. 2.
such claim.\(^90\) Second, the analogy drawn between membership in Israel and membership in the “true Israel” with Christ as its head also breaks down. The Passover liturgy Davies adduces concerns the relation between an Israelite and his ancestors, not between an Israelite and a representative head of Israel. Functionally then, messiahship is not directly pertinent to Davies’s sociological explanation of being “in Christ.”

By the 1960s, the last significant monograph-length treatment of Paul’s “in Christ” language had been Deissmann’s some three quarters of a century earlier. This deficit was remedied, though, by two studies published in quick succession: Fritz Neugebauer’s \textit{In Christus} (1961) and Michel Bouttier’s \textit{En Christ} (1962).\(^91\) Neugebauer had articulated his findings a few years prior in a concise essay entitled “Das Paulinische ‘in Christō.’”\(^92\) He argues there for a revised understanding of both constituent parts of the expression ἐν χριστῷ.

First, regarding the preposition ἐν, Neugebauer attributes to Paul an anthropology according to which the individual is not a self-determined being, but rather one determined by external circumstances. Paul expresses these determinations with phrases such as ἐν σαρκί, ἐν νόµῳ, and ἐν πνεύματι, and therefore ἐν is properly paraphrased, “bestimmt von.”\(^93\) Second, regarding the preposition’s object χριστός, Neugebauer rejects the conflation of the phrases ἐν

\(^{90}\) Compare Justin, \textit{Dial.} 123.9: “Therefore, just as your whole race was called Jacob and Israel after that one man Jacob who was also called by the name Israel, so also we [are called] after Christ (ἀπὸ … χριστοῦ), who begat us unto God” (translation mine). For Justin, \textit{Dialogus cum Tryphone} I follow the Greek text of Edgar J. Goodspeed, \textit{Die ältesten Apologeten: Texte mit kurzen Einleitungen} (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1914).


χριστῷ, ἐν κυρίῳ, and ἐν πνεύματι, and he asserts that χριστός does not denote a pneumatic personality but rather the crucified and risen one. In light of this, ἐν is not to be interpreted spatially but rather “historically.” In sum, Neugebauer concludes that “‘in Christ’ means to be determined by [bestimmt sein durch] the eschatological events of the cross and the resurrection, to be included in this ‘history.’”

In some important ways, Neugebauer’s approach is a welcome corrective to the scholarly habits of his forebears. His criticism of the disproportional interest in the preposition ἐν compared to its object is apt, and his resistance to redefining χριστός as πνεῦμα or κύριος in order to accommodate a particular interpretation of ἐν is manifestly sensible. It is significant, however, that Neugebauer carries on the tradition of eschewing the meaning “messiah” in his consideration of the word χριστός. As warrant for this decision he cites the warning of Nils Dahl that “[t]he name ‘Christ’ does not receive its content through a previously fixed conception of messiahship but rather from the person and work of Jesus Christ.” Dahl’s warning is well-taken, but its implication is not that χριστός does not mean messiah. It is that what Paul means by “messiah” is the product of his scripturally-oriented reflection on what he believed to be empirically true of Jesus of Nazareth. Neugebauer, though, does not engage with Paul’s use of scripture to contextualize the word χριστός. Instead, he frames it as a contrast term with κύριος: “Christos is the merciful savior, but the

100. Reconciling scriptural tradition and empirical circumstance is a trait common to all messiah texts. On this see ch. 2.
kyrios is the demanding master.” Neugebauer regards this distinction as the Grundstruktur of Paul’s theology, according to which ἐν χριστῷ and ἐν κυρίῳ “function essentially as indicative to imperative.” As “fruitful” as Neugebauer finds this framework to be, it does not explain why Paul consistently opted for the phrase ἐν χριστῷ over ἐν Ἰησοῦ if he simply wanted to evoke the events of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.

A comparable approach is taken by Bouttier, whose main contribution to the question is a comparison of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ with the expressions διὰ χριστοῦ, εἰς χριστόν, σὺν χριστῷ, ἐν κυρίῳ, ἐν πνεύματι, Deissmann’s so-called “mystical genitive,” and the idea of “nous en Christ, Christ en nous.” Like Neugebauer, Bouttier frames the difference between ἐν χριστῷ and ἐν κυρίῳ as a difference between “indicative” and “imperative.” Unlike Neugebauer, however, he argues that Paul’s “in Christ” language evokes more than just the past events of Jesus’s death and resurrection: “it is literally to be taken up into [être entraîné dans] his story—past, present, and future!” Accordingly, the meaning of the phrase, argues Bouttier, must be expanded to include not only an instrumental or historical sense related to crucifixion and resurrection, but also an inclusive/communal sense pertaining to Christ’s present right-hand session and an eschatological sense pertaining to his future advent.

Bouttier’s interest in the temporal aspect of Paul’s “in Christ” language also guides his assessment of Deissmann, especially regarding christology. Bouttier contends that Deissmann’s proposal, according to which “the living Christ, the glorified one, is conflated with [assimilé au] the pneuma,” has the effect of restricting the meaning of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ to the present, to mystical communion with the pneumatic Christ now.
finds this wanting, and accordingly he is interested in correcting “a gap [hiatus] between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.” From Bouttier’s perspective, this hiatus lies beneath the religiönsge schichtliche agenda to demonstrate that Paul’s conception of Christ represents an evolution beyond that of the early Palestinian community as well as Neugebauer’s neglect of the present and future circumstances of Christ’s relation to believers. Curiously, the end result of this critique is a revitalization of the idea that Paul’s use of ἐν constitutes a sémitisme—that is, ἐν, like the Hebrew ב, entails both local and instrumental senses. As jolting as it is, the leap between theology and lexical semantics is a commonplace when it comes to discussions of Paul’s “in Christ” language.

Despite Bouttier’s christological diagnosis, his proposal is not so much an alternative christology as it is a redrawing of the borders around ἐν’s range of meaning. Bouttier understands this to be the logical implication of expanding the scope of Christ’s biography to include past, present, and future circumstances, but he neglects to respond to the theory which equates χριστός and πνεῦμα with a different proposal of what Paul meant by χριστός. The possibility that the word means “messiah” and that that might be of some import for comprehending the phrase ἐν χριστῷ is not entertained.

On the heels of Neugebauer’s and Bouttier’s monograph-length treatments of “in Christ” language, Werner Kramer published his Christos Kyrios Gottessohn (1963) in which he set forth his own, more focused analysis of Paul’s idiom. Kramer’s approach is to delineate in what contexts Paul uses the “formulae” ἐν χριστῷ and ἐν κυρίῳ, and he finds that while ἐν χριστῷ is “placed in soteriological and ecclesiological statements” and “passages of

theological argument,” ἐν κυρίῳ “defines specific human actions” and “ethical instruction.”

In sum, “each of the two formulae … had a particular sphere in which it was regularly employed.” In this regard, Kramer’s description is very close that of Neugebauer and Bouttier when they speak of the two expressions corresponding to “indicative” and “imperative.”

Kramer’s finding that Paul uses “in Christ” language primarily in contexts of “soteriological statements” and “theological argument” comports with his conclusions concerning the apostle’s use of χριστός generally, that the term is typically deployed with reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus. According to Kramer, this usage is traditional, a convention Paul inherited by way of “the pistis-formula” passed down through various primitive Christian communities. The extant form of this saying may be found in 1 Cor 15:3b–5: “Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures, … he was raised on the third day according to the scriptures, etc.” Kramer suggests that χριστός was introduced into this saying by pre-Pauline Jewish Christianity since “[t]he title Christ, translating mešīha, presented itself … as a term which would clearly indicate the eschatological status of Jesus.” Nevertheless, continues Kramer, at this point

the Christian understanding of Christ had moved a long way from the Jewish idea of the Messiah already, or it could not have been introduced into this context. To look into the general pattern of contemporary Jewish notions

113. Kramer, Christ, Lord, Son of God, 146, 178–179. Kramer (correctly) determines that the expressions ἐν χριστῷ and ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ exhibit a “basic unity” and ought therefore to be grouped together (146).

114. Kramer, Christ, Lord, Son of God, 179; cf. 143. However, Kramer does find that the phrases’ uses in Romans 16 become somewhat “indiscriminate.” He passes over the issue, though, noting the “uncertain origin” of the chapter (179).


117. Kramer, Christ, Lord, Son of God, 38–44.

118. Kramer, Christ, Lord, Son of God, 41.
of the Messiah would contribute virtually nothing to an interpretation of Christ.\textsuperscript{119}

Moreover, by the time the term χριστός is transmitted to Pauline “Gentile Christianity,” “it has virtually lost the power (which it derived from Judaism) to stand on its own …. Christ is merely a proper name.”\textsuperscript{120} Even as Kramer suggests that Paul’s habit of avoiding the juxtaposition of the designations χριστός and κύριος is evidence that the former retains a vestigial messianic meaning, he concludes that “the custom survives as witness to something forgotten.”\textsuperscript{121}

For Kramer, then, messiahship does not factor into Paul’s use of “in Christ” language. And Kramer is correct to assert the futility of appealing to a “pattern of contemporary Jewish notions of the Messiah” to explain the idiom, for (as will be discussed in the next chapter) there is no such pattern. But where Kramer goes wrong is to assume that Judaism ever did lend the word χριστός “power to stand on its own.” As we will see, the term χριστός had always been propped up, as it were. It had always derived its meanings from the various interpretations of scripture with which it is contextualized by the authors who use it. In this respect, Paul is similar to, not different from, his Jewish contemporaries.\textsuperscript{122}

Nearly a decade on, A. J. M. Wedderburn proffered a notably different theory concerning Paul’s “in Christ” language in his article “The Body of Christ and Related Concepts in 1 Corinthians” (1971). The main objective of Wedderburn’s essay is to contend with Käsemann’s proposal that Paul’s concept of the “body of Christ” is indebted to

\textsuperscript{119} Kramer, \textit{Christ, Lord, Son of God}, 41.

\textsuperscript{120} Kramer, \textit{Christ, Lord, Son of God}, 43.

\textsuperscript{121} Kramer, \textit{Christ, Lord, Son of God}, 214.

\textsuperscript{122} Thus Kramer, \textit{Christ, Lord, Son of God}, 43: “Christ is seen as connected typologically with scriptural prophecies, as is witnessed by the phrase ‘in accordance with the scriptures’ and by the quotation of OT passages.”
Käsemann does not treat Paul’s “in Christ” language in any detail, but he does suggest that a correspondence between the idiom and the idea of the body of Christ indicates “a common underlying tradition.” Wedderburn, however, is unconvinced. Looking to Galatians 3, he observes the progression in Paul’s argument from v. 8, where the patriarchal promise of multi-national blessing was to come ἐν σοί (= Abraham), to v. 14, where the realization of that promise had come ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Wedderburn suggests the uses of ἐν in these verses are the same, and he thus concludes:

Paul’s use of the formula ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in v. 14 is, we infer, based upon the language used by the LXX to express OT ideas of representation and solidarity, ideas which could most aptly be called a spatial metaphor; for, figuratively speaking, Abraham is the source or the place of origin of the blessing of the nations, just as Christ, as his seed, is its true channel.

The conceptual analogy between Abraham and Christ is reflected in the verbal analogy between ἐν σοί and ἐν χριστῷ.

Wedderburn revisits this hypothesis in a 1985 article, “Some Observations on Paul’s Use of the Phrases ‘In Christ’ and ‘With Christ,’” there framing it as a response to Udo Schnelle’s skepticism about the value of a linguistic analysis of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ.

Wedderburn insists that attention to Paul’s grammar is still salutary, and his basic argument is the same: that the verbal analogy in Galatians 3 corresponds to a conceptual analogy in Paul’s understanding of Abraham and Christ. He adjusts his account in two related ways, however. First, Wedderburn is more cautious about using the concept of “corporate


personality” due to its ambiguity and its basis in contested anthropological theory.\(^{127}\) Second, Wedderburn emphasizes more strongly an instrumental interpretation of Paul’s “in Christ” language over a local connotation, which feasibly could be invoked in conjunction with the idea of a “corporate personality.”\(^{128}\) Wedderburn concedes that this interpretation of ἐν cannot account for all of Paul’s uses of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ. Even so, a revival of the methods of the religionsgeschichtliche Schule (such as he detects in Schnelle’s proposal) are not the way forward.\(^{129}\) “These other uses will have to be investigated anew and individually, bearing in mind the whole possible spectrum of meanings of adverbial and adjectival phrases with ἐν and without invoking as a background religio-historical parallels which in fact offer no really comparable usage.”\(^{130}\)

Wedderburn’s explanation of Paul’s language on the basis of scriptural language actually cited by Paul is a significant step forward in the scholarly discussion. He is content, however, to go no further than finding in Paul’s language evidence of a conceptual analogy between two agents of divine action—Abraham and Christ. The correspondence between these two figures according to the logic of Galatians 3, however, is not one of analogy but of patrilineal descent as divine fulfillment. The messiah is Abraham’s “seed,” claims Paul (Gal

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128. Wedderburn, “Observations,” 88–89. This is also due to his skepticism concerning Schnelle’s use of “‘spatial and ontological’ categories” (88).

129. Importantly, Schnelle is distinguished by his identification of Jewish rather than Hellenistic religio-historical parallels.

3:16). But Wedderburn’s proposal does not take into account Paul’s messianic exegesis that would lead him to claim such a thing.\textsuperscript{131}

To draw another analogy, Wedderburn’s overall approach to Paul’s “in Christ” language may be likened to that of Büchsel, who surprisingly goes unmentioned in Wedderburn’s essays. Both sensibly insist on the usefulness of determining the syntactical functions of the phrase in its various contexts rather than appealing to a uniform connotation of the preposition. Wedderburn is less vexed than Büchsel by the dominance of early twentieth-century scholarship on the question, and to that same extent his discussion is more nuanced. Both, however, resist the program of the \textit{religionsgeschichtliche Schule}, and in the coming decades that resistance would expand into a wide-spread movement to investigate Paul’s Jewish context.

\textbf{Retrievals and Revisions}

Davies, in the wake of World War II, had already re-introduced the scholarly world to Paul’s Jewish context, but it was his student E. P. Sanders who established it as a fixture of the scholarly agenda up until the present. Sanders’s 1977 \textit{Paul and Palestinian Judaism} sets out to rectify a major failing, as he saw it, of Davies’s work.\textsuperscript{132} Davies had sought to demonstrate affinity between Paul and Judaism, but he had done so through “motif research,” taking various themes in Paul’s thought and showing how they correspond to ideas within Judaism.\textsuperscript{133} This, however, was incapable of standing up to the descriptions of the likes of Bultmann, who emphasized a basic antithesis between Paul and Judaism by delineating “the \textit{essence} of Paulinism.”\textsuperscript{134} Alternatively, Sanders’s aim is to describe the whole “patterns of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{131} On this see ch. 3.
\item \textsuperscript{132} Sanders, \textit{Paul and Palestinian Judaism}.
\item \textsuperscript{133} Sanders, \textit{Paul and Palestinian Judaism}, 8.
\item \textsuperscript{134} Sanders, \textit{Paul and Palestinian Judaism}, 9 (italics original).
\end{itemize}
religion” belonging to Paul and to Judaism and thus to compare them in a decisive way. At the end of his massive analysis of Jewish literature and a relatively terse description of Paul, Sanders concludes:

We thus in a way agree with one of the conclusions of previous comparisons of Paul and Judaism, that there are peripheral agreements and a basic disagreement. I should say, however, that there are substantial agreements and a basic difference. Further, the difference is not located in a supposed antithesis of grace and works (on grace and works there is in fact agreement, and an agreement which can hardly be called ‘peripheral’), but in the total type of religion.

 Sanders’s work is frequently remembered for one half of this conclusion, that there is actually “substantial agreement” between Paul and Judaism on the matter of grace and works. Because of this, the other half, which emphasizes a “basic difference” between Paul and Judaism, is somewhat less vivid in scholarly memory. This difference, though, is directly pertinent to the present study because it is a distinction drawn between “covenantal nomism” (not “legalism”) and “participatory soteriology”:

The heart of Paul's thought is not that one ratifies and agrees to a covenant offered by God, becoming a member of a group with a covenantal relation with God and remaining in it on the condition of proper behaviour; but that one dies with Christ, obtaining new life and the initial transformation which leads to the resurrection and ultimate transformation, that one is a member of the body of Christ and one Spirit with him, and that one remains so unless one breaks the participatory union by forming another.

This divide between Jewish covenantal nomism and Pauline participatory soteriology emerges in Sanders’s discussion of “in Christ” language.

137. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 520. Note Sanders description of 1 Cor 10:1–5: “The fault of eating and drinking with idols and of fornication is not their character as transgression against the will of God … but their result in forming a union which is antithetical to the union with Christ. This argument is not typical of covenantal nomism as we know it from Judaism” (514).
Sanders revives Schweitzer’s view of the centrality of participation rather than justification in Paul’s soteriology, and his treatment of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ is in most respects a rehearsal of Schweitzer’s observations. Unlike Schweitzer, however, Sanders in no way relates “in Christ” language or the notion of participation to Paul’s Jewish context. He in fact remains agnostic on the subject, insisting “[w]e could do no better than guess by what chain of reasoning or under what history of religions influence” Paul arrived at his ideas of participation.

In light of Paul’s terminology, a reasonable starting place to trace his logic would have been to interrogate his understanding of messiahship. But Sanders opines, “It seems to me to be useless to speculate on what form of messianic hope was known to Paul … and to work out his theology by applying his hypothetical preconceived messianic theory to the fact that Jesus was the Messiah.”

Sanders’s eschewing of this line of investigation is in part due to his critique of Davies, whom he saw as advocating an essential similarity between Paulinism and Judaism, the only difference being Paul’s belief that the messiah had come. It is perhaps also due in part to the implausibility of establishing an extant “form of messianic hope” or “preconceived messianic theory.” But as we will see in the following chapters, a description of Pauline messianology need not follow these methods.

N. T. Wright is often named alongside Sanders as a pioneer of the “new perspective on Paul,” but he has also been a leading light in the larger project of re-contextualizing Paul within Second Temple Judaism. This is epitomized by his description of participation in


140. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 452–453. Sanders also remained famously agnostic on what “participation” even consisted of: “But what does this mean? How are we to understand it? … I must confess that I do not have a new category of perception to propose here” (522–523). Sanders has remained at a loss up to the present, on which see E. P. Sanders, *Paul: The Apostle’s Life, Letters, and Thought* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 723–725. Here he points the reader to an essay by Stanley Stowers, on which see below.


Paul, for which the leitmotif of messiahship in Paul has been of utmost importance since his 1980 Oxford DPhil thesis, “The Messiah and the People of God.”\[^{143}\] There, he contends that

\[\text{t}h\]e Messiah, the anointed one of Israel, represents his people and sums them up in himself, so that what is true of him is true of them. When this aspect is linked to the information Paul received in his conversion, namely, that God in the resurrection had declared the crucified Jesus to be the Messiah, the main themes of his theology … are at once brought together in a new way.\[^{144}\]

It is all-important for Wright that \(\chiριστός\) means “messiah,” and furthermore that “messiah” means the one in whom the people of God are summed up. This perspective has undergirded Wright’s work on Paul up to the present.

In a 1991 essay entitled “\(ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ\) as Messiah in Paul: Philemon 6,” Wright develops a hypothesis concerning the scriptural source for Paul’s manner of speaking about the elect being “in the messiah.”\[^{145}\] The burden of the essay is to explain the puzzling expression in Phlm 6—“every good thing which is in us into Christ (\(εἰς \chiριστόν\))”—which Wright does by invoking and further explicating his notion of incorporative messiahship, according to which the elect can be said to grow “into the messiah.” He writes,

\[\text{W}hy \text{ should “Messiah” bear such an incorporative sense? Clearly, because it is endemic in the understanding of kingship, in many societies and certainly}\]


\[^{144}\] Wright, “The Messiah and the People of God,” 4.

in ancient Israel, that the king and the people are bound together in such a way that what is true of the one is true in principle of the other.\(^{146}\)

In other words, Paul calls Jesus “messiah,” which is an old scriptural word for the king of Judah, who, like other ancient Near Eastern monarchs, was thought to have carried the fate of his subjects in his own person.

This lattermost claim, Wright acknowledges, is vulnerable to the standard criticisms of theories of “corporate personality.”\(^ {147}\) Wright surmounts such criticisms, however, by pointing to certain scriptural texts which, he claims, expressly talk about the Judahite king in the same way that Paul talks about Jesus. All of these texts come from the narrative of the wars of succession in 2 Samuel, such as LXX 2 Sam 19:43: “The men of Israel answered the men of Judah, ‘We have ten shares in the king (ἐν τῷ βασιλεί), and in David (ἐν τῷ Δαυιδ) also we have more than you,’” and LXX 2 Sam 20:1: “Sheba son of Bichri, a Benjaminite ... said, ‘We have no portion in David (ἐν Δαυιδ), and we have no inheritance in the son of Jesse (ἐν τῷ ὑιῷ Ιεσσαί).’” Wright finds in these texts concrete scriptural precedent for speaking of the people as being “in the king,” “in David,” “in the son of Jesse” (but not, admittedly, “in the anointed one”). Taking care not to claim direct or conscious literary dependence on Paul’s part, Wright concludes,

While these texts are not sufficient in and of themselves to suggest that such language was familiar in the first century, it does at least suggest a matrix of ideas out of which a fresh incorporative usage could grow, namely, that of the king representing the people.\(^ {148}\)

In his recent Pauline theology, \textit{Paul and the Faithfulness of God}, Wright stands by his account of incorporative messiahship and, indeed, develops it more fully, but he also repents of certain aspects of his previous treatments. About the “portion in David” and “inheritance in the son of Jesse” texts from 2 Samuel, Wright comments in 2013, “I do not now think (as I

\(^{146}\) Wright, “ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ as ‘Messiah’ in Paul,” 46.

\(^{147}\) See n. 117 above.

\(^{148}\) Wright, “ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ as ‘Messiah’ in Paul,” 47.
once did) that these interesting biblical passages themselves constitute the explanation for [Paul’s] usage.”

And, moving on from Samuel-Kings to Hellenistic- and Roman-period Jewish messiah texts, Wright is also now pessimistic about identifying any parallels that might illuminate Paul’s idiom: “The biblical texts regularly cited in second-Temple messianic speculation ... do not include the idea, in whatever form, that the coming Messiah will sum up or incorporate his people in himself.”

Wright’s caution regarding the 2 Samuel texts is warranted, especially because Paul nowhere makes reference or allusion to them. His reticence to claim that a conception of “incorporative messiahship” can be located in a scriptural source text is also justified. However, Wright cedes too much. While a developed concept of incorporation, especially as Wright understands it, may not be present in the texts he mentions, some of them could have been read as portraying solidarity between the messiah and his people. In any case, Wright is a notable exception to the trend of neglecting messiahship as an integral category for Paul, and he belongs to a bibliographical minority who has argued that both component parts of the phrase “in Christ” contribute equally to the work it does in Paul’s discourse. The present project agrees with this premise.

Udo Schnelle is also among the ranks of those attempting to reposition Paul’s “in Christ” language against a backdrop of Jewish ideas. In his 1983 study on baptism, *Gerechtigkeit und Christusgegenwart*, Schnelle considers the phrase “in Christ” to have been derived from pre-Pauline baptismal traditions, and he undertakes a diachronic analysis of it beginning with Paul’s purported retrieval of those traditions and his uses of the phrase in 1 Thessalonians. He further frames his approach by insisting that—contrary to Büchsel, Neugebauer, and Bouttier—the expression’s meaning cannot be determined through


151. See ch. 4.

preliminary grammatical and lexical considerations. \(^{153}\) Instead, Schnelle contends that an investigation of “religio-historical parallels” is a useful entry point for analysis.\(^{154}\) Accordingly, he locates the religio-historical background for Paul’s uses of the expression “in Christ” in Jewish traditions concerning wisdom. In particular, he points to a set of seven ideas in wisdom literature which he thinks are reflected in Paul’s portrayal of Christ: the image of being enrobed with wisdom, the correspondence between righteousness and sonship in wisdom tradition, the characterization of wisdom as “spirit,” the possession of immortality in association with wisdom, wisdom as a space of healing, the dynamic of mutual indwelling with wisdom, and the activity of seeking or seizing wisdom.\(^{155}\) In light of these proposed correlations, Schnelle concludes that “the spatial \[räumlichen\] and ontological \[seinshaften\] dimensions of the \(\text{ἐν χριστῷ}\) concept \[Vorstellung\] should not be ruled out on the basis of preliminary grammatical and philological considerations” and are in fact very plausible interpretations.\(^{156}\) In sum, a locative reading of \(\text{ἐν χριστῷ}\) need not be discarded along with the Hellenistic religio-historical parallels on which it has traditionally been dependent since Jewish parallels can be assembled in support of the same interpretation.

As was the case with the Hellenistic religio-historical parallels adduced in earlier scholarship, many of the verbal correspondences with wisdom tradition turn out to be tenuous upon closer examination. For example, the phrases \(\text{ἀθανασία} \ldots \text{ἐν συγγενείᾳ σοφίας}\) in Wis 8:17 and \(\text{ζωὴ αἰώνιος} \text{ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ}\) in Rom 6:23 are not actually comparable.\(^{157}\) The object of the preposition in the former is an impersonal noun modified by a (debatably) personal genitive while the object in the latter case is a personal noun. Or consider Wis 5:5,
“Why were they counted among the sons of God (κατελογίσθη ἐν υἱοὶ θεοῦ),” and Gal 3:26, “You are all sons of God … in Christ Jesus (υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἑστε … ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ),” where the use of the preposition ἐν with respect to the noun υἱοί is completely different. The closest verbal parallel is Wis 5:15, “their reward is in the lord (ἐν κυρίῳ),” but there the ostensible analog to χριστὸς would be κύριος, not σοφία. Alternatively, unlike earlier theories which merge χριστός with πνεῦμα, Schnelle at least has in his favor an explicit statement by Paul likening χριστός to σοφία: “We preach … Christ, … the wisdom of God (θεοῦ σοφίαν)” (1 Cor 1:23–24).158 However, Schnelle never mentions this statement, and he offers no discussion of Paul’s understanding of messiahship and its relation to wisdom christology.159 In these cases, Schnelle’s eschewing of preliminary grammatical and lexical considerations has failed him.

Relatedly, there has been a recent revival in some quarters of interest in πνεῦμα for explaining Paul’s “in Christ” language. In her 2007 If Sons, Then Heirs, Caroline Johnson Hodge argues that Paul’s “in Christ” language ought to be understood in the context of a discourse of patrilineal descent rooted in a material understanding of πνεῦμα.160 Like Wedderburn, Johnson Hodge looks to Paul’s language in Gal 3:8, 14 and detects an illuminating analogy. The analogy, however, is not that Abraham and Christ are figures “in” whom God acts, but rather that they are progenitors “in” whom their posterity may be said to be. Paul “adapts this notion of descendants being ‘in’ the patriarchs to create a way for gentiles to join Abraham’s lineage by being ‘in’ Christ.”161 The expression ἐν χριστῷ is

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158. Proposals conflating Christ and “spirit” have never reckoned with the stubborn fact that 2 Cor 3:17 reads ὁ … κύριος τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστιν not ὁ χριστός τὸ πνεῦμα ἐστιν. Obviously, Christ is also called “lord” by Paul, but the algebra involved in reading 2 Cor 3:17 as a straightforward christological predication assumes that Paul’s use of his various designations of Jesus is indiscriminate.

159. Contrast the discussion in Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, 158–163.


161. Johnson Hodge, If Sons, Then Heirs, 94.
therefore a product of Paul’s development of a new paradigm of ancestry for the sake of his gentile mission.\textsuperscript{162}

In support of this hypothesis, Johnson Hodge adduces several uses of the preposition \( ἐν \) in purportedly comparable contexts.\textsuperscript{163} Aristotle speaks of offspring being “in the generator (\( ἐν τῷ γεννῶντι) \)” (\textit{Gen. An.} 716a22), Philo describes what is preserved “in the seminal principles (\( ἐν τοῖς σπερματικοῖς … λόγοις) \)” (\textit{Legat.} 55), and Seneca discusses that which is “in the seed (\textit{in semine})” (\textit{Nat.} 3.29.2). Johnson Hodge also notes LXX Gen 25:23 where Rebecca is told, “two nations are in your womb (\( ἐν γαστρί σου) \).”\textsuperscript{164} It is worth noting that in all of these cases, except perhaps Aristotle, the object of the preposition \( ἐν \) is not the ancestor herself, but rather a gonadic noun. Further, Aristotle’s use of the participial form of \( γενήσαμαι \) rather than the noun \( ἀρρεν \) (cf. 716a19, 20) raises the question of whether his statement can support a theory of the discourse of generation and ancestry in which descendants are typically said to be “in” their ancestors.\textsuperscript{165}

Another question raised by Johnson Hodge’s hypothesis is how being “in Christ” would cause a gentile to be “in Abraham.” To answer this, Johnson Hodge looks to Graeco-Roman medical and philosophical (particularly Stoic) conceptions of \( πνεῦμα \) as “a physical entity, matter … air or breath,” “the vital substance of the body,” “the crucial procreative

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164. For Genesis I follow the Greek text of J. W. Wevers, ed. Genesis, Septuaginta 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974).

165. Stanley Stowers, in an essay to be discussed presently, also cites Heb 7:9–10 where Levi is said to have been “in the loins of his ancestor [\( ἐν τῇ ὄσφυὶ τοῦ πατρός) \].” This example is subject to the same criticism as Johnson Hodge’s.
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element,” or “the very particles which make up the soul.” For Paul too, she argues, πνεῦμα is a material substance, and “the gentiles join Christ by taking his pneuma into their hearts, incorporating his substance into theirs. In this way, this procreative pneuma creates new kinship, and does so materially.” The result of this is that “the gentiles receive the ancestry of their new kin,” and thus Christ “can serve as a link for them to the lineage of Abraham.”

In short, to be “in Christ” is to be “in Abraham.” In asserting this, Johnson Hodge is aware of a breakdown in the analogy with patrilineal descent she has proposed. Having claimed that “in” language is used to indicate the presence of descendants in their ancestors, she admits, “The relationship between Christ and gentiles, however, is not expressed in terms of ancestor and descendants. Instead, Christ and the gentiles seem to be same-generation offspring of common ancestors.” This is correct, but she does not clarify how her paradigm of Paul’s “in Christ” language accommodates this caveat.

As with many of the hypotheses surveyed thus far, the question of messiahship does not enter into Johnson Hodge’s discussion. Her teacher Stanley Stowers, however, integrates an account of messiahship into a similar proposal in his essay, “What Is ‘Pauline Participation in Christ?’” (2008). Stowers admires Schweitzer’s classic statement of Pauline mysticism but criticizes its inability to sufficiently explain “the idea of one person

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167. Johnson Hodge, If Sons, Then Heirs, 75.

168. Johnson Hodge, If Sons, Then Heirs, 105.

169. Johnson Hodge, If Sons, Then Heirs, 105. See also 103.

being in another person or sharing in the experiences of another.”

Despite this, Stowers remains sympathetic to Schweitzer’s attempt at a “realistic” reading of Paul that does not reduce his language to “mere metaphor.” Determined to retain Schweitzer’s realism yet provide a more thorough account of participation, Stowers finds promising explanatory potential in Johnson Hodge’s theory.

Stowers’s proposal is closely aligned with Johnson Hodge’s in almost every respect. He takes a significant step further, however, in that he retains messiahship as an integral element of Paul’s participatory ideas. In contrast to Schweitzer and Wright, Stowers regards Jesus’s messiahship as a central but specifically anti-climactic component of Paul’s understanding of the Christ-event, an understanding that undergirds Paul’s use of the expression ἐν χριστῷ. Stowers describes this in his earlier work, *A Rereading of Romans*:

Jesus showed his faithfulness-trust-obedience toward God and his mission as messiah by allowing himself to be killed instead of bringing about Israel’s final restoration, the last judgment, and the age to come. This he did out of love for the lost, including the gentile peoples. God accepted his action as a trusting and faithful enactment of his mission. He thus vindicated Jesus through the resurrection.

Stowers explains that it was at his resurrection—his vindication in light of his foreswearing of messianic prerogatives—when Christ was granted the divine πνεῦμα, the “stuff” by which

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173. This dissatisfaction with metaphorical explanations is not recent. Note A. R. Peacocke, *Science and the Christian Experiment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971), 172: “apart from the direct biological connection, it is hard to see what sort of solidarity we might have with Christ.” In light of Stowers’s and Johnson Hodge’s proposals, the remark on Peacocke’s statement in Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 49–50 is prescient: “if I understand him rightly, he is saying that little sense can be extracted from language which speaks of us as in Christ, but more from language which speaks of the Spirit as in us.”
gentiles “in Christ” gained entry into the physical lineage of Abraham. For Stowers then, Jesus’s deferred messiahship is requisite for grasping the logic of Paul’s “in Christ” language.

For Paul, according to Stowers, Jesus’s death and resurrection meant that “the Christ … with a whole new meaning” had supplanted the “messiah according to the flesh.” This is of course a trope with a long pedigree, extending back through Bousset and Reitzenstein all the way to Baur’s work in the early nineteenth century. Stowers is distinct, however, in making this notion integral to an explanation of the role of πνεῦμα in Paul’s participatory thought and in maintaining a distinction between πνεῦμα and χριστός while doing so. In these respects, Stowers’s work is a salutary, if partial, corrective.

Michael Wolter, in his 2011 Paulus, also takes an interest in how Paul’s “in Christ” language is used by Paul to describe new realities in light of the Christ event. Wolter’s investigation largely resembles Büchsel’s in that he parcels out the instances of the expression into several categories of usage, some grammatical, some conceptual, but all aimed at demonstrating the inviability of a “mystical-participatory or spatial interpretation.” Wolter departs from Büchsel’s manner of analysis in two ways, however. The first is that he warns against categorizing according to the connotations of ἐν listed in lexicons since they are inevitably artificial, post facto descriptions which “played no role in

178. Stowers, Rereading, 257. On problems with Paul’s supposed opposition to “messiahship according to the flesh” see ch. 3.
180. Wolter, Paul, 229.
the … production of the text.” He instead looks to the contextual functions of the phrase. Second, in describing these contextual functions Wolter proffers a novel description for a usage he thinks is neglected in other analyses but which has some affinity with the proposals of Johnson Hodge and Stowers. All parties are interested in describing a “realistic” meaning of the phrase—its deployment by Paul to describe a new reality in a way that goes beyond the figurative use of language. But whereas Johnson Hodge and Stowers attempt to establish this through a theory of material patrilineal descent, Wolter suggests that the phrase “designates … a particular symbolic universe [Sinnwelt] that originates through ‘Christ-faith.’” Notwithstanding his translator’s use of the word “symbolic,” Wolter insists that for Paul this Sinnwelt denotes a “reality … which is of the same ontological dignity as the construct of reality in the everyday world.” Paul’s “reality” in this sense need not entail materiality.

Wolter, like many others, omits discussion of Paul’s view of messiahship in his treatment of “in Christ” language. Instead, “‘Christ’ stands … as a cipher for the Christ event”; it does not mean “messiah.” An exception to this rule, however, is Wolter’s curious description of Paul’s view of baptism:

[Paul] expresses [fellowship constituted through baptism] in Galatians 3:28 by saying “in Jesus Christ” all who are baptized are “one man” (specifically masculine)—namely, Jesus Christ himself. In 1 Corinthians 12:12 this characterization finds its direct equivalent in that Paul calls the body, which all Christians become through baptism, “the Messiah.”

182. Wolter, Paul, 231.
183. Wolter, Paul, 231.
184. Wolter, Paul, 230
Wolter perhaps reads 1 Cor 12:12 in this way because of Paul’s use there of the articular ὁ χριστός. He elaborates no further, though, and he gives no general account of Paul’s understanding of messiahship in his broader description of Paul’s thought.

Contrary to Wolter’s skepticism about the usefulness of the lexical categories of the preposition ἐν, Constantine Campbell provides just such an analysis in his 2012 Paul and Union with Christ.186 As is evident in the study’s title, however, its primary focus is the theological construct of “union with Christ,” and at the end of his treatment Campbell turns to the question of the concept’s “antecedents.”187 He finds that “Jewish theology … ultimately … does not account for the full-orbed nature of Pauline union with Christ … which remains startlingly original against his Jewish background.”188 Additionally, Campbell asserts that Paul’s “union with Christ vocabulary and prepositional usage” cannot be found in the Jewish scriptures.189 Regarding antecedents to Paul’s understanding of messiahship, Campbell contends, “While an earthly reign of the Messiah is envisaged in Old Testament prophecy, the other worldly nature of the realm of Christ remains a unique feature of New Testament expectation.”190 Campbell does not specify, however, which prophecies he has in mind or why he considers them messianic, and he does not discuss Second Temple messiah texts which arguably do portray an “otherworldly” messiah (e.g., 1 Enoch 48). Thus, Campbell repeats the move we have already seen of pitting purported Jewish messianic conceptions against early Christian portrayals of Christ.191 The strange result of this

186. Constantine R. Campbell, Paul and Union with Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 67–199. Campbell draws on the uses delineated in BDAG (68–73); cf. BDAG. s.v., ἐν. See further ch. 5 below.
188. Campbell, Paul and Union, 415–416.
189. Campbell, Paul and Union, 416.
190. Campbell, Paul and Union, 417n34 (italics original). He does allow, however, that Daniel 7 “presents a step on the trajectory toward the New Testament understanding.”
191. On this problem see ch. 2 and Novenson, Grammar of Messianism, 187–216.
fallacious distinction is an analysis of Paul’s messiah language which includes little to
nothing about Paul’s understanding of messiahship.  

Just a year after the appearance of Campbell’s study, Grant Macaskill published his
Macaskill’s study is a rare display of the mastery of pertinent issues in the fields of both
biblical studies and historical theology. Accordingly, he is careful to distinguish between
Paul’s language and a synthetic concept of participation, warning that “it is too easy for us to
read ‘in Christ’ in an over-specified way.”  

Nevertheless, Macaskill detects a “coherent
theology” of union in Paul’s writings which is associated with instances of ἐν χριστῷ when
“it clearly has a locative sense” and “demarcates a sphere (or state) of existence that is
eschatological.”  

As with the early twentieth-century analyses and their later
recapitulations, the role of πνεῦμα in Paul’s thought is prominent in Macaskill’s description:
“This eschatological state is pneumatological …. To be ‘in Christ’, then, is also to be ‘in the
Spirit.’”  

Unlike the analyses of the *religionsgeschichtliche Schule*, however, Macaskill
resists conflating χριστός and πνεῦμα, warning that “despite the co-incidence of grammars at
certain points, the two are not equated and a distinctive narrative is associated with each: the
Spirit is not crucified, the Spirit is not raised. The Spirit is not the Son.”  

Macaskill also considers the “participatory implications” of “messianism,” including
“the interpretative potential of the tension between speaking of the singular ‘Servant’ … and

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192. Campbell does on three occasions (Eph 1:12, 20; 3:11) opt for the translation “in the messiah”
(Campbell, *Paul and Union*, 144, 146–147) but gives no rationale for doing so.

2013).


197. Macaskill, *Union with Christ*, 249. For Macaskill this is primarily a trinitarian distinction, but of
course Paul’s use of “son” language is due in part to his messianic interpretation of texts such as
2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 2.
the plurality of those either addressed by God … or themselves speaking.” Unusually, he devotes attention to the problems associated with defining “messianism” and developing an appropriate method for describing it from Second Temple texts as well as antecedent scriptural sources. Macaskill ultimately contends that “messianism is a dynamic concept, demonstrable in the Second Temple period, with a connection to royal ideology … [I]t is capable of synthesizing a range of expectations about future events and royal figures and of integrating a range of texts into a distinctively messianic ‘reading.’” In short, “messianism” is understood to be a cumulative interpretative enterprise. Though my application of this basic definition is distinct, the present study proceeds from the same general premise.

If Macaskill sees messianism and royal ideology as two separate but vitally connected things, Joshua Jipp, in his *Christ Is King* (2015), sees them as nearly one in the same. In his search for “the conceptual and lexical sources for Paul’s christological language,” Jipp holds that Paul “was probably not given to reflection upon our contemporary distinction between Messiah and idealistic royal ideology.” Thus Jipp’s working hypothesis is that “while Paul does not refer to Christ as king, his abundant use of the honorific ‘Messiah’ may indicate that he thinks of Jesus as the ideal king or ruler.”

One arena in which Jipp applies this theory is Paul’s “participatory soteriology,” which he argues is best understood with respect to the idea of “sharing in the rule of” the

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198. Macaskill, *Union with Christ*, 121–127 (here 126). See 234–236, where Macaskill suggests that Paul’s explanations of the significance of Jesus’s death exploit this interpretative potential. Macaskill does not directly relate messianism as he understands it to Paul’s “in Christ” language.


201. See ch. 2.


royal messiah. Jipp contends that the idea of participating in the messiah’s reign derives from the “historical-religious antecedents” of Israelite kingship. This ideology entails two dynamics which illuminate Paul’s participatory thought: Israel’s monarch shares in God’s divine kingship, and Israel’s monarch represents his people. Taken together, these mean that

[The king functions as something of a bridge figure between God and God's people, such that the king mediates God's rule and presence, sharing God's πνεῦμα with the people, and is simultaneously the embodied representative of his people, in whose life, destiny, and rule the people participate.]

From here, Jipp sets out to apply this paradigm to a number of texts from the Pauline corpus, several of which are not directly pertinent to Paul’s “in Christ” language. He does, however, home in on the use of “in Christ” language in Ephesians to illustrate characteristics of the phrase’s broader usage. He finds that

Paul uses ἐν Χριστῷ and its correlates as shorthand in order to mark out the Messiah as God's agent who accomplishes his purposes. The “In Messiah” formula also, however, often has a locative sense, and thereby participatory connotations, in many of these constructions, for Paul clearly uses the formula to refer to believers as sharing in the identity of the Messiah.

Jipp does not explain why a locative sense of the preposition ἐν should necessarily imply a participatory connotation of the phrase. As we have seen, this confusion of lexical categories of the preposition ἐν with contextual functions of the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ is endemic in modern discussions of Paul’s “in Christ” language. It is rooted in the persistent view of the phrase

206. See Jipp, Christ Is King, 150–165 for his illustration of these ideas from Jewish scriptural sources.
207. Jipp, Christ Is King, 149.
209. Deissmann’s invention of the new lexical category “mystical in” epitomizes this, but the error can be traced back to Baur.
as a “formula,” a linguistic cipher for a conceptual construct. Notwithstanding this problem with Jipp’s description, however, his observation that Paul uses the formula to indicate believers’ “sharing in the identity of the Messiah” is astute. Jipp points specifically to being co-resurrected and co-exalted with Christ in Eph 1:20 and 2:6 and the use of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ in 2:6 to modify the verbs συνήγειρεν and συνεκάθισεν. Jipp describes this use as entailing “both instrumental and locative senses”—Christ is the means of salvation because his people experience what he experienced. It would therefore perhaps be more accurate to speak of sharing in the messiah’s experiences rather than his identity and to avoid adducing lexical categories in order to bolster this logic. But in any case, as we will see below in chapters four and five, this use of ἐν χριστῷ proliferates elsewhere in the Pauline corpus and is related—though differently than Jipp supposes—to Paul’s messianic interpretation of Jewish scriptural traditions.

Conclusion

To summarize, Paul’s use of the expression ἐν χριστῷ has attracted considerable attention throughout the history of modern interpretation, and the questions of how Paul developed the phraseology and what it means have been met with a diverse array of answers. There are, however, two patterns which emerge from modern discussions of the problem of Paul’s “in Christ” language. The first is that the syntagm ἐν χριστῷ has very often been treated as a concept—“the ἐναι ἐν Χριστῷ,” “the primitive Pauline watchword” “the idea of ‘being in Christ,’” “the one great ever recurring formula of ἐν κυρίῳ (Χριστῷ) ἐναι,” “a

211. Baur, Paul the Apostle of Jesus Christ, 1:283.
212. Deissmann, Paul, 140.
213. Reitzenstein, Hellenistic Mystery-Religions, 81.
brachyology for partaking in the Mystical Body of Christ,”
215 the *Indikativ* of the Christ-event,
216 “a social concept,”
217 or “the ἐν χριστῷ-concept.”
218 This is a mark especially of older studies, but the fact that we are all heirs to this tradition is betrayed by the more recent interest in the phrase almost exclusively as it pertains to concepts such as union or participation.
219 The problem is that the expression ἐν χριστῷ is a manner of speaking, not a concept. The second pattern in modern interpretation is that where messianism enters the discussion of Paul’s “in Christ” language, it is treated as an ideology. Finding Jewish particularism or transcendent eschatology objectionable, the word χριστός is glossed in any number of ways, except “messiah.” And the few who do read ἐν χριστῷ as “in the messiah” also treat messianism as an ideology, just an ostensibly more fitting one concerning, for instance, the messiah’s eschatological union with the elect or ideal kingship. The problem here is the stubborn diversity among ancient messiah texts which resists the formulation of a widely held “messianic idea.”

What is needed is a different approach to the problem of Paul’s “in Christ” language which is focused not on the history of ideas behind Paul’s thought but on the discourse in which he is participating. Scholars of Judaism have for some time now recognized that it is more accurate to speak of “messianism” as a diverse linguistic phenomenon rather than a uniform ideology. On this model, any author of antiquity speculating about a figure called by the scriptural term נִשָּׁה, χριστός, or unctus is participating in a Jewish discourse of scriptural interpretation and re-appropriation. That Paul is no exception to this rule is the subject of the next chapter.

As chapter one shows, scholars have neglected to contextualize the phrase “in Christ” within Paul’s use of messiah language and much less the broader phenomenon of ancient Jewish messiah discourse. This is due in part to the received wisdom that \( \chiριστός \) functions as a surname rather than a “title” in Paul’s letters and therefore should not be counted as a properly “messianic” use of the term.\(^1\) In turn, this misapprehension about messiah language in Paul owes a degree of its staying power to the notion of a putative “messianic idea” operative throughout Second Temple Judaism and the correlated opinion that Paul does not appear to espouse this ideology.\(^2\) Therefore, while describing Paul’s letters as ancient Jewish messiah texts ought to be uncontroversial—Paul was a Jew who wrote about a figure he called \( \chiριστός \)—scholarly tradition has muddied the waters. In recent decades, however, scholars have begun to provide needed clarification of both the nature of ancient Jewish

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1. For a classic statement of this view see Bousset, *Kyrios Christos*, 121, and for a recent example see Andrew Chester, “The Christ of Paul,” in *Redemption and Resistance: The Messianic Hopes of Jews and Christians in Antiquity*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and James Carleton Paget (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 110. A similar though more subtle position is taken by Martin Hengel, “Jesus, the Messiah of Israel,” in *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 1–3. The oft-referenced grammatical rationale of this perspective is Nils A. Dahl, “Die Messianität Jesu bei Paulus,” in *Studia Paulina in honorem Johannis de Zwaan septuagenarii* (Bohn: Haarlem, 1953), 83–95; and a deconstruction of this rationale is set forth in Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs*, who proposes that Paul’s use of the term \( \chiριστός \) fits the conventions of the use of “honorifics” in antiquity and that Paul’s letters ought therefore to be counted as evidence for ancient Jewish messiah discourse.

2. See, e.g., the discussion of Baur, Deissmann, Reitzenstein, Bousset, Stowers, and Campbell in ch. 1.
messiah discourse and Paul as a participant therein. By recapitulating and in some instances extending these proposals, this chapter will provide a theoretical framework for analyzing Paul’s “in Christ” language according to the conventions of messiah discourse in ancient Judaism.

From Messianic Idea to Meaninglessness

An opinion frequently rehearsed in modern treatments of Paul’s “in Christ” language is that his Christ looks nothing like a Jewish messiah. Whether it is because he is regarded as the


object of true consciousness rather than a figure of external political concerns, 5 a universal redeemer rather than a nationalist hero, 6 a present kyrios rather than a future king, 7 a patient savior of gentiles rather than a judge of the nations, 8 or an otherworldly potentate rather than a terrestrial ruler, 9 Jesus is not, for Paul, the “messiah according to the flesh,” he is “the Christ … with a whole new meaning.” 10 Moreover, not infrequently is Paul’s phraseology ἐν χριστῷ cited as an expression of this “whole new meaning.” This drawing of antitheses, however, between alleged Jewish and Christian messianic conceptions is not an idiosyncrasy of only Pauline or New Testament scholarship. Indeed, one of its classic statements was given by the great scholar of Jewish mysticism, Gershom Scholem.

Scholem commences his famous essay, “Zum Verständnis der messianischen Idee im Judentum” (1959) by articulating this taxonomy:

A totally different concept of redemption determines the attitude to Messianism in Judaism and in Christianity …. Judaism, in all of its forms and manifestations, has always maintained a concept of redemption as an event which takes place publicly, on the stage of history and within the community. It is an occurrence which takes place in the visible world …. In contrast, Christianity conceives of redemption as an event in the spiritual and unseen realm, an event which is reflected in the soul, in the private

5. See ch. 1 on Baur.
6. See ch. 1 on Deissmann, and Reitzenstein.
7. See ch. 1 on Bousset, Bultmann, and Käsemann.
8. See ch. 1 on Stowers.
9. See ch. 1 on Campbell.
10. Stowers, Rereading, 257.
world of each individual, and which effects an inner transformation which need not correspond to anything outside.\textsuperscript{11}

Scholem asserts that these different concepts of redemption give rise to irreconcilable interpretations of scripture, especially as it pertains to identifying the messiah. Thus,

[w]hat appeared to the Christians as a deeper apprehension of the external realm appeared to the Jew as its liquidation and as a flight which sought to escape verification of the Messianic claim within its most empirical categories.\textsuperscript{12}

In contrast to this Christian “reinterpretation of the prophetic promises,” however, “[t]he history of the Messianic idea in Judaism has run its course within the framework of this idea’s never-relinquished demand for fulfillment of its original vision.”\textsuperscript{13} In short, Christianity has by means of reinterpretation espoused a novel set of messianic expectations, but Judaism has throughout its history retained a traditional “messianic idea.”

\textit{The Messianic Idea}

Scholem’s ability to make such a generalized distinction depends on his understanding of this messianic idea as a stable and widespread set of Jewish expectations concerning the

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messiah. Accordingly, he speaks of a “well-defined conception of Messianism,” repeatedly of the “crystallization” of the messianic idea, of when it “came into being” and when it “begins its historical influence.” And significantly, ancient texts thought to evince the messianic idea are regarded as “manifestations of Messianism,” windows into an ideology preceding, and independent of them. Scholem’s diction thus epitomizes the conception of the messianic idea as an extratextual, suprahistorical, reified conception of Jewish eschatological expectations which has been manifested with varying degrees of completeness in certain Jewish texts considered therefore to be “messianic.” Noting this, Moshe Idel levies this apt criticism:

What concerns me here is [Scholem’s] emphasis on the “oneness” of the messianic idea. ... Indeed, the “messianic idea” is qualified by the assumption that it took different forms, which are nevertheless dialectically bound to the one messianic idea. It is the singular rather than the plural, however, that attracts my attention. This resort to an alleged singularity is backed by Scholem’s view of its continuity, which precluded the existence of fundamentally significant and different models of messianism.

Though Scholem is the figure perhaps most commonly associated with the messianic idea, he is evoking a trope that appears in highly developed forms in the work of other scholars more directly focused on early Judaism and Christian origins. In what follows, I want to illustrate the messianic idea in the work of such scholars. My purpose in doing so is not to provide a full exposition and critique of the messianic idea, but rather to contextualize

20. The focus of Scholem’s essay is the messianic idea in the rabbinic period and beyond. However, he traces it back especially to writings such as 4 Ezra, 1 Enoch, 2 Baruch, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, and Daniel as well as the earlier biblical prophets, though there he detects more diversity among the sources. See Scholem, “Toward an Understanding,” 4–6.
the current state of the field and the resultant theoretical approach of this present study.\textsuperscript{21} A sketch of the classic work of two of the idea’s proponents—one Jewish, one Christian—will serve this purpose: Joseph Klausner and Emil Schürer. Though earlier editions of Schürer’s work appeared first, a subsequent edition which has exerted the most influence on twentieth-century scholarship incorporated emendations in light of Klausner’s work.\textsuperscript{22} We therefore begin with Klausner.

In his \textit{The Messianic Idea in Israel from Its Beginning to the Completion of the Mishnah}, Klausner undertakes to trace the presence and evolution of the messianic idea across a large swath of Jewish history, examining the literature of the Hebrew Bible through the Second Temple era and on to the completion of the Mishnah.\textsuperscript{23} At the conclusion of his analysis of the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha, Klausner announces the emergence of the galvanized messianic idea in a rather gilded fashion:

[Their authors] broadened, even if they did not deepen, the Messianic ideas of the prophets. They adorned them with the flowers of an imagination for which political events and spiritual development … served as stimulus and incentive. And thus was forged that complete Messianic chain whose separate links are: the signs of the Messiah, the birth pangs of Messiah, the coming of Elijah, the trumpet of Messiah, the ingathering of the exiles, the reception of proselytes, the war with Gog and Magog, the Days of the Messiah, the renovation of the world, the Day of Judgment, the resurrection of the dead, the World to Come. Not all the links of this chain are found in

\textsuperscript{21} For recent, critical examinations of the messianic idea, see Michael L. Morgan and Steven Weitzman, eds. \textit{Rethinking the Messianic Idea in Judaism} (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015), which considers the span of Jewish history, and Novenson, \textit{Grammar of Messianism}, 1–33, regarding early Judaism.


\textsuperscript{23} Klausner, \textit{The Messianic Idea}, (translated from the 3rd Hebrew edition). The book has a complex composition and publication history occurring from 1902 to 1923, on which see ix.
every book of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, or in this order; but in
general you find it with these links and in the order mentioned.  

Two important characteristics of scholarship on the messianic idea are exemplified here. First, multiple concepts are gathered into a single, systematized ideology—many “Messianic ideas” link together to form a single “Messianic chain.” Second, the ideology is independent of the sources, and therefore diversity between the sources is explained away rather than integrated into a more suitable hypothesis. Thus the study of messianism becomes detached from the sources. Correspondingly, the messianic idea is also detached from the varying particularities of historical circumstance. Therefore, despite locating the maturation of the messianic idea roughly in the Second Temple period, Klausner regards it as transcending history. Looking back, it is not just that the Hebrew prophets wove the “splendid fabric” of the messianic idea later to be embellished, but the original impetus of the messianic idea was the primitive history of Israel anchored in Adam’s exile from paradise. As Klausner sees it,

The Messianic expectation is the *Golden Age in the future.* … all ancient peoples praised and exalted the Age of Gold which is already past, but only the people Israel related wonders about the Golden Age *which is still to come.* The happy state of the first man in the Garden of Eden was so short that it is difficult to call it an “Age.” … The people Israel did not have a glorious past, hence it was forced to direct its gaze toward a glorious future.  


Hence, the messianic idea took root in Israel’s pre-history and very early exerted influence over the shape of Jewish religion and its view of history. “Development and completion, therefore, were laid in the foundation of Judaism by means of the Messianic idea.”

For Klausner this forward orientation meant that the messianic idea became a vehicle for transcending one’s historical moment and reaching into an ultimate future. Therefore, while he acknowledges the bearing of historical particularities on the prophets’ expressions of messianic hope, he ultimately sees the prophets as rising above their historical circumstances: “their own time is for them the point of departure from which they rise to the skies—to the kingdom of heaven—or penetrate into the mists of the distant future—to the end of the present age.”

Klausner is here waxing eloquent, but the sentiment he expresses is reflected in the way he discusses methodology. In his introduction, he displays an admirable interest in historical specificity, aiming to write a “book which arranges the Messianic beliefs and opinions in all times and periods according to historical evolution, and shows their connexion with and attachment to historical events.” But only a paragraph later he lapses into descriptions of the messianic idea that betray a monolithic conception in which historical particularity is subsumed under the transcendence of the ideology. Thus, “beliefs and opinions” merge to become “one of [Israel’s] most original revelations,” “the indispensable element in the work of the prophets and in the Jewish Aggadah,” “the summation of the most exalted hopes for a shining future, which our greatest and most venerated dreamers await.”

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26. Klausner, *The Messianic Idea*, 25. One is reminded here of what Scholem would later describe as the “price demanded” of Judaism by the messianic idea, though he takes a markedly more tragic tone: “There’s something preliminary, something provisional about Jewish history; hence its inability to give of itself entirely … There is something grand about living in hope, but at the same time there is something profoundly unreal about it … One may say, perhaps, the Messianic idea is the real anti-existentialist idea” (Scholem, “Toward an Understanding,” 35). See also the related criticism of Taubes, “The Price of Messianism,” 599–600.


“monochromatic diachronism,” “the conception … that there is one major messianic idea which runs continuously throughout Jewish history.”

Klausner’s view of the persistence and uniformity of the messianic idea regardless of historical contingencies and textual data is most poignantly illustrated in his treatment of sources that lack obvious interest in messianism. For example, the Testament of Moses, which mentions no messiah, is exonerated from its inattention to messianic expectation on the basis of either shortsightedness given “the time of confusion and desolation after the death of Herod” or incomplete manuscripts, the missing sections of which would presumably have contained the expected dosage of messianism. Or consider his analysis of Jubilees, whose “pale and thin” depiction of the messianic idea may be explained as a decision of the early Pharisees to withhold haggadah “lest the people should … try to force the coming of the Messiah.” Klausner’s reaching for explanations such as a lack of perspective, textual lacunae, or the willful suppression of messianic belief is telling; indeed, the very need to explain why a text lacks proper manifestation of the messianic idea is telling. For Klausner, the messianic idea is a constant, and if it is under-represented in a given text, that is the result of the text’s unfortunate provenance.

Turning more briefly to the influential work of Schürer, _Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi_, his preamble to the subject of messianism strikes a

30. See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 16–18 (here 17). Idel alternatively proposes an approach he calls “synchronic polychromatism,” which “emphasizes the multiplicity of messianic concepts and events while attempting a typology that will not only take in consideration diversity in one limited period of time but also organize the much larger spectrum of literatures and events into more unified categories, or models” (17).


remarkably different cord than would Scholem some half a century later. 33 Whereas Scholem asserts that Christianity had left behind the visible, this-worldly, communal character of the Jewish messianic idea in favor of a conception focused on an unseen, spiritual world and the individual “realm of inwardness,” 34 Schürer locates just such an evolution of messianism within Judaism. As opposed to the “older messianic hope” of the pre-exilic prophets, the messianic hope of the later prophets and authors of the “post-biblical period” “widened and lengthened to embrace the world,” “was related … much more specifically to the individual,” and “became more transcendent, more and more transposed into the supernatural, the ultramundane.” 35 These sorts of generalizations are only possible if one assumes a uniform ideology of messianic expectations. 36 Thus, even though Schürer acknowledges in his historical survey that messianic belief was “fluid,” “in a state of flux,” and “by no means everywhere the same,” he could still describe its “systematization … which determined doctrinally the details of the messianic picture of the future” and resulted in a “learned doctrine.” 37 Thus he speaks of the ancient author “accept[ing] as much or little of it as he wished.” 38 In other words, an ancient messiah speculator could pick and chose


34. Scholem, “Toward an Understanding,” 2.

35. Schürer, History of the Jewish People, 2:493–495. These are the same authors in whose writings Scholem detected the “crystallization” of his version of the messianic idea.

36. Note the related criticism of Scholem by Idel, Messianic Mystics, 32–33: “This is why I prefer to describe Scholem’s view as diachronic monochromatism, an approach that stresses a type of messianism whose most important characteristics consist in an emphasis upon the national, historical, and geographical elements of redemption through the centuries.” The same could be said for Schürer’s “type of messianism” which emphasizes the universal, individual, and transcendent elements of redemption. In both cases a stable messianic ideology is assumed.


38. Schürer, History of the Jewish People, 2:497.
what he wanted, but the stock from which he made his selection was the established messianic ideology, take it or leave it.

Despite then Schürer’s worthy admission of variation and historical particularity regarding messiah texts, his description of messianic hope, like Klausner’s, takes the form of a bullet-pointed, systemized ideology. Schürer’s version of the “Messianic chain” has eleven links: 1) the final ordeal and confusion; 2) Elijah as a precursor; 3) the coming of the messiah; 4) the last assault of the hostile powers; 5) destruction of the hostile powers; 6) the renewal of Jerusalem; 7) the gathering of the dispersed; 8) the kingdom of glory in the holy land; 9) the renewal of the world; 10) a general resurrection; 11) and the last judgment, eternal bliss, and damnation. Once it is established that this is, more or less, what messianism entails, it becomes possible for Schürer to identify a text as “messianic” even if it mentions no “messiah.” For instance, in his treatment of Sib. Or. 3:652–795 he contends “the whole section … is almost exclusively messianic in content, despite the fact that there is but one brief mention of the messianic King at the beginning.” More accurately, there is no mention whatsoever of a “messiah”—Sib. Or. 3:652 reads simply, “God will send a king (βασιλῆα).” Schürer nevertheless deems the passage “almost exclusively messianic” because he finds instantiations of enough of the elements of his messianic idea—namely, 4) through 8)—to consider the ideology present even if he finds no figure called χριστός. In this way, study of an alleged messianic idea becomes untethered from the study of messiah language, at which point methodological confusion ensues.

This methodological confusion manifests *inter alia* in the form of labored efforts to define the terms “messiah” and “messianic.” Returning to Klausner, this is evident in his definitional concerns:

a distinction must be made between the vague *Messianic expectation* and the more explicit *belief in the Messiah*. The definition of the Messianic expectation is: *The prophetic hope for the end of this age, in which there will be political freedom, moral perfection, and earthly bliss for the people Israel in its own land, and also for the entire human race. But the definition of belief in the Messiah is: the prophetic hope for the end of this age, in which a strong redeemer, by his power and his spirit, will bring complete redemption, [etc.]*.43

Oddly, Klausner is able to discern both a “Messianic expectation” with no messiah and, even more bizarrely, a “belief in the Messiah” with no messiah. How this can be is clarified by Klausner’s definition of the term “messiah”:

The word “Messiah” in that special and consistent meaning which was employed in the Tannaitic period and afterward is from a much later time even than that in which the verse “Touch not mine anointed” was written. Thus we can determine with certainty that the idea of the savior and redeemer was not originally connected at all with the idea of “anointing.”44

Klausner has here introduced a linguistic problem into the study of messianism by conflating a word in the early sources, “messiah,” and an alleged later technical term with “special and consistent meaning.” This results in the appearance of dealing with a term or category intrinsic to the sources when in fact what is being discussed is an extra-textual, modern construct.45

45. Cf. Green, “Messiah in Judaism,” 1–2 who explains that study of the “messianic idea” has made “the object of inquiry ‘messianism’—an ideology or theology—rather than ‘the messiah’—a concrete textual term or category.”
Staying for the moment with the question of definitions, a more recent example of similar distortion is provided by Gerbern Oegema, whose approach is significantly more subtle than Klausner’s but who also finds that his own preferred use of the word “messiah” does not always square with its use in the sources. He helpfully observes that in the Hebrew scriptures there are not only texts in which one finds the word מֶשְׁחָה but also texts without the word that are nevertheless later interpreted as referring to a “messiah.” This is a sensible rubric for identifying sources for the study of messianic beliefs in ancient Judaism. Oegema goes on, though, to adopt a more generalized definition that allows him to include more data: “A Messiah is a priestly, royal or otherwise characterized figure, who will play a liberating role at the end of time.” Thus “the field of eschatology and … the conceptualization of the (eschatological) liberator … become the basic criteria for choosing the ‘messianic passages’” in his study. What is really under examination is not the specific category of messiahs but the general category of eschatological redeemers.

Klausner and Oegema’s definitions illustrate a propensity to label the broad categories of eschatology and eschatological redeemers with the considerably more narrow terms “messianic” and “messiahs.” In fact, this misapplication of terms is widespread enough to draw the attention of notable detractors. Already in the mid-last-century, Marinus de Jonge diagnosed this terminological malady, opting instead for an admirably more straightforward approach:

46. Oegema, Anointed and His People, 21–27.
47. Oegema, Anointed and His People, 26.
I shall use the word “anointed” (“Messiah”) only where the sources use the corresponding word … use of the term “messianic expectation” should be restricted to the expectation of a redeemer who is actually called Messiah.  

Despite the common sense of this approach taken by Jonge, the range of meanings for “messiah” and “messianic” continued to grow, each scholar proffering his own definition. Thus, despite Chester’s efforts to gather the various definitions under four categories, his comment about the appearance of “as many different definitions of messianism as there are those who write about it” rings true. This proliferation of definitions in the secondary literature gives the terminological problem surrounding the word “messiah” the appearance of an unavoidable quagmire native to the landscape of messianism. But in reality it is an invented problem whose staying power consists only of the inertia of scholarly tradition and whose ill effects outweigh any supposed benefits. Thus Matthew Novenson:

the prevailing definition-first approach has frequently resulted in the bizarre spectacle wherein a modern interpreter claims that a figure called messiah in an ancient text is actually not a messiah sensu stricto, while another ancient character is indeed a messiah despite never being so called in the primary sources. The reason for this spectacle is clear enough. It comes about because scholars are keen to identify the origins of the concept “eschatological redeemer” (or equivalent), and because of the weight of tradition they insist on using the word messiah for this concept. The glaring problem with doing so is that messiah is an ancient word with its own ancient range of meaning, so to assign it a definition as a modern technical term is, ipso facto, to obscure its meaning in any given ancient text.


50. Chester, Messiah and Exaltation, 193–205 (193). For representative German scholarship, see Oegema’s list of eleven definitions in Oegema, Anointed and His People, 24–26nn29–36. For Anglophone contributions, see Novenson’s litany of sixteen in Novenson, Grammar of Messianism, 26–27.

51. Novenson, Grammar of Messianism, 28 (italics original).
This terminological problem, which is rooted in the confusion of a scholarly construct of questionable usefulness with a lexeme in the primary literature, has detrimentally refracted the historical sources, impairing our ability to see what is actually there.

Paul’s letters are some of these sources which have been subject to distortion on the basis of a preconceived ideology of messiahship. To the examples already adduced earlier in this chapter and in chapter one, we may add the following: Baur explicitly pits Paul against Judaism, asserting,

The apostle … saw in the death of Christ the purification of the Messianic idea from all the sensuous elements which cleaved it to Judaism, and its elevation to the truly spiritual consciousness where Christ … is infinitely above Judaism.52

William Wrede also finds Paul’s Christ to be something other than a messiah, averring,

The ordinary conception of a Messiah does not suffice to characterize the Christ of Paul. For the significance of the Pauline Christ is valid, not for Judaism, but for mankind. On the other hand he is, in essence, something quite different from a man raised up to be Messiah.53

The messianic idea looms here as a backdrop against which Paul’s writings, despite his prolific use of the word χριστός, do not appear to evince any real interest in messiahship. This approach also presaged later scholarship which, for somewhat different reasons, asserts the same. Echoing Baur and Wrede, Andrew Chester explains, “Paul sees Jesus as fulfilling Jewish messianic hope and bringing final deliverance; but he sees him as doing so in a different way and on a different level to anything within Jewish messianic tradition.”54 More bluntly, Magnus Zetterholm concludes, “In Paul’s letters … any tendency to stress the

54. Chester, “The Christ of Paul,” 120.
messiahship of Jesus has vanished into thin air.\textsuperscript{55} And more starkly still, Lloyd Gaston avers, “For Paul, Jesus was neither a new Moses nor the messiah.”\textsuperscript{56} To this latter claim, John Collins is surely right to say that if this is so, “then words have no meaning.”\textsuperscript{57} This is a telling remark, for in many cases it is not in fact language which counts, but rather alleged ideologies.\textsuperscript{58}

This type of analysis is also evident in the more equivocating description presented by George MacRae in a posthumously published essay. Asserting “the relative absence of messianic issues” in Paul’s letters, MacRae explains that Paul’s thought “is strikingly reminiscent of the main lines of Jewish royal messianism, but transformed from the arena of the future of history to that of a transcendent future.”\textsuperscript{59} He goes on: “Paul could envision Christ as a messianic leader … but he does so without reference to the limited concept of Messiah as traditionally known,”\textsuperscript{60} and “[t]he Son of God is indeed the Messiah, but for Paul the operative categories go beyond classical messianic ideology.”\textsuperscript{61} In conclusion, “[t]hese categories may be said to be Jewish messianic categories also, but they are not the central ones in the Judaism of the period.”\textsuperscript{62} Despite his acknowledgement of Paul’s engagement


\textsuperscript{57.} Collins, Scepter and the Star, 2. He specifically has Gaston in mind.

\textsuperscript{58.} Note Chester, “The Christ of Paul,” 112: “Paul is of course aware that χριστός has the basic sense of ‘anointed one,’ denoting the messiah … but he is not concerned with this as a theme in his letters” and Zetterholm, “Paul and the Missing Messiah,” 37: “To be sure, Paul frequently uses the word christos, ‘Christ, … but there is almost complete unanimity among scholars that this expression has become a proper name and that it has lost its messianic overtones almost entirely.”


\textsuperscript{60.} MacRae, “Messiah and Gospel,” 172.

\textsuperscript{61.} MacRae, “Messiah and Gospel,” 173.

\textsuperscript{62.} MacRae, “Messiah and Gospel,” 184–185.
with the category messiah, MacRae’s talk of “the main lines of Jewish royal messianism,” the “concept of Messiah as traditionally known,” and “classical messianic ideology” all depends on a discernible messianic idea against which Paul’s thought, as MacRae sees it, may be sized up and found to have outgrown its Jewish parameters.

**Messiah and Indeterminacy**

This approach by MacRae is surprising given the other influential contributions in the anthology to which his own essay belongs. These studies represent a tectonic shift in the study of ancient messianism and epitomize a rejection of the messianic idea in favor of emphasizing diversity and incoherence between ancient messiah texts and even the apparent meaninglessness of messiah language. In the collection’s preface, Jacob Neusner explicitly decries “[b]ooks on ‘the messianic idea in Judaism,’” which “employ the category of ‘messianism,’ or ‘the messianic doctrine in Judaism’” in order to harmonize primary sources “that do not speak the same language of thought, that refer to distinctive conceptions and doctrines of their own.” He claims that the essays which follow propose instead “to describe things item by item … until all the components have had their say, one by one.” Accordingly, John Collins, having surveyed sources from the Maccabean period, concludes, “It is evident … that messianism was neither widespread nor prominent in this period and that there was no one ‘orthodox’ notion of ‘the Messiah.’” He goes on, however, to explain that

> [t]he traditions on which Davidic messianism was based were preserved, but these in themselves did not ensure any lively expectation. The presence or

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absence of messianism was primarily determined by the political attitudes and circumstances of the different groups within Judaism.67

In other words, while there is no evidence of a uniform and ubiquitous set of beliefs about the messiah, there is a stable set of scriptural traditions which undergirded messiah speculation but whose interpretation varied with the diverse historical circumstances of their interpreters. This is a more salutary framework for describing ancient messiah discourse, the main lines of which we will return to presently. Collins’s conclusions, however, are relatively more subtle than some of the other contributors to the collection.

James Charlesworth notes the same diversity among the sources, observing, for instance, that in the so-called pseudepigrapha one finds only “various beliefs, not one belief about the Messiah.”68 His evaluation of the Dead Sea Scrolls, however, goes a step further. As Charlesworth sees it, their authors “left us no clue by which to recognize the Messiah or Messiahs; we are given no blueprint or script for him or them.”69 In the end, his conclusions are even more bald: “There is no content for messianism”; “[t]he functions of the Messiah are not clear; there is again no script.”70 And again in a later essay, he contends that “frequently contradictory messianic predictions prohibit anything approximating coherency in early Jewish messianology” and that “it is impossible to define, and difficult to describe the messianology of the early Jews.”71 Where Collins sees varying interpretations of stable scriptural traditions, Charlesworth sees no “script” at all. What is more, where Collins understands varying historical circumstances as catalyzing diverse interest in messiah speculation, Charlesworth sees an overarching historical circumstance as stifling the ability of ancient authors to coherently express their messianic beliefs. Thus he explains that the

author of 4 Ezra “was writing under exasperating circumstances that would preclude consistent reflection.”\(^{72}\) And concerning earlier authors, Charlesworth speaks of “the nonsystematic phenomenological expressions of real and enslaved people struggling with the impossibility of describing the future,” and he explains that “[t]he apparent chaotic thought is actually the necessarily unsystematic expressions of Jews subjugated to the experienced evilness of a conquering nation.”\(^{73}\) Despite his rejection of the messianic idea, Charlesworth’s line of reasoning here is reminiscent of Klausner’s compulsion, discussed above, to explain why certain texts lack a proper manifestation of the messianic idea. One gets the impression from Charlesworth’s statements that had circumstances been more conducive, early Jewish authors would have provided us with a more coherent account of their beliefs about a messiah. In this way, there remains a latent interest in the messianic idea as the object of inquiry.

Not so, however, for William Scott Green. In his essay in the same anthology, Green, taking aim at leading lights such as Schürer, Klausner, Scholem, and others, laments that study of the “messianic idea” has made “the object of inquiry ‘messianism’—an ideology or theology—rather than ‘the messiah’—a concrete textual term or category.”\(^{74}\) Green’s complaint here is not entirely new. Almost three decades earlier, Morton Smith had detected the discrepancy between modern scholarly uses of the terms “messiah” and “messianic” and the use of the term “messiah” in the primary sources. Smith explains,

Beside such instances where no messiah whatever is to be found in [a text considered “messianic”], there are a number of passages where the word “messiah” does appear, but refers to some anointed functionary who may

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72. Charlesworth, “From Jewish Messianology to Christian Christology,” 245. Not only this, but the author was apparently plagued by dispositional inhibitions: “he was one of the apocalyptists, and they were circuitous in the development of thought and self contradictory.”


have nothing whatever to do with the End, and in any case owes his title to a position quite other than that normally, in modern usage, called messianic.\(^{75}\)

Similarly, several years later Jonge, already mentioned above, observed that in scholarly discourse

> [t]he word ‘Messiah’ is commonly used to denote any figure who brings about future salvation of any kind, regardless as to whether the source in question uses the term or not. The word ‘messianic’ has acquired a correspondingly wider range of meanings, and is even used in connection with passages which do not speak of a future deliverer (let alone one which is actually termed Messiah) at all.\(^{76}\)

For his part, Green determines to overturn this habit of describing primary sources with a term lifted from those sources but invested with a different meaning. Accordingly, he conducts a rapid fire survey of the use of the term “messiah” in the relevant primary literature. Green notes that in those texts that would eventually comprise the Hebrew Bible, the term never refers to an eschatological figure. And in later Jewish sources the use of the term is varied, denoting kings, priests, prophets, warriors, and heavenly figures. Further, Green draws attention to both the term’s absence in much of the literature and its relatively infrequent use compared to other titles.\(^{77}\) Finding then that the sources “offer little evidence of sustained thought or evolving Judaic reflection about the messiah,” Green concludes that “[i]n early Jewish literature, ‘messiah’ is all signifier with no signified; the term is notable primarily for its indeterminacy.”\(^{78}\) In other words, “messiah” the technical term with a “special and consistent meaning,” as Klausner put it, is traded for “messiah” the indeterminate lexeme. Absent a messianic idea, “messiah” means nothing at all.\(^{79}\)

79. Klausner, The Messianic Idea, 8. As it happens, this, for Green, accounts for the oft-rehearsed opinion that Paul used χριστός as a surname for Jesus, a usage possible because of the “initial
The irony of this claim is not lost on Novenson. He explains that scholars such as Klausner and Green have together, despite their differences, “created the confusion by granting special status to messiah language, supposing it to be either uniquely meaningful … or uniquely meaningless.”80 The fresh perspective on the primary sources offered by Green and his collaborators is welcome. However, it does not warrant the conclusion Green draws. As Novenson clarifies,

The problem with the minimalist school is that it is thought to have proved one thing, when in fact it has proven another … It is not that messiah language does not have meaning, just that its meaning does not consist in the manifestation of a reified messianic idea.81

What then does messiah language mean? Or better, how does it mean? Returning for a moment to Neusner, his programmatic remarks on the study of diversity within Judaism—what he calls multiple “Judaisms”—reveal an overlooked path forward. He writes,

these several systems produced by different groups of Jews assuredly do exhibit traits in common. For example, they universally appeal to the same Hebrew Scriptures. But in fact points in common underline the systems’ essential diversity. For if we ask a group to specify those verses of Scripture it finds critical and to explain their meaning, we rarely hear from one a repertoire of verses found equally central in the system of some other distinct group. Still less do the interpretations of those verses of Scripture shared among the several groups coincide. It follows that, in the history of Judaism, we can identify numbers of different Judaisms.82

As concerns messiah speculation within so many “Judaisms,” Neusner makes a crucial observation but severely underestimates its significance. All messiah discourse appeals to Jewish scripture, but this is not, pace Neusner, an incidental thing. The coherence of messianism, the way in which the term “messiah” conveys meaning, is that it invokes the indeterminacy” of the word (Green, “Messiah in Judaism,” 4).

80. Novenson, Christ among the Messiahs, 44.
81. Novenson, Christ among the Messiahs, 41.
82. Neusner, “Preface,” xii.
language of scripture. Therefore, despite significant diversity between the anointed figures in ancient messiah texts, it is not accurate to assert, as does Neusner, that these texts “do not speak the same language of thought.” They in fact do speak the same language of thought, the language of scripture, and this is no small thing. What is more, we will see that they speak the language of a relatively small group of scriptures; there is indeed “a repertoire of verses” commonly adduced in ancient messiah discourse. Yes, their interpretations are diverse, but for our purposes all that means is that there is no standard by which to exclude Paul from the circle of ancient Jewish messiah speculators. He, like all the others, was participating in the Jewish interpretative enterprise of describing his messiah in the language of scripture.

**Messiah and Scripture**

The interpretation of scripture was an integral fixture of Jewish culture in antiquity. James Kugel describes the regrouping of the Jews upon return from exile and explains that for them


84. I use the word “scripture” rather than “bible” because the latter term is associated with canonical boundaries reified in later periods and because those boundaries are variously defined by different communities. On this see Hindy Najman, “The Vitality of Scripture Within and Beyond the ‘Canon’,” *JSJ* 43 (2012): 497–518 and Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016). Nevertheless, it is evident among the primary texts pertinent to this study that their authors considered certain antecedent texts authoritative, texts described here as “scripture.” Additionally, I also prefer the word “interpretation” over “exegesis” to describe the ancient re-appropriation of scripture. This is to acknowledge the innovation involved in such reuse. In this connection, Najman acknowledges that the comparison of interpretative practices across “non-canonical” Jewish texts, early Christian literature, and later rabbinic texts “has proven to be both illuminating and very productive for understanding the history of biblical interpretation.” She cautions, however, that “(1) this approach, … can reduce interpretations to exegesis of an already authorized scriptural text, without attending to ways in which the texts are reading against the sense of scripture and even creating a new scripture. (2) It can also reinforce … teleological orientation towards the goal of later Midrash, instead of thinking through the vibrant and variegated interpretive imaginations and scriptural productions of the tradents of Second Temple and post-destruction Judaism” (Najman, “The Vitality of Scripture,” 512).
“[i]t is as if the past had to be consulted … in order to find a program for Judea’s future.”

This recourse to the past for the purpose of imagining the future was a recourse to scripture. “For where was the past to be found? The hills of Judea could not speak to the people … The past was in texts.” However, the past was not explored for its own sake, “but for what message it might yield, and this is necessarily predicated on an interpretive stance.” This interpretative activity of bringing the past to bear on the present consisted of “varied attempts at ‘biblicizing’ recent events” or “endow[ing] them with a biblical glow” by describing them in the language of scripture. In this way, “the present is … encouraged to become part of biblical history,” thus “revealing a divine plan not apparent in recent history.” Michael Fishbane too observes this drive to relate scriptural tradition to present circumstance and sees it as an enduring feature of Judaism. He writes, “The voices of Israel's teachers will struggle to speak anew in traditions and words handed down from the past: Jacob and his exegetical imagination will always be a supplanter seeking the blessing of antiquity.” In seeking to describe this interpretative imagination, Fishbane finds that “across the breadth of Judaism, it is not only the insistent recourse to the Bible that marks its creativity, but the very midrashic mode of correlating Scriptures among themselves and with


86. Kugel, “Early Interpretation,” 37 (italics original). Kugel is here speaking specifically about Chronicles as a re-presentation of earlier scripture and as an illustration of a more general phenomenon. For a specific and extended exploration of this paradigm applied to a later text see Hindy Najman, Losing the Temple and Recovering the Future: An Analysis of 4 Ezra (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).


new values, virtues or events."\textsuperscript{91} Thus out of the connections drawn between text and text and between text and history, “Jewish thought and theology arise.”\textsuperscript{92} This drive to continually re-appropriate the text was part and parcel of what Shaye Cohen calls “a scripturally oriented society,” a culture in which 

[p]eople studied scripture, memorized it, and tried to live by it. In order to understand God's ways, they meditated on it. When praying, they quoted from it liberally, and in their public liturgies they read it and studied it. They sought the meaning of current events not through the writing of histories but through the study of scripture.\textsuperscript{93}

Moreover, this was not limited to the region of Palestine or the use of Hebrew literature. Looking to the diaspora, Tessa Rajak finds the same dynamics at play among Greek-speaking Jews:

if there is one unifying factor which allows us to talk of a [Hellenistic-Jewish] tradition, this lies not in its singleness, but primarily in its consistent engagement with an authoritative literary corpus, the Greek versions of the Hebrew Bible.\textsuperscript{94}

In short, “[t]he mental furniture of literate Jews was biblical.”\textsuperscript{95}

In this cultural milieu, scripture took on a prominent role in the production of new literature. Cohen continues, “All of the Jewish literature written in the Hellenistic and Roman periods draws on the Tanak for imagery and ideas—ancient Judaism has left us few works that are ‘secular’ or nonreligious.”\textsuperscript{96} Hindy Najman sees this relation between

\textsuperscript{93}. Shaye J. D. Cohen, From the Maccabees to the Mishnah (London: John Knox, 2006), 192.
\textsuperscript{94}. Tessa Rajak, Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 222.
\textsuperscript{95}. Rajak, Translation and Survival, 230.
\textsuperscript{96}. Cohen, Maccabees to the Mishnah, 185.
scriptural interpretation and literary production as a pursuit to preserve contact with Israel’s God in an era when the thunder of Sinai and the voices of the prophets had fallen silent. She explains, “To understand how divine encounter survived, how it was reimagined, … it is essential to grasp … how new texts came to be produced and how old texts, figures and concepts were extended and transmitted by later tradents.”

Najman goes on to describe this dynamic of extension and transmission:

scriptures … have an excess of vitality that expresses itself in the fact that they provide the basis for new texts. … they give rise to emulations that purport to “say the same” as the original scripture although they are self-evidently different. … To acknowledge certain texts as scriptural is to recognize them as possessing an excess of vitality, more life than ordinary texts, and it is the nature of life to generate life, to sustain and reproduce itself. Insofar as scripture is authoritative, it is also generative.

Thus the interpretation of old texts and the writing of new texts was not merely a function of the need to “biblicize” present circumstances, as Kugel describes it. It was also a function of how the nature of the texts themselves was understood. They were living literature demanding to be heard anew.

This dynamic of the generative quality of scripture is clear not only in non-Christian Jewish literary production, but also in the composition of new texts by those Jews belonging to the early Jesus movement. Donald Juel explains, “The first believers were Jews, for whom conversation with the Sacred Scriptures was the primary mode of theological reflection.” And while it is true that “Christianity began … as a response to events focusing on a particular person, Jesus of Nazareth,” “the response required a language, and the language of Jesus’ followers was that of the Bible,” that is, the Jewish scriptures. Thus, those Jews authoring new texts about Jesus not only explicitly referenced and interpreted scripture, but

100. Juel, Messiahic Exegesis, 14.
for them “[t]he results of interpretation have been incorporated into the language of faith.”\textsuperscript{101} Or as Rowan Greer puts it, “the New Testament writers do more than cite the text of Scripture. They are saturated in it, and the biblical idiom comes naturally to their lips.”\textsuperscript{102} The diction of early Christian literature is scriptural through and through, and this is the result of the Jewish “scripturally oriented society” to which its authors belonged.\textsuperscript{103}

**Messiah Speculation as Interpretative Discourse**

The role of scriptural interpretation in ancient messiah speculation epitomizes the common cultural ground between what we anachronistically regard as two discrete religious communities. Recovering a clear sense of this commonality provides a framework for a reassessment of messiah discourse across antiquity which avoids the distortions arising from analyses of purportedly competing messianic ideologies. As Novenson puts it,

\begin{quote}

in antiquity, virtually all Jewish discourse—and, *mutatis mutandis*, Christian discourse—consisted of scriptural interpretation of one kind or another. … This is the historical context within which ancient messiah texts become intelligible. They represent so many creative reappropriations of an archaic scriptural idiom to talk about matters of contemporary concern to their latter-day authors and audiences.\textsuperscript{104}
\end{quote}

This is as true of Paul as it is of the authors of 4 Ezra, the *Parables of Enoch*, the Psalms of Solomon, the scrolls of Qumran, and so on. But what precisely does the notion of “creative reappropriation” entail?

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In concluding his study of diverse modes of messiah speculation across Jewish apocalyptic literature, Loren Stuckenbruck is struck by the lack of “a basic core tradition … about God's eschatological Messiah.” What he does find, however, is a series of documents composed near the turn of the Common Era by Jews who were inspired by biblical tradition and subsequent patterns and traditions of interpretation to express their hope in a world restored to being totally in the control of the God of Israel. Such a dynamic hope drove their descriptions of eschatological events to be “creatively biblical” at every turn.

In using the phrase “creatively biblical,” Stuckenbruck is highlighting the interplay between tradition and innovation that is common to all acts of interpretation which are more than mere restatement. Thus a given messiah text is marked both by conventionality, in that it speaks in the language of scripture, and originality, in that it narrates novel conceptions. These novel conceptions are, by definition, distinct from one another, hence the absence of a “basic core tradition” about a messiah. This variation between ancient messiah texts tracks with the particular exigencies of their authors’ diverse historical situations. Oegema, at the close of his study of messiah texts in antiquity, conceptualizes the influence of historical particularities on the messianic interpretation of scripture in this way:

Concerning a model of explanation of the messianic expectations from the Maccabees up to Bar Koṣiba (as well as the time before and after this period) the following can be stated: mostly biblical or traditional material was normally taken as the starting point. The concepts or traditions were

107. Compare Fishbane’s description of inner-biblical “aggadic exegesis” as entailing “an ongoing interchange between a hermeneutics of continuity and a hermeneutics of challenge and innovation” (Michael Fishbane, Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 428). This is also apropos of messianic interpretation.
108. Accordingly, Stuckenbruck remarks, “If we allow for such diversity in both early Christian and Jewish communities, there is no reason to suppose that, beyond the reconciliation of ‘Messiah’ by Christians to the experiences of Jesus, Jewish and Christian ideas were necessarily very distinct from one another” (Stuckenbruck, “Messianic Ideas,” 113n44).
taken over, adapted and reinterpreted within the situation of the author. In this process of reinterpretation … historical factors have played a decisive role.109

These historical factors may consist of a crisis to which an apocalypticist’s vision of a messiah is a response, as in the case of 4 Ezra. They may surround the failed campaign of a messianic pretender requiring explanation, as in the case of the rabbis’ discussion of Bar Kokhba. They could entail dissatisfaction with an illicit accumulation of power, as in the case of Qumran’s vision of dual messiahs. Or these historical factors may concern the events in the life of someone revered as a messiah, as in the case of early Christian literature. The empirical circumstances are diverse, but all messianic interpretation may be characterized as a process in which “text and history meet.”110

This raises the question, though, as to how such diverse portraits of messiahs can be drawn from one pool of scriptural resources. Nils Dahl’s revisionist description of messiah speculation provides a paradigm for understanding this:

Several works on the origins of Christology speak about sources and influences in a manner that evokes the image of a complicated watershed—say the Mississippi water basin, in which water from innumerable sources runs through creeks and streams and finally comes together in the mighty river. It might be wise to exchange this image for the notion of a “language-game,” to use the term of Wittgenstein. Consider the game of chess. … What really matters … are the rules of the game. They allow for innumerable moves, so that one game of chess is never like any other. … very important rules for christological language were given in the Scriptures Christians received from the Jews. 111

109. Oegema, Anointed and His People, 305. Pace Scholem, for instance, the adaption of tradition to historical circumstance is therefore a feature of all messiah texts, both Jewish and Christian. Thus Novenson, Grammar of Messianism, 196: “I propose that Jewish messianism—of which Christian messianism can be thought of as just an extraordinarily well-documented example—always and everywhere involves the interplay of biblical tradition and empirical circumstance. In this crucial respect, there is no difference whatsoever between the Jewish messiah and the Christian messiah.”

110. Oegema, Anointed and His People, 306.

Dahl’s description here is specifically of early Christian messianology because he is directing his critique at a habit in New Testament scholarship of portraying christology as the cumulative and inevitable end-point of the Jewish scriptures. However, the same paradigm—that of a “language game”—is equally applicable to Jewish messiah texts. In fact, across the swath of all messiah discourse in antiquity one can observe common characteristics, “rules” as it were, that guide authors’ re-appropriations of scripture to describe their respective messiahs. These characteristics are also features of Paul’s writings, and they provide a lens through which Paul’s “in Christ” language can be seen as “creatively biblical”—a distinctive manner of speaking that nevertheless follows the “rules of the game” of messiah discourse. Specifically, there are two characteristics of ancient Jewish messiah discourse that are evident in Paul’s writings and essential for our analysis of his “in Christ” language.

**Characteristics of Messiah Discourse**

The first feature of messiah discourse relevant for this study concerns scriptural idioms containing the word “messiah.” Novenson explains that “when one finds the word ‘messiah’ in an early Jewish or Christian text, one very often finds it in a phrase whose structure itself has precedent in one of the ‘messiah’ passages in the Jewish scriptures.”

112. In describing characteristics of messiah discourse in ancient Judaism, I include literary evidence from the period of the composition of those texts which now comprise the Hebrew Bible up through the classical rabbinic era. This range roughly represents the period between the inception of messiah discourse, which is a distinctly Jewish idiom, and the completion of the formative texts of Judaism and Christianity. There are, however, two caveats to this. First, I include evidence from the targumim, which contain layers of tradition, some from the period just delineated but some later. However, none of targumic texts adduced are integral to the argument; in every case they illustrate a feature of messiah discourse extant in earlier texts. On the provenance and dating of the various targumim and their use as evidence for early scriptural interpretation, see Edward M. Cook, “The Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in the Targums,” in *A Companion to Early Biblical Interpretation in Judaism*, ed. Matthias Henze (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2012), 92–117. The second caveat is that I exclude patristic Christian texts. Much of this literature is overtly influenced by Paul’s letters, and therefore their inclusion would introduce circularity into arguments concerning commonality between Paul’s use of messiah language and other examples of messiah discourse.

short, later messiah texts do not just borrow the word messiah, they also borrow messiah phrases.

To illustrate, Novenson points to the phrase “the footsteps of the messiah” in m. Soṭah 9:15: “With the footsteps of the messiah (משׁיחא בעקבות) presumption shall increase and dearth reach its height.”114 The phrase is lifted from MT Ps 89:53: “Your enemies, O YHWH, scoff on the heels of your anointed one (משׁיחק עקבות).”115 Notably, the way the idiom is reused in Mishnah Soṭah does not correspond to its meaning in the psalm. In the former the phrase is a temporal clause indicating the future arrival of an anointed one, while in the latter it is a synecdoche for the anointed king. A second illustration offered by Novenson is the use of “temporal clauses, often with a verb of ‘coming’ or ‘appearing’”116 Examples of this include: “until there comes (עמוד) the messiah of Aaron and Israel” (CD XII, 23–XIII, 1; XIV, 19),117 “until comes (בוא) the messiah of righteousness” (4Q252 V,


116. Novenson, Christ among the Messiahs, 54.

“when … the time of my messiah comes (ὥτη)” (2 Bar. 72:2); “from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ (ἕως τοῦ χριστοῦ) is fourteen generations” (Matt 1:17); and “when he [messiah] comes (ἔταν ἔλθη) he will show us all things” (John 4:25). Precedent for this construction is found in Dan 9:25: “From the going out of the word to return and build Jerusalem until an anointed one (πάντα ἐποίη, ἕως χριστοῦ), a ruler, shall be seven weeks.”

Again, there is a proliferation of a certain turn of phrase in new literary contexts that are often very different from the scriptural source in which it first occurs.

Moving beyond Novenson’s illustrations, we also observe this characteristic of borrowed scriptural idioms in repeated talk of a messiah “arising” or being “raised up.” Examples include: “this is the messiah …, who will arise (Syriac ḏnh, lit. “shine”) from the

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posterity of David” (4 Ezra 12:32); 123 “for the appointed day when he raises up (ἐν ἀνάξει) his messiah” (Ps. Sol. 18:5); 124 “How beautiful is the king messiah who is destined to arise (נלאיך) from the house of Judah!” (Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 49:11); 125 “from you shall come forth before me the messiah … and he shall arise (וא柠) and rule” (Tg. Neb. Mic 5:1, 3); 126 or “thus it is written, that the messiah is to suffer and to arise (אנסה) from among the


124. For Psalms of Solomon I follow the Greek text of Alfred Rahlfs, ed. Psalmi cum Odis, Septuaginta 10 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1931); translation modified from R. B. Wright in Charlesworth, OTP. Note also Ps. Sol. 17:21, 32: “See, Lord, and raise up (ἀνάστησον) for them their king, the son of David … and their king shall be the lord messiah (χριστὸς κυρίου).” On the messiah of Psalms of Solomon see Charlesworth, “Introduction: Messianic Ideas,” 29–32 and Stuckenbruck, “Messianic Ideas,” 93–97.


126. For Targum of the Prophets I follow the Aramaic text of Alexander Sperber, ed. The Bible in Aramaic: Based on Old Manuscripts and Printed Texts: Volumes I–III (Leiden: Brill, 2004); translation modified from Levey, The Messiah, 93. MT Mic 5:3 reads “and he shall stand (standen).” This motif is relatively frequent in the targumim. Cf. Frg. Tg. Num 24:7: “Their king shall arise (הארו) from among them … Exalted shall be the kingdom of the king messiah”; Tg. Ps.-J. Num 24:17,19: “but when a mighty king of the house of Jacob shall reign, and shall be anointed messiah … A ruler shall arise (הואים) from the house of Jacob”; and Tg. Neb. 2 Sam 23:3: “he is the messiah, who is destined to arise (יירש) and rule in the fear of the Lord”; translations modified from Levey, The Messiah, 20, 23, 40.
dead” (Luke 24:46).127 This trope reflects the verbiage introducing the last words of David in 2 Sam 23:1: “the oracle of the man who was raised up (קָם, ἀνέστησεν) on high, the anointed (משׁיח, χριστόν) of the God of Jacob.”128

Despite what appears to be a clear precedent here, there are two issues of note concerning the possibility that 2 Sam 23:1 is a source for this messiah idiom. The first is that the relevant phrase in 4 Ezra 12:32, which occurs only in Syriac, does not use qwm as one finds in Peshitta 2 Sam 23:1, but rather dnḥ.129 The second issue is that 2 Sam 23:1 is arguably never otherwise alluded to in later messiah texts.130 An alternative scriptural precedent for this manner of speaking, however, is a text that is not messianic, strictly defined, but which does appear frequently in later messianic interpretations—Num 24:17: “a star will come out of Jacob and a scepter will arise (קָם, ἀναστήσεται) out of Israel.”131 While in the MT and the LXX the same relevant verbs appear in Num 24:17 as do in 2 Sam 23:1, in the Peshitta one finds both dnḥ and qwm: “a star will shine (dnḥ) out of Jacob and a ruler will

130. Cf. Oegema, Anointed and His People, 301.
131. Other candidates along these lines include Amos 9:11: “On that day I will raise up (נָאשָׁמֶנָה, ἀναστήσω) the booth of David”; Isa 11:10 in the Greek: “… the root of Jesse, who also will arise (ἄναστάμενος) to rule the Gentiles”; and Jer 23:5: “and I will raise up (הָקָם, ἀναστήσω) for David a righteous branch.” The first two appear in Oegema’s list of scriptures often featured in later messiah texts (Oegema, Anointed and His People, 302). John Collins is convinced Jer 23:5 ought to be added to this list (John J. Collins, review of Christ Among the Messiahs: Christ Language in Paul and Messiah Language in Ancient Judaism, by Matthew V. Novenson, JR 93 [2013]: 90–91). For Numbers I follow the Greek text of J. W. Wevers, ed. Numeri, Septuaginta 3.1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982); for Amos I follow the Greek text of Joseph Ziegler, ed. Duodecim Prophetae, Septuaginta 13 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984); for Isaiah I follow the Greek text of Joseph Ziegler, ed. Isaia, Septuaginta 14 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1939); and for Jeremiah I follow the Greek text of Joseph Ziegler, ed. Jeremias, Baruch, Threni, Epistula Jeremiae, Septuaginta 15 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1957).
arise (qwm) out of Israel."\(^{132}\) This suggests that at least for 4 Ezra 12:32, which uses the verb dnh, Num 24:17 is more likely the particular source from which its interpreter drew language to describe the coming of a messiah. Moreover, reference to Num 24:17 would also account for Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 49:11 and Tg. Neb. Mic 5:1, 3, which consistently have “messiah” as the subject of “arise” rather than the object of “raise up.”\(^{133}\)

Something analogous is also likely relevant to early Christian texts such as Luke 24:46, mentioned above, that use ἀνιστήμημι or its cognate ἀνάστασις to describe their messiah’s resurrection. In this connection, Max Wilcox and Dennis Duling following Otto Betz and others note that Rom 1:3–4 is built on a pre-Pauline tradition according to which 2 Sam 7:12 is interpreted messianically, and they correctly perceive the distinctive way early Christian interpreters exploited 2 Sam 7:12’s language of “raising up” in light of their belief in Jesus’s resurrection. According to this theory, the phrase in 2 Sam 7:12, “I will raise up (והקמתי, ἀναστήσω) your seed after you,” was taken as a reference to the resurrection of the messiah.\(^{134}\) Second Samuel 7:12 is a likely candidate, therefore, for the scriptural precedent according to which early Christian authors speak of their messiah being “raised up.”\(^{135}\) Like

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133. Interestingly, Tg. Neb. 2 Sam 23:1 omits the verb “raised up (הקם)” which is present in the MT, and Tg. Neb. 2 Sam 23:3 includes the phrase “destined to arise (דיקום)” which is absent in the MT. Cf. Levey, The Messiah, 40.


135. It is almost certain, however, that the language of 2 Sam 7:12 did not influence the composition of the Targum of the Prophets since it is not given a messianic gloss there. See Levey, The Messiah, 37.

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Num 24:17, then, 2 Sam 7:12 is another scriptural text which is not messianic *sensu stricto*, but which was later interpreted messianically, and which provided precedence for an oft-repeated messiah idiom.

We return then for a moment to the previously mentioned example of the frequent appearance of “messiah” in temporal clauses with a verb of “coming” or “appearing.” There is a better explanation for this idiom than Fitzmyer’s proposal, channeled through Novenson, that Dan 9:25 gives precedent for this manner of speaking. In fact, while the relevant phrase in Dan 9:25 (דרש ישוע, ἕως χριστοῦ) contains the word “messiah,” it does not actually contain a verb of “coming” or “appearing” even though six of Novenson’s seven examples do. Genesis 49:10, however, does: “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until Shiloh comes (שילה כי יבוא עד, ἕως ἂν ἐλθῃ).” Having observed that later messiah texts sometimes borrow idioms not only from scriptural messiah texts but also other scriptural texts interpreted messianically, and knowing that Gen 49:10 is often appealed to in later messiah texts, it is reasonable to surmise that Gen 49:10 rather than Dan 9:25 is more likely to have provided the linguistic resources for describing the coming of a messiah in such temporal clauses.

In light of these examples, Novenson’s description of this first characteristic of messiah discourse concerning the borrowing of scriptural idioms requires emendation. It is not just that later “messiah texts speak in syntactical patterns inherited from scriptural messiah texts.” Rather, later messiah texts speak in idioms inherited from scriptural messiah texts *as well as other scriptural texts interpreted messianically*. This more accurate description of this characteristic of messiah discourse will be integral for understanding how


137. The relevant Damascus Document passages (CD XII, 23–XIII, 1; XIV, 19) use the verb עמד, which is also found in Isa 11:10: “On that day, the root of Jesse, who shall stand (עמד) as a signal to the peoples ….” The relation of the Qumran texts to this Davidic oracle, however, is complicated by the issue of bi-messianism, on which see Collins, *Scepter and the Star*, 79–109.


Paul’s “in Christ” language is a scripturally-derived pattern of speech despite the fact that the exact phrase ἐν χριστῷ is not extant in any literature antecedent to Paul. We will return to this in chapter three.

The second characteristic of ancient Jewish messiah discourse pertinent to this study is the frequent reuse of the imagery of a relatively small number of scriptural texts in order to characterize a messiah. Novenson explains,

most early Jewish and Christian messiah texts also make explicit citation of or allusion to one or more scriptural source texts. This point, in contrast to the previous one, does not pertain to the constructions within which the word “messiah” falls; many citations and allusions appear in nearby sentences and so are syntactically independent of the word itself. They are marked instead by imagery borrowed … to clarify what the author intends by “messiah.”

Novenson illustrates this by noting allusions to Ps 2:2 in 1 En. 48:10: “For they have denied the Lord of Spirits and his anointed one”; Dan 7:9–14 in 1 En. 46:1: “There I saw one who had a head of days, and his head was like white wool. And with him was another, whose face was like the appearance of a man”; Gen 49:9–10 in 4 Ezra 12:31–32: “And as for the lion … this is the messiah whom the Most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David”; and Amos 9:11 in Acts 15:16: “I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen.”

140. Novenson, Christ among the Messiahs, 55–56.


142. Translation of Nickelsburg and VanderKam, 1 Enoch.

143. Translation modified from that of Bruce M. Metzger in Charlesworth, OTP.
One may add to this list allusions to Ps 2:2, 9 in Pss. Sol. 18:7: “under the rod of discipline of the anointed of the Lord”; Jer 33:15 in 4Q252 V, 3–4: “until the coming of the messiah of righteousness, the branch of David”; Ps 110:1 in 1 Cor 15:25: “For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet”; and Dan 7:9, 13 in Rev 1:13–14: “and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man … His head and his hair were white as white wool”; Ezek 39:1, 6, 9–10 in Frg. Tg. Num 11:26: “[Eldad and Medad] prophesied together, saying: ‘At the end, the very end of days Gog and Magog and their armies shall go up against Jerusalem, but they shall fall by the hand of the king messiah. For seven full years the children of Israel shall use their (Gog’s, etc.) weapons of war for kindling, without having to go into the forest to cut down the trees’”; Dan 7:13 in Tg. Ket. 1 Chron 3:24: “And the sons of Elioenai: Hodaviahu, … and Anani (ענני), who is the king messiah who is destined to be revealed. Seven in all”; and Mic 7:6 in m. Soṭah 9:15: “With the footprints of the messiah presumption shall increase and dearth reach its height … for the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: a man’s enemies are the men of his own house.”

These otherwise diverse portraits of messiahs share the common trait of being created using literary features of Jewish scriptures.

What is more, while a broad range of scriptures may be appealed to, there are a few which appear to be favorite catalysts for messiah speculation. Oegema, in his study of Jewish and Christian messiah texts from the third century BCE to the second CE, records all

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scriptural texts which receive a messianic interpretation in the literature of that period. While a wide swath of Jewish scriptures are represented in his tally, he notes a small number of which appear repeatedly.\(^{148}\) His list includes: Gen 49:10; Num 24:17; Deuteronomy 33; 2 Sam 7:13; Isa 11:1–12; Amos 9:11; and Dan 7:13. Novenson cross-references Oegema’s list with other studies by Fitzmyer, Horbury, and Collins which gather similar data, finding his list to be essentially accurate with the exception of Oegema’s inclusion of Deuteronomy 33.\(^{149}\) Novenson does not, however, account for Oegema’s overly broad definition of what constitutes a messiah text, which was discussed above. If a messiah text is strictly defined as a text which specifically discusses a figure called “messiah” and not generally an eschatological redeemer, then the inclusion of Amos 9:11 is debatable. The two references to Amos 9:11 that Oegema cites, 4Q174 and Damascus Document\(^6\) VII, 14–21, do not actually speak of a “messiah” as such.\(^{150}\) That said, Oegema omits Acts 15:16, which relates Amos 9:11 to apostolic work “for the name of … Jesus Christ (\(χριστοῦ\))” (Acts 15:26).\(^{151}\) Thus Amos 9:11 is indeed given a messianic interpretation, but this interpretation is not common enough to warrant inclusion in a list of frequently adduced texts. Taking this into account, the resulting list is as follows:\(^{152}\)


\(^{150}\) In an alternative version of the passage, Damascus Document\(^6\) XIX, 10, a messiah is mentioned, but Amos 9:11 is not cited there. On these texts and messianic interpretation see Collins, *Scepter and the Star*, 87–90.

\(^{151}\) *Pace* Fitzmyer, “Use of Explicit Old Testament Quotations,” 51.

\(^{152}\) My translations from the MT.
Gen 49:10: The scepter will not depart from Judah nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes, and the obedience of the peoples is his.

Num 24:17: … a star will tread forth out of Jacob, and a scepter will arise out of Israel; it will shatter the borders of Moab, and it will tear down all the sons of Sheth.

2 Sam 7:12–13: 12 … I will raise up your seed after you, who will come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He will build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Isa 11:1–2: 1 A rod will come forth from the stem of Jesse, and a sprout from his roots will bear fruit. 2 The spirit of the LORD will rest on him ….

Dan 7:13–14: 13 I was seeing in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of the heavens, one like a son of man was coming. And he approached the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. 14 To him was given dominion and honor and kingship ….

As an example of how such texts repeatedly feature in messiah speculation, Novenson points to the use of Isa 11:1–10 to describe a messiah in what are otherwise “chronologically and geographically diverse” texts—the Psalms of Solomon, the Parables of Enoch, Romans, and the Sanhedrin tractate of the Babylonian Talmud. References to Isaiah 11 are italicized:

See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David … in wisdom of righteousness to drive out the sinners from the inheritance … with a rod of iron to break all their substance, to destroy the lawless nations by the word of his mouth [Isa 11:2, 4] … That all will be holy, and their king will be the anointed of the Lord. (Pss. Sol. 17:21, 23–24, 32)

For they have denied the Lord of spirits and his anointed one. Blessed be the name of the Lord of spirits. … For the chosen one has taken his stand in the presence of the Lord of spirits; and his glory is forever and ever, and his

might, to all generations. *And in him dwell the spirit of wisdom and the spirit of insight, and the spirit of instruction and might,* and the spirit of those who have fallen asleep in righteousness. *And he will judge the things that are secret* [Isa 11:2, 3]. (1 En. 48:10; 49:2–4)⁵⁴

Christ has become a servant of circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises to the patriarchs and so that the Gentiles might glorify God for mercy. Just as it has been written, … *The root of Jesse will be, he who rises up to rule the nations; upon him the nations will hope* [Isa 11:10]. (Rom 15:8–9, 12)

Bar Koziba reigned two and a half years, and then said to the rabbis, “I am the messiah.” They answered, “Of messiah it is written that *he smells and judges* [Isa 11:3]: let us see whether he can do so.” When they saw that he was unable to judge by the scent, they slew him. (b. Sanh. 93b)⁵⁵

Novenson’s point in juxtaposing these texts is to emphasize that despite their differences they share the common trait of speaking of their respective messiahs in terms drawn from a small stock of scriptural texts, in this case all from Isa 11:1–10.⁵⁶ Stated with respect to the study of messianism, the rejection of the messianic idea does not mean the rejection of the coherence of messiah discourse. That coherence consists in the repeated appeal to scripture when describing messiahs, and a relatively small sampling of scripture at that. As is already illustrated by these examples, Paul, for all his supposed distinctiveness on the question of his messiah, participates in this same discourse.

There is another point, however, that I want to draw out from the same juxtaposition of texts, and it is the phenomenon Dahl describes when he quips that “one game of chess is never like any other.”⁵⁷ The Psalms of Solomon, the *Parables of Enoch*, Romans, and tractate *Sanhedrin* each exploit imagery of Isaiah 11 to describe their messiahs—they are all

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⁵⁴ Translation modified from Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch*.


⁵⁶ Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs*, 60.

⁵⁷ Dahl, “Sources of Christological Language,” 133.
playing the language game of re-appropriating the oracle of the prophet. But in doing so the imagery each one uses is distinct—their interpretative moves are different. The author of the Psalms of Solomon emphasizes his messiah’s rod of iron to punish the nations. The author of the Parables is interested in the spirits of virtue with which his messiah is anointed. Paul portrays his messiah as the hope of the gentiles. And the Babylonian rabbis want to show how the test of judgement by scent outed a messianic pretender. All of these messiah texts speak in the language of scripture, and they all draw on the language of the same text, but they all do so differently. Per Dahl, the game is always chess, but the moves are always different.

This same dynamic is evident elsewhere. Compare, for instance, how the blessing of Judah in Genesis 49 is variously used in Paul’s epistle to the Galatians, the Fourth Book of Ezra, and again, tractate Sanhedrin of the Bavli.

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. It does not say, “and to your seeds,” as to many, but to one, “and to your seed,” who is Christ. … Why then the law? It was added because of disobedience until what time the seed would come [Gen 49:10] to whom the promises had been made. (Gal 3:16, 19)

And as for the lion [Gen 49:9] that you saw rousing up out of the forest and roaring and speaking to the eagle and reproving him for his unrighteousness, and as for all his words that you have heard, this is the messiah whom the


Most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David. (4 Ezra 12:31–32)\textsuperscript{161}

“What is his [the messiah’s] name? The school of R. Shila said: His name is Shiloh, for it is written, Until Shiloh comes” [Gen 49:10]. (b. Sanh. 98b)\textsuperscript{162}

Or note how the vision relayed in Daniel 7 inspires varied mises-en-scène for the messianic victories described in Matthew’s gospel, again 4 Ezra, and the Apocalypse of Baruch:

“Many will come in my [Jesus’s] name, saying, ‘I am the messiah!’ and they will lead many astray. … But concerning that day and hour no one knows. … When the son of man comes in his glory [Dan 7:13] and all the angels with him [Dan 7:10], then he will sit on his throne of glory [Dan 7:9]. All the nations will be gathered before him [Dan 7:14] and he will separate them from one another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” (Matt 24:5, 36; 25:31–32)

And I looked, and behold, this wind made something like the figure of a man [Dan 7:13] come up out of the heart of the sea [Dan 7:3]. And I looked, and behold, that man flew with the clouds of heaven [Dan 7:13] (4 Ezra 13:3)\textsuperscript{163}

The last [fourth] ruler [Dan 7:7, 19–23] who is left alive at that time will be bound, whereas the entire host will be destroyed. And they will carry him on Mount Zion, and my anointed one will convict him [Dan 7:26] of all his wicked deeds and will assemble and set before him all the works of his hosts. And after these things he will kill him and protect the rest of my people who will be found in the place that I have chosen. And his dominion will last forever [Dan 7:14, 27]. (2 Bar. 40:1–3)\textsuperscript{164}


\textsuperscript{162} On this rabbinic play on words see Novenson, Grammar of Messianism, 15–16. Translation modified from Epstein, Babylonian Talmud.

\textsuperscript{163} On the correlation between this figure and the messiah of 4 Ezra 12:32 see Stone, “The Concept of the Messiah in IV Ezra,” 309. Translation of Bruce M. Metzger in Charlesworth, OTP.

\textsuperscript{164} Translation of A. F. J. Klijn in Charlesworth, OTP.
As with the passages above alluding to Isaiah 11, there are of course points of overlap in the scriptural imagery that the texts here use. Galatians 3:19 and b. Sanh. 98b reference the same clause in Gen 49:10. However, the former is emphasizing its temporality and the latter the enigmatic word שילה. Fourth Ezra and Matthew both refer to the assembly of nations (cf. 4 Ezra 13:37–40). But in the former they are utterly destroyed, while in the latter they are sorted. The point is that while all of these texts are speaking the same scriptural language, their dialects, as it were, are different. Thus it is possible to speak of both the coherence of messianism as an interpretative enterprise and the diversity of messianologies as the products of those interpretations.

Pulling these strands together, then, we may summarize this second characteristic of messiah discourse in this way: Early Jewish and Christian messiah speculators not only borrow messiah idioms from the Jewish scriptures, but they also re-appropriate broader literary themes and imagery to characterize their messiahs. Moreover, in doing so these authors very frequently draw from a small set of scriptures. However, precisely what literary material from those scriptures they use and how they use it varies, and their resultant messianic portraits are to that extent unpredictable.

**Conclusion**

When the apostle Paul’s letters are assessed against the canon of the “messianic idea,” it appears that, despite his prolific use of the word χριστός, he is writing about something other than a messiah. In turn, his “in Christ” language must be explained as something other than messiah language. As chapter one demonstrated, however, such explanations have been exhausted and found wanting. Alternatively, when Paul’s letters are analyzed according to the conventions of messiah discourse in ancient Judaism—“creatively biblical” speech arising out of the interpretative interplay between textual traditions and circumstantial *nova*—then it is evident that Paul is a participant in the Jewish interpretative enterprise of
messiah speculation. It is the burden of the remainder of this study to describe Paul’s “in Christ” language accordingly.

Glancing back briefly to the characteristics of messiah discourse described above, there is what appears to be a rather piecemeal quality to the way later messiah texts draw on scripture. Novenson summarizes,

As we have seen, the thirty-eight scriptural passages that do contain that word [“messiah”] influence the later messiah texts at the level of lexeme and syntagm, but not, for the most part, at the wider literary level. At that level, the messiah texts typically draw on these other scriptures instead, scriptures that do not contain the word “messiah” but whose rich imagery funds their interpretations of the word. This irony is an important feature of early Jewish and Christian messiah texts: They take the word itself from one set of scriptures and the imagery with which they interpret the word from a different set of scriptures.165

In light of the emendations of Novenson’s conclusions discussed here, this irony is not as pronounced as he depicts it to be. Even so, it is accurate to say that later messiah texts regularly embed patterns of speech from one scriptural tradition in literary contexts constructed in part from the imagery of another scriptural tradition. Paul’s use of “in Christ” language, I propose, exemplifies this exactly. In chapters three and four, we will see how this is the case.

165. Novenson, Christ among the Messiahs, 58.
In the previous chapter I showed that when ancient authors wished to describe a messiah, their diction frequently entailed the use of messiah idioms adapted from either scriptural messiah texts or other texts understood messianically. However, these instances of borrowed phraseology were not exercises in mere parroting, rather they always involved interpretation—the re-appropriation of scriptural tradition to changing circumstances. This chapter will argue that the expression “in Christ” is an example of this linguistic phenomenon. An analysis of Paul’s appeal to the oracles concerning the “seed” of Abraham “in” whom the nations would be blessed indicates that it is from his messianic interpretation of those traditions that the idiom ἐν χριστῷ arises. While this particular turn of phrase is distinctive, the modes of interpretation by which it is developed are within the pale of Jewish messiah discourse in antiquity.

On Words and Ideas

The prepositional phrase ἐν χριστῷ is so common in Paul’s writings (and indeed in modern Christian parlance, scholarly and colloquial) that its use at times strikes the modern reader as trifling. Douglas Campbell, for instance, perceives a “frequent trivial use of the phrase,”
which he suggests is a product of Paul “simply talking of ‘Christ-being.’”\(^1\) While it is not clear how this gloss of the phrase explains either its frequency, its triviality, or even its meaning, it does appear that Campbell regards the expression “in Christ” as an abbreviation of sorts for a prominent concept in Paul’s thought. The words are to be explained on the basis of the idea they express, even if they express it opaquely. This way of handling the evidence is not new. As discussed earlier, Schweitzer claimed the phrase “in Christ” was the most “frequent expression” of Paul’s mysticism but nevertheless considered it a “a cul-de-sac” among the possible paths for exploring Paul’s thought—from the expression “in Christ,” “the real nature of the conception cannot be apprehended.”\(^2\) For Schweitzer, Paul apparently had a well-formed messianic-mystical eschatology, but more often than not he settled for an inept way of expressing it. Therefore, “there should be sought behind the ‘in Christ’ a more general conception.”\(^3\) On this account, it is not Paul’s words that ought concern us, but rather the ideas they articulate, however poorly.

This feature of Schweitzer’s analysis is odd, especially considering his rapping of Reitzenstein’s knuckles for being so enamored with a religio-historical approach that he ignores “the fact … that from the side of Hellenism nothing can be adduced tending to explain Paul’s ‘in Christ.’”\(^4\) Schweitzer’s own attempt at a specific explanation of the phrase, though, is not significantly more illuminating. Indeed, he contended it is not actually as important as it seems, and that its frequency is a function of convenience—“in Christ” made for an easy contrast term with “in the Law.”\(^5\) This too is surely a dead end, however, since

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1. Douglas A. Campbell, *The Quest for Paul’s Gospel: A Suggested Strategy*, JSNTSup 274 (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 100n119. Contrast the opinion of Nils Dahl: “New Testament authors frequently insert a reference to Jesus, for example, in the form of a prepositional phrase or a subordinate clause, while speaking about something else, thus providing warrants for their arguments or exhortations. Such passing references may tell us as much about the significance of Jesus for the actual life of early Christians as do thematic statements about who he was and what he did and experienced” (Dahl, “Sources of Christological Language,” 116).
Paul’s “in Christ” language is not typically part of the formulation of antitheses. In the end, if Reitzenstein failed to adduce anything from the side of Hellenism for explaining Paul’s “in Christ” language, Schweitzer failed to adduce anything of much use from the side of Judaism. His pessimism about the usefulness of examining Paul’s words perhaps led him astray.

On the whole, Schweitzer’s intuition was nevertheless on target—his sense that Paul’s messianic beliefs would yield a clearer picture of the ideas he so frequently articulated with prepositional phrases using the word χριστός. Schweitzer’s way of getting at those beliefs, however, was flawed. Paul was not the passive recipient of preformed ideas derived from a homogenous Jewish messianic-eschatology of the era. Rather, he, like other messiah speculators of his time, was an interpreter ranging through the Jewish scriptures in search of oracles—of words—that could make sense of the events of his moment as he saw them. Or put differently, because all ancient messiah discourse was interpretative discourse, Paul’s messianology is best described not by postulating a reified apocalyptic messianism about which Paul was more or less adept at speaking, but by following what he did with the scriptural sources upon which he drew when writing about the person he identified as χριστός. As concerns the expression ἐν χριστῷ, then, the better question is not how successfully the phrase relays an idea independent of Paul’s words—whether mysticism, union, participation, incorporation, or whatever—but whether anywhere in his writings Paul anchors this manner of speaking in his messianic interpretation of scripture. As it happens, he does this very thing in his discussion in Galatians 3 of the oracles concerning Abraham and his seed and thus provides the evidence necessary to delineate the provenance of his ἐν χριστῷ construction.

6. Cf. Rom 6:11–14 and Phil 3:8–10 where, per Schweitzer, one would expect Paul to draw a comparison between ἐν χριστῷ and ἐν νόμῳ, though he does not.

In your Seed, Who Is Messiah

In his explanation of the relation of law to faith in Galatians, Paul introduces the biography of Abraham in Gal 3:6 and returns to the oracles repeatedly through the remainder of the chapter. In doing so, Paul borrows the language of LXX Genesis at least four times. First, in Gal 3:6 Paul quotes LXX Gen 15:6 almost exactly concerning Abraham’s faith:

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Second, in Gal 3:8b Paul paraphrases a component of the promises made to Abraham which concerns the blessing of the nations. Here he appropriates language that appears in several recapitulations of the promise throughout Genesis, including its extension to Abraham’s progeny. The first three words of the paraphrase appear in LXX Gen 12:3b and 28:14b and the last three in LXX Gen 18:18b, 22:18a, and 26:4b.

| Gen 12:3b: καὶ ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοί πάσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς | Gen 28:14b: καὶ ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν σοὶ πάσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς καὶ ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου | Gen 18:18b: καὶ ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν αὐτῷ (=Ἀβραὰμ) πάντα τὰ ἐθνα τῆς γῆς |
| Gen 22:18a: καὶ ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου πάντα τὰ ἐθνα τῆς γῆς | Gen 26:4b: καὶ ἐνευλογηθήσονται ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου πάντα τὰ ἐθνα τῆς γῆς |

While certainty on the issue is not possible, Gal 3:8b should probably be regarded as a reference to LXX Gen 12:3b for two reasons. First, Paul introduces the quotation as a proclamation made specifically to Abraham. Paul returns several verses later to the question...
of Abraham’s seed, but he does not introduce that here in Gal 3:8. Second, given the wording of the last half of LXX Gen 12:3b, πᾶσαι αἱ φυλαὶ τῆς γῆς, Paul’s use of the alternate phrase πάντα τὰ ἔθνη can be explained as a preference for reserving the word φυλή to denote the tribes of Israel. 8 That said, the reiterations of this oracle which contain the phrase πάντα τὰ ἔθνη are obviously present in Paul’s mind, and this is confirmed by what follows. 9 Third then, in Gal 3:14a Paul refers idiomatically to the promise of multi-national blessing using an expression appearing in LXX Gen 28:4a.

We will return to this verse presently. Fourth, in Gal 3:16 Paul makes an argument concerning the phrase καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου. The exact phrase appears eight times throughout LXX Genesis, always with reference to the promises given initially to Abraham and reiterated to the later patriarchs. 10 The phrase τῷ σπέρματί σου not preceded by καὶ appears an additional six times in LXX Genesis, again all in contexts related to the promises made to Abraham. 11 Paul may have had a certain instance in mind—a likely candidate is perhaps LXX Gen 28:4 since he has just referenced that verse in Gal 3:14 or alternatively Gen 13:5 since it is the initial statement of the promise—but the distribution of Paul’s allusions is wide enough that he probably had the set of oracles in mind rather any particular one of them. 12

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8. The noun φυλή appears only in Rom 11:1 and Phil 3:5. In both cases Paul uses it to refer to his membership in the tribe of Benjamin.


This catena of references to Genesis has drawn the attention of several scholars—Wedderburn, Johnson Hodge, and Stowers—interested in pinpointing a discourse in which Paul’s “in Christ” language is intelligible. This is because Galatians 3 is the only locus in Paul’s letters where the phrase ἐν χριστῷ occurs in conjunction with an analogous phrase drawn from Paul’s scriptural reserve—ἐν σοί (cf. Gal 3:8, 14). These scholars, as opposed to those who describe Paul’s “in Christ” language without reference to comparable linguistic conventions, follow the right evidence. However, in different ways they all draw the wrong conclusions.

As discussed in chapter one, for instance, Wedderburn, noting the linguistic analogy between ἐν σοί and ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, is content to go no further than postulating a conceptual analogy between two agents of divine action—Abraham and Christ. As we will see, however, the correspondence between these two figures in Galatians 3 is not one of analogy but of patrilineal descent as divine fulfillment. According to Paul, Abraham’s seed is the messiah. Wedderburn’s proposal, however, does not take into account Paul’s messianic interpretation of scripture that would lead him to claim such a thing.13

In contrast, the similar proposals of Johnson Hodge and Stowers, also followed by Thiessen, do take patrilineal descent into account, drawing an analogy between the expressions “in Abraham” and “in Christ” on the basis of a proposed discourse of ancestry in which progeny are said to be “in” an ancestor.14 While these accounts of the importance of gentile access to Abraham’s lineage do illuminate important aspects of Paul’s thought, they are not viable explanations of the expression ἐν χριστῷ. First, Stowers’s argument is premised on an antithesis between two manifestations of messiahship—one fleshly and one pneumatic, per Rom 1:3–4. Jesus inhabits the latter and is therefore granted the πνεῦμα, the bestowal of which on gentiles causes them to be “in Christ” and therefore “in Abraham,”

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Christ’s ancestor. This antithesis, however, cannot be sustained because there is nothing in the words or syntax of Rom 1:3–4 indicating that the participial phrases describing Davidic descent and the resurrection are meant to convey a contrast. As Novenson observes, the phrases “are not separated by so much as a particle (e.g., δέ), much less a strong disjunction (e.g., ἀλλά). Syntactically, they are not opposites but complements.” Accordingly, Paul considers Jesus’s Davidic descent an integral aspect of his pre-resurrection messiahship rather than, as Stowers proposes, a delayed manifestation of messianic functions. By quoting OG Ps 68:10 and 17:50 in Rom 15:3 and 9 (respectively), Paul places David's words in Christ's mouth for the purpose of elucidating the significance of things Christ had already done. Paul did not think Christ had forsaken his Davidic-messianic functions; he thought he had fulfilled them.

A second difficulty with the models of Stowers and Johnson Hodge arises from a closer scrutiny of the syntactical parallels drawn between the phrases “in Christ” / “in Abraham” / “in your seed” and phrases such as “in your womb” / “in the loins of his ancestor.” The correspondence is inexact, and the difference is significant. With the former the object of the preposition is a person, whereas with the latter the object is a reproductive organ or associated euphemism. Thus, while the prepositions may be the same in all of these phrases, the idioms are not. Johnson Hodge and Stowers, therefore, have simply not adduced evidence that the preposition ἐν with a person as its object denotes familial descent.

Third, the explanation that Christ’s πνεῦμα grants inclusion in the Abrahamic lineage is undermined by Gal 3:14 and 4:6. Galatians 3:14 describes the results of Christ becoming a curse with two ἵνα-clauses, the first of which is the granting of Abraham’s blessing to


17. Conceivably, “in your seed” entails a gonadic object, but the phrase refers to a person or group of people throughout Genesis. In any case, Paul clearly understood “seed” to be a person (Gal 3:16).
gentiles and the second of which is the reception of πνεῦμα. These two clauses may be read as contemporaneous or as sequential, but in neither case it is exegetically tenable to claim that the second precedes or causes the first—that the reception of πνεῦμα causes access to Abraham’s blessing. Galatians 4:6 is even clearer: “and because (ὅτι) you are sons, God sent forth the spirit of his son (πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ) into our hearts.” Despite this, Johnson Hodge in her paraphrase of Gal 4:6 ignores the subordinating conjunction ὅτι and directly inverts the logical relationship between the clauses: “Once God sends ‘the spirit of his son’ into their hearts (Gal 4:6), the gentiles are now sons, and therefore heirs.”

Finally, the conceptual parallel drawn between “in Abraham” and “in Christ” is not precise. Christ is not portrayed as the ancestor of those who are “in” him. Johnson Hodge and Stowers acknowledge this but do not account for it in their schema. Here the linguistic analogy between a purported discourse in which progeny are said to be “in” their ancestors and Paul’s “in Christ” language fatally breaks down. Its viability would depend on the introduction of a second type of discourse in which siblings or same-generation cousins may be said to be “in” one another because of shared ancestry. No evidence whatsoever is adduced for such a manner of speaking, however, and at this point the complexity of the hypothesis outweighs its explanatory power. What is more, Paul’s statements in Gal 3:26; 4:5–7; and Rom 8:16–17 indicate that his ultimate interest is the correlation between possessing the spirit and sharing in Christ’s divine sonship: “For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God (υἱοὶ θεοῦ) through faith” (Gal 3:26); “and because you are sons (υἱοί), God sent forth the spirit of his son (πνεῦμα τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ) into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba, Father!’ (αββα ὁ πατήρ)” (Gal 4:6); “The spirit himself testifies to our spirit that we are children of God (τέκνα θεοῦ). And if children, then also … coheirs with Christ (συγκληρονόμοι …

18. Johnson Hodge, If Sons, Then Heirs, 72 (italics added). Contrast Baur, Paul, 2:127n2: “the sending of the spirit pre-supposes the υἱος εἶναι.”
20. Thus Johnson Hodge, If Sons, Then Heirs, 105: “The relationship between Christ and gentiles, however, is not expressed in terms of ancestor and descendants. Instead, Christ and the gentiles seem to be same-generation offspring of common ancestors”; and Stowers, “Pauline Participation,” 360: “Those in Christ are not descendants of Christ but contemporary kin.”
χριστῷ)” (Rom 8:16–17). This divine-familial relationship is the end-game as far as Paul is concerned, and gentile access to Abraham’s line is of penultimate importance in his conception of how that relationship is forged. For Paul, πνεῦμα is not the substance of ancestors; it is the substance of God.

Given the phrases ἐν σοί and ἐν χριστῷ in Galatians 3, these proposals attempt to explicate an analogy between Christ and Abraham in order to elucidate Paul’s language. Wedderburn’s discussion of Abraham and Christ as agents of divine action is illuminating as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. For Paul, Christ is not like Abraham, he is Abraham’s seed. Alternatively, Johnson Hodge’s and Stowers’s theories go too far in the wrong direction. Paul’s ultimate vision is not gentiles being drawn into the lineage of Abraham, but rather the blessing of divine sonship, which first belonged to Abraham’s family, going out to the nations. However, there is another, much more neglected linguistic analogy in Galatians 3 which points in a different, more fruitful direction.

“In Your Seed” and “In Christ”

Glancing back to Deissmann’s philological analysis of Paul’s “in Christ” language, we find a completely different argument concerning the phrase ἐν σοί in Gal 3:8. Here, Deissmann makes an astute observation from which he draws exactly the wrong conclusion. Deissmann is (justifiably) convinced that there is a considerable level of innovation involved in Paul’s proliferation of the apparently unprecedented phrase ἐν χριστῷ. To bolster this perspective, he attempts to distance Paul’s language from Septuagint Greek, which he considers to be “Semitic.” Specifically, Deissmann tries to demonstrate that “Paul’s language is influenced by the LXX only in a lexical (lexikalischer) sense, and not a syntactical sense (syntaktischer

21. Hence, there is a conspicuous absence of the Abrahamic lineage motif outside of Galatians and Romans. The one exception is when Paul is bold (τολμᾷ) about his own Abrahamic ancestry in 2 Cor 11:22, but this, he says, is to speak ἐν ἀφροσύνῃ (2 Cor 11:17, 21). Interestingly, he contrasts such talk with speaking ἐν χριστῷ (2 Cor 12:19).

22. See ch. 1.
To do so, he turns to Paul’s adapted quotation of LXX Gen 12:3 in Gal 3:8 containing the phrase ἐν σοί. Noting that in the following verse Paul uses the phraseology σὺν … Ἄβραάμ rather than ἐν Ἄβραάμ, Deissmann concludes that Paul has improved upon the Septuagint’s “mechanical” translation of 3 as ἐν.24

However, Deissmann ignores Paul’s other reference to the patriarchal promise in Gal 3:14, which of course contains the phrase ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. As previously discussed, Paul refers idiomatically to the patriarchal promise as ἡ εὐλογία τοῦ Ἄβραάμ (LXX Gen 28:4). Additionally, however, Paul also alludes to the thrice appended specification of the promise, that God would bless the nations ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου (LXX Gen 22:18; 26:4; 28:14). This allusion consists of Paul retaining the preposition ἐν, altering instead its object by substituting χριστός for τὸ σπέρμα σου.25 And if there is any doubt of the plausibility of Paul making such a substitution, then it is dispelled by his quite explicit predication in Gal 3:16: καὶ τῷ σπέρματί σου, ὡς ἐστιν χριστός. This provides an at-hand rationale for why in Gal 3:8 Paul would write σὺν Ἄβραάμ rather than ἐν Ἄβραάμ. Abraham is not Paul’s messiah; Abraham’s seed is. The use of a different preposition in Gal 3:9 is therefore a function of Paul’s messianic interpretation of Jewish scriptural tradition, not his linguistic superiority over it. Indeed, Gal 3:14 is a case demonstrating the very opposite of Deissmann’s claim that the Septuagint’s influence on Paul is lexical but not syntactical. For there Paul is constrained not by the Septuagint’s vocabulary, but in fact by its syntax.

23. Deissmann, Die neuestamentliche Formel, 68.

24. Deissmann, Die neuestamentliche Formel, 68. On Deissmann’s view of the “mechanical” use of ἐν in the Septuagint see 55.

To my knowledge, the only other scholar to comment at any length on this intertextual dynamic in Gal 3:14 is Dahl, who confines his description to brief suggestion.26 He writes,

The text which underlies [Gal 3:14] is Gen. 22:18 (LXX), part of the report about God's oath to Abraham after he had proved faithful to God by demonstrating his willingness to sacrifice Isaac: “and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.” In Paul's paraphrase, the expression “the blessing of Abraham,” derives from Gen. 28:4, and “in Christ Jesus” replaces “in your offspring.” It is possible that the promise in Gen. 22:18 is more generally the background for the Pauline expression “in Christ Jesus.”27

Thus, according to Dahl the component parts of Gal 3:14a are sourced from LXX Genesis as follows:

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<tr>
<td>Gen 22:18: καὶ ἐνευλογηθῶσιντε ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τῆς γῆς</td>
<td>Gal 3:14a: … γένηται ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ</td>
</tr>
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Dahl does not provide a rationale for why he thinks ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ alludes to the LXX Gen 22:18 instance of ἐν τῷ σπέρματί rather than its occurrence in LXX Gen 26:4 or 28:14. He is

26. See Dahl, “Promise and Fulfillment,” 130–131. Cf. the earlier statement in Nils A. Dahl, Das Volk Gottes: Eine Untersuchung zum Kirchenbewusstsein des Urchristentums (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), (originally published 1941). Wright briefly notes something similar but declines to pursue the idea further, evaluating the hypothesis as an effort “to hang several heavy weights by a slender thread” (N. T. Wright, “Messiahship in Galatians? (2012),” in Pauline Perspectives: Essays on Paul 1978–2013 (London: SPCK, 2013), 535). If one is after a linguistic source, or even merely a linguistic comparison point, it seems to me that however scant the evidence, it is better to look to inter-texts Paul has actually adduced rather than ones of which he makes no mention such as those appealed to by Wright (2 Sam 19:43, 20:1, and 1 Kgs 12:16). A slender thread is better than no thread. As it happens, Wright appears to be warming up to the idea, conceding now that he is “very open to being persuaded that Paul’s incorporative language was developed not least on analogy with language used about Abraham’s seed” (N. T. Wright, “The Challenge of Dialogue: A Partial and Preliminary Response,” in God and the Faithfulness of Paul, 734 responding to Hewitt and Novenson, “Participationism and Messiah Christology in Paul,” 393–415).

likely correct, however, since in Gen 26:3 the restatement of the promise to Isaac is described as “my oath which I swore to Abraham your father” (i.e., Gen 22:18), and since LXX Gen 28:14 refers to the nations as αἱ φυλαί rather than τὰ ἔθνη as appears in Gal 3:14 and LXX Gen 22:18. In any case, it is not integral to the argument here that Paul had one source in mind over another. What is central is that Paul’s paraphrase in Gal 3:14 of the oracle that Abraham’s blessing would come to the nations “in Abraham’s seed” indicates that the expression ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ is a messianic adaptation of the LXX Genesis syntagm ἐν τῷ σπέρματί. Therefore, despite the phrase “in Christ” being unprecedented in the sources, when Paul uses the idiom he is speaking in the diction of scripture.

This is a clear example of Paul’s language exhibiting the first characteristic of messiah discourse discussed in the previous chapter—namely, that later messiah texts speak in idioms inherited from scriptural messiah texts as well as other scriptural texts interpreted messianically. In this case, Paul is borrowing an idiom from a scriptural text that is not a messiah text senso stricto, but which Paul nevertheless regards as a messianic oracle because he understands Abraham’s seed to be messiah. As Dahl puts it, Gal 3:14 “presupposes the messianic interpretation of ‘the offspring of Abraham.’” And as noted above, what is presupposed in Gal 3:14 is made abundantly clear in Gal 3:16. Furthermore, we will see that while Paul does use the idiom in Galatians 3 more or less in accordance with its original literary context, he also uses it elsewhere in other ways that constitute innovative re-appropriations of the syntagm. Again as observed in chapter two, this also is a common feature of the use of borrowed messiah idioms. Therefore, Paul’s “in Christ” language is an innovation, but it is an innovation according to the “rules of the game” of messiah speculation. In short, Paul’s use of the expression ἐν χριστῷ does what we would expect ancient Jewish messiah discourse to do.


Considering again the analogy proposed by Wedderburn between Christ and Abraham, what I am postulating here is more than merely an alternate analogy between Christ and Abraham’s seed. Instead, I am shifting away from analogy altogether as an explanatory category and toward Paul’s interpretative stance—his specifically messianic hermeneutic. Paul’s language does not reflect a simple comparison between two representative figures, but rather a conviction that the promises concerning Abraham’s seed refer to the messiah and that those promises are fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. For Paul then, it is not that Jesus is like Abraham’s seed, rather it is that he, as χριστός, is Abraham’s seed.

This observation about Gal 3:14 was made in passing by Dahl, and it has remained undeveloped and untested in modern scholarship. Specifically, there are two overarching questions raised by this proposal. First, given the claim espoused here that Paul was a participant in the broader Jewish interpretative enterprise of messiah discourse, where does his “reading” of the traditions concerning Abraham’s seed show affinity with, and divergence from other Jewish interpretative traditions? And second, considering the hypothesis that Paul’s “in Christ” phraseology derives from his messianic interpretation of oracles concerning Abraham’s seed, what are its implications for illuminating the functions of “in Christ” language in Paul’s letters? The balance of this chapter will address the first question at length and the second question in a preliminary way which looks ahead to chapter five.


31. Thus the perhaps overdrawn statement in Levenson, Death and Resurrection, 211: “Once Jesus has displaced Isaac it follows that the promises and blessings that had been associated with the beloved son par excellence in Genesis must be available instead through the Christian messiah. This is, in fact, the implication of Paul’s first clause in Gal 3:14.”
Paul’s messianic interpretation underlying Gal 3:14—that Abraham’s σπέρμα is χριστός (Gal 3:16)—raises a significant, two-part question: What were the interpretative traditions and/or innovations by which Paul understood the seed of Abraham to be an individual and that individual to be the messiah? Proceeding on the assumption that Paul’s reading habits were
not alien to the Jewish literary milieu to which he belonged, we turn to explore other examples of Jewish interpretation exhibiting similar characteristics.\footnote{32. The analysis in this section is focused on specific reading practices and points of contact between Paul and other Jewish interpreters. More generally, however, it should be noted that Abraham was a significant personage in configurations of Jewish identity in Paul’s time, and that this was the context in which Paul worked out his own understanding of the patriarch. This broader enterprise pertaining to Abraham and community identity is evident in literature from a range of contexts. See, e.g., see Sir 44:19–23 (second century BCE) in which Abraham’s faithfulness is proven not by his trust in the promise of many descendants as in Gen 15:6, but in his “testing (πειρασµῶ),” which is a reference to the Aqedah in Gen 22:1 (Sir 44:20; for Ben Sira I follow the Greek text of Rahlfs, ed., Septuaginta). “Because of this (διὰ τεσσάρων)” Abraham receives the divine oaths of blessing, and “because of Abraham (δι’ Αβρααµ) the same are reconfirmed to Isaac (Sir 44:21–22; the promise in v. 21 “to exalt his seed like stars” may be an interpolation of the Greek text). Abraham is thus presented as the tested and proven patriarch, and his progeny are those destined to experience blessing due to his righteousness (Sir 44:11–12; see Bradley C. Gregory, “Abraham as the Jewish Ideal: Exegetical Traditions in Sirach 44:19–21,” CBQ 70 [2008]: 73–80; and Jon D. Levenson, Inheriting Abraham: The Legacy of the Patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012], 72). In the roughly contemporaneous text Jub. 15:11–16, 25–34, a slightly different cord is struck. In this account of the establishment of the covenant of circumcision with Abraham, the author of Jubilees includes a command absent from MT Gen 17:14, that any soul not circumcised precisely on the eighth day “shall be uprooted from its family” (Jub. 15:14, cf. LXX Gen 17:14; translation of Wintermute in Charlesworth, OTP). This is followed by a number of observations about the ordinance which emphasize its authority and perpetuity (Jub. 15:25–29), and a prediction that Israel will nevertheless forsake the command, incurring God’s “great wrath…because they have made themselves like the gentiles” (Jub. 15:33–34). In this version of a scene of the Abraham saga, the patriarch is a paragon of Jewish distinctiveness, and the expansions of the circumcision ordinance compared to that found in the MT “are unquestionably directed against the hellenizers of the period. Abraham does what is proper; the hellenizers do not” (Samuel Sandmel, “Philo’s Place in Judaism: A Study of Conceptions of Abraham in Jewish Literature: Part 2,” HUCA 26 [1955]: 163). A final example is Philo’s treatment in De Abrahamo around the turn of the Common Era. Here, Abraham’s virtue serves as proof of the universality of torah. Abraham obeyed God’s commands, “understanding by commands not only those conveyed in speech and writing but also those made by nature with clearer signs” (Abr. 60 [Colson, LCL]). In so doing, Abraham demonstrates “that the enacted ordinances [i.e., the Mosaic law] are not inconsistent with nature” (Abr. 5 [Colson, LCL]). In other words, because he was obedient prior to the giving of the written code, Abraham demonstrates that the Mosaic law is really only an inscription of the universal laws of nature. As concerns Jewish identity in the diaspora, “[a]n anyone who would declare the Jews parochial because of their particular observances … need only consider that the first father of the Jewish people was able to infer those very practices from … the law of nature, to which all peoples are accountable” (Levenson, Inheriting Abraham, 145; see also Sandmel, “Philo’s Place: Part 2,” 217–332; and Annette Yoshiko Reed, “The Construction and Subversion of Patriarchal Perfection: Abraham and Exemplarity in Philo, Josephus, and the Testament of Abraham,” JSJ 40 [2009]: 192–195). If Paul’s understanding of Abraham is distinctive, his is merely one among several distinctive Jewish perspectives on the patriarch.}
Collectivity and Individuality (Galatians 3:16)

Despite Paul’s multifarious handling of scripture it is unusual for him to parse grammar. This, however, is exactly what he does in Gal 3:16: “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed (καὶ τῷ σπέρµατι αὐτοῦ). It does not say, ‘and to seeds (καὶ τοῖς σπέρµασιν)’ as if concerning many, but as concerning one, ‘and to your seed,’ who is messiah (καὶ τῷ σπέρµατί σου, ὃς ἐστιν χριστός).” Perhaps it is this rare moment of affinity with the fastidiousness of modern exegesis that has drawn scholars’ attention and led them to assess Paul’s own prowess as an exegete. However, these assessments are as various as they are irrelevant.33 What matters for historical description is not whether Paul should have read scripture the way he did, but that he did and by what hermeneutical framework he did so. Unfortunately, however, the historical task has at times been eclipsed by evaluative concerns.

The oddness of Paul’s reasoning arises from the fact that זרע and its Greek translation equivalent σπέρµα usually denote collective entities in the context of the patriarchal narratives.34 Paul, however, claims in Gal 3:16 that it denotes a single descendant of Abraham, the messiah. Even so, Paul is clearly aware of the collective sense of the noun, making use of it even just a few verses later in the course of the same argument. In Gal 3:29 he writes, “And if you (ὑµεῖς, pl.) are Christ’s, then you are (ἐστέ, pl.) Abraham’s seed (σπέρµα, sg.)” (Gal 3:29).35 Indeed, Paul appears to be capitalizing intentionally here on the


34. See BDB, s.v. זרע, 4b; and BDAG, s.v. σπέρµα, 2a.

35. See also Rom 4:13, 16; 9:7, 8; and 2 Cor 11:22.
equivocality of the number of the “seed”—an equivocality he has created by his unconventional interpretation in Gal 3:16. The resultant logic is that the Galatian believers belong to the collective seed of Abraham insofar as they belong to the individual seed of Abraham, Christ. We will return later to Paul’s use of Christ as the seed of Abraham as an identifier of believers. For now, the point is that Paul is neither ignorant of, nor has abandoned the collective sense of σπέρμα. By what line of reasoning, then, does Paul also assert that the σπέρμα Ἄβραμάμ refers to an individual?

One hypothesis, most recently and fully articulated by Wright, is that Paul in fact does not interpret σπέρμα individually. 36 He proposes that the comparison Paul is drawing in Gal 3:16 is not between an individual and a collective, but rather between one collective and many collectives—or, to put it in Wright’s terms, between one “family” and many “families.” Paul’s objective, according to Wright, is to emphasize the unity of believers, who comprise one family made up of both Jews and Gentiles, rather than two separate families. Thus Paul reads σπέρμα as it is typically meant—i.e., collectively—but reads χριστός as it is not typically meant—also collectively. This is possible, but it is improbable for several reasons.

First, the plural σπέρματα, the other half of Paul’s comparison in Gal 3:16, is never used in the Septuagint in the way Wright asserts it is used here by Paul to refer to multiple families. 37 Of its five occurrences, only in 4 Macc 18:1 does it refer to people rather than botanical seeds. There, however, the meaning of σπέρματα is actually the inverse of what Wright proposes in that it refers to multiple individuals (presumably the patriarchs) within one family: Ὡ τῶν Ἀβραμιάων σπερμάτων ἀπόγονοι παῖδες Ἰσραήληται, “Oh, descendants of Abraham’s seeds, children of Israel.” Though it would be unprecedented in the Septuagint, it is conceivable that σπέρματα here in 4 Macc 18:1 could refer, say, to the tribes of Israel (i.e., multiple collectives). However, since παῖδες is in apposition to ἀπόγονοι and not σπέρματα,

36. Wright, “Messiahship in Galatians?,” 510–546. See also Ellis, Paul’s Use of the Old Testament, 72; and Boyarin, Radical Jew, 145.

37. Wright lists one example of זרעיות meaning “families” in b. Qidd. 70b (Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 164).
this possibility is excluded on syntactical grounds. A second problem is that in accordance with the typical use of σπέρματα in the Septuagint, all of the occurrences of the word elsewhere in NT literature, including an additional instance in Paul, refer to botanical seeds.\textsuperscript{38}

Third, in the NT writings when the notion of “family” or “families” is meant in the way Wright proposes to read σπέρματα in Gal 3:16, the noun πατριά (singular and plural) and not σπέρμα is used.\textsuperscript{39} Acts 3:25 and Eph 3:15 are both notable here. In Acts 3:25 the promise to Abraham of multi-national blessing is also quoted, but Luke has taken the liberty of opting for a word other than ἐθνη (LXX Gen 22:18) or φυλαί (LXX Gen 12:3) to denote the gentiles. Yet, rather than using σπέρματα from earlier in the quotation (as Paul would have done per Wright’s hypothesis), he uses πατριά. Admittedly, this may not be significant since the speech is making a different point than Paul is making. However, Eph 3:15 (considered authentically Pauline by Wright) conveys something very close to Wright’s understanding of Gal 3:16. Ephesians 3:14b–15 reads, “… the Father, from whom every family (πᾶσα πατριά) in heaven and on earth is named.” Not only is πατριά rather than σπέρμα used to mean “family,” but the notion of a plurality of “families”\textsuperscript{40} is not dispensed with in order to emphasize unity under God the Father (cf. Eph 4:6).\textsuperscript{41} Fourth, the reading of χριστός as a collective singular noun is unlikely. While it is true that there is a strong precedent in the Jewish scriptures for using a name to refer to a group—Ἰσραήλ itself was of course originally an alternate name of the patriarch Jacob—there is no such precedent for titles or honorifics.\textsuperscript{42}

\textsuperscript{38.} Cf. Matt 13:32; Mark 4:31; 1 Cor 15:38.


\textsuperscript{40.} The noun is singular—πατριά—but the use of πᾶς is clear enough.

\textsuperscript{41.} Thus Wright’s expanded translation of Eph 3:15 overstates the case by supplying a second instance of the singular “family”: “the one who gives the name of ‘family’ to every family that there is, in heaven and on earth” (Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 1517, italics added).

\textsuperscript{42.} Wright would certainly be a frontrunner in the race to decry the notion that Paul uses χριστός in Gal 3:16 as a proper name. Nor would he find many hurdles in his way since this is one of the few places where it is widely acknowledged Paul means “messiah.” See, e.g., Chester, “The Christ of Paul,” 110–111.
Finally, though Wright’s reading of Gal 3:16 dovetails well with Paul’s emphasis on unity at the end of the chapter, it is not in fact consonant with the steps of Paul’s reasoning in the intervening discourse of Gal 3:17–19. There, Paul’s point is that the law does not void the promise of Abraham since the promise antedates the law and was yet unfulfilled until the coming of the messiah. Therefore, as Paul understood it, the promise to Abraham and to his “seed” had remained in play from prior to the giving of the law. Thus, Paul’s specific point in Gal 3:16 is not about the unity of Jews and Gentiles in Christ (he makes that point later), but rather that the promise of Abraham ultimately concerned the messiah. The implication is that the promise had not been fulfilled in Israel’s history up to that point, and so it stood “until the time the seed came to whom the promise had been made” (Gal 3:19). Wright’s hypothesis commends itself because, were it correct, Paul may be understood as reading σπέρμα in a way that is closer to its typical meaning in Genesis and χριστός in a way that would provide useful fodder for explaining apparently participatory uses of “in Christ” language (to be “in Christ” would be to belong to an incorporative identity). As demonstrated, though, Wright’s account is unlikely. As it happens, it is also unnecessary for addressing the questions of Paul’s apparent exegetical mishandling of σπέρμα and of the meaning of his “in Christ” language. Paul’s individual interpretation of σπέρμα is actually historically unremarkable, and the interplay between Paul’s emphases on the singularity and collectivity of the seed illuminates certain uses of his “in Christ” language.

Regarding the conventionality of Paul’s interpretation, there are two ancient haggadot with which his individual reading of a collective noun shares a degree of likeness. The first is a rabbinic interpretation in which the collective singular אדם, “humanity,” in Gen 1:27 and 5:1–2 was taken as a “specific singular” referring to an individual, composite, androgynous Adam. For the rabbis, this achieved an easier harmonization of Gen 1:27; 5:1–2, which say


44. Gen. Rab. 8:1; b. Ber. 61a; b. ‘Erub. 18a; Lev. Rab. 14; Midr. Ps. 139:5. See also Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, 52–55.

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God created אדם male and female, with Gen 2:22, which says that Eve was formed from the rib of אדם. The textual basis for this interpretation was the alternation between singular and plural pronouns referring back to אדם. Daube summarizes:

the plural, it was held, indicated not several beings, but one composite being; and the singular was not of a generic character, it did not denote mankind, but it was a specific singular, it denoted one human being only, the first bisexual one, out of whom Eve was subsequently taken.\textsuperscript{45}

Thus the apparent tension between the creation accounts was resolved.

Daube, finding that Paul “avails himself of this method of exegesis” according to which “[a] generic singular is given the force of a specific one,” postulates that Paul may have had this particular interpretative tradition in mind.\textsuperscript{46} This suggestion reaches beyond the evidence. In Paul’s discussions of Adam in Rom 5:12–19 and 1 Cor 15:21–22, 45–49, he indicates no awareness of the tradition.\textsuperscript{47} Nevertheless, the analogy with rabbinic interpretation is illuminating. That is to say, it is not that Paul’s thought derives from a tradition preserved in the Talmud and Midrash, rather it is that Paul and the rabbis exhibit certain common interpretative traits. In this case, grammatical ambiguity could provide enough linguistic slack for Jewish interpreters to untangle theological knots, and Paul’s

\textsuperscript{45} Daube, “Generic Singular,” 441.


\textsuperscript{47} Daube also admits that Paul makes no explicit mention of this tradition in Galatians (Daube, “Generic Singular,” 443). He does, however, take Paul’s mention of καινὴ κτίσις as a reference to Christ, “which suggests a contrast with the first creation” (443), and he suggests that Gal 3:28 “may contain a trace of the myth respecting the first man” (442). In this connection note also Wayne A. Meeks, “The Image of the Androgyne: Some Uses of a Symbol of Earliest Christianity,” \textit{HR} 13 (1974): 165–208, who detects in the “baptismal reunification formula” of Gal 3:28 an allusion to Gen 1:27 in the formula’s third pairing—οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ (181). Meeks contends this allusion “suggests that somehow the act of Christian initiation reverses the fateful division of Genesis 2:21–22,” a view which “presupposes an interpretation of the creation story in which the divine image after which Adam was modeled was masculofeminine” (185). These suggestions are possible, and if they were correct it would only enhance the case being made here. They are more difficult to prove, however, than the explanation that will be argued presently—that Paul identified the seed of Abraham with the seed of David, who Paul and other Jewish interpreters understood to be the messiah.
messianic interpretation of the promises to Abraham is a member of this species of interpretation. Even so, this analogy between Paul’s interpretation of Abraham’s seed and the rabbinic interpretation of Adam only goes so far. Whereas the rabbis conflated singular with plural pronouns and male with female nouns to produce the concept of a composite, androgynous individual, Paul’s procedure is rather more straightforward and specific—the noun in question is singular and it refers individually to the messiah.

Closer to Paul’s textual reasoning is a second haggadah in which the rabbis seek to delineate a specific chronology of pre-Sinaitic history by analyzing the prediction of slavery given to Abram in Gen 15:13: “And he said to Abram, ‘Know certainly that your seed will be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them; and they will oppress them for four hundred years.’” The rabbinic analysis divides the promise of Gen 15:3 into three phrases, each corresponding to a phase of the four hundred-year period between Isaac’s birth and the Exodus. “Your seed will be a stranger in a land that is not theirs” refers specifically to the wanderings of Isaac alone, “and will serve them” refers to Israel’s servitude in Egypt, and “they will oppress them” refers to Israel’s affliction in Egypt. This analysis proceeds from the explicit individual interpretation of Abraham’s seed as Isaac, an identification supported by reference to Gen 21:12: “in Isaac your seed will be named.” This structural similarity with rabbinic thought, however, does not entirely account for the

48. Cf. S. ’Olam Rab. 3 and Daube, “Generic Singular,” 440. See also the similar interpretation in Gen. Rab. 44:18. Paul also cites LXX Gen 21:12 in Rom 9:7, though his use of it there is different.


50. Levenson, Death and Resurrection, 211 rightly observes that Paul’s interpretation “exemplifies a familiar and uneventful Jewish exegetical technique.”
identification of the σπέρμα Ἄβραάμ specifically as χριστός. For this, we must turn to Paul’s understanding of the relation between the lineages of Abraham and David.

Until the Seed Comes (Galatians 3:19 and Genesis 49:10)

In Galatians Paul does not explicitly articulate the logic by which he interprets σπέρμα Ἄβραάμ as χριστός. There is, however, evidence elsewhere in Jewish tradition and in Paul’s own writings that suggests this interpretation arises from an identification of Abraham’s seed with David’s seed—what may fairly be called a “messianic” interpretation of the promises to Abraham since the members of the Davidic dynasty were the anointed sovereigns of Israel.

Before turning to these other texts, we begin with a hint in Galatians 3 that this interpretative tradition is part of the substructure of Paul’s thought. In Gal 3:19 Paul delineates the duration of the law’s “addition” (προστίθημι) as being ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ τὸ σπέρμα ὧ ἐπήρει, “until what time the seed should come to whom the promises had been made.” This statement is a paraphrase of the enigmatic oracle given to Judah in Gen 49:10:

| MT Gen 49:10: The scepter will not depart from Judah nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet until Shiloh comes (ט מאשר רבי ישוע), and the obedience of the peoples is his. | LXX Gen 49:10: A ruler will not fail from Judah nor a leader from his loins until there come the things stored up for him (ἐως ἂν ἔλθῃ τὰ ἀποκείμενα αὐτῷ), and he is the expectation of the nations. |

The presence of an allusion to Gen 49:10 in Gal 3:19 is asserted by Dahl, Meeks, and Juel, though none of them argue for it. And it must be admitted that the allusion is not indisputably clear since Paul’s phrasing and that of LXX Gen 49:10 do not cleanly match:


What then are the verbal correspondences between these texts and how can the divergences be explained?

The commonality between LXX Gen 49:10 and Gal 3:19 is the use of the aorist subjunctive ἐλθῇ preceded by a composite phrase meaning “until” and followed by the designation of something or someone whose coming signals a temporal endpoint. Paul’s syntax is closest to the variant of LXX Gen 49:10, which was evidently known to early Christian authors. Additionally, in both Gal 3:19 and the variant of LXX Gen 49:10 the subject of ἐλθῇ is further defined by a relative clause consisting of the relative pronoun ὧν referring back to the subject of ἐλθῇ and functioning as the indirect object of a passive verb with continuing result. Paul’s use of the perfect tense rather than the present for this verb is easily explained by his recounting of biblical history in Gal 3:16, where he introduces the explanation, “the promises (αἱ ἐπαρέλθαι) were spoken (ἐρρέθησαν, aorist) ….” This would also explain Paul’s exchange of the verb ἀποκεῖμαι for ἐπαρέλθαι—he has couched his explanation of the Abraham narrative rhetorically in terms of promise. Paul’s insertion of τὸ

53. See the apparatus of Wevers, ed., Genesis.


σπέρμα indicates his linking of the Gen 49:10 oracle with the promises to Abraham’s seed, the messiah (Gal 3:16).56

Accounting for the difference between the opening composite phrases—ἐώς ἄν in LXX Gen 49:10 and ἄχρις οὗ in Gal 3:19—is less straightforward, though not impossible. Paul follows the Septuagint’s use of ἐώς in his citation of LXX Deut 29:3 (as well as LXX Isa 29:10) in Rom 11:8, which he introduces with the citation formula καθὼς γέγραπται:

Deut 29:3: καὶ ὅσιον κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῖν χαρδίαν εἰδέναι καὶ ὑφάλαμον βλέπειν καὶ ὅτα ἀκούειν ἐώς τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης.

Rom 11:8: καθὼς γέγραπται: ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς πνεῦμα κατανύξεως, ὑφάλαμον τοῦ μὴ βλέπειν καὶ ὅτα τοῦ μὴ ἀκούειν, ἐώς τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας.

Notably, however, Paul makes precisely the same substitution we are proposing for Gal 3:19—ἄχρις οὗ for ἐώς ἄν—in his allusion to OG Ps 109:1 in 1 Cor 15:25:57

Ps 109:1: Εἶπεν ὁ κύριος τῷ κυρίῳ μου Κάθω ἐξ δεξιῶν μου, ἐώς ἄν θῶ τοὺς ἐχθρούς σου ὑποπόδιον τῶν ποδῶν σου.

1 Cor 15:25: δεῖ γὰρ αὐτὸν βασιλεύειν ἄχρις οὗ ὃ πάντας τοὺς ἐχθροὺς υπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ.

A very similar substitution may also be involved in an allusion to LXX Deut 29:3 in 2 Cor 3:14:


57. A small difference between Gal 3:19 and 1 Cor 15:25 is the appending of the moveable sigma to ἄχρι according to Hellenistic Greek convention. This is unusual in the NT, occurring only in Gal 3:19 and in Heb 3:13. It may merely be a stylistic adjustment since ἄχρι there precedes a word beginning with a vowel, though the appearance of ἄχρι οὗ in Rom 11:25; 1 Cor 11:26; and 15:25 would betray stylistic inconsistency. This inconsistency may suggest Paul has access to a Greek version of Gen 49:10 reading ἄχρις οὗ, but this is speculative. See BDAG, s.v. ἄχρι and BDF §21.
Deut 29:3: καὶ οὐκ ἔδωκεν κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὑμῖν καρδίαν εἰδέναι καὶ ὠφθαλμοὺς βλέπειν καὶ ὡτα ἀκούειν ἐως τῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης.  

2 Cor 3:14: ἄλλα ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν. ἔχρι γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης μένει, μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον ὅτι ἐν χριστῷ καταργεῖται.

Thus Paul exhibits consciousness of traditional wording as well as the prerogative to alter it. It is therefore plausible that he could have adjusted the LXX Gen 49:10 phrase ἐως ἄν to ἄχρις οὗ when making an allusion to the verse in Gal 3:19.

But why would Paul have made this substitution? Paul only uses ἐως with the particle ἄν once, and he does so in a syntactical construction where the composite phrase is followed by a verb (notably also ἔλθῃ): 1 Cor 4:5a: “Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes (ἐως ἄν ἔλθῃ ὁ κύριος).” Paul’s meaning here is subtly different than his meaning in Gal 3:19. In 1 Cor 4:5 he is placing an injunction against something until a condition is met, whereas in Gal 3:19 he is describing the continuation of something until a condition is met. Furthermore, Paul always uses ἄχρις with this latter connotation. Therefore, in Paul’s allusion to LXX Gen 49:10 in Gal 3:19, his substitution of the phrase ἄχρις οὗ for ἐως ἄν can be explained as an effect of the distinct connotations with which Paul normally uses the phrases.

In light of these considerations, I consider the instincts of Dahl, Meeks, and Juel correct, that in Gal 3:19 Paul has paraphrased LXX Gen 49:10 and re-contextualized it for

59. On this see Stanley, Paul and the Language of Scripture, 259–264.
60. Cf. BDAG, s.v. ἐως, 1aβ and s.v. ἄχρις, 1bα. The preposition ἄχρις occurs only thrice in the Septuagint, in 2 Macc 14:10, 15; and Job 32:11, where it has the same connotation it does in Gal 3:19. For 2 Maccabees and Job I follow the Greek text of Rahlfs, ed., Septuaginta.
61. Note, e.g., 1 Cor 11:26b: “you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes (ἄχρις οὗ ἔλθῃ).” See also Rom 1:13; 5:13; 8:22; 11:25; 1 Cor 4:11; 11:26; 15:25; 2 Cor 3:14; Gal 3:19; 4:2; and Phil 1:5–6. The two remaining uses of ἄχρις in the undisputed letters (2 Cor 10:13, 14) function differently, as spatial prepositions. The word ἄχρις does not appear in the disputed letters. Paul does use ἐως alone in the undisputed letters, sometimes with a connotation similar to his use of ἄχρις (1 Cor 1:8; 16:8; 2 Cor 3:15). This pattern also holds for the two occurrences in the disputed letters (2 Thess 2:7; 1 Tim 4:13).
his purposes. As mentioned above, he has inserted the word σπέρμα (identified just three verses earlier as χριστός) into the wording of LXX Gen 49:10. In doing so, Paul relates the promises concerning Abraham’s seed to the promises concerning Judah, promises that were frequently interpreted messianically elsewhere in early Judaism. For instance, Gen 49:10 receives a consistent messianic interpretation in the targumim:

Tg. Neof. Gen 49:10: … until the time king messiah shall come, to whom the kingship belongs; to him shall all the kingdoms be subject.

Tg. Onq. Gen 49:10: … until the messiah comes, to whom the kingdom belongs, and whom nations obey.

Tg. Ps.-J. Gen 49:10: … until the time when the king messiah shall come, the youngest of his [Judah’s] sons, and because of him nations shall melt away.

Frg. Tg. Gen 49:10: … until the time of the coming of the king messiah, to whom belongs the kingdom, and to whom all dominions of the earth shall become subservient.

While none of the targumim explicitly relate Gen 49:10 to the line of David, talk of anointed kings regularly refers to the Davidic dynasty. What is implicit in the paraphrases of the targumim, however, is explicit in the commentary on Gen 49:10 in 4Q252 V, 3–4: “… until
comes (צא ברָא) the messiah of righteousness [Gen 49:10], the branch of David [Jer 33:15].

Given, then, that Gen 49:10 was often interpreted as referring to a Davidic messiah, Paul’s allusion to the oracle in Gal 3:19 provides a glimpse into Paul’s reasoning: the seed of Abraham is the seed of David, who is messiah.

Abraham and David in Jewish Interpretation

The identification of the seed of David with the seed of Abraham is an unstated premise in Paul’s train of thought. It is unstated likely because it is assumed by Paul and also because it reflects a traditional, if not necessarily widespread, conflation of the promises to Abraham and to David concerning their respective progeny. At face value, this is of course unremarkable since any descendant of David is by definition a descendent of Abraham. The force of the identification, however, is to designate the Davidic dynasty as the specially appointed carrier of the hopes associated with the promises to Abraham. Accordingly, we find that the same descriptors are applied to both David and the “seed of Abraham (זרע אָבְרֶהָם)” (i.e., the patriarchs) in Psalms 89 and 105 respectively, including “chosen one (בחיר),” “servant (עבד),” and even “anointed one (משׁיח):”

Noting this, Bernard Gosse suggests that Psalms 105–106 are a “response” to the disavowal of the Davidic line in Ps 89:39–40, constituting a “transfer” of the role of the dynasty back to

68. Translation modified from García Martínez and Tigchelaar, eds., The Dead Sea Scrolls.

69. Note Juel, Messianic Exegesis, 86: “In Galatians, ‘offspring’ (‘seed’) has been inserted into the paraphrase of Gen. 49:10, confirming the link with more obvious messianic oracles like 2 Samuel 7 and Psalm 89, as well as with the preceding citation of Gen. 22:18.”

the patriarchs.⁷¹ Regardless of whether one accepts this notion of transferral, the recollection of Israelite history in which both David’s line and the patriarchs are called by the same significant epithets is noteworthy.⁷² It represents a linguistic phenomenon in which the same expressions can be used to describe both David’s and Abraham’s specialized roles in God’s purposes. What is more, while overlooked by Gosse, it is even more significant for our purposes that those who in Ps 105:6 (OG Ps 104:6) are called “seed of Abraham (אברהם זרע, σπέρμα Αβρααμ)” (collective sg.) are in Ps 105:15 (OG Ps 104:15) called “my anointed ones (משיחי, οἱ χριστοί μου)” (pl.).⁷³ While Paul is obviously aware of the patriarchal traditions which underlie this portion of Psalm 105 (=1 Chron 16:8–22), he does not appear to make use of the paean itself. And of course, the psalmist does not call Abraham’s seed “anointed one” but “anointed ones.” Nevertheless, we find here a verbal precedent according to which the “seed of Abraham” may be denoted with the noun משיח/χριστός, an appellation authorized, per Gosse, by an amalgamation of Davidic and Abrahamic traditions.

Drawing on a different set of linguistic resources, Jer 33:22 applies the promises of the proliferation of Abraham’s seed to David and the Levites. There, amidst a series of God’s speeches to his prophet, it is reported, “As the host of heaven cannot be counted and the sand of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the seed of David my servant and the

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⁷² Gosse’s hypothesis rests on a construal of the overarching literary structure of the psalter, a premise he assumes but does not demonstrate (cf. Gosse, “Abraham and David,” 25).

⁷³ The pointed form with the inseparable preposition ב is בִּמְשִׁיחָי. The plural form of משיח is markedly rare in the MT, constituting only three of the noun’s thirty-eight occurrences: Ps 105:15; 1 Chron 16:22 (recording the same paean); and 2 Chron 6:42 (sg. in the Greek).
Levites who minister to me.” This entails a clear allusion to Gen 22:17, borrowing the language “I will multiply,” “seed,” “the sand of the sea,” and “the stars/host of heaven.”

Noting these correspondences, Max Wilcox explains their significance this way:

The allusion to Gen. 22:17, though not precise, is nonetheless clear enough: the covenant to David that his son would rule upon his throne, etc., is exemplified as an eternal covenant on the pattern of that referred to in Gen. 22:17. Just as Abraham’s seed was to be multiplied as the stars of the heavens and the sand of the sea-shore, so also David's seed. Now it is an intriguing feature of the New Testament that it sees Jesus—as Messiah—as both “seed of David” … and “seed of Abraham” …. Here, already in the Old Testament, we have a start made in this direction.

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74. On this text and messianic interpretation see Collins, Scepter and the Star, 30.


76. Cf. Gen 15:5. On this imagery, see also the interesting proposal in Thiessen, Paul and the Gentile Problem, 129–160. Thiessen suggests that for Paul, as for many other ancient authors, “[t]o be like the stars is to be exalted like the stars, to have their power, to participate in their ethereal life” (140)—that is, “to become pneumatic beings, akin to the stars” (147). Applying this to the problem of how Paul could have understood Abraham’s blessing to entail “the promise of the spirit (ἐπαγγέλλαν τὸν πνεῦματος),” Thiessen concludes: “When claiming that God had promised the pneuma to Abraham and his seed (Gal 3:14–16), Paul intends his readers to recognize that Gen 15:5 and 22:16–18, in promising that Abraham’s seed would be like the stars of the heaven, contained the implicit promise of the pneuma, the stuff of the stars/angels. To Paul, and to his informed readers, Gen 15:5 and 22:17 were clear references to God’s promise of sending the pneuma to give birth to seed who were like the stars of heaven” (159).

This is correct, and I want to propose that what lies behind Paul’s assertion in Gal 3:16, that Abraham’s seed is the messiah, is just this sort of interpretative tradition which conflates the hopes associated with the patriarchs and with David’s house. As Otto Betz contends,

It is thus also in Gal 3:16 that the Davidic dynasty, and with it an important part of Israel’s history, is included in the realization (Verwirklichung) of the “messiah” promise given to Abraham. 78

In this connection, Wilcox observes that an amalgamation of the promises to David and the promises to Abraham is not only implied by texts such as Jeremiah 33, Psalm 89, and Psalm 105, but is also explicitly recorded in Tg. Ket. Ps 89:4: 79

| MT Ps 89:4: I have made a covenant with my chosen one (לבחירי); I have sworn to David my servant | Tg. Ket. Ps 89:4: I made a covenant for Abraham my chosen one (לאברם בחורי); I swore to David my servant. 80 |

In MT Ps 89:4 God’s “chosen one” is ambiguous, though the parallelism of the lines suggests it is David who is meant by the epithet “my chosen one.” 81 In Tg. Ket. Ps 89:4, however, the “chosen one” is identified as Abraham. The subsequent verse in the MT then defines the content of God’s promise as the perpetuity of Davidic dynasty—“I will establish your seed forever, and I will build your throne for generations” (Ps 89:5). 82 The poetic parallelism of Ps 89:4 and the singular definition of the promise in Ps 89:5 indicate that there is one covenant, one sworn oath, in mind. The targum’s combination of this with the

78. Otto Betz, “Die heilsgeschichtliche Rolle Israels bei Paulus,” TBei 9 (1978): 12. Betz also suggests that the association of these traditions was, for Paul, sanctioned by the phrase “your seed after you” (אחריך זרעך, τὸ σπέρμα σου μετὰ σέ), which is common to both Gen 17:7 and 2 Sam 7:12.


80. Translation and Aramaic text from Wilcox, “The Promise of the ‘Seed,’” 279.

81. The OG (Ps 88:4) renders לבחירי plurally, however, with ἐκλεκτοῖς. This presumably refers to the Davidic dynasty, though it is possible it refers to the people of Israel.

82. Wilcox notes that Tg. Ket. Ps 89:5 substitutes “throne of your kingdom” (מלכותך כורסי) for the MT’s “your throne” (כסאך), possibly reflecting the influence of the wording of MT 2 Sam 7:13, “I will establish the throne of his kingdom (כסא ממלכתו) forever.” (Wilcox, “The Promise of the ‘Seed,’” 280.)
specification of God’s “chosen one” as Abraham has the effect of fusing the promises made to David and to Abraham.

I contend that this fusion was made even earlier than Wilcox allows. Psalm 72:17 (OG Ps 71:17) makes the same kind of interpretative move. It mentions neither Abraham nor David by name, but the application of the covenant with Abraham to the House of David is plain. The psalm is dedicated to Solomon, and the opening entreaty in Ps 72:1 is for both the king (למלך) and the king’s son (לבן־מלך), suggesting the whole dynasty is in view. Then in Ps 72:17 there is a clear reference to the promise made to Abraham in Gen 22:18 (and reaffirmed to Isaac in Gen 26:4). There the psalmist petitions for the king, writing, “May all nations be blessed in him; may they pronounce him happy!”\(^8^3\)

From the perspective of the psalmist, it is the royal (and presumably anointed) son of David in whom the patriarchal promise of multi-national blessing will to come to fruition.

\(^8^3\) See also the similar pronouncement in Gen 18:18 and 12:3, the latter of which is regarded as the source of the expression in Ps 72:17 by B. Renaud, “De la bénédiction du roi à la bénédiction de Dieu (Ps 72),” *Bib* 70 (1989): 323–324. *Pace* Renaud, Ps 72:17 should probably be regarded as an allusion to Gen 22:18 and/or 26:4 because it is only in these instances that we find—as we do in Ps 72:17—both the noun גוי used to refer to the nations (it is משבחה in Gen 12:3), and the verb ברך in the hithpael binyan (it is niphal in Gen 12:3 and 18:18).
Significantly, the relevant phrase in OG Ps 71:17 reads καὶ εὐλογηθήσονται ἐν αὐτῷ, and thus we also find here a precedent for adjusting and re-applying the specific idiom ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου to a Davidide.

Given these precedents elsewhere in Jewish interpretation, if Paul is applying the promises concerning Abraham’s seed to David’s seed, then he is participating in an interpretative tradition with an established pedigree. This perhaps explains in part why the premise that Abraham’s seed is David’s seed remains unstated in Galatians 3. It would have been unnecessary for Paul to show his work, so to speak, in collating the Davidic and Abrahamic traditions because such an interpretative move would have been uncontroversial. Additionally, Paul’s choice not to elaborate on the role of David in his thinking in Galatians 3 is congruent with one of his main concerns in writing that letter—the status of gentiles vis-à-vis the family of Abraham. To have explicitly brought David into that equation would have added an extra turn in Paul’s argument where he evidently saw a straighter path. In any case, however, Paul makes it clear that he understood the messiah to be the seed of David elsewhere. We turn, therefore, to Paul’s introduction of himself to the believers in Rome.

**The Problem of “Flesh” (Romans 1:3)**

At the head of his correspondence to the Romans, Paul introduces himself as “an apostle set apart for the gospel of God” (Rom 1:1). This gospel was promised by God “in the holy scriptures” (Rom 1:2) and concerns “his son” (Rom 1:3a). Paul then further characterizes God’s son with two participial phrases:

Rom 1:3b–4: τοῦ γενοµένου ἐκ σπέρµατος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, τοῦ ὁρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάµει κατὰ πνεῦµα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡµῶν
who was born from the seed of David according to the flesh, who was declared the son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness from the resurrection of the dead, Jesus Christ our lord.

Of primary interest here is the assertion that Jesus Christ, God’s son, “was born from the seed of David.” As will be discussed below, this is a straightforward affirmation, drawing on
the language of 2 Samuel 7, that the messiah is the seed of David—to be from (ἐκ) David’s seed is, by definition, to be David’s seed. Scholarly discussion, however, of this statement and the parallel statement that follows has not been straightforward for several reasons. Some ground-clearing is therefore in order.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the grammar of these parallel phrases is uncomplicated—they are not separated by an adversative conjunction or even an intervening particle. This has given little pause, however, to modern readers who are inclined to regard the phrases as antitheses. The purported contrast is usually framed in terms of developing christologies and has served the task of reconstructing the history of the early church as a progression from Jewish (or Jewish-Hellenistic) Christianity to Hellenistic Christianity. Jipp explains that a purported Jewish-Christian emphasis on Jesus as the nationalistic Son of David, which is then devalued by the Hellenistic(-Jewish) church that valued the risen exalted Lord, has played a tremendous role in setting up an antithetical relationship between vv. 3 and 4.

The antithetical reading of these parallel phrases is thus premised on the previously discussed scholarly trope of a distinction between Jewish and Christian messianic conceptions. What is thought to generate the distinction is the peculiarly Christian exegetical activity of adapting Jewish scriptural sources to the historical circumstances of the early Jesus movement, especially that of waiting on the second advent of the messiah. However, as

84. Two classic examples are Bultmann, Theology, 1:237; and James D. G. Dunn, “Jesus—Flesh and Spirit: An Exposition of Romans 1:3–4,” JTS 24 (1973): 40–68. Dunn has provided one of the most thorough arguments for this reading, and his proposal will be discussed presently. For an alternative perspective see Joshua W. Jipp, “Ancient, Modern, and Future Interpretations of Romans 1:3–4: Reception History and Biblical Interpretation,” Journal of Theological Interpretation 30 (2009): 241–259.

85. For a preeminent example of a form-critical analysis of these phrases, entailing discussion of shifting christologies and tensions between Hellenistic and Jewish communities of believers, see Robert Jewett, Romans, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 103–108.

discussed at length in chapter two above, the activity of reading scripture innovatively in light of new circumstances is not, in fact, distinctly Christian. Thus Novenson:

For as long as there have been Jewish messiah texts, those texts have been characterized by the necessity of negotiating mythical tradition on the one hand and empirical circumstance on the other, the biblical and parabiblical reflections on what a messiah would be like when he came, and the obstinate facts of the lives of actual messiahs and their followers. … If what scholars have called “Christian messianism” is indeed an ingenious, even desperate assimilation of scriptural tradition to the circumstances of a particular messiah’s life, then it is not at all something separate from or other than Jewish messianism. On the contrary, it is just an exceptionally well documented instance of the latter.87

This bears repeating: the interplay between scripture and circumstance is not a difference between Jewish and Christian messiah speculation, but rather a point of convergence.

The impulse to detect an antithesis in Rom 1:3–4 is also energized by the presence of the two prepositional phrases, κατὰ σάρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα, which are taken as invariably expressing contrast in Paul’s writings. This appears sensible at first glance since the collocation of these two phrases does indicate opposition in contexts outside of Romans 1—namely, in Gal 5:17; Rom 8:4–5; and Gal 5:17.88 Nevertheless, the case is deceptively more complex. In Gal 5:17, where Paul arguably articulates his κατὰ σάρκα-κατὰ πνεῦμα opposition most explicitly, the grammar of the phrases differs from other instances with κατὰ, taking genitive rather than accusative objects (πνεύματος and σαρκός). In Rom 8:4–5 there is close a syntactical similarity to Rom 1:3–4—a substantive participial phrase modified by a prepositional phrase built with κατὰ. However, there are grammatical and contextual differences which suggest a semantic analogy between Rom 8:4–5 and Rom 1:3–4 breaks down. In Rom 8:4–5 the phrases modify active (περιπατοῦσιν) and stative participles (ἔντες), while in Rom 1:3–4 they modify participles functioning passively.


88. In fact, κατὰ πνεῦμα does not appear anywhere in Paul’s letters, disputed or undisputed, outside of these examples. Not so for κατὰ σάρκα, on which see below.
This grammatical distinction reflects a contextual difference—the subject of Rom 8:4–5 is moral character but the subject of Rom 1:3–4 is messianic biography. Given this, Gal 4:29 remains the closest match to Rom 1:3–4 for comparing the connotations of κατὰ σάρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα when they appear together. Yet there too syntactical features warn against too readily drawing an analogy with Rom 1:3–4. In Gal 4:29 a dualism between “flesh” and “spirit” is obvious since the two prepositional phrases modify the same participle, which appears only once in the sentence. This is not the case, however, in Rom 1:3–4, where the two phrases modify two participles. What is more, at the end of Gal 4:29 the phrase ὁστός καὶ νῦν, “so also now,” indicates Paul is framing his account of the births of Isaac and Ishmael so as ultimately to apply the contrast between them to the Galatian believers and those urging them to Judaize (cf. Gal 4:28, 31). Thus the expressions κατὰ σάρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα in Gal 4:29 are drawn up into a rhetorical context more similar to that of Rom 8:4–5 than that of Rom 1:3–4. In short, these various grammatical, syntactical, and contextual factors belie an easy comparison between Paul’s greeting to the Romans and a κατὰ σάρκα-κατὰ πνεῦμα contrast elsewhere in his writings.

Romans 1:3–4 must therefore be taken on its own terms, and, as noted, those terms do not include anything indicating contrast. Romans 8:4–5 uses ἀλλὰ and δέ; Gal 5:17 uses δέ; and the opposition in Gal 4:29 is clear from the phrases’ relation to the verb διώκω, “persecute.” But in Rom 1:3–4 the participial phrases are simply parallel. Additionally, the construction πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης does not appear elsewhere in Paul and is generally taken as an indication that Paul is making use of a traditional formula.

89. Γενοµένου is morphologically middle, but its sense here, as in Gal 4:4, is passive. Cf. BDAG, s.v. γίνοµαι, 1: “be born.”

90. Gal 4:29: ἀλλʼ ὡσπερ τότε ὁ κατὰ σάρκα γεννηθεὶς ἔδιωκεν τὸν κατὰ πνεῦμα, ὁστός καὶ νῦν, “but just as the one who was born according to the flesh was persecuting the one [supply: ‘born’] according to the spirit, so also now.”

91. The phrase τὸν κατὰ πνεῦμα (accusative) is the object of the verb ἔδιωκεν, of which ὁ κατὰ σάρκα γεννηθεὶς (nominative) is the subject.

context to indicate that Paul’s own views actually differ from those articulated in the 
formula, and while a lack of consensus on which parts are Pauline emendations frustrates 
attempts to prove that Paul is in some way correcting the formula, the possibility that Paul is 
using borrowed language may account for why the pairing of κατὰ σάρκα and κατὰ πνεῦμα 
does not connote a contrast as it does elsewhere in his letters.93

Moving beyond the apposition of the phrases, the specific phrase κατὰ σάρκα is of 
most interest for the argument here. If it is taken as one side of an antithesis in Rom 1:3–4, it 
supposedly indicates a devaluation of the messiah’s Davidic pedigree. As it happens, 
however, the phrase is used alone elsewhere by Paul in the way it should be understood in 
Rom 1:3–4. In Rom 4:1; 9:3, 5; 1 Cor 10:18; and Gal 4:23, 29 κατὰ σάρκα indicates physical 
relatedness, and in none of these cases, outside of Galatians 4, does that notion entail a 
negative connotation.94 Galatians 4:23 constitutes a special case in which two kinds of 
physical descent are in view—mere physical descent and physical descent made possible by 
God’s fulfillment of promise.95 Significantly, Paul draws this comparison using the phrases 
κατὰ σάρκα and δι’ ἐπαγγέλιας, not κατὰ σάρκα and κατὰ ἐπαγγέλιαν. True, Paul develops this 
comparison in Gal 4:29 so as to contrast the child κατὰ σάρκα with the child κατὰ πνεῦμα, 
but, as discussed above, Paul deploys this phrasing to prepare for the contrast he draws

93. See Duling, “Promises to David,” 72.

94. Also of potential interest here is 2 Cor 5:16, where Paul writes, “we knew Christ according to the 
flesh (κατὰ σάρκα), but now we no longer know [him this way].” In an earlier era, κατὰ σάρκα here was 
often taken adjectivally, as modifying χριστόν rather than ἐγνώκαμεν, and therefore as denoting Jesus’s 
pre-resurrection, messianic existence, considered somehow deficient or even problematic for Paul. 
See, e.g., Baur, Paul, 1:283; Reitzenstein, Hellenistic Mystery-Religions, 474–480; Bousset, Kyrios 
Christos, 169n41; and note esp. the equivocating comments of Bultmann, Theology, 2:238–239: “this 
decision means nothing for the sense of the total context, for a ‘Christ regarded in the manner of the 
flesh’ is just what a ‘Christ after the flesh’ is.” This position has receded in prominence, and a majority 
report, with which I am in agreement, now understands κατὰ σάρκα adverbially, as modifying 
ἐγνώκαμεν. See, e.g., Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, 195; Neugebauer, In Christus, 50n37; 
Boutrier, En Christ, 98. Therefore, this instance of κατὰ σάρκα is not actually pertinent for the present 
discussion (pace Stowers, Rereading, 217).

95. If Hays’s well-known reading of Rom 4:1 is accepted, a similar contrast between “flesh” and 
“promise” would be at play there, though developed differently by Paul than in Galatians 4. See 
Richard B. Hays, “‘Have We Found Abraham To Be Our Forefather According to the Flesh?’ A 
between the Galatian believers and his theological opponents. At that point, therefore, Paul shifts toward a substantival use of the prepositional phrases (ὁ κατὰ σάρκα γεννηθεὶς … τὸν κατὰ πνεῦμα), and the language of “being born” becomes a figurative description of the parties involved in Galatian dispute. An apparent similarity between Rom 1:3 and Gal 4:23 therefore fades when Paul’s extrapolation of the contrast in Gal 4:29 is taken into account.

Among the other instances where κατὰ σάρκα indicates physical relatedness, Rom 9:5 is the closest idiomatic match. There, as in Rom 1:3, the preposition ἐκ is used to designate the parentage of the descendant in question:

| Rom 1:3: τοῦ γενοµένου ἐκ σπέρµατος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα who was born from the seed of David according to the flesh | Rom 9:5: καὶ ἐξ ὧν ὁ χριστὸς τὸ κατὰ σάρκα and from them [the Israelites] [is] the messiah according to the flesh |

The verb must be supplied in Rom 9:5, but the close similarity of the idioms is clear enough.97 Moreover, that this statement about the messiah’s genealogy in Rom 9:5 appears in a list including things such as “adoption,” “glory,” and “promises” (certainly not liabilities to Paul’s mind) demonstrates that the messiah’s physical descent is not in some way problematic for Paul.

96. The “substantivizing” of κατὰ σάρκα by the addition of the article emphasizes the qualifying effect of the phrase (BDF §266). In other words, the messiah is “from” Israel only physically. The need to emphasize this qualification is more apparent if in the remainder of the verse (… ὁ ὢν ἐπὶ πάντων θεός) Paul intends to call Christ θεός. Note Bruce M. Metzger, “The Punctuation of Rom. 9:5,” in Christ and Spirit in the New Testament: Studies in Honour of Charles Francis Digby Moule, ed. Barnabas Lindars and Stephen S. Smalley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 105: “on the supposition that ὁ ὢν x.t.l. refers to Christ, we have not a formal antithesis …, but simply an appositional, descriptive clause, setting forth the exalted dignity of him who as to the flesh sprang from the Jews.” Alternatively, it is conceivable that the emphasis could be taken as a qualification which implies an inferior connotation of the phrase κατὰ σάρκα, the effect being to minimize in some way the relation of Christ to Israel. This, however, is a subtext more likely in the mind of modern readers than Paul’s. Moreover, if this sort of minimizing was Paul’s intention, then similar qualifications could easily abound elsewhere in the list of Israel’s advantages in Romans 9, but they do not.

97. Note the similar ellipsis in Rom 9:6: οὐ γὰρ πάντες οἱ ἔξω Ἰσραήλ οὗτοι Ἰσραήλ.
Dunn has argued to the contrary, asserting that σάρξ always carries a negative connotation in Paul’s writings and that therefore Jesus’s Davidic pedigree in Rom 1:3 is presented as a liability. Dunn’s case for this is one of the most extensive, so it is worth demonstrating in some detail his missteps. Generally, Dunn’s argument fails to convince because he does not account for how κατά σάρκα connotes differently in different contexts. Thus Dunn:

> It is my contention that Paul does not and would not understand κατά σάρκα in a neutral sense. On the contrary, it has here [in Rom 1:3] its usual “bad connotation.” Paul’s use of σάρξ cannot be neatly classified into separate categories and pigeon-holes, as is done for example by W. D. Davies into “places where ‘flesh’ has a physical connotation” and “places where ‘flesh’ has a moral connotation.”

“Pigeon-holes” is a misleadingly flippant way of dismissing a foundational tenet of lexical semantics: that a word’s context limits its meaning. There is an apparent temptation here to designate σάρξ a terminus technicus in Paul, but since that cannot be sustained—as aptly illustrated by Davies’s analysis—Dunn finds himself leaning in the direction of “illegitimate totality transfer.” He thus goes on to claim that for σάρξ “the full range of meaning often lies in the background, even when the immediate emphasis is more narrowly defined in a particular context,” and “because σάρξ regularly encompasses such a wide range of its spectrum of meaning it often has a depreciatory significance not apparent on the surface.”

According to Dunn, at least in this case, context exerts less force on a word’s meaning than what lies beneath and behind.


This error shapes Dunn’s semantic analysis of the specific phrase κατὰ σάρκα in Rom 9:3, 5. In this, his reading of σάρξ in Rom 9:8 is overly determinative for his reading of κατὰ σάρκα earlier in the chapter, leading him to conclude that σάρξ is pejorative throughout. This approach neglects several important details. Paul’s statement in Rom 9:6, “but it is not as though (οὐχ οἷον δὲ ὅτι) the word of God has failed,” indicates a significant transition of perspective such that an easy analogy between Rom 9:8 and Rom 9:3, 5 is tenuous. Dunn also ignores a shift in idiom in Rom 9:8, where Paul does not write τὰ τέκνα κατὰ σάρκα but rather τὰ τέκνα τῆς σαρκός. There is an overlap in meaning between these two expressions, but the idiomatic variation tracks with a connotative variation from a neutral genealogical description to the insufficiency of human parentage for enjoying the privilege of divine parentage. Dunn’s inattention to these details results in a reading in which his perception of the implicit rhetorical force of Paul’s words in Rom 9:1–5 overrides their explicit meaning. Thus for Dunn, “occasions in which κατὰ σάρκα describes physical kinship with Israel appear on the surface to be … neutral; but in fact they are set in contexts of antitheses which give the phrase deeper resonance.” This, however, ignores the fact that Paul’s “fleshly” relation to his Israelite kinsmen is valuable enough to him that if he could, he would choose to “be accursed from Christ” for their sake. To say then that Paul considers his relation to his brethren “wholly inferior” distorts text in favor of subtext.

Dunn’s imposition of a pejorative tone onto the phrase κατὰ σάρκα in Rom 1:3 is therefore unjustified in light of the problems with his reading of σάρξ, and particularly the

104. Dunn, “Jesus—Flesh and Spirit,” 47. What is more, it is inexact to say Paul sets up an “antithesis” in Rom 9:6–13. It is more accurate to say he is discussing necessary and sufficient conditions. The “children of promise” in Rom 9:9–13, Isaac and Jacob, were physically descended from their fathers just as were Ishmael and Esau. However, according to Paul physical descent from the patriarchs is an insufficient condition for Israelites to experience blessing, and for the gentiles it is also an unnecessary condition (pace Johnson Hodge and Stowers, on whom see ch. 1). But in no case is descent from the patriarchs a defective condition. Otherwise, Paul’s important caveat in Rom 11:1 would be senseless: “I ask, therefore, has God cast away his people? May it never be! For I myself am also an Israelite, from the seed (ἐκ σπέρματος) of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.”
phrase κατὰ σάρκα, in Romans 9. In the end, one wonders if his semantic analysis of σάρξ is pre-determined by his earlier exegetical analysis of Rom 1:3–4, according to which the participial phrases in question constitute a temporal sequence corresponding to a progression of christological thought from earlier to later, Jewish to Hellenistic, and, ultimately, unacceptable to acceptable for Paul. The presence of a temporal sequence is asserted rather than argued, and its correlation with the problematic scholarly trope of a “Jewish messiah-Christian messiah distinction” renders it all the more dubious. In short, there is no reason to think, as Dunn does, that Paul considered Jesus’s Davidic pedigree “a dangerously defective and misleading half truth.”

The aim of deconstructing the perspective illustrated in Dunn’s work is to defend an assertion that would otherwise be uncontroversial: The idiom ἐκ … κατὰ σάρκα in Rom 1:3 is a genealogical expression just as it is in Rom 9:3 and 5, and its significance is that Paul regarded Jesus’s Davidic ancestry as integral to his messiahship. For Paul, Jesus was the messiah, seed of David. Objections to this that are based on the claim that Paul nowhere else mentions David are shortsighted. They first fail to account for the prominence of place Paul gives this statement by articulating it at the head of his letter to the Romans and within the description of his own calling. They also fail to account for the fact that David’s descendants are not always called by David’s name. For example, leading up to his penultimate benediction, Paul explains in Rom 15:8–9 how “the messiah has become a servant of circumcision (διάκονον … περιτομῆς) … so that the gentiles might glorify God for

106. Dunn, “Jesus—Flesh and Spirit,” 43.
107. Dunn, “Jesus—Flesh and Spirit,” 51. Note the more nuanced description in Stowers, Rereading, 215: “‘According to the flesh’ implies that the Christ ought to be evaluated from two perspectives with regard to status and identity. Spirit ranks higher than flesh. Messiah according to flesh does not cease to be important but becomes subordinated to messiah according to Spirit” (italics added). Despite this subtlety, Stowers’s hypothesis of “The Messiah Who Delayed” (213–226) is not without difficulty. For instance, Stowers claims that “forsaking his messianic prerogatives, Jesus was allowing Jews and gentiles an opportunity to repent” (214). In Rom 15:12–13, however, Paul envisions the gentiles “abounding in hope” in the “root of Jesse” (Isa 11:10)—i.e., for Paul, the Davidic messiah.
108. E.g., Fitzmyer, Romans, 230.
his mercy” in accordance with the scriptures (a theme whose central importance for Paul scarcely needs defending). Then, Paul recites a brief litany of such scriptures, concluding in Rom 15:12 with LXX Isa 11:10, which anticipates “the root of Jesse (ἡ ῥίζα τοῦ Ιεσσαϊ) upon whom the nations will hope (ἐλπιοῦσιν).”109 “The root of Jesse” is of course a Davidide, and Paul’s integration of the cognate word ἐλπίς from the oracle into his benediction in Rom 15:13 confirms the oracle’s significance for Paul.110 Moreover, this emphasis on the relation of Davidic messiahship to Paul’s gentile mission accords with his train of thought in Romans 1 as he moves from Christ’s descent from David in Rom 1:3 to “the obedience of faith (ὑπακοὴν πίστεως) among all the nations” in Rom 1:5. Paul thus bookends his letter to the Romans with an emphasis on the importance of the messiah’s Davidic pedigree.111 It is not a preliminary, earthly, defective, Jewish stage of the messiah’s vocation superseded by something complete, spiritual, superior, and more relevant to the gentiles.112 On the contrary, the claim that the messiah is the seed of David is integral in Romans to Paul’s gentile

109. The awaited ruler of Isa 11:1 is called a האヶ月, “branch” (translated ῥάβδος, “stick”) and a זאר, “sprout” (translated ἄνθος, “flower”); and in Isa 11:10 he is called a שׁרשׁ, “root” (translated ῥίζα, “root/shoot”). The latter term שׁרשׁ and its translation equivalent ῥίζα are also used in Isa 11:1 to designate that from which the “branch” and “sprout” grow. Thus the awaited ruler is both “root” and “shoot.” The statement in Rev 22:16, “I am the root (ῥίζα) and the descendant (γένος) of David,” may be exploiting this verbal irony. On the use of botanic imagery in later retrievals of traditions concerning the house of David see Duling, “Promises to David,” 58–59.

110. See Novenson, Christ among the Messiahs, 158. Paul follows closely here the Septuagint, which quite unusually translates ψῆφον, “they will seek,” with ἐλπιοῦσιν, “they will hope.” Note also the cognates ἀναστάσας in Rom 15:12/LXX Isa 11:10 and ἀναστάσιμον in Rom 1:4. See Wagner, Heralds, 319 on the question of whether Paul, whose preferred verb for resurrection is ἐγείρω, would have enjoyed “a delicious double-entendre” of the word ἀνίστημι from LXX Isa 11:10 in Rom 15:12. Wagner contends “it would be ludicrous to suggest … that Paul would not have recognized the paronomastic potential of ἀνίστημι” (319n44). On this see also J. R. Daniel Kirk, Unlocking Romans: Resurrection and the Justification of God (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008), 50–53.

111. Jipp, “Romans 1:3–4,” 258 refers to this as a “messianic inclusio.” See also Kirk, Unlocking Romans, 33–55.

112. Note the observation in Duling, “Promises to David,” 70n1 regarding a certain scholarly predisposition against the notion of a messiah son of David: “‘Reluctant’ or ‘hesitatingly’ or some such term would be central to these views [of Jesus as son of David], for they invariably suggest that another title such as Son of God or Son of Man was considered by Jesus to be more appropriate to his (future) status, or that Son of David carried with it nationalistic overtones which Jesus thought were inappropriate for his mission.”
mission just as the claim that the messiah is the seed of Abraham is integral in Galatians to that same mission. Although at different times and in different ways, both progenitors play a prominent role in Paul’s understanding of his messiah’s significance.

**Messiah Seed of David (Romans 1:3–4 and 2 Samuel 7:12, 14)**

We return now specifically to the question of scriptural interpretation and the statement in Rom 1:4 (with which Paul happily agreed) that the messiah is the seed of David. Given the premise discussed just above and in chapter two that all messiah discourse entails the “assimilation of scriptural tradition to the circumstances of a particular messiah’s life,” what were the scriptures and what were the circumstances that together catalyzed the depiction of Paul’s messiah in Rom 1:3–4?¹¹³ There is good reason to think it was the promises to David in 2 Samuel 7 read through the lens of Paul’s belief in Jesus’s resurrection that shaped this messianic portrait.

As Dennis Duling aptly illustrates, prior to the rabbinic period and prior to the composition of the synoptic gospels, the perpetuation of the Davidic promise tradition in Jewish literature was accomplished not in the use of titles such as “Son of David,” but rather in the “cumulative conflation” of metaphorical descriptors and verbs found in the scriptural source texts concerning David’s line.¹¹⁴ Specifically regarding early Christian literature, Duling notes that

> apart from the synoptic Son of David sayings, the phenomena of early Christianity look very much like the phenomena [in early Jewish literature] discussed so far, i.e. references to metaphors and conﬂations of texts, but now in reference to Jesus, especially in his resurrected and exalted state.¹¹⁵

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¹¹⁴. See Duling, “Promises to David,” 55–77, esp. 70–77. On this account, it is in fact unsurprising that David is not mentioned by name more often in Paul’s letters. The examples adduced by Duling include 4Q252; 4Q174; T. Jud. 12:2–3; 24; and Pss. Sol. 17; 18.

¹¹⁵. Duling, “Promises to David,” 68 (italics original).
Romans 1:3–4 is a clear illustration of this. While Jesus is not referred to there as the “son of David,” the language of divine sonship, of the pedigree of David’s seed, and of resurrection can all be located back in the promises to David in LXX 2 Samuel 7:

| 2 Sam 7:12, 14: 12 καὶ ἀναστήσω τὸ σπέρμα σου [Δαυὶδ] μετὰ σέ, ὅτι ἔσται ἐκ τῆς κοιλίας σου, καὶ ἐτοιμάσω τὴν βασιλείαν αὐτοῦ ... 14 ἐγὼ ἐσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσται μοι εἰς υἱόν ... | Rom 1:3–4: 3 περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ τοῦ γενομένου ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ κατὰ σάρκα, 4 τοῦ ὄρισθέντος υἱοῦ θεοῦ ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ήμῶν |

Thus for Paul, the messiah, per 2 Samuel 7, is God’s “son,” David’s “seed,” the preeminent one among the “raising up” of the dead.¹¹⁶

Notably, this messianic interpretation of 2 Sam 7:12 and 14 in Rom 1:3–4 exhibits the second characteristic of messiah discourse described in chapter two above: Later messiah texts often re-appropriate literary themes and imagery drawn from a small set of scriptures, including 2 Samuel 7, that are not themselves messianic sensu stricto, but the use of those literary materials varies and the resultant messianic portraits are to that extent unpredictable. In this case, the exploitation of the language of “raising up” (ἀνάστησις/ἀνάστασις) is an interpretative innovation spurred by belief in Jesus’s resurrection and his role in initiating the resurrection of the dead.¹¹⁸ Schweitzer and Wright after him are therefore correct that Paul’s

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116. Cf. Ps 2:2, 7 where the Lord’s anointed is also the Lord’s son.

117. I say “preeminent one among the raising up of the dead” because Paul uses the expression ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν which refers to the general resurrection, not specifically to Jesus’s resurrection. As will be discussed in chapter four, this distinction is significant for understanding Paul’s thought. It does not, however, undermine the view espoused here, that the verbal correspondence between ἀνάστασις in Rom 1:4 and ἀναστήσω in 2 Sam 7:12 is evidence of an appropriation of the Davidic promise to describe the messiahship of Jesus in light of his resurrection. This is because the association of the inception of the general resurrection with Jesus logically entails belief in Jesus’s resurrection, as Paul makes clear in 1 Cor 15:20.

conviction concerning the resurrection was a major impetus for his messiah speculation.\footnote{119} This, however, was not just a theological tenet or a psychological predisposition; it was also a text-based inference rooted in the 2 Sam 7:12 phrase ἀναστήσω τὸ σπέρμα σου. As Wilcox explains, “The means by which the NT writers were able to make the final step from ‘Messiah’ to Jesus was the resurrection, itself seen as disclosed in the promise to David that God would raise up his seed after him (2 Sam.(Kgd.) vii. 12).”\footnote{120} Yet even this novel use of the tradition can be located along the spectrum of conventional Jewish interpretative practices since, as correctly noted by Duling, the retrievals of the promises to David elsewhere in contemporary Judaism traded not on the title son of David, but on the “metaphorical materials” of 2 Samuel 7.\footnote{121} In this case, the referential ambiguity of the image of “raising up” allowed for a new application of the associated language. Thus the messianic profile of Rom 1:3–4 was to a degree distinctive to the early Jesus movement, but the interpretative means by which it was constructed were not. Paul surely considered the inception of the resurrection of the dead in the raising up of Jesus an unprecedented event (1 Cor 15:20), but he nevertheless found language in his ancestral scriptures for discussing it. Hence for Paul, the messiah Jesus is the “seed of David,” the first of the “raising up” of the dead.

**Summary**

Drawing all these strands together then, how do we work our way back to the question of Paul’s “in Christ” language in Galatians 3? Paul, convinced that the resurrection of the dead had begun in Jesus’s resurrection and finding in 2 Sam 7:12 the language of “raising up,” hailed Jesus as χριστός, σπέρμα Δαυίδ (Rom 1:3–4). Midrashically, Paul also understood the σπέρμα of the promises to David as the σπέρμα of the promises to Abraham (cf. Gal 3:19).\footnote{122}

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121. Duling, “Promises to David,” 71.
Therefore, for Paul the σπέρμα Ἅβραμ is χριστός (Gal 3:16). Drawing then on the language of the promise in LXX Gen 22:18 that the nations would be blessed ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου, Paul claims that the blessing of Abraham has come to the gentiles ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (Gal 3:14). Furthermore, as illustrated throughout this chapter, in each of these inferences Paul is exhibiting interpretative traits evident elsewhere in Jewish literature. This includes the use of non-titular imagery from the Davidic tradition, the conflation of the Abrahamic and Davidic traditions, the exploitation of collective singular nouns, and indeed even the application of a scriptural syntagm concerning Abraham’s seed to a Davidide. Thus the expression ἐν χριστῷ arises from Paul’s recognizable participation in the broader Jewish enterprise of scriptural interpretation, in his case specifically messiah speculation. The idiom ἐν χριστῷ is distinctive, but the manner of its development is conventional.

**Implications**

Briefly, we turn now to consider how “in Christ” language functions in Paul’s writings. This question is the focus of chapter five, but some preliminary remarks are in order which take into account the specific findings of this chapter. First, considering that Paul understood himself to be a specially commissioned apostle to the gentiles (cf. Gal 1:16; 2:7; Rom 1:5), it is not surprising he found linguistic resources for his mission in an ancestral tradition foretelling the blessing of the nations “in the messiah”—at least as he understood it. Thus the extensive proliferation of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ in Paul’s writings may be explained in part as a function of his calling. Second and correlative, there are certain syntactical and conceptual features of Paul’s use of the expression ἐν χριστῷ that map onto the function of the phrase ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου in the recapitulations of the promises to Abraham in LXX Genesis.

122. Thus Dahl, “Promise and Fulfillment,” 130; and Juel, *Messianic Exegesis*, 87.
Syntactical Features

All three occurrences of the prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου in LXX Genesis (22:18; 26:4; 28:14) are adverbial, modifying the divine passive verb ἐνευλογηθήσονται. This provides a syntactical precedent for Paul’s use of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ to modify divine passive verbs. It is of course a very small step from this to the use of the phrase to modify divine active verbs. Looking to Gal 3:14, what we might consider the ground-zero occurrence of the idiom, Paul gives a slightly different syntactical function to the idiom in his paraphrase of the promise tradition. There it modifies the morphologically middle verb γίνομαι, which with the preposition εἰς conveys the active idea of changing location. Galatians 3:14 is a figurative use of this active connotation—“so that the blessing of Abraham might come (γένηται) to (εἰς) the gentiles.” In rephrasing the scriptural tradition this way, Paul opens up the possibility of other adverbial functions for the phrase ἐν χριστῷ, namely the modification of active verbs and possibly stative verbs (given the common stative connotation of γίνομαι elsewhere). In fact, later in the same chapter the phrase ἐν χριστῷ is used twice (Gal 3:26, 28) to modify the verb εἰμί in connection with the Galatian believers’ status in light of the promise to Abraham (Gal 3:29). This brings us to the conceptual features of the idiom’s use.

Conceptual Features

The function of the phrase ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου in LXX Genesis is to indicate that Abraham’s seed would be the agent through whom God would bless the nations. Despite the syntactical variation from LXX Genesis in Paul’s paraphrase of that promise in Gal 3:14, the conceptual function of ἐν χριστῷ there is analogous—the messiah Jesus is the instrument by which the blessing of Abraham comes to the gentiles. As we will see in chapter five, this conceptual use of “in Christ” language is prominent throughout Paul’s writings. By extension, this also accounts for Paul’s adjectival use of “in Christ” language to modify various blessings or privileges belonging to believers. A second conceptual function of the idiom in Paul’s letters

123. Cf. BDAG, s.v. γίνομαι, 6a; and see ch. 5.
is to indicate inclusion among the people of Christ. For instance, Paul writes in Rom 16:7 that Adronicus and Junia “were in Christ” before him. While Paul does not use “in Christ” language in this way in Galatians 3, he does provide an indication there of how that use pertains to his understanding of the promises concerning Abraham’s seed when he explains that association with Christ correlates with inclusion in Abraham’s offspring (Gal 3:29). Christ, the singular seed of Abraham, is the means by which believers are included in the collective seed of Abraham. Notably, Paul is also aware of a variation of the idiom ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου that is analogous to his use of ἐν χριστῷ to describe this inclusion—LXX Gen 21:12 quoted in Rom 9:7: ἐν Ἰσαὰκ κληθήσεται σοι σπέρμα, “in Isaac your seed will be named.” Although Paul does not provide a messianic interpretation of this statement, he does cite it as explanation for the inclusion of some—those “in Isaac”—and the exclusion of others from God’s promises. It would be conjectural to press this further, but we may at least note that the idiom in Rom 9:7 provides a linguistic precedent from the Abraham saga for using an ἐν-phrase with a personal object to describe inclusion in a group of people blessed by God.

Conclusion

In chapter one, we observed that modern scholarship has not provided satisfactory explanations for Paul’s “in Christ” language—explanations that adduce legitimate and enlightening linguistic parallels to the expression and that properly relate it to ancient messiah discourse. In chapter two, I demonstrated that one feature of messiah discourse is the borrowing of, and re-contextualization of idioms from scriptural messiah texts and other texts interpreted messianically. Here in chapter three, I have shown that the syntagm ἐν χριστῷ is Paul’s messianic adaptation of an idiom borrowed from scriptural traditions concerning Abraham’s seed. This adaptation was part and parcel of a larger interpretative phenomenon which identified Abraham’s seed with David’s seed and David’s seed with the messiah, the firstfruits of the raising up of the dead. As pertains to Paul’s use of “in Christ”
language, several features of its syntax and conceptual force may also be understood as arising from Paul’s messianic interpretation of oracles about Abraham’s “seed.”

One major conceptual aspect of Paul’s “in Christ” language, however, remains unexplained—the feature that has most assuredly guaranteed scholarly interest in the phrase for well over a century. I refer to the use of the expression ἐν χριστῷ to describe what has variously been called mystical union, participation, or incorporation. This is Paul’s deployment of the idiom in contexts where he depicts Christ and believers as experiencing the same things—what I will call simply “solidarity.” For this too, there is an explanation with roots in messianic scriptural interpretation. Two signposts have already pointed in this direction: The first is Paul’s claim that both Christ and believers are Abraham’s seed. The second and more significant is that the seed, the messiah, is preeminent in the resurrection of the dead. It is to Paul’s elaboration of this idea we now turn.
In chapter two we observed that later messiah texts regularly embed patterns of speech from one scriptural tradition in literary contexts constructed using the imagery of another. While chapter three demonstrated how Paul derived the pattern of speech “in Christ” from scriptural traditions concerning Abraham’s seed, this chapter will argue that Paul also embedded that idiom in a literary context built in part from the imagery of the apocalyptic vision of Daniel 7. An examination of how Paul draws upon elements of this heavenly scene in his exposition of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 accounts for his use of “in Christ” language to describe solidarity between Christ and believers. This much discussed conceptual feature of the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ—often called its “participatory” use—is therefore explicable in terms of ancient messiah discourse.

The Resurrection of the Dead

We have already noted in the previous chapter that the programmatic description of Paul’s messiah in Rom 1:3–4 does not refer specifically to Jesus’s resurrection. Rather, it refers generally to the “raising up” of dead, the inception of which Paul understood to be the

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“raising up” of the seed of David (cf. 2 Sam 7:12).\(^{1}\) Thus the messiah, seed of David, “was declared the son of God in power according to the Spirit of holiness ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν’—“from the resurrection of the dead” (Rom 1:4). The observation of this distinction is quite old. Augustine of Hippo, commenting on the formula, writes,

Paul does not say that Christ was predestined by his resurrection from the dead (resurrectione a mortuis), but ‘by the resurrection of the dead’ (ex resurrectione mortuorum). For his own resurrection does not show how he is the Son of God … since others also will be raised from the dead. But he was predestined Son of God by a certain primacy of resurrection (principatu resurrectionis), since he himself was predestined by the resurrection of all the dead (ex resurrectione omnium mortuorum); that is, he was appointed to rise above and before the others. (Augustine, Inchoata Expositio 5.11)\(^2\)

That is, the formula does not say ἐξ ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ ἐκ νεκρῶν, as if concerning one, but rather ἐξ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν, as concerning many.\(^3\) The effect of this, as Ernst Käsemann puts it, is that “[t]he hymnic tradition does not isolate Christ's resurrection, but views it in its

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1. I leave aside the question of whether Paul envisions a resurrection of all the dead, both condemned and righteous, or only a resurrection of the righteous. That being said, the latter conception is what he spills ink writing about, and it is what I refer to when using the phrase “general resurrection” in the context of discussing Paul’s thought.

2. Translation and Latin per Paula Fredriksen, Augustine on Romans: Propositions from the Epistle to the Romans, Unfinished Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, SBLTT 23 (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1982), 58–59 (italics original).

3. Compare Paul’s choice of wording in 1 Cor 15:12 when discussing side by side the ideas of Christ’s own resurrection and the prospect of the resurrection of many: “Now if Christ is proclaimed, that he has been raised from the dead (ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγήγερται), how do some among you say there is no resurrection of the dead (ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν)?” Additionally, outside of Rom 1:4 the phrase ἀνάστασις (τῶν) νεκρῶν occurs only in 1 Cor 15:12, 13, 21, and 42 where each time it denotes the general resurrection. An intensified form of the phrase, also referring to the general resurrection, occurs in Phil 3:11: “if somehow I might arrive into (καταντήσω εἰς) the resurrection which is from the dead (τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν).” The clarifying use of the article before ἐκ νεκρῶν (cf. BDF §272) is paralleled only in Luke 20:35 and Acts 4:2, and ἐξανάστασις is a hapax legomenon in the NT (cf. LXX Gen 7:4). Elsewhere, when Paul speaks of a specific person’s resurrection he typically uses the verb ἐγείρω (cf. Rom 4:24, 25; 6:4, 9; 7:4; 8:11, 34; 10:9; 1 Cor 6:14; 15:4, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 29; 2 Cor 4:14; 5:15; Gal 1:1; 1 Thess 1:10). Twice he uses the noun ἀνάστασις to refer specifically to Christ’s resurrection (Phil 3:10; Rom 6:5), though in those cases it is not followed by νεκρῶν (cf. 2 Tim 2:28, where ἀνάστασις is used alone to refer to the general resurrection).
cosmic function as the beginning of general resurrection.” This is not to say that Paul (whether as user or author of the formula) does not have the resurrection of the messiah in mind. He does, as he makes clear throughout the course of his letter (cf. Rom 4:24–25; 6:4–11; 7:4; 8:11, 34; 10:9). Rather Paul has the messiah’s resurrection in mind primarily as it pertains to the eschatological resurrection of the dead. His “raising up” marks the commencement of the resurrection of his people.

This messianic tableau presupposes solidarity between the messiah and his people—that what is true of the one is (or will be) true of the many, that the experience of Christ is the experience of believers. Augustine therefore writes elsewhere concerning Rom 1:4, “But Paul mentions the resurrection of the dead (mortuorum ... resurrectionem) because in Christ we have all been crucified and we have all been raised” (Exp. quaest. Rom., 1; cf. Rom 6:11). We have already seen a hint of this feature of Paul’s conception of messiahship in our discussion of Gal 3:29, where Paul writes that those who are Christ’s (χριστοῦ) are, like him, the “seed of Abraham.” Or consider again 2 Samuel 7, applied to the messiah in Rom 1:3–4 but in 2 Cor 6:18 framed as a promise to believers (cf. 2 Cor 7:1): “‘And I will be a father to


5. On which see Kirk, *Unlocking Romans*.

you and you will be sons and daughters to me,’ says the Lord almighty.” This is a clear—though democratized—citation of 2 Sam 7:8a, 14a:

| LXX 2 Sam 7:8a, 14a: 8 καὶ νῦν τάδε ἔρεις τῷ δούλῳ μου Δαυίδ Τάδε λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ … 14 ἐγὼ ἐσομαι αὐτῷ εἰς πατέρα, καὶ αὐτὸς ἔσεσθαι μοι εἰς υἱόν. | 2 Cor 6:18: καὶ ἐσομαι ὑμῖν εἰς πατέρα καὶ ὑμεῖς ἔσεσθε μοι εἰς υἱόν καὶ θυγατέρας, λέγει κύριος παντοκράτωρ. |

The messiah is the son of God per 2 Sam 7:14, and believers are sons and daughters of God according to the same oracle. Or again, returning to the topic of resurrection, we find that in Phil 3:11 Paul aspires to “arrive into the resurrection of the dead (ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν)” by way of “knowing [Christ] and the power of his resurrection (ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ)” (Phil 3:10). Thus Paul’s participation in the general resurrection will be the result of his solidarity with the messiah, whose own “raising up” was the dawning of the resurrection of the dead. These dynamics are hinted at in the formula of Rom 1:3–4, the implications of which Stowers captures well in his summary relating the formula to the later portions of the epistle:

Through Jesus Christ, “who was appointed son of God in power by the holy Spirit” (1:4), God enacted the destiny of others. … As Christ’s body was

7. Cf. Duling, “The Promises to David,” 72. For a thorough delineation of the issues surrounding the authenticity of 2 Cor 6:14–7:1, see Victor Paul Furnish, II Corinthians: Translated, with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary, AB 32A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), 371–383. Furnish is partial toward the hypothesis that the passage is a “Pauline interpolation of non-Pauline material”—i.e., Paul did not write the material, but he did incorporate it into his letter. Nils A. Dahl, “A Fragment and Its Context: 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1,” in Studies in Paul, 62–69 holds a similar line, demonstrating how the verses in question can be read sensibly within their present literary context. As for whether they were added by someone other than Paul, I share Dahl’s intuition: “I have to confess that I find it somewhat difficult to imagine a later redactor who was capable of expressing his understanding of Paul’s unique apostolic ministry in such an indirect and subtle way” (69). I therefore take the position that the verses were situated as we find them by Paul and that they express what he wanted to express. Whether or not Paul authored them or simply appropriated them is less important for our purposes.

8. Cf. Gal 3:26 “in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ) you are all sons of God (υἱοὶ θεοῦ),” on which see ch. 5.

9. This in turn is Paul’s specification of what he means by being “found in [Christ] (ἐὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ),” on which see ch. 5.
raised by the power of the Spirit to new life (1:4), so also those in Christ will experience new life in their bodies (8:10–11). As Christ was appointed “a son of God” or “the son of God” …, so also gentiles in Christ will be designated sons of God. Jesus is the “first born from the dead” (8:29) who “was appointed son of God, coming forth from the [general] resurrection of the dead” (1:3–4). … Jesus’ resurrection is the first instance of the general resurrection.

1 Corinthians 15

What is intimated in Rom 1:3–4 is fully explained in 1 Cor 15:20–27, the text which will be the focus of this chapter. There Paul makes explicit Christ’s role in the general resurrection and the dynamic of solidarity between him and his people that brings about their resurrection:

1 Cor 15:20–27: 20 But in fact Christ has been raised from among the dead (ἐγήγερται ἐκ νεκρῶν), the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since through a man there is death, also through a man there is resurrection of the dead (ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν). 22 For just as all die in Adam, so also all will be made alive in Christ (ἐν τῷ χριστῷ … ζωοποιηθήσονται). 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then next those of Christ (οἱ τοῦ χριστοῦ) at his coming. 24 Then comes the end, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father, having destroyed every rule and every authority and power [cf. OG Dan 7:27]. 25 For it is necessary that he reign until “he has put all his enemies under his feet” [OG Ps 109:1]. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For “[God] has subjected all things under his feet” [OG Ps 8:7] …

An exhaustive treatment of Paul’s exposition of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 is neither possible nor necessary here. And the textual details relevant to the present argument will be discussed fully later in the chapter. For now, there are two features of Paul’s explanation of

10. Stowers, Rereading, 282–283 (brackets original). The summary is apt regardless of whether one adopts Stowers’s view concerning the relative importance of Jesus for gentiles and Jews.

the resurrection of the dead that I want to point out: First, Paul’s expectation of the eventual resurrection of believers is based on a concept of solidarity between the messiah and “those of the messiah (ὁ τοῦ χριστοῦ).” Significantly, he expresses this by modifying the divine passive, future verb ζωοποιηθήσονται with the prepositional phrase ἐν τῷ χριστῷ. Just as the messiah was raised (1 Cor 15:20), so also “those of the messiah” will be made alive “in the messiah.” The second point is that Paul goes on to explain that the realization of this solidarity between the messiah and his people comes about through the defeat of enemies, culminating in victory over death itself. According to Paul, then, solidarity in resurrection is tantamount to solidarity in enjoying victory over the messiah’s enemies, especially the enemy “Death” (1 Cor 15:26). Reitzenstein captures this dynamic of solidarity, explaining, “Paul conceives of the process as though the individual Christian conquers death …. Christ’s victory … results in the victory of the Christian.” The risen messiah enjoys victory over death, and believers enjoy victory over death in him.

Given that messiah speculation is the convergence of tradition and novel circumstance—the reconciling of scripture to empirical realities—what promise or vision prompted Paul to include this idea of solidarity in his messianology? As discussed in chapter one, there have been several answers to this, none of which are fully satisfactory. Schweitzer proposes a general apocalyptic messiah myth—a “messianic idea” of sorts—according to which the elect were predestined to rise with the messiah. Realizing that this would take place over the course of not one but two advents of the messiah, Paul developed Christ-mysticism to resolve the resultant cognitive dissonance. Wright adopts a version of this view but acquiesces on the question of Paul’s scriptural interpretation: “the biblical texts regularly cited in second-Temple messianic speculation … do not include the idea, in

12. Note the syntactical correspondence here with the use of the phrase ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου to modify a divine passive verb in LXX Gen 22:18; 26:4; and 28:14, on which see ch. 3.

13. Reitzenstein, Hellenistic Mystery-Religions, 447. Compare the similar statement concerning Gal 3:26–4:7 in Thiessen, Paul and the Gentile Problem, 160: “those in Christ become sons of God themselves. As a consequence, gentiles have been freed from the malevolent powers—the stoicheia—that rule the world.”

whatever form, that the coming Messiah will sum up or incorporate his people in himself.”

Jipp also sidelines the phenomenon of messianic interpretation, looking instead to describe “historical-religious antecedents” of Israelite kingship according to which subjects “participate” in the reign of their king. I contend, however, that we need not seek recourse to a purported history of ideas to explain Paul’s thought, and I propose that there is in fact a commonly adduced text in early messiah speculation that, interpreted messianically, clearly supplies the notion of solidarity in victory between a messiah and his people—namely, Daniel 7.

**Daniel 7**

I have employed here the term “solidarity,” and I use it to refer to a feature of a text’s logic according to which what is predicated of one subject is predicated of another, whether an action, experience, status, or possession. In 1 Corinthians 15 both Christ and all the dead experience victory over death. An analogous dynamic of solidarity is clear in Dan 7:14 and 27, where both the “one like a son of man” and the people of God are granted an everlasting, worldwide kingdom. At OG Dan 7:14, Daniel beholds this heavenly scene:

> And to him [the “one like a son of man”] was given authority, and all glory, and all the nations of the earth according to kind worship him. And his authority is an everlasting authority which will never be removed, and his kingdom will never be corrupted.

Then at OG Dan 7:27, Daniel’s angelic companion interprets the scene in this way:

> And the kingdom and the authority and their greatness, and the rulers of all the kingdoms under heaven were given to the holy people of the Most High

17. This is clear notwithstanding variations in vocabulary referring to resurrection, raising, making alive, etc.
to reign as an everlasting kingdom. And all the authorities will be subjected to it, and they will obey it.

Both the one like a “son of man” and the “people of the Most High” enjoy the spoils of victory over God’s opponents. At the lexical level, this is reflected in the shared vocabulary of Dan 7:14 and 27:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MT Dan 7:14</th>
<th>MT Dan 7:27</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>וָלֶה צַיִּב שְׁלֹשׁ יְהֹודָם וְכִלָּה</td>
<td>וְקָחְתָּהוּ שָׁלֹשׁ יְהוָ֑ה וְכִלָּה</td>
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<tr>
<td>שמָאָה אָנָּא רַשָּׁא הַיָּוָ֖ה שָׁלֹשׁ יְהֹודָם</td>
<td>וְלָשׁוֹנָֽהוּ בְּלֵֽהוּ שָׁלֹשׁ יְהוָ֖ה</td>
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<td>דִּי־לָ֑א</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>OG Dan 7:14</th>
<th>OG Dan 7:27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>καὶ ἐδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τῆς γῆς κατὰ γένη καὶ πᾶσα δόξα αὐτῷ θερεύουσα: καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτοῦ ἐξουσία αἰώνιός, ἢτις οὐ μὴ ἀρθῇ, καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ, ἢτις οὐ μὴ διαφθαρῇ.</td>
<td>καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ τὴν ἐξουσίαν καὶ τὴν μεγαλειότητα αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν ἁρχὴν πασῶν τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν βασιλείων ἐδωκε δόξα ἀγίων βασιλεύσαι βασιλείαν αἰώνιον, καὶ πᾶσα αἱ ἐξουσίαι αὐτῷ ὑποταγήσονται καὶ πειθαρχήσονται αὐτῷ.</td>
</tr>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theod. Dan 7:14</th>
<th>Theod. Dan 7:27</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>καὶ αὐτῷ ἐδόθη ἡ ἁρχή καὶ ἡ τιμή καὶ ἡ βασιλεία, καὶ πάντες οἱ λαοὶ, φυλαι, γλώσσαι αὐτῷ δουλεύσουσιν: ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτοῦ ἐξουσία αἰώνιος, ἢτις οὐ παρελεύσεται, καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ οὐ διαφθαρήσεται.</td>
<td>καὶ ἡ βασιλεία καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία καὶ ἡ μεγαλειότητα τῶν βασιλεῶν τῶν ὑπὸ κάτω παντὸς τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐδώκε ἁγίοις ψήφιστον, καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ βασιλεία αἰώνιος, καὶ πᾶσα αἱ ἁρχαὶ αὐτῷ δουλεύσουσιν καὶ ὑπακούσονται.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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In short, what is true of the “son of man” is true of the “people of the Most High.”

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18. Given that Dan 7:23–27 is an interpretation of the preceding vision, there is disagreement as to whether the “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7 is a collective symbol of Israel or an individual person. Contrast, e.g., John J. Collins, Daniel: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Daniel, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1993), 304–310 with Wright, New Testament and the People of God, 291–297. The outcome, however, is inconsequential for our purposes. The relevant point is that the heavenly man of Daniel 7 was associated with messiahs in later reception, Jewish and Christian. For those who regard Daniel 7’s “son of man” as a collective symbol Paul’s messianic interpretation of the figure should be no more troubling than his exploitation of the numerical ambiguity of σπάρμα in Gal 3:16, a collective noun interpreted individually and messianically.

Regarding Paul, it is true that the “son of man” makes no appearance in his letters, or at least no figure does who is given that title, if “title” is even the appropriate word. This is perhaps a relief; Paul’s letters present enough conundrums to his modern readers without also inviting entanglement in controversies catalyzed by the use of this moniker elsewhere in early Jewish and Christian literature. Nevertheless, the absence of the “son of man” in the Pauline epistles also comes as something of a surprise. The material in Daniel 7 makes frequent cameos in texts undertaking apocalyptic, eschatological, and, especially, messianic speculation. And while Paul’s writings cannot hold a candle to, say, the Parables of Enoch or 4 Ezra in terms of lurid imagery, he does engage in these types of speculation, often at crucial or climactic points in his train of thought. But there is more to Daniel 7 than its otherworldly scenery and dramatis personae, and Paul’s aims are rather different than those of the later apocalypses or even the canonical gospels. It is therefore worth raising the question of whether the search for a “son of man,” horned beasts, heavenly thrones, and so on is actually a hunt for red herrings when it comes to Paul’s letters.

In his otherwise incisive study on early Christian messianic interpretation, Juel draws a conclusion well illustrating this problem: “Had exegesis of Daniel 7 developed independently of the title [‘son of man’], we would expect to find some allusions to the


verses in Paul”; and Juel thinks we do not.\textsuperscript{22} I contend, however, that Paul did in fact include the traditions of Daniel 7 among the scriptural material he interpreted messianically in 1 Corinthians 15, just not in the form with which we happen to be most familiar. This is not to give Paul a special dispensation, however, since as it happens there is a text from among the Qumran caves that similarly draws upon the relatively more mundane elements of Daniel 7.\textsuperscript{23} Before undertaking an analysis of 1 Corinthians 15, then, we turn to the Aramaic fragment 4Q246, more familiarly known as the “Son of God Text,” as a test case for the literary influence of Daniel 7.

**Daniel 7 and Solidarity with the “Son of God” in 4Q246**

4Q246 consists of two columns, the first only partially preserved. It is several features of the second column, however, which have been of most interest to scholars. Column II reads:

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23. Another possible point of comparison for a concept of solidarity arising in part from Daniel 7 is the *Parables of Enoch*. Note Macaskill, *Union with Christ*, 294–295: “just as Isaiah is marked by an alternation between the singular figure of the Servant and the plural servants, and by the use of the descriptive ‘chosen’ for both the Servant and God’s people, so the *Parables* speak of both the ‘Chosen One’ and the ‘chosen ones,’ the latter term denoting the saved community, also described as ‘the righteous.’ The overlap in terminology, then, certainly allows for some notion of solidarity existing between the Son of Man and his people, but, crucially, this seems to be the result of Isaianic and not Danielic influence. Interestingly, no scholar of 1 Enoch would argue that the Son of Man is a corporate figure, per se: he is rather an individual in solidarity with a people.” See also George W.E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism and Early Christianity*, HTS 56 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972), 70–78 and John J. Collins, “The Heavenly Representative: The ‘Son of Man’ in the Similitudes of Enoch,” in *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism*, ed. George W. E. Nickelsburg and John J. Collins, SCS 12 (Chico, CA: Scholars, 1980), 113–116 who grant greater significance than does Macaskill to the correspondence between the Danielic vision and this dynamic of solidarity in the *Parables*. Despite the *Parables* being a messiah text, I have chosen 4Q246 as a test case because, like 1 Corinthians 15, it lacks the heavenly imagery and appellation “son of man” of Dan 7:9, 13 (cf. 1 Enoch 46), and it portrays solidarity specifically in victory over enemies (solidarity in the *Parables* is confined to the statuses of “chosen” and “righteous”).
4Q246 II, 1–9: 1 “Son of God” he shall be called, and they will name him “Son of the Most High.” Like sparks 2 which you saw (or: of the vision), so will be their kingdom. For years they will rule on 3 earth, and they will trample all. People will trample on people and city on city, 4 [vacat] until the people of God arises, [or: until he raises up the people of God]24 and all rest from the sword. 5 His [or its] kingdom is an everlasting kingdom and all his [or its] ways truth. He [or it] will judge 6 the earth with truth and all will make peace. The sword will cease from the earth, 7 and all cities will pay him [or it] homage. The great God will be his [or its] strength. 8 He will make war on his [or its] behalf; give nations into his [or its] hand and cast them all 9 down before him [or it]. His [or its] sovereignty is everlasting sovereignty and all the depths …25

This Qumran fragment is perhaps most famous for its onomastic correspondences with Luke’s infancy narrative. The phrases “he shall be called the son of God” and “he shall be called the son of the Most High” appear in both texts.26 Despite these striking parallels, however, the identity of the one styled בָּרָה יִזָּר אלהי in the text is unclear. Is he friend or foe, a

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savior figure or a megalomaniacal pretender? The torn first column of the already
diminutive fragment deprives us of the necessary context to answer this with certainty.
Moreover, the identity of the “one called son of God” is not the only ambiguity. While the
accolades of the final five lines—phrases like מלכות מלכותה “his kingdom will be an
everlasting kingdom” (II, 5)—might suggest the son of God is a savior figure, the singular
suffixes in these lines have a more immediate antecedent with which they also grammatically
agree, namely, תפלת, “the people of God” (II, 4). This too presents a enigma since it would
constitute an unusual democratization of royal prerogatives.  

27. Interpretations of the “son of God” as a positive figure are found in Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The
Florentino Garcia Martinez, “The Eschatological Figure of 4Q246,” in Qumran and Apocalyptic:
Studies on the Aramaic Texts from Qumran, STDJ 9 (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 162–179; John J. Collins,
Cross, “Notes on the Doctrine of Two Messiahs at Qumran and the Extracanonical Daniel Apocalypse
(4Q246),” in Current Research and Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Conference on the Texts
from the Judean Desert, Jerusalem, 30 April 1995, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks, STDJ
in Qumran-Messianism: Studies on the Messianic Expectations in the Dead Sea Scrolls, ed. James H.
Charlesworth, Herman Lichtenberger, and Gerben S. Oegema (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 162–
179; and Puech, editor of the DJD edition, as reported in Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra, “Messianic Figures
in the Aramaic Texts from Qumran,” in Aramaic Qumranica: Proceedings of the Conference on the
Aramai Texts from Qumran in Aix-en-Provence 30 June–2 July 2008, ed. Katell Bethelot and Daniel
Stökl Ben Ezra, STDJ 94 (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 542 (this is Puech’s most recent view). Negative
interpretations include David Flusser, “The Hubris of the Antichrist in a Fragment from Qumran,”
Stuckenbruck, “The Book of Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls: The Making and Remaking of the
Biblical Tradition,” in The Hebrew Bible and Qumran, ed. James H. Charlesworth, The Bible and the
Dead Sea Scrolls 1 (N. Richland Hills, TX: BIBAL, 2000), 157n55. Within these two general views—
friend or foe—there are significant variations in the specifics.

28. Cf. the royal prerogative of righteous judgment in Ps 72:1–2; Isa 11:4; and Pss. Sol. 17:29.
A parade of scholars has set out to resolve these and other questions, and their procedures have included reconstructions of historical context, structural analyses, completions of the lacunae in column I, and philological surveys of appellative conventions. While an interpretative consensus has not been reached, one of the few points of virtually unanimous agreement is that the Qumran fragment reuses material from Daniel 7. It is perhaps surprising, then, that John Collins is a lone voice in attempting to clarify the ambiguities of 4Q246 by way of a comparison with Daniel 7.

With respect to the reception of Daniel 7 more generally, scholarly discussion of 4Q246 is notable because a literary relationship between 4Q246 and Daniel 7 is posited despite the absence of the more commonly adduced Danielic footprints mentioned above—the appellation “son of man” or scenes with thrones, clouds, and beasts. This opens new avenues for exploring the reception of Daniel 7 other than scanning for titles and apocalyptic imagery. Moreover, Collins’s approach is especially distinctive because he moves beyond merely observing the reuse of Danielic material in 4Q246 to appealing to the literary relationship in order to solve the fragment’s mysteries. My proposal is that a similar comparison of Daniel 7 with Paul’s mini-apocalypse in 1 Cor 15:20–28, which also


33. How this reuse of material is to be characterized is debated, on which see Stuckenbruck, “The Book of Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 154–158.

conspicuously shares words and concepts with Daniel 7, would elucidate some of Paul’s language and ideas. Like 4Q246, 1 Corinthians 15 is devoid of the more familiar signals of Daniel’s influence, but Collins’s work on the fragment suggests that such a comparison would be valid and salutary.

It must be said that the warrant for a methodological extrapolation from Collins’s approach is not that he has established an absolute consensus. Rather, it is that his basic move of appealing to Daniel 7 is deemed valid by all even in the face of disagreement about the interpretative import of the literary relationship between Daniel 7 and 4Q246. For instance, Dunn, who has directly disagreed with Collins, nevertheless accepts “a deliberate echo of Daniel 7 in 4Q246 col. ii strong enough to provide a basis for further reflection.”

And Vermes, despite taking a different view of the “son of God” figure than does Collins, goes on to suggest that the “people of God” in the fragment “may constitute the earliest non-biblical evidence for the collective understanding of ‘one like a son of man’ (ănshוּכָּבָּאֵן) of Dan 7:13.”

Collins’s work stands out from that of his interlocutors as a useful test case, however, because he does not simply acknowledge literary correspondences between Daniel 7 and 4Q246 but also uses them in an attempt to elucidate the fragment. There is thus something to be gleaned from Collins’s method irrespective of his particular conclusions.

Looking then to Collins’s analysis of 4Q246, the basis for drawing a comparison between it and Daniel 7 is the lexical and thematic correspondences between the two texts. The fragment’s clearest points of contact with Daniel 7 are the phrases מֶלֶךְלָם מָלְכָּה תַּלָּם, “his [or its] kingdom is an everlasting kingdom” (II, 5), and מֶלֶךְלָם שֶׁלֶטֶן שֶׁלֶטְנוּ, “his [or its] sovereignty is an everlasting sovereignty” (II, 9). These match verbatim Dan 7:27 and 14 respectively.

35. Dunn, “‘Son of God’ as ‘Son of Man’ in the Dead Sea Scrolls?,” 208.
38. Also MT Dan 3:33 and 4:34, respectively.
Collins also lists two other possible allusions: the verbs “serve” (I, 8), and “trample” (II, 3), which also appear in Dan 7:10 and 23 respectively.

Additionally, 4Q246 appears to be an interpretation of a vision before a king, a situation generally reminiscent of Daniel, and Collins suggests that the theme of conflict between nations is similar to Daniel 11, though he admits this “is a commonplace in apocalyptic literature.”

Having delineated these correlations with Daniel 7, Collins suggests the earlier apocalypse may clarify the two aforementioned ambiguities of the Qumran text: the identity of the “one called son of God” and his relation to the people of God.

As mentioned above, the general debate about the figure who appears in 4Q246 II, 1 concerns whether he is a positive or a negative character, and within each of these positions there are various distinctions. Among those who think he is a negative figure, some postulate a human king, others a supra-human antichrist. Among those who think he is a positive figure, some designate him a “messiah” (despite the absence of the term), others do not.


40. E.g., Cook, “4Q246,” 65–82; and Flusser, “The Hubris of the Antichrist in a Fragment from Qumran,” 31–39, respectively.

our purposes the generalizations “friend or foe” will suffice. One of the key arguments that the figure styled “son of God” is a foe of God’s people is that his introduction in II, 1 is followed by a depiction of additional turmoil in II, 3. The victorious turning point does not come until the rise of the people of God in II, 4, and therefore everything prior is a description of their oppressors, including the “son of God.” In rebuttal of this position, Collins draws an analogy between the sequence of 4Q246 and the literary structure of Daniel 7, in which the conferral of the kingdom is repeated four times (in Dan 7:14, 22, and 27), in each case following an account of tribulation. He explains,

The chapter does not proceed in simple chronological sequence. Rather it goes over the same ground in slightly different ways, and this, in fact, is a well-known feature of apocalyptic writing. I suggest that the Son of God text can be understood in much the same way. … the mutual trampling of the nations in column 2 is simply an alternative formulation, or another aspect, of the carnage between the nations in column 1, and the rise of the people of God is parallel to the advent of the “Son of God” or “Son of the Most High.” The appearance of the savior figure does not necessarily mean that the time of strife is over. 42

The second issue addressed by Collins is the ambiguity of the singular third-person suffixes in the final five lines of the fragment. The list of royal accolades and prerogatives would more naturally be ascribed to the “son of God,” assuming he is a hero figure, but the closer antecedent is the singular noun עם in II, 4. Collins again looks to Daniel 7 for clarification. As noted above, in Dan 7:14 and 27 respectively the kingdom is explicitly conferred on both the “one like a son of man” and “the people of the saints of the Most High.” Collins describes this as “parallelism” between the people and the “son of man,” who is their representative. He suggests that an analogous dynamic is at play in 4Q246:

The ambiguity of the third person suffixes … can be explained most satisfactorily if the one who is “called ‘Son of God’” is understood as the

42. Collins, Scepter and the Star, 177. See also the detailed analysis of the fragment’s “poetic structure” in Zimmerman, “Observations on 4Q246,” 182–184, according to which “the problem of the Son of God as a positive figure at the wrong point in time disappears” (184).
ruler or representative of the people of God. The everlasting kingdom, then, belongs to both, and the “Son of God” exercises universal judgment on behalf of his people.43

Collins is somewhat imprecise here. Grammatically speaking, it is unlikely that the ambiguous suffixes have a double referent.44 Instead, it is more probable that the suffixes refer to the closest antecedent, לא עם in II, 4, but that the democratization of royal prerogatives can be explained by a dynamic of solidarity between the people and the “son of God.” In any case, the analogy with Daniel 7 is instructive because it posits a particular feature of the Danielic vision’s logic which also fits the data of the Qumran text.

Collins goes on to explore the possibility that the “son of God” in 4Q246 is an interpretation of the “son of man” in Daniel 7—an interpretation Johannes Zimmerman calls “Davidic-messianic.”45 Ultimately, this cannot be proven, and Collins explicitly cautions against reading the fragment as a simple exposition of Daniel 7, noting it presents an original vision in a new situation.46 Nonetheless, because the presentation of the fragment trades on some of the language and ideas of Daniel 7, a comparison of the texts is warranted and illuminating. The same is true for Paul’s vision in 1 Corinthians 15, to which we now return.

**Daniel 7 and Solidarity with the Messiah in 1 Corinthians 15**

The basis for positing a relationship between 1 Corinthians 15 and Daniel 7 is the same as that for positing one between 4Q246 and Daniel 7—common words and ideas. A developed argument for the influence of Daniel 7 in 1 Corinthians 15 has not been presented before as will be done here. However, correspondences between the texts have occasionally been

43. Collins, Scepter and the Star, 178.
noted. For instance, Bousset, framing his comments with reference to the supposed epithet “son of man,” speculates, “That [Paul] knew the title appears perhaps from the use of the Son-of-Man psalm … (Ps. 8) and its messianic interpretation in I Cor. 15:26.” Thinking in terms of concepts rather than titles, Sigmund Mowinckel suggests,

> It is very probably that Paul is here [1 Corinthians 15] applying to Christ ideas from the theology of the Son of Man and the Primordial Man, when we recall that he also regards Christ as the last Adam (1 Cor. xv.45), a typical conception of the Son of Man as the Primordial Man and the eschatological Man.

Looking in the direction of scriptural interpretation, a similar possibility also occurs to Jan Lambrecht, who wonders, “Is Paul here [1 Cor 15:47] dependent on the vision of the one like a son of man who is coming on the clouds of heaven (Dan. 7:13)?” Matthew Black is more certain. He is convinced that “in the testimony pattern behind these three passages in the epistles [1 Cor 15:24–27; Eph 1:20–21; and 1 Pet 3:22], Ps. 110:1 is combined with Dan. 7:26–7” and that “[a]t 1 Cor. 15:24 the τέλος and the destruction of the sovereignty of the last of Daniel’s four kingdoms has been developed by a Christian interpretation (pesher) into the

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47. There are also various cross references between 1 Corinthians 15 and Daniel 7 in late nineteenth-century bibles, both Greek and English. See Ἡ ΚΑΙΝΗ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗ (London: Samuel Bagster & Sons, 1851) (1 Cor 15:27 referencing Dan 7:27); Comprehensive Reference Bible. The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: Nelson and Sons, 1855) (1 Cor 15:24 referencing Dan 7:14); Revised English Bible. The Holy Bible According to the Authorized Version (Edinburgh: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1877) (1 Cor 15:24 referencing Dan 7:13–27; 12:4, 9); The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1884) (1 Cor 15:24 referencing Dan 7:14, 27); and The Variorum Teacher’s Edition of the Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments (Edinburgh: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1886) (1 Cor 15:24 referencing Dan 7:13–27).

48. Bousset, Kyrios Christos, 121.


destruction of ‘every kind of domination, authority and power.”\textsuperscript{51} Regarding the interpretation of Paul, Betz emphasizes the importance of the vision for understanding 1 Corinthians 15, explaining that 1 Cor 15:23–24 should be “understood against the background (auf dem Hintergrund) of Daniel 7.”\textsuperscript{52}

Martin Hengel too perceives a connection, commenting, “With the phrase ὅταν καταργήσῃ (1 Cor 15:24), one is reminded (erinnert) of statements like Dan 7:11–12, 26. … The list, ‘powers, lordships, etc’ also reminds one here of Daniel 7.”\textsuperscript{53} And Wright also notes shared conceptions, averring,

There are, of course, further echoes here [1 Corinthians 15] of Daniel 7, in which, within the apocalyptic imagery, the human figure, standing for the people of the saints of the most high, is exalted to a position of authority at the right hand of the Ancient of Days.\textsuperscript{54}

Joost Holleman, thinking in terms of tradition history, is undeterred by the absence of the putative title “son of man,” writing,

What is clear … is that the concept of Jesus’ parousia in Paul is based on the tradition of the Son of Man, even though he does not use the title. There is


\textsuperscript{52} Otto Betz, Jesus und das Danielbuch: Band II: Die Menschensohnworte Jesu die Zukunftserwartung des Paulus (Daniel 7, 13–14), ANTJ 6.2 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1985), 131.


\textsuperscript{54} Wright, Climax of the Covenant, 28.
no other Jewish (or pagan) tradition which can serve as an alternative to explain the expectation of Jesus’ coming at the end of time in Paul.55

Similarly, Oegema detects

a certain functional similarity with the tradition material connected with the “Son of Man” in Dan. 7:13 and the history of its reception in the first century CE. This is a thought that also, without the Danielic “Son of Man” being explicitly mentioned in 1 Cor. 15:28, seems to have been implied.56

Craig Evans also finds Paul’s vision of Christ handing over the kingdom to God in 1 Cor 15:24 “consistent with the image of the son of man in Dan 7:13–14.”57 Seyoon Kim is convinced that “the main idea of this passage [1 Cor 15:23–28], the temporary entrusting of God’s kingly reign to Christ until he subjugates all those enemy forces, reflects Dan 7:13–14 as well as Ps 110:1 and 8:7.”58 And Joel White, also noticing these ideas, contends,

certain assumptions [Paul] makes are inexplicable on the basis of those texts alone [OG Psalms 8 and 109]. I would argue that at least two of them [the subordination of the son and the transferability of the kingdom] are traceable exclusively to Dan 7.59

Notwithstanding these affirmative evaluations concerning the influence of Daniel 7 in 1 Corinthians 15, no comprehensive argument for that influence has been presented. Furthermore, as concerns broader evaluations of the literary relationship between Daniel and Paul’s letters, we lack a scholarly consensus. Maurice Casey flatly denies any influence whatsoever, while Evans has produced a list of several literary “traces” of Daniel in Paul, not

55. Holleman, Resurrection, 133 (cf. 114).
56. Oegema, Anointed and His People, 174.
all of which are convincing.\(^{60}\) And, as mentioned, it is true that 1 Corinthians 15 lacks the more traditionally acknowledged signals of Danielic influence: There is no “son of man” riding on the clouds or beasts rising from the sea. However, this was of no consequence in Collins’s and others’ analyses of 4Q246, and therefore neither is it for an analysis of 1 Corinthians 15, as also the catena of opinions just reviewed suggests. If one allows, as specialists have for the Qumran fragment, that Daniel 7 was not only a depository of remarkable imagery, but also of more mundane concepts and language denoting the oppression, deliverance, and victory of God’s people, then new possibilities emerge.

With respect to the historical plausibility of Paul being influenced by Daniel’s vision, Josephus reports that the Danielic writings were a popular catalyst of apocalyptic speculation in and around the first century. He writes,

> since [Daniel’s] death, his memory lives on eternally. For the books which he wrote and left behind are still read by us even now, and we are convinced by them that Daniel spoke with God, for he was not only wont to prophesy future things, as did the other prophets, but he also fixed the time at which these would come to pass.\(^{61}\) (A.J. 10.266–268 [Marcus, LCL])

Moreover, as noted in chapter two, Daniel 7 was a go-to text for messiah speculation in the same period. In Oegema’s tabulation of the main scriptural source texts that were interpreted messianically between the third century BCE and the second century CE, Daniel 7 is among the short list of scriptures featuring repeatedly. Indeed, by Oegema’s count Daniel 7 was the one most frequently adduced. Additionally and significantly, however, the same source


\(^{61}\) Josephus excludes Daniel 7 from his paraphrase, but as Wright points out, 1 En. 46–48, 4 Ezra 12–13, and 2 Bar. 39–40 suggest Josephus’s report holds true for Daniel 7, too (Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 292n32). Wright (314) and Collins (Daniel, 85), who otherwise differ on the interpretation of the vision, both think Josephus’s silence on the chapter is a conspicuous, tight-lipped attempt not to offend imperial Rome—presumably because he thought it predicted its overthrow.
text was not typically interpreted in a consistent way.\(^{62}\) Daniel 7 was thus a favorite candidate for messianic interpretation, but what that interpretation might be was largely unpredictable. It would therefore be unsurprising if Paul were to use Daniel 7 in an apparently unconventional way.

Relatedly, there are traces of Daniel elsewhere in Paul, almost always in eschatological and/or apocalyptic contexts, confirming his knowledge of Danielic literary traditions and willingness to appropriate them in his writings.\(^{63}\) These traces include the statements that God’s children “shine as stars” in Phil 2:15,\(^{64}\) that believers “will reign” in Rom. 5:17,\(^{65}\) that “the saints will judge” in 1 Cor 6:2,\(^{66}\) and that believers will be caught up “in the clouds” in 1 Thess 4:17:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OG Dan 12:3: καὶ οἱ συνιέντες φανοῦσιν ὡς φωστήρες τοῦ οὐρανοῦ</th>
<th>Phil 2:15: τέκνα θεοῦ ἄμωμα μέσον γενεάς σκολιάς καὶ διεστραμμένης, ἐν ὦς φαίνεσθε ὡς φωστήρες ἐν κόσμῳ.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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62. So Oegema, Anointed and His People, 300–303.

63. On the Greek version of Daniel cited by NT authors see Alexander A. Di Lella, “The Textual History of the Septuagint-Daniel and Theodotion-Daniel,” in The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception, ed. John J. Collins and Peter W. Flint, VTSup 83.2 (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 592–593. Di Lella detects evidence that both OG Daniel and Theod. Daniel are cited by NT authors. However, it is not clear that Theod. Daniel in its present form was extant in the period, on which see 593–597. In any case, for our purposes concerning Paul, comparison with OG Daniel suffices.

64. Noted in Engberg-Pedersen, Cosmology and Self, 223n6, following Gordon D. Fee, Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, NICNT (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1995), 246–247. This idiom does not occur elsewhere in the Septuagint.

65. Noted in Brendan Byrne, S.J., Romans, SP 6 (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1996), 185; Jewett, Romans, 384n185; and Peter Stuhlmacher, Paul’s Letter to the Romans, trans. Scott J. Hafemann, (Louisville: John Knox, 1994), 83 (referencing the parallel statement in Dan 7:18, which lacks the verb βασιλεύω in the OG).

OG Dan 7:22: καὶ τὴν κρίσιν ἔδωκε τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῦ υψίστου

1 Cor 6:2: ἢ οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι οἱ ἁγίοι τὸν κόσμον κρίνοντι; καὶ οἱ ἐν υἱῷ κρίνεται ὁ κόσμος, ἀνάξιοί ἐστε κριτηρίων ἑλαχίστων;

OG Dan 7:13: καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὡς ὄντος ἁγίου ἦρχετο

1 Thess 4:17: ἔπειτα ἡ ζῶος ὁι περιλειπόμενοι Ἰσαὰκ τὸν αὐτοῦ ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις εἰς ἀπάντησιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς ἀέρα.

This last example in 1 Thess 4:17 is somewhat troublesome because it is believers, not Christ, who are cloud-borne. However, the image is probably derived from a dominical tradition, itself based on Daniel 7. For instance, Matt 24:30 reads:

And then the sign of the son of man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the son of man coming upon the clouds of heaven (τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ ἁγίου ἢρχομενον ἐπὶ τῶν νεφελῶν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) with power and much glory.

67. Though note Schweitzer, Mysticism of Paul, 90: “[Paul] thinks of the Messiah as the Son-of-Man Messiah, because he represents him as appearing upon the clouds of heaven.” On the question of the prepositions ἐπί and ἐν see Collins, Daniel, 311n295, who notes that the Aramaic עם is variously rendered as μετά, ἐπί, and ἐν among other texts alluding to Dan 7:13.

68. On 1 Thess 1:10 and the influence of Daniel 7 on early traditions concerning Jesus’s return note Hurtado, Lord Jesus Christ, 20: “passages in the Gospels indicate that the scene in Daniel 7:13–14 where God gives dominion and vindication to ‘one like a son of man’ was interpreted as a prophecy of Jesus’ eschatological victory …. But there is no indication that ‘the son of man’ was used by early Christians as a confessional title that expressed this expectation. Instead, they preferred other christological terms. For example, in what is usually taken as a very early confessional fragment, 1 Thessalonians 1:10, Jesus is referred to as God’s ‘Son,’ whom believers await from heaven to deliver them from eschatological wrath.”
Moreover, the mention in 1 Thess 4:16 of a trumpet call signaling the resurrection is paralleled in 1 Cor 15:52, a context wherein Paul’s description of the resurrection is partially indebted to imagery and language from Dan 12:1–4. These include a comparison of the resurrected redeemed with heavenly bodies (cf. 1 Cor 15:40–42), mortality as a connection to the “dust of the earth” (1 Cor 15:47–49), death as “sleep” (cf. 1 Cor 15:51), and the verb ἀνίστησι (Dan 12:2) clearly signifying resurrection. Additionally, Chester notes that in 1 Corinthians 15, in “speaking of the ‘man from heaven’ (v. 47) and ‘the image of the heavenly man’ (v. 49), Paul probably takes up the traditions of the heavenly Son of Man, familiar to us already from a number of texts (Dan. 7.13 …).”

Specifically concerning 1 Cor 15:20–28 and Dan 7:13–27, it is notable that both texts are apocalyptic in the strict sense of the term—they purport to reveal otherwise unseen realities. This similarity stands even if one eschews the fraught term “apocalyptic.” The label is arguably appropriate, though, depending of course on its definition. In his introduction to


72. Chester, Messiah and Exaltation, 393.
the 1979 *Semeia* collection of essays on apocalyptic literature, Collins defines “apocalypse” thus:

> a genre of revelatory literature with a narrative framework, in which a revelation is mediated by an otherworldly being to a human recipient, disclosing a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world.\(^{73}\)

Each of these elements, however tersely they are relayed, is present in 1 Cor 15:20–28 with the exception of an otherworldly mediator. And perhaps in the case of Paul’s letters there are internal reasons to expect him to avoid the notion of a revelatory mediator. In Gal 1:12 and 16 he takes pains to insist he has direct access to God’s revelation, and it would not be too much to say that Paul thought of himself as the mediator of God’s revelation.\(^{74}\)

Further, 1 Corinthians 15 and Daniel 7 share not only the same apocalyptic vantage point, but also the same specific themes. Both texts describe a kingdom and a reign entailing the subjection of all rulers and all authorities, resulting in ultimate victory for God’s people.\(^{75}\)

Are these themes not, however, too common in the broader milieu of contemporary apocalyptic Judaism to be anchored back into the book of Daniel? Gordon Wenham’s sensible handling of this objection suggests not:

> [A]lthough there is every reason for thinking that early Christian thinking about the book of Daniel took place within the context of a broad stream of Jewish apocalyptic and exegetical thinking …, it is unnecessarily complicated to make Daniel an indirect influence on New Testament thinking and other works dependent ultimately on Daniel the direct influence, when we know that the book of Daniel itself was significant for

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74. Cf. 2 Cor 12:1–7 where there is no mention of a heavenly guide for the “man in Christ.”

the first Christians and when Daniel itself is a thoroughly plausible background to the Christian ideas in question.  

The simplest hypothesis for the presence of these themes in 1 Corinthians 15 is a return to the font of apocalyptic speculation about God’s kingdom—Daniel 7.

With respect to Paul’s other literary influences in 1 Corinthians 15, OG Psalm 109 (alluded to in 1 Cor 15:25) is amalgamated with Daniel 7 elsewhere in both non-Christian Jewish texts and early Christian literature, as is widely acknowledged. Examples include the “son of man” or “elect one” sitting on the throne of glory in 1 Enoch (1 En. 45:1, 3; 46:3–6; 51:3; 55:4; 61:8; 62:1–3; and esp. 69:27, 29), R. Akiba’s renowned saying concerning the thrones of Dan 7:9, one for the Ancient of Days and one for David (b. Sanh. 38b), and the vision of the “son of man” at the right hand of God repeated in the Synoptics and Acts (Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 22:69; Acts 7:46). It is therefore unsurprising to find the same collocation in Paul.

Most concretely then, there is significant lexical overlap between OG Dan 7:14, 26–27 and 1 Cor 15:24–27. This includes the terms τέλος, βασιλεία, βασιλεύω, ὑποτάσσω, πᾶσα ἀρχή, and πᾶσα ἐξουσία:

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76. Wenham, “The Kingdom of God and Daniel,” 133.


78. Cf. the combination of Christ at God’s right hand and the subjection of rulers, authorities, and powers in Eph 1:20–22 and 1 Pet 3:22.


80. Compare the less complete lists of verbal correspondences in Black, “Πᾶσαι ἔξουσίαι αὐτῷ ὑποταγήσονται,” 75 and Novenson, Christ among the Messiahs, 144
OG Dan 7:14, 26–27: 14 καὶ ἔδόθη αὐτῷ ἐξουσία, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη τῆς γῆς κατὰ γένη καὶ πᾶσα δύση αὐτῷ λατρεύουσα: καὶ ἡ ἐξουσία αὐτοῦ ἐξουσία αἰώνιος, ἦτης οὐ μὴ ἀρθῇ, καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ, ἦτης οὐ μὴ φθαρῇ.

26 καὶ ἡ κρίσις καθίσεται καὶ τὴν ἐξουσίαν ἀπολοῦσι καὶ βουλεύσονται µίας καὶ ἀπολέσαι ἕως τέλους. 27 καὶ τὴν βασιλείαν καὶ τὴν ἐξουσίαν καὶ τὴν µεγαλειότητα αὐτῶν καὶ τὴν ἀρχήν πασῶν τῶν ὑπὸ τὸν οὐρανὸν βασιλείων ἐδώκει λαῷ ἁγίῳ ὑψίστου βασιλεύσαι βασιλείαν αἰώνιον, καὶ πᾶσαι αἱ ἐξουσίαι αὐτῶν ὑποταγήσονται καὶ πειθαρχήσουσιν αὐτῷ.

1 Cor 15:24–28: 24 εἶτα τὸ τέλος, ὅταν παραδίδῃ τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί, ὅταν καταργήσῃ πᾶσαν ἀρχήν καὶ πᾶσαν ἐξουσίαν καὶ δύναµιν. 25 δεῖ γὰρ αὐτὸν βασιλεύειν ἄρχει οὐ θῆ πάντως τοὺς ἐχθρούς ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ. 26 ἐσχάτος ἡδρὸς καταργεῖται ὁ διάνατος. 27 πάντα γὰρ ὑπέταξεν ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ. ὅταν δὲ εἴη ὅτι πάντα ὑποτέτακται, δῆλον ὅτι ἐκτὸς τοῦ ὑποτάξαντος αὐτῦ τὰ πάντα, 28 ὅταν δὲ ἡ ὑποταγὴ αὐτῷ τὰ πάντα, τότε [καὶ] αὐτὸς ὁ υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου ὑποταγήσεται ἐν πάσιν.

Furthermore, it is not just the individual lexemes, several of which are relatively commonplace, that signal a literary relationship between the two texts. It is also the distinctive connotations and combinations of the terms that occur in the broader contexts of both 1 Cor 15:20–28 and OG Dan 7:13–27, but not elsewhere. The variations on the phrase πάντα ὑπέταξεν in 1 Cor 15:27–28 derive primarily from the quotation of OG Ps 8:7, but the overlap with the phrase πᾶσαι αἱ ἐξουσίαι ὑποταγήσονται in OG Dan 7:27 may have been a catalyst for Paul reading the texts together. The same may be true of the phrase υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου in OG Ps 8:5 and Dan 7:13, especially if Paul understood the phrase in Daniel 7 not as a title, but as a way of emphasizing the humanness of the figure. This is admittedly speculative, however, since the phrase υἱὸς ἀνθρώπου itself does not appear in Paul. 81 The word ἀρχή appears in OG Ps 109:3, but there it is neither used to denote an enemy nor modified by πᾶς as it is in 1 Cor 15:24 and OG Dan 7:27. Τέλος occurs in the heading of OG Psalm 8, though

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81. On the non-titular significance of Dan 7:13’s “one like a son of man,” compare Betz, Jesus und das Danielbuch, 131: “It is true that Dan 7:13 provides no title, although it virtually invites a titular approximation (Näherbestimmung) of the ‘human-like one’ (‘Menschenähnlichen’).” On the possible connection between Psalm 8 and Daniel 7, see Hengel, “‘Sit at My Right Hand!,’” 168–172; and Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 1063–1065, where he describes OG Psalm 8 as being “linked to the rule of the ‘son of man’” and OG Psalm 109 “to the victory of the Messiah” in Paul’s thought (1064).
with an unrelated, liturgical connotation, ubiquitous in the Psalter.\(^82\) It is not a rare term, but its use to refer to the culminating destruction of hostile ἔξουσία (1 Cor 15:24) does not occur in the Septuagint outside of Dan 7:26.\(^83\) The remaining shared words—βασιλεία, βασιλεύω, and ἔξουσία—do not appear at all in OG Psalms 109 or 8. βασιλεία and βασιλεύω are also common words, but their appearance in combination with the terminology πᾶσα ἀρχή, πᾶσα ἔξουσία, and ὑποτάσσω … πάντα is unparalleled outside of Daniel 7. Additionally and significantly, the pairing of πᾶσα ἀρχή and πᾶσα ἔξουσία to denote cosmic enemies appears nowhere in Greek literature prior to Paul’s letters with the sole exception of Daniel 7.\(^84\) Black is therefore led to suppose that 1 Cor 15:24–27 (and the similar passages, Eph 1:20–21 and 1 Pet 3:22) evidence an early Christian “pesher” based on Dan 7:26–27, which is then fused with OG Ps 109:1.\(^85\) Whether there existed such a pesher is uncertain, but Black has correctly homed in on the fact that there is no source besides Daniel 7 from which the terminology

\(^{82}\) Pace Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs*, 146n36.


\(^{84}\) See Foerster, “ἔξουσία,” *TDNT* 2:571, verified by a TLG search. Whether the beasts and the human figure of Daniel 7 were originally intended as symbols of nations remains an open question, on which see Caragounis, *Son of Man*, 67–71 and contrast Collins, *Daniel*, 304–310 with Wright, *New Testament and the People of God*, 291–297 (cf. n. 18 in this chapter). Regardless, more important for our purposes is the question of early Christian interpretations of Daniel 7. The individual, messianic interpretation of ὡς ὑιὸς ἀνθρώπου (OG Dan 7:13) suggests that the referents of the beasts, which correspond to ἄξιον ἔξουσια (OG Dan 7:27), could also have been individual entities (cf. Caragounis, *Son of Man*, 68n141). As for what kind of entities, conceptions of “supraterrestrial powers” and historical political entities were not neatly distinct from one another (on which see Caragounis, *Son of Man*, 69–70 on Daniel 7 and Guy Williams, *The Spirit World in the Letters of Paul the Apostle: A Critical Examination of the Role of Spiritual Beings in the Authentic Pauline Epistles*, FRLANT 231 [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009], 133–134 on 1 Corinthians 15). See also the very recent contribution to this discussion, Emma Wasserman, “Gentile Gods at the Eschaton: A Reconsideration of Paul’s ‘Principalities and Powers’ in 1 Corinthians 15,” *JBL* 136 (2017): 727–746. Wasserman argues that the terms ἀρχή, ἔξουσία, and δύναμις in 1 Cor 15:24 refer not to “an unqualified class of evil beings” such as demons, but to gentile deities—“wayward lesser gods,” “harassing hosts and foolish insubordinates” (745–746).

\(^{85}\) Black, “Πᾶσαι ἔξουσίαι αὐτῷ ὑποταγήσονται,” 75–76.
πᾶσα ἀρχή and πᾶσα ἐξουσία, used as it is in 1 Corinthians 15, could have been drawn. It is of course conceivable Paul could have coined this usage entirely on his own, but why ascribe such novelty to his idiolect when there is an antecedent text that is known to have been a literary reservoir from which contemporary apocalyptic and messianic speculation frequently drew, and which contained such an extensive inventory of shared themes and language? The more plausible explanation is that Daniel 7, alongside OG Psalms 109 and 8, provided Paul with the linguistic and conceptual resources with which he articulated his understanding of a resurrected, reigning, victorious, heavenly messiah.

Having assembled these constructive reasons for drawing a comparison between 1 Corinthians 15 and Daniel 7, I also want to anticipate two objections. First, if Paul were alluding to Daniel 7, why did he not use the phrase “son of man”? A simple answer, I think, is that Paul does not use the phrase “son of man” to describe the savior figure because he does not use the imagery of beasts to describe his enemies. The poignancy of the “one like a son of man” in Daniel 7 is that his humanness is a foil for the beastliness of God’s enemies. Paul, however, does not make use of that particular contrast found in Daniel 7. In fact, he is more interested in a comparison of Christ and Adam, both as ἄνθρωποι (cf. 1 Cor 15:21, 45, 47–49). Therefore, the supposed title is actually a red herring. Second, since Paul quotes OG Psalms 109 and 8, why did he not quote Daniel 7? The answer here is due to a difference in how the scriptural texts function in the flow of Paul’s logic. The language of Daniel 7 is used for the apocalyptic mise en scène of the messiah’s final victory, which is requisite for the resurrection of believers, but OG Psalms 109 and 8 are used to justify this

86. See n. 93 in this chapter.

87. Paul does not use citation formulas with the psalms, and thus the “quotations” are of a different order than, say, his adducing of Gen 2:7 in 1 Cor 15:45 where he introduces the quotation with the phrase ὡς καὶ γέγραπται. Even so, the allusions to the psalms are admittedly clear enough to place them in a different category from those to Daniel 7. On Paul’s combination of OG Psalm 109 with OG Psalm 8, see Martin C. Albl, ‘And Scripture Cannot Be Broken’: The Form and Function of Early Christian Testimonia Collections, NovTSup 96 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 222–225; Hengel, “‘Sit at My Right Hand!’,” 119–225; and Lambrecht, “Paul’s Christological Use of Scripture,” 502–527.
need for final victory, which itself is the reason for the delay of the final resurrection. In short, the difference in function accounts for the difference in style of allusion.

As mentioned above, Collins suggested but ultimately retreated from the idea that 4Q246 constituted an interpretation of the “son of man” as the “son of God,” an interpretation elsewhere dubbed “Davidic-messianic.” However, what was an unprovable possibility in the Qumran fragment is, I think, demonstrably the case in 1 Corinthians 15. There can be no doubt that the more prominent inter-texts in 1 Cor 15:20–27 are OG Psalms 109 and 8, both of which are superscribed τῷ Δαυιδ. Novenson explains,

Paul appeals to psalms of David as if they are straightforwardly about Christ, as for him they are. This association is admittedly tendentious, but it is not random; the psalms of David are about “Christ” because they are first about “Christ.” The Davidic messiahship of Jesus is not the point of 1 Cor 15:20–28, but it is axiomatic for the argument of the passage.

Just so. But how then does Paul’s messianic appropriation of Daniel 7 fit into this picture of Paul’s conception of messiahship? Paul’s application of language and concepts from Daniel 7 to a person he calls χριστός in the midst of an argument entailing messianic exegesis of Davidic source texts is plausibly explained as an interpretation of the “son of man” as the “son of God.” Paul’s use of father and son language to refer to God and Christ in 1 Cor 15:24 and 28 confirms this. Thus, the predominant flavor of Paul’s messianology is Davidic, but his hermeneutic allows him to integrate other, non-Davidic messianic notions into his concept of messiahship. We saw this already in the previous chapter where Paul’s messianic interpretation of oracles about David’s seed paved the way for him also to interpret Abraham’s seed messianically. Here in 1 Corinthians 15 Paul integrates the Danielic-apocalyptic notion of solidarity with the Davidic-royal notion of enemies underfoot, and the

90. Novenson, *Christ among the Messiahs*, 146.
91. Cf. 2 Sam 7:14 and Ps 2:7.
shared concept between those traditions of victory over God’s enemies allowed him to form this amalgamation.\footnote{A fusing of these traditions also appears in 4 Ezra 11–12, the “Eagle Vision,” which is coordinated by its interpreter with the Danielic vision (12:11). On this “blending” of traditions see Schäfer, “Diversity and Interaction,” 33; also Stone, Fourth Ezra, 209. Note further the explanation in Wright, New Testament and the People of God, 315: “at the point in the vision where Daniel introduces ‘one like a son of man,’ this vision introduces ‘a lion, [who] uttered a man’s voice.’ The best explanation of this seems to be that the ‘man’s voice’ ties the lion to the ‘son of man’ in Daniel 7, while the fact of his being a lion … is an echo of Davidic Messianism” (brackets original). On the symbol of a lion and Davidic pedigree see Gen 49:9 and Rev 5:5. See also 4 Ezra 12:31–32, which explicitly claims the lion-messiah is a Davidide. Finally, compare the subsequent vision concerning a being “like the figure of man” (4 Ezra 13:3).} Thus for Paul, the messiah, son of God, is also the messiah, “son of man”—or better, the messiah, the “human one” (ἄνθρωπος, 1 Cor 15:21), the “man of heaven” (ἄνθρωπος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ, 1 Cor 15:47).

Accordingly, a dynamic of solidarity analogous to that in Daniel 7 is the basis of Paul’s logic in 1 Corinthians 15 concerning the certainty of final resurrection. Contrary to the futility of hypothetical resurrection-less hope (1 Cor 15:17–19), Christ has in fact (νυνὶ δὲ) been raised and is the firstfruits of the general resurrection. Paul presents this as a thesis statement in 1 Cor 15:20, which he then defends with a two-tiered explanation in the following two verses. First, in 1 Cor 15:21, Christ is the firstfruits of the resurrection because the causes of death and resurrection are the same; they are both human. In other words, according to Paul’s logic resurrection had to come about in the same way death did—δι’ ἄνθρωπου. Second, in 1 Cor 15:22, the reason the causes of death and resurrection are the same is because there is a comparable dynamic of solidarity operative in both cases—all died
in Adam (ἐν τῷ Ἀδάμ) and all will be made alive in Christ (ἐν τῷ χριστῷ).\(^{93}\) From here, Paul goes on in 1 Cor 15:23–26 to explain the temporal separation of Christ’s resurrection and that of his people. As demonstrated above, he does this by describing, in terms borrowed in part from Daniel 7, the ongoing reign of Christ necessary for the destruction of all enemies, whose defeat brings about the realization of solidarity in resurrection.\(^{94}\) Given all of this, the best hypothesis for explaining Paul’s use of the phrase ἐν τῷ χριστῷ in 1 Cor 15:22 to denote the concept of solidarity is that it arises from his messianic interpretation of the victory shared by the “one like a son of man” and the people of God in Daniel 7.

C. E. Hill therefore too readily dismisses J. Christiaan Beker’s (admittedly vague) suggestion of an “apocalyptic connection” between Christ’s resurrection and a future resurrection.\(^{95}\) Hill maintains that “the connection does not seem to arise from a particularly

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93. First Corinthians 15:21 and 22 both begin with the conjunction γάρ. I do not take them as parallel ground clauses for v. 20; rather the ground of v. 20 is v. 21, and the ground of v. 21 is v. 22. This structure of Paul’s logic has two interpretative implications. First, that the primary ground of v. 20 is v. 21 indicates that Paul emphasizes the importance of a human in bringing about eschatological victory. This comports with Paul’s use of OG Psalm 8 in 1 Cor 15:27 since the psalm is a meditation on the role in God’s purposes of not only the Davidic king as in OG Psalm 109, but also more fundamentally of ἄνθρωπος. Thus OG Psalm 8:5: “What is man (ἄνθρωπος) that you remember him, the son of man (ὁ υἱὸς ἄνθρωπος) that you care for him?” This structure also comports with the hypothesis that Paul draws on Daniel 7, in which the conflict between God’s people and their enemies is painted as human versus monstrous beasts. I am thus in agreement with N. T. Wright, “Adam, Israel and the Messiah,” in The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 30 that “the overall thrust of the passage is therefore fundamentally anthropological” (italics original). However, this ἄνθρωπος-messianology does not inevitably lead to a maximalist account such as Wright’s of the relation between Adam, Israel, and messiah. Nor does it lead to the conclusion (not advocated by Wright) that “in Christ” derives from the phrase “in Adam”—the inverse is more likely the case. The second implication of the structure of Paul’s logic is that 1 Cor 15:21 and 22 do not simply say the same thing twice, rather the latter explains how the former is true. Accordingly, the preposition διὰ in v. 21 does not function identically to ἐν in v. 22 (cf. Wedderburn, “Body of Christ,” 90). The former connotes instrumentality, but the latter connotes what could be described as instrumentality by solidarity. Paul’s point in 1 Cor 15:20–28 is not merely that Christ is the cause of the resurrection, but that Christ is the cause of the resurrection because he himself was raised. To miss this is to render 1 Cor 15:12–19, which asserts the integrality of Jesus’s own resurrection, superfluous.


apocalyptic matrix but rather from Paul's notion of incorporation into Christ, of solidarity between Christ and his people.”⁹⁶ But it is not an either-or proposition. Paul’s notion of solidarity itself arises from the “apocalyptic matrix” of Daniel 7, according to which what is true of the “son of man” is true of “the people of the Most High”—or, interpreted messianically, what is true of the messiah is true of his people. And in 1 Cor 15:22, Paul has distilled this notion of solidarity into the terse phrase, ἐν τῷ χριστῷ πάντες ἀναστάσεως, “in the messiah all will be made alive.” The messiah has personally experienced victory over death, therefore “in Christ” so shall those “of Christ.”

Implications

A full description of the functions of Paul’s “in Christ” language is the task of the next and final chapter. However, I want to make some prefatory remarks, which expand on the findings of the previous chapter and also extend the findings of this chapter. Foremost among these is to answer the question, how does delineating Paul’s messianic interpretation of Daniel 7 in his treatise on resurrection elucidate his broader use of “in Christ” language? The answer is that it allows what is perhaps Paul’s most famous connotation of the phrase—often called “participatory”—to be firmly anchored in ancient Jewish messiah discourse, specifically understood as an interpretative-linguistic phenomenon. This has been a desideratum of modern scholarship heretofore unfulfilled.

Accordingly, the logic of solidarity described here obtains elsewhere in some (not all) contexts where Paul uses the phrase ἐν χριστῷ. As would be expected, this is the case in other discussions of the resurrection outside of 1 Cor 15:20–27. For example, solidarity with the messiah undergirds Paul’s argument, though in an inverse way, just a few verses earlier in 1 Cor 15:16, 18: “For if the dead are not raised, then neither has Christ been raised. … Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ (ἐν χριστῷ) have perished.” Paul describes here a

hypothetical, counter-factual solidarity between Christ and believers in resurrection-less demise. Looking outside of 1 Corinthians 15 we find a similar use of “in Christ” language in Rom 6:10–11, where Paul writes, “For the death [Christ] died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God. In this way also reckon yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus (ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ).”97 This is an expansion of the concept of solidarity in the messiah that relates to both his resurrection and his death.98

A comparable use also appears in Phil 3:9–10, mentioned earlier in this chapter. There Paul explicates being “found in [Christ]” (εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ) as “knowing (τοῦ γνῶναι) … the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death” which will result in Paul’s inclusion in the general resurrection.99 It is notable that in Phil 3:9 the idiom εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ trades on the spatial connotation of ἐν. This presents a puzzle since “Christ” of course is not a locale but a person.100 If seen against the backdrop of the apocalyptic vision of Daniel 7, however, Paul’s exploitation of the spatial imagery of being “in Christ” is more readily comprehensible. Interpreted messianically, the Danielic scene features a description of the messiah’s physical location “before” God—a location emblematic of his status, and a status shared by his people.101 Given this, it is no wonder that

97. See also the discussion of Rom 6:23 in ch. 5
98. See also the discussion of 2 Cor 5:17 in ch. 5
99. The genitive articular infinitive τοῦ γνῶναι is to be taken with the main verbs of the purpose clause beginning in v. 8—ἵνα χριστὸν κερδήσω καὶ εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ—not the intervening participial phrase of v. 9—μὴ ἔχων ἔμην δικαιοσύνην, etc. See further ch. 5
101. MT Dan 7:13: מְדַע; Theod. Dan 7:13: ἐνώπιον. OG Dan 7:13 is a somewhat different case. The received text reads: “one as a son of man was coming, and he was present as far as the Ancient of Days (ἐως παλαιοῦ ἡμερῶν παρῆν), and those who were presenting him were present.” The idea of physical position is expressed in the phrase ἐως … παρῆν. However, in some witnesses the clause in question reads: καὶ ὁ παλαιός ἡμερῶν παρῆν, “and he [the ‘son of man’] was present as the Ancient of Days.” This reading is usually assumed to be the result of a copyist error in which the epsilon of ἐως was mistakenly omitted and the case of παλαιός altered to correspond to the conjunction ὡς. Stuckenbruck, however, has argued that this variant should instead be understood as a theologically motivated emendation. See Loren T. Stuckenbruck, “‘One like a Son of Man as the Ancient of Days’ in the Old Greek Recension of Daniel 7,13: Scribal Error or Theological Translation?,” ZNW 86 (1995): 268–276.
in both non-Christian Jewish sources and early Christian literature, Daniel 7 was coupled
with OG Psalm 109—a poem in which the dextral location of the anointed king said it all.
Recognizing the import of space and locality in the texts to which Paul looked to understand
his messiah provides a conceptual matrix that is more textually-anchored, if perhaps
somewhat less elegant, than Deissmann’s previously mentioned analogy describing Pauline
mysticism:

Just as the air of life, which we breathe, is “in” us and fills us, and yet we at
the same time live “in” this air and breathe it, so it is also with the Christ-
intimacy of the Apostle Paul: Christ in him, he in Christ.102

As poignant as this image is, it may be that Paul’s “mysticism,” as it were, is less
atmospheric than it is topographical.103

Paul’s use of “in Christ” language in Philippians 3 also introduces a further
extrapolation of his concept of solidarity in the messiah. While the examples from
1 Corinthians 15 and Romans 6 are embedded in Paul’s instructions to his churches, the
context of Phil 3:8–9 is autobiographical. It is reasonable to infer that Paul would have
conceived of the Philippians as sharing his hope of being “found in Christ,”104 but Paul is
unmistakably narrating his own personal solidarity with Christ when he speaks of sharing in
Christ’s suffering, death, and resurrection. This is reflected in a number of other uses of “in
Christ” language indicating that Paul’s experiences, actions, words, and accomplishments are
all in solidarity with his messiah.105

As I will show in the next chapter, a description of Paul’s concept of solidarity in the
messiah can also be expanded in other directions: for instance, his notion of “oneness” in the

103. Note also the spatial orientation of Phil 3:14: ‘the upward (ἀνω) call … in Christ Jesus (ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ),’ on which see ch. 5.
104. The first-person plural τοῦτο φρονῶ µεν in Phil 3:15 confirms Paul expected the Philippians to
share his outlook.
105. See, e.g., Rom 9:1; 15:17; 1 Cor 15:31; 2 Cor 2:14, 17; 12:19; 13:3, 4; Phil 1:13; Phlm 8—all discussed in ch. 5.
messiah premised on the oneness of Christ’s body, or of filial status in the messiah premised on Christ’s own sonship. The examples already explored, though, are sufficient to illustrate that a significant swath of Paul’s “in Christ” language is explicable in terms of the logic of solidarity between Daniel 7’s “son of man” and the people of God, or as Paul understood it, between the messiah, man of heaven, and believers.

In light of the array of thematic contexts in which Paul employs this logic of solidarity, the concept is best described as a structural component of Paul’s messianology rather than a discrete theological conviction or overarching ideology. That is to say, while 1 Corinthians 15, drawing upon Daniel 7, evinces a specific concept of solidarity in resurrection as victory over the enemy of death, not every instance of “in Christ” language that indicates solidarity relates to resurrection. Some relate to suffering and death, others to filial status and corporate unity, and yet others to apostolic experience and authority. Thus, Paul’s overall usage of “in Christ” language to indicate solidarity involves several innovative extrapolations from his messianic interpretation of Daniel 7—just the type of creative re-appropriation we would expect of an ancient messiah text. Therefore, in asserting the importance of Daniel 7 in Paul’s messianic portrait, I do not mean that each time Paul wrote the phrase ἐν χριστῷ he had in mind solidarity with the “son of man.” What I do mean is that Paul’s messianic understanding of Daniel 7 gave rise to an idiolect he ran with in various directions, though never so far that his usage cannot be explained in terms of his scripturally-informed messianology.

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108. In fact, this use of ἐν χριστῷ comprises just under half of the expression’s total occurrences, on which see ch. 5.
109. The questions of if and how Paul’s understanding of solidarity in resurrection may be logically related to these other conceptions are lines of investigation for another occasion.
What I have demonstrated in this chapter is a notably different account of Pauline messianology than the type of proposal set forth recently and powerfully by Joshua Jipp. He avers that participation in Paul is best understood in the context of the idea of “sharing in the rule of” the royal messiah, an idea arising from “historical-religious antecedents” of Israelite kingship. What I have proposed, though, is a variegated messianology shaped less by a neat ideology of kingship than by a conglomerate of textual-interpretative possibilities. Further, given the description of messiah discourse set forth in chapter two, Paul’s interpretative ingenuity is remarkable, but it is not alien to ancient messiah discourse. He is a recognizable participant in Jewish messiah speculation.

This framework accounts more readily for the flexibility with which Paul employs “in Christ” language as well as the array of seemingly disparate scriptural sources upon which he draws. Paul’s messianology is not indebted to an inherited ideology derived from the Jewish scriptures, but rather to the scriptures themselves with all of the interpretative possibilities they held for making sense of what he had come to believe about Jesus as the messiah. His use of the expression “in Christ,” rooted as it is in his messianic interpretation of several otherwise unrelated scriptures, is a parade example. The fifth and final chapter will illustrate how this is so.

110. See also ch. 1. A similar comparison could be drawn with the work of Wright.
111. Jipp, *Christ Is King*, 166, 149.
In chapters three and four, I demonstrated that Paul interpreted messianically the seed of Abraham and the heavenly human figure of Daniel 7, and that he drew upon the language and concepts of these scriptural traditions to inform his understanding and articulation of Jesus’s messiahship. Moreover, these readings were ingenious in accommodating Paul’s circumstances, but their ingenuity was well within the spectrum of the creative tendencies evinced across all ancient messiah discourse, as shown in chapter two. The purpose of this final chapter is to illustrate how Paul’s uses of “in Christ” language are innovative extrapolations from these messianic interpretations. As mentioned before, I do not mean by this that every time Paul wrote the phrase “in Christ” he specifically had in mind the promises concerning Abraham’s seed or the correspondence between the “one like a son of man” and God’s people. I do contend, however, that Paul’s understanding of these traditions catalyzed a manner of speaking that he deployed in a large variety of ways, yet never so haphazardly that his idiolect becomes unmoored from his messianic interpretation of scripture.

I have called these various uses of “in Christ” language “innovative extrapolations,” and this chapter is divided into two parts which correspond respectively to these two descriptors. Part one is a syntactical analysis of every instance of “in Christ” language in Paul’s undisputed letters, the variegated results of which illustrate the linguistic ingenuity of his usage. Part two is a conceptual analysis of every instance, which, while evincing variation in Paul’s usage, nevertheless demonstrates that the roles “in Christ” language plays
in his thought are extrapolations from his scripturally-informed messianology, which was described in chapters three and four.

Part 1: Syntactical Analysis

As discussed in chapter one, Deissmann, in the course of his explorations of Pauline mysticism, proposed new grammatical categories to describe Paul’s language—the so-called “mystical genitive” and “mystical ‘in.’”¹ This appeal to novelty had staying power. F. Blass and A. Debrunner in their grammar lament that “[t]he phrase ἐν χριστῷ…, which is copiously appended by Paul to the most varied concepts, utterly defies definite interpretation.”² Frederick Danker and Walter Bauer in their lexicon are compelled to devote an entire sub-entry to Paul’s use of ἐν.³ Likewise, in Moulton’s grammar Nigel Turner resorts to the classification of “peculiarly Christian usages” of ἐν, explaining elsewhere that these “are the full flower of which the seed alone may have been in the mind of St. Paul.”⁴ Comparably, Albrect Oepke’s TDNT article on the preposition ἐν devotes an entire subsection to Paul’s “in Christ” “formula.”⁵ It is difficult not to get the impression that Paul as a user of language is in a category all his own. But then one wonders how he expected to be understood.

¹. Deissmann, Paul, 163 and 297, respectively. Deissmann suffers no “fear of schoolmasterish criticism” while insisting that “mystical can be used as a grammatical category” (297, italics original).
². BDF §219(4), citing Deissmann, Die neutestamentliche Formel.
³. BDAG, s.v. ἐν, 4c.
⁵. Albrect Oepke, “ἐν,” TDNT 2:541–542. This is symptomatic of the methodological error described by Moisés Silva, Biblical Words and Their Meanings: An Introduction to Lexical Semantics (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 24–25 in which lexicography is confused with “the study of concepts on the basis of the terms used to express them” (italics original).
The impulse to create new categories in order to describe Paul’s uses of “in Christ” language has also energized the much more widespread phenomenon of thematic analysis. Treatments of “in Christ” language for more than a century and going have, almost without fail, resorted to the invention of new paradigms in efforts to capture the distinctive character of Paul’s manner of speaking. In his monograph on “in Christ” language, Deissmann arranges instances according to “das apostolische Selbtsbewusstsein des Paulus,” “das Gemeinde,” “das Heil,” and “die Heilsgeschichte.”6 Neugebauer similarly captures Paul’s usage under the groupings “Das Heil in Christo,” “Die Ekklesia in Christo,” and “Der Apostel in Christo.”7 And Bouttier consciously reproduces Deissmann’s paradigm but then expands on it by considering how the phrase indicates believers’ participation in three “dimensions de l'œuvre du Christ”: “le ministère historique du Christ,” “le ministère eschatologique du Christ,” and “le ministère actuel du Seigneur.”8

More recently, Dunn, in his Pauline theology, conceives of three categories: “the more objective usage, referring particularly to the redemptive act which has happened ‘in Christ’ or depends on what Christ is yet to do”; “a more subjective usage, where Paul speaks regularly of believers as being ‘in Christ’ or ‘in the Lord’”; and a usage “where Paul has in view his own activity or is exhorting his readers to adopt a particular attitude or course of action.”9 Timms, in his unpublished dissertation, classifies Paul’s use of the phrase according to his understanding of its various contextual functions, including “in Christ” as “an

8. Bouttier, En Christ, 87–133.
9. James D. G. Dunn, The Theology of the Apostle Paul (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 396–401 (italics original). Despite the neatness of these divisions, Dunn stresses “that the categories are in no sense fixed or clearly discrete. On the contrary, one of the features of the motif is the way usages in different contexts blend into each other, and also into the related phrases, ‘with Christ,’ ‘into Christ,’ and ‘through Christ.’ They thus indicate a whole perspective from which Paul viewed different aspects of Christian identity and daily life” (397). This has the appearance of subtlety while it is in fact the substitution of a theological construct for a linguistic phenomenon—usages “blend into each other” and “indicate a whole perspective.” While there is nothing wrong in principle with describing a theological motif, our purpose here in part one of this chapter will be to describe fully the linguistic phenomenon before attempting a conceptual synthesis.

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identifier,” “meaning ‘for Christ,’” “used instrumentally, especially of God,” “used with verbs that regularly take ἐν,” and “as a basis for authority.” Hung-Sik Choi understands the phrase as referring to a “redemptive-historical sphere,” which is to be further parcelled out into “the sphere where God’s saving activities have happened,” “the sphere where salvific benefits are found,” and “the sphere where God’s glory, grace, love and will have been manifested.” Campbell’s programmatic study cuts two ways. First, he groups instances in thematic categories, including: “things achieved for/given to people in Christ,” “believers’ actions in Christ,” “characteristics of those in Christ,” “faith in Christ,” “justification in Christ,” “new status in Christ,” “in Christ as periphrasis for believers,” and “Trinity in Christ.” Second, as discussed in chapter one, Campbell also classifies each instance according to the semantic nuance of the preposition ἐν. In so doing, he draws upon the range of meanings delineated in BDAG, weighing whether the preposition should be labelled as locative, instrumental, indicating agency, or causal. Wolter collects Paul’s uses of the phrase into three groups: first, its use in contexts that he determines are not in fact “mystical-participatory,” including idiomatic uses and its use “as a cipher for the Christ event”; second, its use to refer to “the Christian symbolic universe”; and third, its use in statements about humans that have “the purpose of characterizing their identity.” As is evident in these examples, higher-order synthetic descriptions have overshadowed basic observations about Paul’s use of language. Energy for apprehending the mysteries of Paul’s theology has made students of Paul bored with his grammar and syntax.

13. Campbell, Paul and Union, 68–73; cf. BDAG. s.v., ἐν, from which Campbell draws his categories. See the incisive criticism of this approach in Wolter, Paul, 229–230, mentioned also in ch. 1. See also the related warning against fitting the “living language” of ancient authors into modern categories of analysis in Büchsel, “In Christus,” 143 (followed by Wedderburn, “Observations,” 86).
Even so, there have been words of warning along the way. Büchsel, in his previously discussed essay, which is directly aimed at undoing Deissmann’s mystical account of Paul’s language, quite reasonably suggests that the first step of analysis ought to be to determine what the phrase ἐν χριστῷ modifies in its given contexts. This is a good start even if Büchsel’s analysis is somewhat skewed by his singularity of focus on deconstructing Deissmann’s hypothesis. Similarly, Wedderburn exhorts that “an initial glance at the grammatical question can at least serve the purpose of preventing us from setting off on the wrong foot.” And more recently, David Konstan and Ilaria Ramelli in their 2007 article have assembled instances of Paul’s “in Christ” language according to whether the prepositional phrase modifies a substantive or a verb. Like Büchsel, their analysis tends toward a homogenization of Paul’s usage in service of their (theological) argument, but the mode of their approach is nonetheless salutary.

Part two of this chapter will comprise my own contribution to the conceptually oriented analyses described above, and the warrant for recapitulating such analysis is the complete disregard for Paul’s messianology in these previous descriptions. Before that, however, and in the spirit of Büchsel, Wedderburn, and Konstan and Ramelli, I will present in part one a thorough syntactical analysis of Paul’s “in Christ” language, which will gather


16. Büchsel, “In Christus,” 142. Büchsel does not discuss in any detail why he takes each instance of ἐν χριστῷ in the way he does. Rather, he simply groups them together in a series of categories, the vast majority of which are variations on adverbial usage. Büchsel then deploys these findings in service of his hypothesis that the phrase should be regarded as “instrumental” as opposed to “mystical.”

17. Wedderburn, “Observations,” 83. Wedderburn then goes on to criticize Neugebauer’s efforts at doing this, who in turn was attempting to correct Deissmann.


19. Konstan and Ramelli conclude that the regular syntactical function of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ is adverbial (Konstan and Ramelli, “Syntax,” 589). They then assert that 1 Thess 4:16 ought to be read “the dead will rise in Christ” rather than “the dead in Christ will rise,” an “argument which depends first and foremost” on their syntactical analysis of the prepositional phrase (591). Konstan and Ramelli acknowledge that their hypothesis is of “considerable importance … for the thesis of universal salvation or apocatastasis” (580). See also the discussion of 1 Thess 4:16 below.
every instance of the phrase in the undisputed epistles under the following inductive categories:

- Adverbial, Modifying a Divine Passive Verb
- Adverbial, Modifying a Divine Active Verb
- Adverbial, Modifying an Active Verb
- Adverbial, Modifying a Stative Verb
- Adverbial, Modifying a Verbal Adjective which Modifies a Personal Noun
- Adverbial, Modifying an Adjective which Modifies an Impersonal Noun
- Adjectival, Modifying an Impersonal Noun
- Adjectival, Modifying a Personal Noun or Pronoun
- Substantival, Denoting Persons

Additionally, this syntactical analysis will improve on the briefer treatments by Büchsel and Konstan and Ramelli in two ways. First, there are many ambiguous instances, and in these cases I provide a rationale for their categorization rather than merely asserting a particular reading. Second, these syntactical categories do not map onto the conceptual categories I will explore in part two of this chapter. There is therefore no temptation toward producing a particular result in service to a conceptual or theological hypothesis.

The analysis will be laid out as follows: Under each heading, I will give a definition of the category and then list each instance of “in Christ” language that fits into the category. For each instance, I will quote the Greek, underline the “in Christ” phrase and the word it modifies, and then provide my own translation. For ambiguous instances, I will provide the rationale for their categorization after my translation of the verse. Unambiguous instances will not be followed by commentary. Additionally, where a pronoun is the object of the preposition ἐν, I will explain in a footnote why its antecedent is Χριστός. Within each category, the instances are listed according to the order of the Pauline epistles in NA28. This arrangement is for ease of reference, and is otherwise arbitrary.⁴⁰

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⁴⁰ See the appendix for an index to this chapter. The first page number listed after each instance refers to its syntactical analysis.
Adverbial, Modifying a Divine Passive Verb

There are seven instances in which the prepositional phrase modifies a passive verb of which God is the understood agent of the action.

1 Cor 1:2: τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ οὖσῃ ἐν Κορίνθῳ, ἡγιασμένοις ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, σὺν πάσιν τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ἐνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ, αὐτῶν καὶ ἡμῶν.

To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, theirs and ours.

The participle ἡγιασμένοις functions as a substantive, the indirect object of an implied verb (e.g., γράφω) or a so-called dative of recipient—“to those who have been sanctified.” However, the prepositional phrase ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ functions adverbially by modifying the verbal aspect of the participle. Put pedantically, ἡγιασμένοις ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ translates as “to those who have been sanctified-in-Christ-Jesus,” not “to those in Christ Jesus who have been sanctified.”

1 Cor 1:4: Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου πάντοτε περὶ ύμῶν ἐπὶ τῇ χάριτι τοῦ θεοῦ τῇ δοθείσῃ ύμῖν ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

I give thanks to my God always for you for the grace of God which was given in Christ Jesus to you.

Ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ could modify the pronoun ύμῖν or the participle δοθείση. Ὡς at the beginning of v. 5 is epexegetical, and therefore ἐπλουτίσθητε ἐν αὐτῷ in v. 5 is parallel to and explains τῇ δοθείσῃ ύμῖν ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in v. 4. Since ἐν αὐτῷ in v. 5 clearly modifies the verb ἐπλουτίσθητε (see below), ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in v. 4 also should be understood as adverbial, modifying the verbal aspect of the attributive participle δοθείση.

1 Cor 1:5: ὅτι ἐν παντὶ ἐπλουτίσθητε ἐν αὐτῷ, ἐν παντὶ λόγῳ καὶ πάσῃ γνώσει,

that in every way you were enriched in him, in all speech and all knowledge.²²

1 Cor 15:22: ὅπερ γὰρ ἐν τῷ Ἀδὰμ πάντες ἀποθνῄσκουσιν, οὕτως καὶ ἐν τῷ χριστῷ πάντες ζωοποιηθήσονται.
For just as all die in Adam, so also all will be made alive in Christ.

Ἐν τῷ χριστῷ does not modify πάντες.²¹ There are no instances in the undisputed epistles of the prepositional phrase modifying a noun or pronoun that it precedes. Generally, adjectival prepositional phrases are placed either between the article and the substantive they modify or after the substantive.²⁴ Additionally, context confirms that ἐν τῷ χριστῷ is adverbial. In v. 21, the twice repeated phrase δι’ ἀνθρώπου modifies an implied verb γίνομαι in both cases. The conjunction γὰρ at the beginning of v. 22 indicates that what follows is the grounds for what has been said in v. 21. This in combination with the parallel structure of the verses suggests that the prepositional phrases in each verse function analogously, that is, adverbially.²⁵

2 Cor 3:14: ἀλλὰ ἐπωρώθη τὰ νοήματα αὐτῶν. ἄχρι γὰρ τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας τὸ αὐτὸ κάλυμμα ἐπὶ τῇ ἀναγνώσει τῆς παλαιᾶς διαθήκης μένει, μὴ ἀνακαλυπτόμενον ὅτι ἐν χριστῷ καταργεῖται.
But their minds were hardened. For to this very day, when reading the old covenant, the same veil remains, unlifted, because it is set aside in Christ.

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²². The closest possible antecedent to αὐτῷ is χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ at the end of v. 4. Also, as mentioned, the phrase ἐν αὐτῷ is clearly a recapitulation of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.


²⁵. But this is not to say that the prepositions ἐν and διὰ have identical connotations, which would render the sentences redundant. On this, see the relevant discussion in ch. 4.
Gal 2:17: εἰ δὲ ζητοῦντες δικαιωθῆναι ἐν χριστῷ εὑρέθημεν καὶ αὐτοὶ ἀμαρτωλοί, ἀρα χριστὸς ἀμαρτίας διάκονος; μὴ γένοιτο.

But if while seeking to be justified in Christ we ourselves were also found to be sinners, then is Christ a servant of sin? May it never be!

Ἐν χριστῷ could modify δικαιωθῆναι or εὑρέθημεν, though I am aware of no one who suggests the latter. In either case, the classification of the prepositional phrase stands. However, since several factors favor it, it is curious no consideration has been given to the possible reading, “But if in seeking to be justified, we ourselves were also found in Christ to be sinners, then is Christ a servant of sin?” There are three things that suggest the possible validity of this reading. First, nowhere else in the undisputed epistles does ἐν χριστῷ modify the verb δικαιόω or the noun δικαιοσύνη. In the preceding verse, Paul has in fact used alternative formulations to qualify δικαιοῖς: διὰ πίστεως Ιησοῦ χριστοῦ and ἐκ πίστεως χριστοῦ. The passive of εὑρίσκω is, however, qualified by ἐν αὐτῷ [χριστῷ] in Phil 3:9.

Second, the reading “we ourselves were also found in Christ to be sinners” would comport with Paul’s use of ἁμαρτωλοί as an idiomatic way of referring to gentiles who lack torah (cf. Gal 2:15). In turn, this would also cohere with Paul’s thought in Phil 3:9. That is to say, Paul’s meaning in Phil 3:9 (“found in Christ without torah-righteousness”) would match his meaning in Gal 2:17 (“found in Christ to be a ‘sinner’, i.e., someone without torah-righteousness”). Third, the jolting oxymoronism of this alternative reading would constitute a clearer reason for Paul’s rhetorical question and its emphatic answer—“then is Christ a servant of sin? May it never be!” Conversely, Paul’s use of the allegedly parallel phrase ἐν νόμῳ in Gal 3:11 and 5:14 to qualify δικαιοῖς speaks against this revisionist reading.


27. Though, in Rom 5:9 the verb is qualified with ἐν τῷ αἵματι αὐτοῦ, in 1 Cor 6:11 by ἐν τῷ ονόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ιησοῦ χριστοῦ, and in 2 Cor 5:21 ἐν αὐτῷ modifies the stative verb in the phrase ἡμεῖς γενόμεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ.

However, whether one instance of δικαιόω ἐν χριστῷ constitutes a standardized antithesis with ἐν νόμῳ, as suggested by Schweitzer, is questionable. 29

Phil 3:8–9: 8 … ἵνα χριστὸν κερδήσω 9 καὶ εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ, μὴ ἰχνὼν ἰμήν δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ ἀλλὰ τὴν διὰ πίστεως χριστοῦ, τὴν ἐν θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει,

8 … so that I may gain Christ, 9 that is, 30 be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is from the law, but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ, 31 the righteousness from God based on faith.

Adverbial, Modifying a Divine Active Verb

There are three instances in which the prepositional phrase modifies an active verb of which God is the subject.

2 Cor 2:14: Τῷ δὲ θεῷ χάρις τῷ πάντοτε θρίαμβεύοντι ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ χριστῷ καὶ τὴν ὑστερήματα γνώσεως αὐτοῦ φανεροῦντι δι’ ἡμῶν ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ·

But thanks be to God who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession and who makes manifest through us in every place the fragrance of the knowledge of him.

Ἐν τῷ χριστῷ could modify ἡμᾶς or θρίαμβεύοντι. 32 Christoph Heilig argues that if θριαμβεύω connotes the act of God triumphantly defeating Paul (regarded as the referent of

29. Schweitzer, Mysticism of Paul, 123.

30. On the explicative use of καί here, see BDAG, s.v. καί, 1c; and Gordon D. Fee, Paul’s Letter to the Philippians, NICNT (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 1995), 320.


32. For a thorough discussion of these options see Christoph Heilig, Paul’s Triumph: Reassessing 2 Corinthians 2:14 in Its Literary and Historical Context, BTS 27 (Leuven: Peeters, 2017), 225–237.
ἡμᾶς) as persecutor of the church, then it would be nonsensical to describe Paul in that state as ἐν τῷ χριστῷ. I would also add that though it is possible the plural ἡμᾶς could have a singular referent, ἡμᾶς could also refer to Paul’s missionary cohort since he also names Timothy as a sender (2 Cor 1:1), and since the adverb πάντοτε and the use of the plural in vv. 15 and 17 suggest Paul is describing something as typically true of his mission.

Alternatively, Heilig notes that if ἐθριαμβεύω connotes the act of God presenting believers generally in a victory procession, then ἡμᾶς ἐν τῷ χριστῷ could mean something like “us Christians.” The problem here, however, is that Paul is clearly speaking specifically about his missionary work, not “the Christian experience of blighted plans in general.” Finally and decisively, Heilig notes that prepositional phrases following pronouns with no intervening article are always adverbial in Paul’s letters and therefore concludes that the phrase is adverbial.

2 Cor 5:19: ὡς ὅτι θεὸς ἦν ἐν χριστῷ κόσμου καταδάσσων ἑαυτῷ, μὴ λογιζόμενος αὐτοῖς τὰ παραπτώματα αὐτῶν καὶ δέμενος ἐν ἡμῖν τὸν λόγον τῆς καταδαγῆς.

That is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their trespasses, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Ἐν χριστῷ modifies the periphrastic participle καταδάσσων. On why it should not be taken with κόσμον, see the discussion above on 1 Cor 15:22 regarding word order.

Phil 4:19: ὁ δὲ θεὸς μου πληρώσει πᾶσαν χρείαν ὑμῶν κατὰ τὸ πλοῦτος αὐτοῦ ἐν δόξῃ ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

33. Heilig, Paul’s Triumph, 228–229.

34. Cf. BDF §280. See also the argument for this reading in Scott J. Hafemann, Suffering and the Spirit: An Exegetical Study of II Cor. 2:14–3:3 within the Context of the Corinthians Correspondence, WUNT II 19 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1986), 12–18.

35. Heilig, Paul’s Triumph, 229.

36. Heilig, Paul’s Triumph, 230–231. Thus also Büchsel, “In Christus,” 144; Margaret E. Thrall, 2 Corinthians, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 1:196; and Campbell, Paul and Union, 143.
And my God will fulfill your every need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ could reasonably be understood as qualifying πληρώσει, δόξῃ, or possibly πλοῦτος. Most commentators agree it should be taken with the verb πληρώσει. This is probably correct, and the placement of ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ at the end of the sentence can be explained as emphasis. That being said, the expression in 2 Cor 4:6, τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ Ἰησοῦ, “the glory of God in the face of Christ,” suggests Paul could be referring here in Phil 4:19 to the concept of God’s glory “in Christ.” The meaning of the verse would then be that God will fulfill the Philippians’ needs in a way that is consummate with his glory displayed in Christ.

Adverbial, Modifying an Active Verb

There are eighteen instances in which the prepositional phrase modifies an active verb of which God is not the subject.

Rom 8:2: ὁ γὰρ νόμος τοῦ πνεύματος τῆς ζωῆς ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἠλευθέρωσέν σε ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ τοῦθανάτου.

For the law of the Spirit of life set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ could be taken with ἠλευθέρωσέν or νόμος (… ζωῆς). In favor of νόμος, Jewett contends that “the entire subject of this sentence, ‘the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus,’ needs to be kept together on syntactical grounds.” Jewett does not, however, describe these syntactical grounds, providing instead a higher order theological rationale:


“under the power of sin and flesh, the law was distorted and became an instrument of gaining honor for oneself and one’s group. But in Christ the law regains its proper spiritual function, which leads to genuine life.” In fact, there is no syntactical reason why the prepositional phrase could not modify the verb, being placed ahead of it for the sake of emphasis.

Moreover, the “natural influence” of word order, as appealed to by Campbell, is too subjective to be of use. Better is the reasoning of Cranfield, who explains, “the fact that in the following sentence (joined as it is with this verse by γάρ) the sending of the Son is the method by which God accomplishes the action described argues strongly in favor” of taking ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ with ἠλευθέρωσέν.

Oddly, and as untenable as it is, Neugebauer and Bouttier both appear to suggest ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ here is both adverbial and adjectival. Neugebauer asserts, “The formula belongs here to the whole phrase, to the unity (Einheit) of subject and predicate,” and Bouttier claims, “‘In Christ’ dominates the sentence …, and one should not limit its interactions (interférences), which express the exact intention of Paul.”

However, Neugebauer does go on to explain, “In the circumstance of the Christ-event … the law of the Spirit of life has freed man from the law of sin and death,” which can only be understood as an adverbial interpretation of the phrase. And Bouttier also appears to take the phrase adjectivally elsewhere, comparing it to Rom 6:23.

Rom 9:1: Ἀλήθειαν λέγω ἐν χριστῷ, οὐ ψεύδομαι, συμμαρτυρούσης μοι τῆς συνειδήσεώς μου ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ.

40. Jewett, Romans, 481.
43. Neugebauer, In Christus, 92 and Bouttier, En Christ, 93 (italics original).
44. Neugebauer, In Christus, 92.
45. Bouttier, En Christ, 89.

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In Christ I speak the truth—I do not lie; my conscience confirms it to me in the Holy Spirit.

Rom 15:17: ἔχω οὖν τὴν καύχησιν ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν.

Therefore, in Christ Jesus I have reason for boasting of things that are to God.

Ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ could conceivably be taken with καύχησιν. However, the same idiom appears in 1 Cor 15:31, and there the prepositional phrase clearly modifies ἔχω. It should therefore be taken the same way here.

1 Cor 4:15a: ἐὰν γὰρ μυρίους παιδαγωγοὺς ἔχετε ἐν χριστῷ ἄλλοι πολλοὺς πατέρας.

For even if you have in Christ ten thousand guardians, you do not [have] many fathers.46

1 Cor 4:15b: ἐν γὰρ χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου ἔγω ὑμᾶς ἐγέννησα.

For in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel.

1 Cor 15:18: ἄρα καὶ οἱ κοιμηθέντες ἐν χριστῷ ἀπώλοντο.

Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

Ἐν χριστῷ should be understood as modifying the verbal aspect of the participle κοιμηθέντες (passive with an active sense) rather than the verb ἀπώλοντο.47 This is evident because ἄρα καὶ at the beginning of the verse indicates that what follows is an additional result of the hypothetical, counterfactual circumstance of Christ not having been raised. This result is parallel to v. 17: “your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.” Therefore, οἱ κοιμηθέντες corresponds to the “you” of v. 17, and thus both verses are about believers,

46. Pace Campbell, Paul and Union, 122.

47. Thus, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, First Corinthians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, AB 32 (London: Yale University Press, 2008), 564: “those who have died believing in Christ, and the effects of the Christ-event are lost in nothingness, just as he is. They too have suffered the same fate.”
though two different subsets—in v. 17 the living who have faith (ἡ πίστις ὑµῶν) and in v. 18 those who have died in Christ (εἰ κοιµήθηντες ἐν χριστῷ).

1 Cor 15:19: εἰ ἐν τῇ ζωῇ ταύτη ἐν χριστῷ ἡλπικότες ἐσμέν, μόνον, ἠλεεινότεροι πάντων ἀνθρώπων ἐσμέν.

If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all people most pitiable.

Ἐν χριστῷ could be taken with the periphrastic participle ἡλπικότες or the noun τῇ ζωῇ. Either could make good sense of the clause—i.e., “if in this life only (and not also after death) we have hoped in Christ” or “if in this life in Christ, we have only hoped (and that hope will never be fulfilled),” respectively. However, two factors suggest ἐν χριστῷ should be taken with ἡλπικότες. First, Paul never uses ἐλπίζω elsewhere with reference to God or Jesus with the modern sense of a future-oriented desire, the likelihood of fulfillment of which is uncertain. This, however, would be the meaning required were ἐν χριστῷ taken with τῇ ζωῇ. Second, Paul uses the preposition ἐν again in Phil 2:19 to designate the person who is the object of hope (ἐλπίζω δὲ ἐν κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ). Taken together, these two factors favor reading ἐν χριστῷ as modifying the verbal aspect ἡλπικότες.

48. This is acknowledged by Konstan and Ramelli, “Syntax,” 589–590 despite the fact that it works against their broader argument concerning 1 Thess 4:16.

49. Cf. Rom 8:24, 25; 13:7; 15:12; 2 Cor 1:10; and Phil 2:19; note, however, 2 Cor 8:5 concerning an “un-hoped for (οὐ … ἠλπίσας) positive result in the Macedonian collection.

50. That being said, ἑτι designates the object of hope in Rom 15:12 (though Paul is there quoting LXX Isa 11:10), and εἰς is used in 2 Cor 1:10. It is therefore difficult to establish a pattern in Paul. There is precedent, however, in the LXX for using ἐν with ἐλπίζω: 2 Kgs 18:5; Jdt 9:7; Ps 32:21; 35:8; and Hos 10:13. On the use of ἐν with ἐλπίζω, especially in the Greek Psalter, see Anneli Aejmelaeus, “Faith, Hope and Interpretation: A Lexical and Syntactical Study of the Semantic Field of Hope in the Greek Psalter,” in Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, and the Septuagint Presented to Eugene Ulrich, ed. Peter W. Flint, Emanuel Tov, and James C. VanderKam, VTSup 101 (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 370–375.

1 Cor 15:31: καθ’ ἡμέραν ἀποθνῄσκω, νῆ τὴν ὑμετέραν καύχησιν, [ἀδελφοί], ἢν ἔχω ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν.\(^{52}\)

Daily I die—I swear by\(^{53}\) [my] reason for boasting in you[, brothers], which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Cor 2:17: οὐ γάρ ἔσμεν ὡς οἱ πολλοὶ κατηλεύοντες τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐξ εἰλικρινείας, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἐκ θεοῦ κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν.

For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but as from sincerity, as from God, before God, we speak in Christ.

2 Cor 12:19: Πάλαι δοκεῖτε ὅτι ἡμῖν ἀπολογεθα, κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν. τὰ δὲ πάντα, ἀγαπητοί, ὑπὲρ τῆς ἡμῶν οἰκοδομῆς.

All along you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Before God, we speak in Christ; and all, beloved, is for your building up.

Gal 2:4: διὰ δὲ τοὺς παρεισάκτους ψευδαδέλφους, οἵτινες παρεισῆλθον κατασκοπῆσαι τὴν ἐλευθερίαν ἡμῶν ἢν ἔχουμεν ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα ἡμᾶς καταδουλώσουσιν.

But because of false brothers brought in secretly, who entered in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us.

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52. The terse phrase ἐν κυρίῳ, replacing ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν, is attested by D*, Latin manuscript b, Ambrosiaster, and Pelagius. G. Zuntz, *The Text of the Epistles: A Disquisition Upon the Corpus Paulinum* (London: British Academy, 1953), 182 argues for the originality of this shorter variant, appealing to Paul’s “motto ὁ καυχώμενος ἐν κυρίῳ καυχάσθω” (1 Cor 1:31; 2 Cor 10:17). More accurately, this “motto” is a paraphrase of LXX Jer 9:23 (ἐν τούτῳ καυχάσθω δ καυχώμενος, συνίει καὶ γινώσκειν ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι κύριος) in which κυρίῳ replaces τούτῳ as a summary of the remainder of the sentence. Hence, in 1 Cor 1:31 Paul prefaces the saying with “as it has been written.” Aside from his invocation of this scriptural paraphrase in 1 Cor 1:31 and 2 Cor 10:17, Paul in fact never pens the expression “boast in the Lord.” Moreover, the idiom here in 1 Cor 15:31—ἔχω εὖν καύχησιν ἐν—is slightly different from the scriptural paraphrase, and it appears only once more, in Rom 15:17 where the object of ἐν is χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (cf. Phil 1:26, 3:3 where the idioms are slightly different but the object of ἐν in both cases is also χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ). Given these factors, there is not sufficient evidence for rejecting the longer prepositional phrase, which is supported by most witnesses. Additionally, see Dennis Ronald MacDonald, “A Conjectural Emendation of 1 Cor 15:31–32: Or the Case of the Misplaced Lion Fight,” *HTR* 73 (1980), 270–273, who argues that the entire relative clause ἢν ἔχω ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν is an interpolation; and see Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “Interpolations in 1 Corinthians,” *CBQ* 48 (1986): 93, who rebuts MacDonald.

53. On this statement as a vow note Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians*, 581:“To such an admission, Paul adds an oath, introduced by the Classical Greek asseverative particle νέ, which is found only here in the NT, but occasionally in the LXX (Gen 42:15, 16) and which governs the accus. (BDF §149).”
Gal 3:14: ἵνα εἰς τὰ ἔθνη ἡ εὐλογία τοῦ Ἀβραὰμ γένηται ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ἵνα τὴν ἐπαγγελίαν τοῦ πνεύματος λάβωμεν διὰ τῆς πίστεως.

so that to the gentiles the blessing of Abraham might come in Christ Jesus, so that through faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Gal 5:6: ἐν γὰρ χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ οὔτε περιτομὴ τι ἵσχυε οὔτε ἀκροβυστία ἀλλὰ πίστις δι᾽ ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη.

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision but rather faith working through love.55

Phil 1:26: ἵνα τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν περισσεύῃ ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ ἐν ἑμοὶ διὰ τῆς ἐμῆς παρουσίας πάλιν πρὸς ὑμᾶς.

so that your reason for boasting might abound in Christ Jesus in me through my coming to you again.

It is tempting to take ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ with the noun καύχημα because the verb καυχάομαι normally takes ἐν plus the dative to indicate the object of boasting.56 The intervening pronoun and verb weigh against this, however. Furthermore, that Paul has strung

54. Γίνεσθαι with the preposition εἰς denotes a change of location, and this meaning is employed figuratively here (BDAG, s.v. γίνεσθαι, 6a). Many commentators therefore translate it “come.” So Hans Dieter Betz, Galatians: A Commentary on Paul’s Letter to the Churches in Galatia, Hermeneia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 152; Dunn, Galatians, 178; and Boer, Galatians, 214. J. B. Lightfoot, Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Galatians (London: Macmillian, 1914), 140 attempts to capture a sense of implied divine agency by speaking of the “extension” of blessing to the gentiles. Nevertheless, as it is used here this is neither a stative nor a divine passive verb.

55. The phrase ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τι ἵσχυε is implied in the second clause of the sentence—i.e., ἀλλὰ πίστις δι᾽ ἀγάπης ἐνεργουμένη [τι ἵσχυε ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ], “but faith working through love [counts for something in Christ Jesus].”

56. BDAG, s.v. καυχάομαι, 1; cf. Phil 3:3. This is the view adopted by Bockmuehl, Philippians, 94–95 and Campbell, Paul and Union, 104.
together three prepositional phrases after the verb suggests they all function comparably to 
modify περισσεύῃ.57

Phil 3:3: ἥμεις γὰρ ἔσμεν ἡ περιτομή, οἱ πνεύματι θεοῦ λατρεύοντες καὶ 
καυχόμενοι ἐν χριστῶ Ἰησοῦ καὶ σὺ ἐν σαρκί πεποιθότες,

For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and boast in 
Christ Jesus and do not have confidence in the flesh.

Ἐν χριστῶ Ἰησοῦ modifies the verbal aspect of the participle καυχόμενοι. The verb 
καυχάομαι normally takes the preposition ἐν.58 This idiom is drawn from LXX Jer 9:22–23 
(cf. Paul’s allusions to this text in 1 Cor 1:31 and 2 Cor 10:17).59

Phil 4:7: καὶ ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ ὑπερέχουσα πάντα νοοῦ φρουρήσει τὰς 
καρδίας ὑμῶν καὶ τὰ νοήματα ὑμῶν ἐν χριστῶ Ἰησοῦ.

and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard in Christ 
Jesus your hearts and your minds.

While it is feasible ἐν χριστῶ Ἰησοῦ could qualify καρδίας … νοήματα, both the 
meaning and the construction are so awkward as to make this highly unlikely. Since the 
subject of the verb φρουρήσει is ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ and not ὁ θεὸς τῆς εἰρήνης (cf. Rom 15:33; 
16:20; Phil 4:0; 1 Thess 5:23), this has not been classified as a “divine active.” However, it 
would not be unreasonable to regard God as the agent of the action and ἡ εἰρήνη τοῦ θεοῦ as a 
metonym for God used to emphasize peace as a particular quality or gift of God.60

57. So Marvin R. Vincent, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles to the Philippians 
Similar adverbial uses of ἐν χριστῶ where the noun καύχησιν also appears in the sentence are found in 
Rom 15:17 and 1 Cor 15:31. Fee, Philippians, 155n21 draws a proper distinction between the syntax 
of the sentence and the broader concept of “boasting in Christ” or “boasting in the Lord” found 
throughout Paul’s letters: “No doubt that [boasting] ‘overflows in Christ’; but that makes sense 
precisely because he is first of all the grounds for any and all such boasting.”
58. Cf. BDAG, s.v. καυχάομαι, 1.
59. On this see Bockmuehl, Philippians, 193.
60. Thus Büchsel, “In Christus,” 145.
Phlm 8: ἐπὶ πολλὴν ἐν χριστῷ παρρησίαν ἔχων ἐπιτάσσειν σοι τὸ ἄνήκον

Therefore, even though in Christ I have enough boldness to command you to do what is fitting.  

Phlm 20: ναὶ ἀδελφέ, ἡγώ σου ὀναίμην ἐν κυρίῳ ἄνάπαυσόν μου τὰ σπλάγχνα ἐν χριστῷ.

Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord. In Christ refresh my affections.

Ἐν χριστῷ could be taken with τὰ σπλάγχνα or ἄναπαυσόν. However, this verse is clearly an echo of Phlm 7 where Paul does not qualify the noun σπλάγχνα except with a genitive of possession. Therefore, ἐν χριστῷ here is most likely adverbial, qualifying ἄναπαυσόν.

**Adverbial, Modifying a Stative Verb**

There are fourteen instances in which the prepositional phrase modifies a verb expressing a state or condition. In several cases the verb is implied.


Thus, also reckon yourselves [to be], in Christ Jesus, dead to sin but alive to God.

Rom 12:5: οὕτως οἱ πολλοὶ ἐν σώμα ἐσμὲν ἐν χριστῷ, τὸ δὲ καθ᾽ ἑαυτὸν ἔλη γὰρ ἀλλήλων μέλη.

So we, the many, are in Christ one body, and individually members of one another.

61. See Rom 15:17; 1 Cor 4:15, 15:31; and Gal 2:4 for the common use of ἐν χριστῷ with ἔχω.


63. The square brackets are original to NA28. Even if εἶναι is doubtful, the textual witnesses containing it demonstrate it is clearly implied.
Rom 16:7: ἀσπάσασθε Ἀνδρόνικον καὶ Ἰουνίαν τοὺς συγγενείς μου καὶ 
συναχμαλώτους μου, οἵτινες εἰσίν ἐπίσημοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις, οἷς καὶ πρὸ ἐμοῦ 
γέγοναν ἐν χριστῷ.

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and my co-prisoners, who are 
prominent among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

1 Cor 1:30: ἐξ αὐτοῦ δὲ ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὃς ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ 
θεοῦ, δικαιοσύνη τε καὶ ἁγιασμός καὶ ἀπολύτρωσις,

And from him you are in Christ Jesus, who was made wisdom for us from 
God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

1 Cor 4:10: οἵτινες εἰσίν ἐπίσημοι ὑμῶν, ὑμεῖς δὲ φρόνιμοι ἐν χριστῷ: ὑμεῖς 
ἀσθενεῖς, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἰσχυροί· ὑμεῖς ἔνδοξοι, ὑμεῖς δὲ ἄτιμοι.

We [are] foolish for the sake of Christ, but in Christ you [are] wise. We are 
weak, but you are strong. You are honored, but we are dishonored.

2 Cor 1:19: ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ γὰρ υἱὸς Ἰησοῦς χριστὸς ὁ ἐν ἑμῖν δι’ ἑμῶν κηρυχθείς, δι’ 
ἐμοῦ καὶ Σιλουανοῦ καὶ Τιμοθέου, οὐκ ἐγένετο ναὶ καὶ οὗ ἀλλὰ ναὶ ἐν αὐτῷ 
γέγονεν.

For the son of God, Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed among you by us, by 
me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not “yes and no,” but in him it has been 
“yes.”

2 Cor 1:20: Ὑστεροῦν πρὸς ἀλλα, ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ ναὶ· διὸ καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ ἐν ἑμῖν κῆρυχθείς, 
ἀλλὰ ναὶ τῷ θεῷ πρὸς δόξαν δι’ ἑμῶν.

For however many are promises of God, in him [they are] “yes,” therefore 
also through him “Amen” to the glory of God through us.

64. The anarthrous φρόνιμοι is a predicate adjective, and the stative verb is therefore implied.

65. The closest reasonable antecedent to αὐτῷ is Ἰησοῦς χριστός in the same verse (ἁμών καὶ Σιλουανοῦ 
καὶ Τιμοθέου belong to a parenthetical insertion specifying ἡμῶν). Cf. 2 Cor 1:19.

66. The reading ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ ναὶ καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ ἀμήν, rather than ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ ναὶ· διὸ καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ τὸ 
ἀμην, is attested by D K L 1241. 1505. 1881 (+ διό). Ψ, Harklensis, and Ambrosiaster. This is likely 
an assimilation of the phrase δι’ αὐτοῦ to the preceding ἐν αὐτῷ. One witness (630) retains both, 
reading ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ ναὶ ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ ἀμήν· διὸ καὶ δι’ αὐτοῦ τὸ ἀμήν. Cf. Thrall, 2 Corinthians, 1:149n156.

67. The stative verb is implied such that the clause in question could read ἐν αὐτῷ τὸ ναὶ γεγόνας on 
analogy with the preceding verse. Ἀυτῷ here refers back to αὐτῷ in the preceding verse, the antecedent 
of which is Ἰησοῦς χριστός.
2 Cor 5:17: ὥστε εἰ τις ἐν χριστῷ, καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαία παρῆλθεν, ἵδου γέγονεν καινά.

Therefore, if anyone [is] in Christ, [there is] a new creation. The old passed away; look, the new has come.⁶⁸

2 Cor 5:20–21: 20 … δεόµεθα ὑπὲρ χριστοῦ, καταδάγητε τῷ θεῷ. 21 τὸν μὴ γνώντα ἀμαρτίαν ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἀμαρτίαν ἐποίησεν, ὅταν ἡμές γενώµεθα δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ. 20 … we have entreated you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. 21 He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.⁶⁹

Ἐν αὐτῷ could theoretically be taken with γενώµεθα or δικαιοσύνη. However, I am aware of no one who understands the prepositional phrase as modifying δικαιοσύνη, probably because doing so would further obfuscate the meaning of the already difficult sentence.⁷⁰

2 Cor 13:4: καὶ γὰρ ἐσταυρώθη ἐξ ἀσθενείας, ἀλλὰ ζῇ ἐκ δυνάµεως θεοῦ. καὶ γὰρ ἡμές ἀσθενοῦµεν ἐν αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ ζήσοµεν σὺν αὐτῷ ἐκ δυνάµεως θεοῦ εἰς ὑµᾶς. 70 For indeed he was crucified out of weakness but lives by the power of God. For in him we are weak also, but we will live with him by the power of God toward you.

Gal 3:26: Πάντες γὰρ υἱοὶ θεοῦ ἐστε διὰ τῆς πίστεως ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ: 

68. The stative verb is implied such that the clause in question could read εἰ τις ἐστιν ἐν χριστῷ.

69. The antecedent of αὐτῷ is χριστοῦ in the preceding verse.

70. Büchsel, “In Christus,” 145 classifies this instance under “Zuständen … der Christen” modified with the phrase “in Christ,” presumably indicating he takes the prepositional phrase with γενώµεθα. Campbell, Paul and Union, 185–187 also seems to take it adverbially, but his discussion is unclear because of his fixation on the somewhat forced dichotomy of instrumentality versus “union with Christ.” For clearer determinations, see Morna D. Hooker, “Interchange in Christ,” JTS 22 (1971): 353 and Victor Paul Furnish, II Corinthians: Translated, with Introduction, Notes, and Commentary, AB 32A (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), 340.

71. The variant reading ἀσθενοῦµεν σὺν αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ ζήσοµεν σὺν αὐτῷ is attested by ΝΑFG, Latin manuscript r, Peshitta, and the Bohairic. This is likely an assimilation of the phrase ἐν αὐτῷ to the following σὺν αὐτῷ. Also, the inverse assimilation—ἀσθενοῦµεν ἐν αὐτῷ, ἀλλὰ ζήσοµεν ἐν αὐτῷ—is attested by ℶ* (uncertain) D* 33, 326, Latin manuscript g, and Pelagius*. Cf. Bruce M. Metzger, A Textual Commentary on the New Testament (London: United Bible Societies, 1971), 587–588.
For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.

Ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ could be taken with πίστεως or ἐστε.  

Fee’s three observations are decisive: First, “Paul never uses the preposition ‘in’ (ἐν) to refer to someone’s putting their trust in something or someone.” Second, Paul’s emphasis, reiterated unambiguously in v. 28 (ἐστε ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ), is on “believers’ new position (being ‘in Christ’) that has come about ‘through the … faith.’” Third, the repeated use of the article with πίστις in v. 23 (2x), v. 25, and here in v. 26 indicates it is used in an objectivizing way to refer to the teaching of the gospel.


73. Fee, “Paul’s Use of Locative ἐν,” 183; and notwithstanding the non-Pauline examples adduced in Konstan and Ramelli, “Syntax,” 584n13.

74. Fee, “Paul’s Use of Locative ἐν,” 183 (italics original).

75. Fee, “Paul’s Use of Locative ἐν,” 183n39 (cf. BDAG, s.v. πίστις, 3); pace Longenecker, Galatians, 152. Compare the use of similar prepositional phrases in Eph 3:6: εἶναι τὰ ἐθνῆ συγκληρονόμα καὶ σύσσωμα καὶ συμμέτοχα τῆς ἐπαγγελίας ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ διὰ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, “that the gentiles are, in Christ Jesus, through the gospel, co-heirs and co-members of the body and co-sharers of the promise.”
Gal 3:28: οὐκ ἐνὶ Ἰουδαῖος οὐδὲ Ἑλλην, οὐκ ἐνὶ δούλῳ οὐδὲ ἐλεύθερος, οὐκ ἐν ἀρσεν καὶ θηλυ· πάντες γὰρ ὑμεῖς ἐστε ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. 

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is not male and female. For you all are, in Christ Jesus, one.

Phil 2:5: Τοῦτο φρονεῖτε ἐν ὑμῖν ὡς καὶ ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. 

Think this among you, which also [is] in Christ Jesus.

The phrase ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in this verse has prompted more discussion about syntax than has any other instance of Paul’s “in Christ” language. It is widely agreed that the prepositional phrase is adverbial, modifying an implied verb in the second clause. But what verb is to be supplied has catalyzed debate, and opinions are bound up in various understandings of Paul’s theology generally and in theological interpretations of Paul’s “in Christ” language specifically. The sides of the debate are clearly explained by Bockmuehl: “The main proposals boil down to two: ‘Have this attitude among yourselves,’ [1] ‘which was also in Christ Jesus’ (the ‘ethical’ reading) … [or 2] ‘which you have in Christ Jesus’ …”

76. The use of ἐν is unusual for Paul (though cf. 1 Cor 6:5) and may, along with other factors, suggest here the use of a pre-existing formula, on which see Martyn, Galatians, 374–375, 378–383. Note the explanation of the word ἐν in BDF §98: “Εν, which properly stands for ἔνεστιν as πάρα stands for πάρεστιν … appears in the NT with the meaning ‘there is’ (always with negative);” and similarly see Herbert Weir Smyth, Greek Grammar (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1920), §175b. LSJ and BDAG both define ἔνειµι as “to be in” or “to be possible.” In Franco Montanari, The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 692 it is given a third possible meaning, “to exist, be present, occur.” Alternatively, Lightfoot proposes that it “is not a contraction of ἔνεστι, but the preposition ἐν, ἐνι, strengthened by a more vigorous accent, like ἐπι, πάρα, and used with an ellipsis of the substantive verb” (Lightfoot, Galatians, 150, following Winer, Grammar, §14.2). The resultant meaning would be something like, “therein is neither Jew nor Greek, [etc.].” While this would be an interesting extension of a spatial idea of being baptized “into (ἐκ) Christ” and of the clothing metaphor in v. 27, it would require supplying both the stative verb and the object of the preposition. The explanation in Longenecker, Galatians, 156 is preferable: “Originally ἐνi was but an expanded form of the preposition ἐν. It came, however, to be used as a variant of ἔνεστιν (‘it is possible’), and so it appears, for example, in 1 Cor 6:5 and 4 Macc 4:22. Yet it also was used as an emphatic equivalent for ἐστιν (‘it is,’ ‘there is’), particularly when a strong negation was in view (cf. Col 3:11; Jas 1:17; also Sir 37:2, though not negated in this latter case). And that is how it is used here.”

77. It spells trouble when, in the words of Matlock, we “strain to find our every theological initiative condensed into droplets of Pauline grammar” (Matlock, “Detheologizing,” 23).
(the ‘kerygmatic’ reading)." The labels “ethical” and “kerygmatic” betray theological interests in how the text is interpreted, and this is readily admitted by Käsemann and discussed by Hurtado. Indeed, Hurtado aptly navigates beyond the purported mutual exclusivity of these theological options by, quite reasonably, interpreting the verse in its broader context. He concludes,

these crucial verses emphasize that Jesus’ actions were foundational for Christian existence [i.e., kerygmatic], and at the same time show that his self-denial and obedience have received divine vindication, making Jesus’ pattern of service the Lordly example to the readers who acclaim him now [i.e., ethical].

Given this perspective on the broader context of Phil 2:5, the decision of what verb to supply in the verse’s elliptical clause can be made simply on grammatical grounds. The simplest solution is the stative ἐστιν, “is.” The third person form of ἐίνα is commonly omitted, and


82. Cf. BDF §127, 480.
the insertion of the stative verb into the clause agrees with the case of ὅ. 83 Additionally, it allows the ἐν-phrases in both clauses to function similarly—that is, in both cases there is a figurative application of the preposition’s locative connotation to indicate position. The mentality Paul is espousing is to be operative “inside” the Philippian community just as it is “inside” the mind of Christ. This agreement in connotation between the prepositional phrases is also suggested by the conjunction καί.

1 Thess 2:14: ᾿Τιμίας γὰρ μιμητῆς ἐγενήθητε, ἀδελφοὶ, τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν ὐσῶν ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, ὥστε τὰ αὐτά ἐπάθετε καὶ ὑμεῖς ὑπὸ τῶν ἰδίων συμφιλετῶν καθὼς καὶ αὐτοὶ ὑπὸ τῶν Ἰουδαίων,

Fo you became imitators, brothers, of the churches of God that are in Judea in Christ Jesus because you also suffered the same things from your own compatriots as they also did from the Jews. 84

Adverbial, Modifying a Verbal Adjective which Modifies a Personal Noun

There is one instance in which the prepositional phrase modifies an adjective which in turn modifies a personal noun. This instance is conceptually an extension of the previous category, “Adverbial, Modifying a Divine Passive Verb,” since the adjective is verbal and the implied agent of the action is God.

Rom 16:10: ἀσπάσασθε Ἀπελλῆν τῶν δόκιμων ἐν χριστῷ. ἀσπάσασθε τοὺς ἐκ τῶν Ἀριστοβούλου.

83. Contrast the proposed wording rejected by Moule, “Further Reflexions,” 265: Ὅτο ὑμῖν ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ ὑμῖν ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. This lacks an accusative object for ὑμῖν in the second clause.

84. Ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ clearly modifies the participle ὑσῶν. However, the participle in turn modifies ἐκκλησιῶν, and therefore this verse is conceptually close to Gal 1:22 and 1 Thess 1:1. In these other two examples there is no stative verb. The difference in construction here is probably due to Paul’s dual emphasis on geographical location and differentiation from non-messianic Jewish congregations, whereas in Gal 1:22 only the latter factor is emphasized.
Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those of Aristobulus.\textsuperscript{85}

Ἐν χριστῷ could modify either τὸν δόκιµον or ἀσπάσασθε. However, in the surrounding context ἐν χριστῷ is used twice to modify a noun that describes someone Paul is greeting (Rom 16:3, 9),\textsuperscript{86} and once to modify a stative verb of which someone he is greeting is the subject (Rom 16:7). In no case is ἐν χριστῷ used to modify the frequently repeated verb ἀσπάσασθε. Ἐν χριστῷ should therefore be taken here in Rom 16:10 with the adjective δόκιµον, which is also a descriptor of the person Paul is greeting.

**Adverbial, Modifying an Adjective which Modifies an Impersonal Noun**

There is one instance in which the prepositional phrase modifies an adjective which in turn modifies an impersonal noun. This is a conceptual extension of the following category, “Adjectival, Modifying an Impersonal Noun.”

Phil 1:13: ὥστε τοὺς δεσµούς μου φανερούς ἐν χριστῷ γενέσθαι ἐν ἔλῳ τῷ πραιτωρίῳ καὶ τοῖς λοιποῖς πάσιν,

so that my chains have been manifest in Christ among the whole prison guard and to all the rest.

The awkwardness of this sentence is widely acknowledged, and it is caused by the phrase ἐν χριστῷ itself.\textsuperscript{87} Campbell notes that word order rules out taking the prepositional phrase with δεσµούς (i.e., “my chains-in-Christ have become manifest”) because of the intervening adjective φανερούς.\textsuperscript{88} Konstan and Ramelli take ἐν χριστῷ with γενέσθαι, but the

\textsuperscript{85.} Compare 1 Thess 2:4 where Paul expresses a similar idea but with an emphasis on the action of approving rather than the quality of being approved: ἀλλὰ καθὼς δεδοκιµάσθησα ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ πιστευθῆναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον, “But just as we have been approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel.”

\textsuperscript{86.} Cf. Phil 4:21.

\textsuperscript{87.} See Fee, Philippians, 112.

\textsuperscript{88.} Campbell, Paul and Union, 124–125. See also Neugebauer, In Christus, 121n13.

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resultant meaning is less clear than the remaining alternative. For what would it mean for Christ to be the instrument by which, or the “sphere” in which Paul’s imprisonment is made known? And would this not imply that the fact of his imprisonment is otherwise hidden or ambiguous? The better option is to take the prepositional phrase with the adjective φανερούς. Fee seems to imply something along these lines when he suggests the gloss: “so that my chains have been manifest [as being] in Christ.” Yet, even with this slightly clearer option, Paul’s meaning is admittedly still abstruse.

Adjectival, Modifying an Impersonal Noun

There are seven instances in which the prepositional phrase modifies a noun denoting something other than a person.

Rom 3:24: δικαιούµενοι δωρεάν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ·
being justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus.

Rom 6:23: τὰ γὰρ ὀψώνια τῆς ἀμαρτίας βάναυσος, τὸ δὲ χάρισµα τοῦ θεοῦ ζωῆς αἰώνιος ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡµῶν.
For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

90. Fee, Philippians, 112n29.
91. This is no doubt why John Henry Paul Reumann, Philippians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, AB 33B (London: Yale University Press, 2008), 170 opts for “[h]aving one’s cake and eating it too” by placing the prepositional phrase at the front of the whole clause so that it “stands over” the entire thought expressed by Paul as well as at the end of the clause to indicate that “the bonds are for Christ” (italics original). Thus he illegitimately translates the verse: “The results are that in Christ it has become clear in the whole Praetorium and to all the rest that my bonds are for Christ” (166). See also the similar analysis in Neugebauer, In Christus, 121.
Ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ could be taken with ζωή, χάρισμα, or possibly an implied stative. However, in Rom 6:11 the prepositional phrase modifies the participle ζώντας, and Paul is recapitulating a similar idea here. Therefore, it should be taken as modifying ζωή.  

Rom 8:39: οὔτε ὑψωμα οὔτε βάθος οὔτε τις κτίσις ἡμᾶς χωρίσαι ἀπὸ τῆς ἁγάπης τοῦ θεοῦ τῆς ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τῷ κυρίῳ ἡμῶν. nor height, nor depth, not any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Cor 4:17: Διὰ τούτο ἐπέμψα ὑμῖν Τιμόθεον, δς ἄστιν μου τέκνον ἁγαπητόν καὶ πιστὸν ἐν χριστῷ, δς ὑμᾶς ἀναμνήσει τὰς ὁδοὺς μου τὰς ἐν χριστῷ Ιησοῦ. For this reason I sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ [Jesus], just as I teach everywhere in every church.

Phil 2:1: Εἴ τις οὖν παράκλησις ἐν χριστῷ, εἴ τι παραμύθιον ἁγάπης, εἴ τις κοινωνία πνεύματος, εἴ τις σπλάγχνα καὶ οἰκτιρμοί, Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort from love, if any participation of the Spirit, if any affection and sympathy.

Phil 3:14: κατὰ σκοπὸν διώκω εἰς τὸ βραβεῖον τῆς ἄνω κλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ could modify διώκω (being placed at the end of the sentence for emphasis) or τῆς … χλήσεως. However, Paul’s discussion in vv. 10–11 and v. 21 of sharing in Christ’s resurrection, and in v. 20 of present citizenship in heaven where Christ resides suggest that here in v. 14 Paul is qualifying God’s upward call with ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ and using τῆς ἄνω χλήσεως τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ as a shorthand for this complex of ideas. 


In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

**Adjectival, Modifying a Personal Noun or Pronoun**

There are eleven instances in which the prepositional phrase modifies a noun or pronoun denoting a person or group of people.

Rom 16:3: Ἀσπάσασθε Πρίσκαν καὶ Ἀκύλαν τοὺς συνεργούς μου ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.

ʼἘν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ qualifies the noun τοὺς συνεργούς and not the verb ἀσπάσασθε.” Paul is clarifying that Prisca and Aquila are not merely co-workers but co-workers with Paul in his missionary efforts. Konstan and Ramelli’s bias toward identifying as many instances as possible as adverbial is especially evident in their generalization that all instances of ἐν κυρίῳ or ἐν χριστῷ with ἀσπάζομαι without an intervening verb in Romans 16 (vv. 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 22) modify the verb ἀσπάζομαι. In fact, it is only in Rom 16:22 that this is the case. In all other instances the phrase clearly characterizes the person receiving the greeting as it does here in Rom 16:3.  

Rom 16:9: Ἀσπάσασθε Οὐρβανὸν τὸν συνεργὸν ἡμῶν ἐν χριστῷ καὶ Στάχυν τὸν ἀγαπητὸν μου.

Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ and my beloved Stachys.

1 Cor 3:1: Κάγω, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλῆσαι ὡς πνευματικοῖς ἀλλ’ ὡς σαρκίνοις, ὡς νηπίοις ἐν χριστῷ.

But I, brothers, could not speak to you as spiritual people but as fleshly people, as infants in Christ.

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95. See also Rom 16:9, Phil 4:21, and Phlm 23.
1 Cor 16:24: η ἀγάπη μου μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.

My love with all of you in Christ Jesus.

Ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ should be taken with ὑμῶν rather than an implied stative verb—i.e., “My love [be] with …”96 Three factors favor taking the prepositional phrase here as describing the letter’s recipients. First, it is congruent with Paul’s use of the phrase in his greeting in 1 Cor 1:2. There it modifies the verbal aspect of a participle, but that participle in turn denotes the letter’s recipients. Second, it coheres with Paul’s emphasis on unity. All the Corinthians, despite their factions, are “in Christ.” Third, elliptical constructions are typical in closing salutations, and there is therefore no need to supply the verb “be.”97 As a variation on the view taken here, Campbell suggests that the prepositional phrase modifies the adjective πάντων.98 This is overly subtle and is a broad interpretation of Paul’s overall argument for unity masked as a grammatical observation. Better is Barrett’s careful differentiation: “It would not be wrong to say that, in sense, not construction, [ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ] covers the whole epistle.”99 Here our concern is the construction, and it is more straightforward to take ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ with the object ὑμῶν rather than its adjunct. Finally, it is also possible the prepositional phrase could be taken with ἡ ἀγάπη (cf. Rom 8:39). However, the three arguments just given also weigh against this option. In any case, the prepositional phrase would still be adjectival.

2 Cor 12:2: οἶδα ἐνδοξοῦν ἐν χριστῷ πρὸ ἐτῶν δεκατεσσάρων, εἴτε ἐν σώματι ὑμῶν οἶδα, εἴτε ἐκτὸς τοῦ σώματος ὑμῶν οἶδα, ὅ ἐστι σῶμα, ἁρπαγέντα τὸν τοιοῦτον ἐως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ.


I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body, I do not know, or out of the body, I do not know; God knows—was caught up into the third heaven.100

Gal 1:22: ἤμεν δὲ ἀγνοούμενος τῷ προσώπῳ ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις τῆς Ἰουδαίας ταῖς ἐν χριστῷ.

And I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea in Christ.101

100. Cf. Ralph P. Martin, 2 Corinthians, WBC 40 (Dallas: Word Books, 1986), 399, where, despite his conventional translation of this verse, Martin describes the phrase ἐν χριστῷ as if it modifies an unstated divine passive verb (cf. 2 Cor 12:7).

101. Similar constructions appear in 1 Thess 1:1 and 2:14. On the use of ἐκκλησία to denote Christian congregations, see the classic discussion in Ernest de Witt Burton, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians, ICC (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1921), 417–420. Burton notes that by the first century Jewish congregations were consistently called συναγωγαί not ἐκκλησίαι, and he suggests that Christian assemblies distinguished themselves simply by use of the word ἐκκλησία (cf. Wolfgang Schrage, “‘Ekklesia’ und ‘Synagoge’: Zum Ursprung des urchristlichen Kirchenbegriffs,” ZTK 60 [1963]: 178–202). If this is accepted, the assertion by Lightfoot, Galatians, 86 cannot be sustained, that “[t]he addition ταῖς ἐν χριστῷ was necessary when speaking of the Christian brotherhoods of Judaea; for the unconverted Jewish communities might still be called ‘the Churches of Judaea’” (cf. Dunn, Galatians, 30–31, 83). Alternatively, Martyn, Galatians, 176, noting Betz, Galatians, 80n226, observes what he considers to be the particularly “elaborate” constructions here and in 1 Thess 2:14. By this he presumably means the insertion of the article before ἐν χριστῷ in Gal 1:22 and the stative participle τῶν ὁσῶν before ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ in 1 Thess 2:14 (cf. 1 Cor 1:2). On this basis, Martyn speculates that “Paul was consistently careful to refer with great respect to those thoroughly Jewish-Christian churches whom he did not know personally and to whom he was personally unknown” (176). Similarly, Boer, Defeat of Death, 102, evidently still conscious of F. C. Baur’s theory to the contrary, surmises from this a high degree of courtesy toward Peter and his mission to the Jews in the area. While Martyn’s and Boer’s suggestions are possible, it is difficult to establish with any certainty Paul’s psychological predisposition on the basis of a perceived syntactical oddity. What can be said concretely is that Paul qualifies the noun ἐκκλησία with the phrase ἐν χριστῷ three times (Gal 1:22; 1 Thess 1:1; 2:14), and that in two of these three instances (Gal 1:22 and 1 Thess 2:14) he is referring to Judean assemblies. The remaining instance in 1 Thess 1:1 can be explained by Paul’s consistent preference for mentioning “(our) Lord Jesus Christ” in his opening salutations (cf. Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Cor 1:2; Gal 1:3; Phil 1:2; Phlm 3; this also explains the rarity in 1 Thess 1:1 where κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ intervenes between ἐν and χριστῷ while in every other instance of “in Christ” language the first noun after the preposition is always χριστῷ). It is therefore reasonable to surmise that there is something about their Judean location that prompts Paul to qualify certain ἐκκλησίαι with the phrase ἐν χριστῷ as he does in Gal 1:22 and 1 Thess 2:14. Whether this is out of Paul’s courtesy to Peter, his lack of personal association with the churches, or (despite Burton’s conclusion) a need to distinguish the messianic-Jewish assemblies from non-messianic synagogues, remains unclear.
Phil 1:1: Παῦλος καὶ Τιµόθεος δούλοι χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ πάσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi with the bishops and deacons.102

Phil 4:21: Ἀσπάσασθε πάντα ἅγιον ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. Ἀσπάζονται ὑμᾶς οἱ σὺν ἡμοί ἀδελφοί.

Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers with me greet you.

Ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ could modify either ἅγιον or ἀσπάσασθε. However, the parallel and unambiguous instance in Phil 1:1 favors ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ modifying ἅγιον.103 This parallel also invalidates the objection that Paul would not have used the phrase “every saint in Christ” because it is redundant.104 By adding ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, Paul is likely qualifying ἅγιος, a traditional designation for God’s people (cf. LXX Pss 15:3; 33:9; 73:3; and Dan 7:27, OG, but esp. Theod.).105

1 Thess 1:1: Παῦλος καὶ Σιλουανὸς καὶ Τιµόθεος τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ χριστῷ, χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη.

Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace.106

1 Thess 4:16: ὅτι αὐτὸς ὁ κύριος ἐν κελεύσματι, ἐν φωνῇ ἀρχα~έλου, καταβήσεται ἀπ᾿ οὐρανοῦ καὶ οἱ νεκροὶ ἐν χριστῷ ἀναστήσονται πρῶτον,

102. On the use of the adjective ἅγιος as a substantive, see BDAG, s.v. ἅγιος, 2c–d.
103. So Vincent, Philippians and Philemon, 153. Word order may also favor this reading, on which see Bockmuehl, Philippians, 268; pace Konstan and Ramelli, “Syntax,” 588.
104. Thus Fee, Philippians, 458. Fee remains unbothered by this supposed tautology in Phil 1:1 (64–65).
105. On this see Lightfoot, Philippians, 81; and Fee, Philippians, 64–65. Also, for Paul’s use of ἀσπάζομαι with an object qualified by ἐν χριστῷ, cf. Rom 16:3.
For the Lord himself in a commanding shout, in the voice of the archangel
and in the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ
will rise first.

Ἐν χριστῷ could be taken with ἀναστήσονται or οἱ νεκροί. The latter is the traditional
interpretation taken by most commentators.107 Two factors favor this interpretation: The first
is that Paul uses a similar phrase in 1 Cor 15:18—οἱ κοιμηθέντες ἐν χριστῷ.108 The second is
that οἱ νεκροί at the end of 1 Thess 4:16 is parallel to οἱ ζῶντες at the beginning of 1 Thess
4:17, and both of these are further specified—οἱ ζῶντες by its apposition to ἡμεῖς and οἱ νεκροί
by the addition of ἐν χριστῷ. Despite these factors, the burden of Konstan and Ramelli’s
article is to demonstrate that ἐν χριστῷ actually modifies ἀναστήσονται.109 This is
grammatically possible and no more theologically objectionable than, say, Paul’s statement
in 1 Cor 15:22 that “all will be made alive in Christ.” However, Konstan and Ramelli’s
argument is unconvincing for two reasons. First, generally, they attempt to demonstrate that
Paul’s “normal” use of ἐν χριστῷ is adverbial.110 Notwithstanding several instances they
incorrectly identify as adverbial, it is true that there are more adverbial uses of the phrase
than adjectival—a ratio of roughly two to one. However, this majority is not nearly large
enough to support an argument that is based essentially on statistical probability. Second,
Konstan and Ramelli are inaccurate in their description of the adjectival use of ἐν χριστῷ.
They assert, “the phrase ἐν χριστῷ modifies a preceding substantive, and more particularly
the subject of the sentence, in letters that are attributed with certainty to Paul, but in these

107. So, e.g., Neugebauer, *In Christus*, 110; Ernest Best, *The First and Second Epistles to the
(Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 101; Beverly Roberts Gaventa, *First and Second Thessalonians,*
Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1998), 66; Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the
178; and Campbell, *Paul and Union*, 119.

108. Ἐν χριστῷ modifies the verbal aspect of the participle, but the participle clearly denotes dead
believers.


cases the article is invariably repeated before the phrase."\textsuperscript{111} As examples of this pattern they list Rom 3:24, where \textit{ἀπολυτρώσεως} is not in fact the subject of the sentence; Rom 8:39, which they misquote, substituting \textit{Ἰησοῦ} for \textit{θεοῦ}; 1 Cor 1:4, where the prepositional phrase does not function adjectivally but adverbially, modifying the participle \textit{τῇ δοθείσῃ}; and Gal 1:22. However, the closest syntactical analogies to the traditional reading which they are refuting are instances in which the prepositional phrase follows a personal noun or pronoun and functions adjectivally to modify it.\textsuperscript{112} This category includes ten instances from the undisputed epistles (Rom 16:3, 9; 1 Cor 3:1; 16:24; 2 Cor 12:2; Gal 1:22; Phil 1:1; 4:21; and Phlm 23) all but one of which (Gal 1:22) omit the article before \textit{ἐν χριστῷ}.\textsuperscript{113} Therefore, Konstan and Ramelli’s attempt to demonstrate a consistent construction of the adjectival use \textit{ἐν χριστῷ} to which 1 Thess 4:16 does not conform is unsuccessful. While these problems in their argument do not render their proposal grammatically impossible, neither do they convincingly undermine the reasons given above for the more widely accepted reading.

\textit{Phlm 23: Ἀσπάζεται σε Ἕπαφρας ὁ συναιχμάλωτός μου ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.}
Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you.\textsuperscript{114}

**Substantival, Denoting Persons**

There is one instance in which the prepositional phrase functions as a noun denoting persons. This is a conceptual extension of the previous category, “Adjectival, Modifying a Personal Noun or Pronoun.”

\textit{Rom 8:1: Οὐδὲν ἄρα νῦν κατάκριμα τοῖς ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ.}

\textsuperscript{111.} Konstan and Ramelli, “Syntax,” 582 (italics added).

\textsuperscript{112.} In the wry words of Matlock, “not only can statistics not count: you have to count the right statistics!” (Matlock, “Detheologizing,” 18).

\textsuperscript{113.} There are also two examples excluding the article from the disputed epistles: Col 1:2 and Eph 2:7.

\textsuperscript{114.} See the discussion above on Rom 16:3.
There is therefore now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.\textsuperscript{115}

\textit{Summary and Observations}

The results of this syntactical analysis are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Adverbial or Adjectival Use</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial, Modifying a Divine Passive Verb</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial, Modifying a Divine Active Verb</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial, Modifying an Active Verb</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial, Modifying a Stative Verb</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial, Modifying a Verbal Adjective which Modifies a Personal Noun</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial, Modifying an Adjective which Modifies an Impersonal Noun</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectival, Modifying an Impersonal Noun</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectival, Modifying a Personal Noun or Pronoun</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substantival, Denoting Persons</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I would like to make two observations about this data. First, the most prominent, and perhaps most significant, syntactical feature of Paul’s “in Christ” language is the large diversity of ways in which he deploys the phrase. As discussed in chapter three, Paul’s initial allusion in Galatians 3 to the LXX Genesis source from which he derived his “in Christ” phraseology, and his use of “in Christ” language elsewhere in the immediate context of that allusion, account for the adverbial use of the prepositional phrase to modify verbs of divine agency, other active verbs, and perhaps stative verbs. Even in Galatians 3, however, Paul already exhibits a tendency toward syntactical innovation, and as we have seen in this chapter that tendency obtains even more so elsewhere in his writings. Nevertheless, as discussed in

\textsuperscript{115} This is an unusual and therefore notable use of the phrase \textit{ἐν χριστῷ} as a substantive. On the substantivizing of a prepositional phrase by the addition of the article, see BDF §266 and Smyth, \textit{Greek Grammar}, §1153c. This particular construction occurs only once more in the NT, in 1 Pet 5:14, where its use is probably dependent on Paul’s. See also \textit{ὁ τοῦ χριστοῦ} in 1 Cor 15:23, which, together with the substantival phrase here in Rom 8:1, perhaps epitomize Paul’s usage which Deissmann attempted to describe with the novel grammatical categories “mystical genitive” and “mystical ‘in’” (Deissmann, \textit{Paul}, 163 and 197).
chapter two, the creative re-appropriation of scriptural idioms is a standard feature of ancient messiah discourse. If the Pauline corpus comprises an unusually prolific specimen of this feature of messiah discourse, Paul is no less a participant in ancient Jewish messiah speculation for it.

The second observation is that while Paul’s use of “in Christ” language is typically adverbial, it is not exclusively so. Moreover, of those adverbial uses, less than a third pertain to divine agency. The specific tallies are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adverbial116</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divine Agency117</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human Agency118</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stative Verbs</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectival119</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite this, some have made generalizations to the contrary. For instance, Neugebauer, noting the predominant adverbial use of the phrase, then moves on to claim that “Pauline anthropology must also be called verbal,” and that Paul’s use of ἐν is therefore oriented toward the Christ-event as that which determines and qualifies actions.120 Approaching the question from a slightly different angle, Wedderburn contends that his observations about Paul’s “in Christ” language “point to a background in which Abraham and Christ are viewed

116. Includes the categories “Adverbial, Modifying a Divine Passive,” “Adverbial, Modifying a Divine Active Verb,” “Adverbial, Modifying an Active Verb,” “Adverbial, Modifying a Stative Verb,” and “Adverbial, Modifying a Verbal Adjective which Modifies a Personal Noun.”

117. Includes the categories “Adverbial, Modifying a Divine Passive,” “Adverbial, Modifying a Divine Active Verb,” and “Adverbial, Modifying a Verbal Adjective which Modifies a Personal Noun.”

118. Includes the category “Adverbial, Modifying an Active Verb.”

119. Includes the categories “Adverbial, Modifying an Adjective which Modifies an Impersonal Noun,” “Adjectival, Modifying an Impersonal Noun,” “Adjectival, Modifying a Personal Noun or Pronoun,” and “Substantival, Denoting Persons.”

as representative figures through whom God acts towards the human race: he acts towards them ‘in’ those figures.\[^{121}\] Similarly, with reference to Paul’s “in Christ” language, Novenson claims that “Paul refers to [Christ] ‘adverbially’—to specify and qualify God’s act.”\[^{122}\] The problem with these statements is not that they are globally inaccurate; it is that they are inaccurate with respect to grammar. As we will see in part two of this chapter, there is more than a grain of truth to the claim that the instrumentality of the messiah in God’s work is a fundamental aspect of Paul’s messianology. Regarding the syntactical characteristics of Paul’s “in Christ” language, however, less than a fifth of the phrase’s occurrences modify divine actions. Thus, these generalizations have confused higher-order observations about Paul’s concept of the messiah’s role in God’s purposes with grammatical observations about Paul’s use of a particular messiah idiom.

That being said, how Paul conceived of his messiah is a seminal question, and a conceptual analysis of his “in Christ” language will shed light on its answer. This is the task of part two of this chapter.

**Part 2: Conceptual Analysis**

The preceding syntactical analysis made use of descriptive categories which were strictly grammatical and which arose from the features of Paul’s language itself. This is not to say that the syntactical function of the phrase “in Christ” was clear in every case, nor is it to say that the way a given instance is understood syntactically has no import for higher-order descriptions of Paul’s thought. It is to say, however, that synthetic categories were not imposed on the text. The following conceptual analysis, though, is distinct from this.


The conceptual categorizes I will use are consciously imposed from above for the purpose of analyzing features of Paul’s writings in a re-descriptive way. Prior conceptual analyses of Paul’s “in Christ” language—at least those which avoid the pitfall of treating the phrase as a static formula—have categorized instances either topically (e.g., God’s saving acts, the church, Paul himself), semantically (e.g., whether ἐν connotes instrumentality, agency, sphere, location), or theologically (e.g., whether or not an interpreter perceives a contribution to the theological construct of “union with Christ”).\textsuperscript{123} What is revisionist about the conceptual analysis I am undertaking is not that it avoids the imposition of synthetic categories, but that the categories I use derive from a heretofore neglected feature of Paul’s writings—his participation in the Jewish interpretative enterprise of messiah discourse. This participation, demonstrated and illustrated in chapters three and four, consists in Paul’s re-appropriation of the language and ideas of scriptural traditions to generate and articulate his understanding of messiahship. Thus, in contrast with the topical divisions just described, I in a sense gather all instances of Paul’s “in Christ” language under the topic “messiah.” And in contrast with the semantic categorizations mentioned, I attend to the meaning of sentences and paragraphs more than individual, isolated words in order to trace Paul’s thoughts. This latter distinction is especially important because (with the exception of technical terms) concepts are communicated through combinations of words, not by single words.\textsuperscript{124}

What then are these conceptual categories arising from our observations about Paul’s innovative messianic interpretations of scripture? There are three: “instrumentality,” “inclusion,” and “solidarity.” We have been introduced to the first two of these in our

\textsuperscript{123} One of the flaws of Campbell’s otherwise helpful semantic analysis is that he evidently includes the category of “union with Christ” in the semantic field of the preposition ἐν (Campbell, \textit{Paul and Union}, 68–73). This is to confuse the study of a concept with the study of a word’s meaning, on which see James Barr, \textit{Semantics}, 207–216; and Silva, \textit{Biblical Words}, 24–25. Campbell’s is perhaps an understandable error in light of the unnecessary introduction of novel lexical and grammatical categories for Paul’s “in Christ” language in BDAG, BDF, Moulton’s grammar, and \textit{TDNT} mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. It is nevertheless misleading.

analysis in chapter three of Paul’s messianic interpretation and appropriation of the Genesis traditions concerning Abraham’s “seed.” “Instrumentality” describes Paul’s use of “in Christ” language to indicate that Christ is the means by which God’s redemptive purposes are accomplished, and “inclusion” describes Paul’s use of the phrase to indicate that certain people or groups are included among God’s people. We have been introduced to “solidarity” in our analysis in chapter four of Paul’s messianic interpretation and appropriation of the Danielic vision of the “one like a son of man” and the people of God. This category corresponds to Paul’s use of “in Christ” language to describe solidarity between the messiah and his people. I shall expand on each of these in reverse order.

First, solidarity: By “solidarity” I mean the idea that the messiah and someone else—whether Paul, his team, a particular church, or believers in general—are understood to do, experience, or possess the same thing.125 This aspect of Paul’s conception of messiahship arises from his interpretation of the relation between the heavenly man and the people of God in Dan 7:13–27 and his appropriation of that understanding in his depiction of shared victory of enemies in 1 Cor 15:20–28. As explained in chapter four, because of the variety of thematic contexts in which Paul employs this logic, the concept of solidarity is best described as a structural component of Paul’s messianology rather than a discrete theological conviction or overarching ideology. That is to say, while Paul’s logic evinces a notion of solidarity between the messiah and his people in resurrection—understood as victory over death (1 Corinthians 15)—not every other instance of solidarity relates to the topic of resurrection (though many do).

Further, in the following analysis I subdivide this category into Paul’s “explicit” and “implicit” expressions of solidarity with the messiah. There are instances where Paul makes a plain statement of solidarity, and there are instances where it is only implied as a premise or inference of what he is saying. The line between explicit and implicit is blurry in some

125. A different question is the “basis” of this solidarity (cf. Wedderburn, “Body of Christ,” 95), and this is where, for instance, descriptions of Paul’s understanding of the indwelling of πνεῦμα or perhaps the theological concept of “union with Christ” may be illuminating. This interesting question, however, is outside the purview of this study.
instances, especially those in which it is primarily a question of how far out into a given sentence’s context one must look to detect an indication of solidarity. In these cases, I have erred on the side of epistemological modesty, remaining restrained in the amount of instances I deem “explicit.” For example, in Rom 6:23 Paul says that God’s gift to believers is “eternal life in Christ Jesus.” Earlier in the same chapter, he says that Christ lives and no longer dies. Conceptually, this corresponds rather obviously with “eternal life,” but because the statements about Christ are relatively distant in the context and because they are expressed with different language, I described this as an example of “implicit solidarity.” In other cases, however, an expression of solidarity is implicit because it depends on an unexpressed, though reasonably surmised, premise. For example, when in 2 Cor 5:21 Paul writes, “he made him who did not know sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God,” many (not uncontroversially) detect an “interchange” in status whereby an unspoken premise of Paul’s thought is that Christ also in some way is “the righteousness of God” (however that is understood). If so, this can only be described as “implicit solidarity” since Paul does not articulate this premise.

Before moving on to the next category, I also want to say something about my choice of the word “solidarity.” There is some overlap in what I mean with concepts such as “mystical communion,” “union with Christ,” or “incorporation,” ideas which feature in some of the treatments of Paul’s “in Christ” language surveyed in chapter one. There is also, however, a significant difference. In discussing solidarity I make no claims about how a connection is forged between the messiah and his people or what its basis is. Rather, solidarity is a lower-order category describing a phenomenon in Paul’s logic in which he, explicitly or implicitly, attributes the same action, state, quality, or possession to both the messiah and others. But Paul’s notion of the metaphysics by which this solidarity exists—whether by union, pneumatic indwelling, incorporation, or some other “mystical” means—is not the subject of this study. Thus, my use of the term “solidarity” perhaps comes closest to

what is often meant by the more typically used term “participation.” Why introduce a new term, then? For one, it is not new, just uncommon. It has appeared—though not been emphasized—in discussions of Paul’s thought for decades. More importantly, “solidarity” is a less fraught term. Because it has not been much used, it is relatively free of associations having to do with debates about the nub of Paul’s theology—debates in which words like “participation,” and “participatory” are prominent fixtures. Finally, “participation” is usually conceived of unidirectionally—believers share in something that is Christ’s. This is often the underlying logic of Paul’s reasoning, but not always. Occasionally, Paul appears to be reasoning from a premise of bi-directional solidarity. Participation could be re-defined to entail this notion, but rather than attempt to expand the scope of a well-established scholarly technical term, I have simply chosen a different one.

The second conceptual category I would like to explain further is “inclusion.” By this, I mean Paul’s use of “in Christ” language to indicate that a person or community belongs to the people of the messiah. This corresponds to Paul’s understanding of the messiah as the seed of Abraham “in” whom the faithful are named. As discussed in chapter three, this feature of Paul’s messianology arises from his interpretation of the seed of Abraham as the messiah in Gal 3:14–16 and is made explicit in his subsequent statement in Gal 3:29 that to be “of the messiah (Χριστοῦ)” is also to be the seed of Abraham. Additionally, Paul’s use of a related tradition in Rom 9:7 to distinguish between the totality of Abraham’s progeny and a subset of those who “will be named in Isaac (ἐν Ἰσαάκ)” indicates his awareness of a linguistic precedent for using ἐν with a personal object in this way. There is obviously a notion of solidarity involved, for instance, in identifying both Christ and believers as Abraham’s seed. However, the category of “inclusion” is derivative from that specific idea, and I reserve it for instances where “in Christ” language is used to describe people in contexts where shared identity with the messiah is not in view. Therefore, I will further

specify the category by calling it “simple inclusion.” For example, when Paul speaks of “saints in Christ” in Phil 1:1 and 4:21 this does not entail the idea of the messiah also being a “holy one” (though probably Paul would have agreed with such a description); it simply further specifies that the saints in question are the ones included in the people of the messiah. As mundane as this observation is, that Paul uses “in Christ” language to designate people and communities who follow Christ, what has not been recognized is that this linguistic convention derives from the scriptural tradition about Abraham’s seed, interpreted messianically by Paul. The convention of indicating inclusion in the community of the messiah by using the expression “in Christ” is a specific function of Paul’s scripturally derived understanding of messiahship, not a vaguely innovative turn of phrase amounting to nothing more than the modern notion of delineating a religious group.

The third and final conceptual category I want to expand on is “instrumentality.” In using the word “instrumentality,” I do not refer to a segment of the preposition ἐν’s semantic range. Rather, I refer to the idea, the concept that the messiah is the means by which God’s redemptive purposes are accomplished, experienced, or their benefits possessed. This is sometimes expressed by Paul modifying a verb of divine agency with the phrase ἐν χριστῷ, but sometimes in other ways as will be seen. As also discussed in chapter three, this too relates to Paul’s messianic interpretation of the scriptural tradition concerning Abraham’s seed, especially the LXX Genesis promise, “in your seed (ἐν τῷ σπέρµατί σου) all the nations of the earth will be blessed.” Here, Abraham’s seed, understood by Paul as the messiah, is the agent through whom God extends his blessing to the nations. It is no surprise that the apostle to the nations would adopt this as a paradigmatic thought structure in his understanding of messiahship and as a linguistic convention for articulating that understanding.

128. Cf. BDAG, s.v. ἐν, 5.
129. The semantic range of ἐν obviously plays a role in Paul’s articulation of this concept, but there is not a one-to-one correspondence between the preposition’s meaning and the idea as a facet of Paul’s messianology.
There are many instances when “in Christ” language is used in this way. However, as with the previous category of “inclusion,” some of these instances also entail solidarity—that is, the messiah is the means of something specifically because he exists in solidarity with his people. This dynamic of instrumentality by solidarity is evident, for example, in 1 Corinthians 15 where it is not merely that Christ is the means by which God accomplishes the resurrection of the dead, but that he is the means of resurrection specifically because he himself has been raised. This reasoning is distinguishable, for instance, from Paul’s description in Rom 3:24 of redemption being “in Christ.” There is no indication in the context of Rom 3:24 that Christ himself experiences or possesses redemption; it is simply that he is the instrument by which God accomplishes redemption (cf. Rom 3:25). Therefore, I will also further specify this category by calling it “simple instrumentality.”

The observation that Paul uses “in Christ” language to indicate instrumentality may also seem to be pedestrian. In many cases, the idea of instrumentality could be surmised easily enough from the preposition’s meaning without delving into Paul’s concept of messiahship. This is exactly as it should be if we think Paul had any hope of being understood. Nevertheless, it is grammatically unusual for the object of ἐν to be a person, and this anomaly is worth explaining. In fact, it is explicable on the basis of Paul’s messianic interpretation of the LXX Genesis scriptural tradition containing the same grammatical oddity. What is more, this observation is significant because it cuts through the middle of a polarization in the history of modern scholarship in which one side claims a spatial connotation of the preposition ἐν in service to a hypothesis of mysticism, and the other side rebuts, claiming Paul’s usage is just a workaday expression of instrumentality with the same preposition. Both extremes ignore—inexplicably in light of the consistent use of χριστός as the object of the preposition—messiahship. Paul says things the way he says them because he is talking about a messiah, and when one speaks of a messiah one reaches for the dialect of scripture. Ἐν plus the personal dative is part of that dialect.

In what follows, then, we will work through these categories in the same order in which they arose from our analyses of Paul’s messianic interpretation of scripture in chapters three and four. That is:
Every instance of “in Christ” language in the undisputed Pauline epistles will be categorized under these headings. The analysis will be laid out similarly to the syntactical analysis in part one of this chapter. Under each heading, I will list every instance of “in Christ” language that fits into the category, providing my own translation and occasionally some additional context integral to the analysis. Within each category, the instances are listed according to the order in NA^{28} for ease of reference. After ambiguous instances, I will provide a rationale for their categorization, and that rationale will presuppose the results of the syntactical analysis.

Compared to the concept of solidarity, the concepts of simple instrumentality and simple inclusion are more straightforward, and therefore some instances in those categories will require little or no explanation. Further, very similar instances not requiring separate analyses will be listed together before the relevant discussion. Alternatively, the discussion of instances indicating solidarity will naturally be more extended.

**Simple Instrumentality**

There are twenty-three instances in which the prepositional phrase indicates that Christ is the instrument by which God’s purposes are accomplished. This includes not only the qualification of God’s actions, but also people’s actions which Paul sees as consummate with God’s purposes, and occasionally people’s experience of, or possession of redemptive benefits made possible through Christ. The use of “in Christ” language to modify divine passive and divine active verbs will usually require no comment.

130. See the appendix for an index to this chapter. The first page number listed after each instance refers to its syntactical analysis and the second to its conceptual analysis.
Rom 3:24: being justified freely by his grace through the redemption in Christ Jesus.

Paul modifies “redemption” with the phrase “in Christ Jesus” in order to specify that God has provided redemption by means of Christ. Despite the adjectival use of the prepositional phrase here, its conceptual force is clear from the relative clause directly following in v. 25, which describes Christ as the one “whom God set forth (προέθετο) ….” This is a specification of the way in which Christ was instrumental in God’s actions to accomplish redemption. It is perhaps possible that Paul also has in mind here a notion of instrumentality by solidarity since in 1 Cor 1:30 he says that Christ “became (ἐγενήθη) for us … redemption.” It is best, however, to explain this unusual statement in 1 Cor 1:30 on the basis of what Paul is writing here in Romans. Christ “became redemption” in the sense that God, by means of “setting forth” Christ, secured redemption.

Rom 8:39: nor height, nor depth, not any other created thing will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The phrase “the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” is a shorthand reference to Paul’s explanation in v. 32 that God “did not spare his own son but handed him over (παρέδωκεν αὐτόν).” This statement is Paul’s basis for asserting in v. 32 that God “will freely give (χαρίσεται) to us all things.” Paul then elaborates on this idea by describing a series of protective blessings in the following verses—namely, justification (v. 33), intercession (v. 34), and victory (v. 37). Then in vv. 38–39 Paul reiterates the basis for assurance of these things, and he does so with the summary statement “the love of God in Christ Jesus.” Thus this statement recapitulates the more elaborate explanation in v. 32. God’s love is expressed in an ultimate way by his handing over of Christ. Therefore, the love of God is “in Christ.”

Rom 16:10: Greet Apelles, approved in Christ. Greet those of Aristobulus.

As discussed in the syntactical analysis, “in Christ” modifies the adjective “approved (δόκιµος)” which in turn characterizes Apelles. The other instances of “in Christ” language
here in Romans 16 will be classified as “simple inclusion” because they straightforwardly
designate individuals, or individuals in their capacities as Paul’s coworkers, as belonging to
the people of the messiah. This case is slightly different, however, because the adjective
dόκιµος has a verbal connotation that implies divine passive agency.\footnote{131} Apelles, by means of
Christ, is approved by God.

1 Cor 1:2: To the church of God which is in Corinth, to those who have been
sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who call upon the
name of our lord Jesus Christ in every place, theirs and ours.

Paul modifies the passive participial “those who have been sanctified (ἡγιασµένοις)”
with “in Christ Jesus” to indicate that Christ is the instrument by which God has sanctified
the Corinthian believers. As with Rom 3:24, it is possible that this could be understood as
instrumentality by solidarity since in 1 Cor 1:30 Paul also writes that Christ “became for us
… sanctification.” However, this statement is best explained as an alternative expression of
what is grammatically clear here in 1 Cor 1:2—God has sanctified the Corinthians by means
of Christ.

1 Cor 1:4: I give thanks to my God always for you for the grace of God
which was given in Christ Jesus to you.

1 Cor 1:5: that in every way you were enriched in him, in all speech and all
knowledge.

1 Cor 1:30: And from him you are in Christ Jesus, who was made wisdom
for us from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.

We have already discussed 1 Cor 1:30 above in relation to Rom 3:24 and 1 Cor 1:2,
particularly concerning the somewhat unusual assertion that Christ “became (ἐγενήθη)”
wisdom, righteousness, etc. This assertion, however, provides context for understanding
Paul’s statement that “from (ἐξ) [God, v. 29] you are in Christ Jesus.” On its own this would

\footnote{131} Cf. BDAG, s.v. δόκιµος, 1.
appear to be a simple indication that the Corinthians are included among the people of the messiah. However, in light of the rest of the sentence which describes the benefits the Corinthians enjoy “from God (ἀπὸ θεοῦ)” by means of Christ, Paul’s use of the phrase “in Christ Jesus” should also be understood instrumentally. Its meaning then would be that the Corinthian believers owe their very existence “before God (ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ)” (v. 29) to Christ—he is the instrument by which they have their being. Thus this statement is a specification of Paul’s description of God in v. 28 as the one who has utter control over “things that are (τὰ ὄντα)” and “things that are not (τὰ μὴ ὄντα).” As Hays writes, “God is the source of the very existence of the Corinthian community; they have been brought into being by God in Christ Jesus.”

1 Cor 4:10: We [are] foolish for the sake of Christ, but in Christ you [are] wise.

Paul appears to be indulging in a play on prepositional phrases in the opening clauses of this verse. “For the sake of Christ (διὰ χριστόν)” he and his team are foolish, but “by means of Christ (ἐν χριστῷ)” those they serve are deemed “wise.” God’s agency in the Corinthians’ possession of this status is implied by the statement’s structure which is parallel to the preceding clause claiming Paul and his team are fools. In turn, that statement is a summarization of v. 9 where Paul explains that God “exhibited (ἀπέδειξεν)” the apostles as a spectacle of defeat—that is, as fools. Therefore, just as God is the agent who has made Paul and his cohort out to be fools for the sake of Christ, so he is also the agent who has made the Corinthians wise by means of Christ. As with Rom 3:24 and 1 Cor 1:2, this explains Paul’s claim in 1 Cor 1:30 that Christ “became for us … wisdom.”

1 Cor 4:15a: For even if you have in Christ ten thousand guardians, you do not [have] many fathers.

132. Richard B. Hays, First Corinthians, Interpretation (Louisville: John Knox, 1997), 33; see also Collins, First Corinthians, 112.
Paul modifies “have” with the phrase “in Christ” to indicate that Christ is the means by which the Corinthians possess many guardians. Put differently, Christ is the instrument by which God has provided for them many guardians (presumably through the calling and gifting of the many teachers to whom the various factions of Corinthian believers were loyal).

1 Cor 4:15b: For in Christ Jesus I begat you through the gospel.

Paul here modifies a verb of which he is the subject with the phrase “in Christ.” By means of Christ, Paul has, like a father (v. 15a) begotten the Corinthians (and therefore has the prerogative to lovingly admonish them, v. 14). The backdrop of this notion is Paul’s understanding that the Corinthians’ status is ultimately due to God’s mysterious redemptive purposes, of which Paul is only a “steward” (v. 1). His begetting of the Corinthians as children by means of Christ, then, is derivative of God’s will and is therefore accomplished by means of Christ.133

1 Cor 4:17: For this reason I sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ [Jesus], just as I teach everywhere in every church.

Paul’s use of the phrase “in Christ” here is analogous to that in 1 Cor 4:15b. He qualifies his own actions—his “ways”—with the phrase “in Christ,” because he acknowledges God’s agency mediated through Christ in the execution of his apostolic duties.

1 Cor 15:19: If we have hoped in Christ in this life only, we are of all people most pitiable.

As discussed in the syntactical analysis, the use of the preposition ἐν to designate the object of the verb “hope” is conventional. Behind this linguistic convention, however, is Paul’s understanding of Christ as a worthy object of hope because he is the one through

133. Cf. Paul’s description of himself and his cohort as a mother and then a father in 1 Thess 2:6–8, 11–13.
whom God has accomplished his redemptive purposes—in this case, resurrection. This is clear from the rhetoric of Paul’s argument. Here in v. 19 Paul is contemplating the hypothetical, counter-factual notion of worthless hope in Christ—a hope that is pointless if Christ has not actually been raised by God (vv. 15, 17) and is therefore not the instrument by which God has accomplished the resurrection of the dead. In other words, according to Paul’s reasoning in the context of this verse, Christ’s worthiness as the object of hope correlates directly with his role as the instrument by which God accomplishes his purposes. To hope “in Christ,” is to hope in him as the means of resurrection.

2 Cor 3:14: But their minds were hardened. For to this very day, when reading the old covenant, the same veil remains, unlifted, because it is set aside in Christ.

2 Cor 5:19: That is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, not reckoning to them their trespasses and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Gal 2:4: But because of false brothers brought in secretly, who entered in to spy out our freedom which we have in Christ Jesus, so that they might enslave us.

Paul modifies the verb “have” with the phrase “in Christ Jesus” because Christ is the means by which Paul and his coworkers (and the Galatians) possess freedom. Thus in Gal 5:1 Paul writes, “Christ has set us free.”

Gal 2:17: But if while seeking to be justified in Christ we ourselves were also found to be sinners, then is Christ a servant of sin? May it never be!

Gal 3:14: so that to the gentiles the blessing of Abraham might come in Christ Jesus, so that through faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.

Gal 5:6: For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision but rather faith working through love.
Paul is here articulating the grounds (γάρ) for his claim in v. 5 that “by the Spirit, from faith, (πνεύματι ἐκ πίστεως) we await the hope of righteousness.” In turn, this statement in v. 5, is the grounds (again, γάρ) for Paul’s claim in v. 4 that seeking to be “justified in the law (ἐν νόμῳ)” is to be separated from Christ and from grace. Thus, Paul’s language here in v. 6 about circumcision or uncircumcision “counting for something” is another way of talking about the basis of possessing righteousness, or justification. Paul’s point is that just as Christ is the instrument by which believers are justified (Gal 2:17), so he is also the instrument by which other bases of justification or condemnation—circumcision or foreskins—are rendered irrelevant and “faith working through love” becomes of central importance.

Phil 2:1: Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, if any comfort from love, if any participation of the Spirit, if any affection and sympathy.

Paul modifies the noun “encouragement” with the phrase “in Christ” because encouragement is a benefit the Philippians possess by means of Christ. Put differently, Christ is the instrument by which the Philippians have been granted encouragement by God (cf. ἐχαρίσθη in Phil 1:29).

Phil 3:3: For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and do not have confidence in the flesh.

As discussed in the syntactical analysis, the verb “boast” normally takes the preposition ἐν. This idiom also appears in LXX Jer 9:23–24, to which Paul alludes in 1 Cor 1:31 directly following his statement in 1 Cor 1:30 that Christ “became for us wisdom from God, righteousness, justification, and redemption.” In 1 Cor 1:31, Paul explains that the reason for what he has described in the proceeding verse is “so that (ἵνα)” believers will “boast in the Lord.” As discussed above, 1 Cor 1:30 is best understood as a way of describing Christ as the means by which God extends these redemptive benefits to his people. Thus, in 1 Cor 1:31 to “boast in the Lord” is to boast in the instrument by which God accomplishes redemption. The alternative expression here in Phil 3:3—those who “boast in Christ Jesus”—should be understood the same way. Christ is the object of boasting because
he is the one through whom God has acted to give believers confidence that does not depend on the flesh.

Phil 4:7: and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard in Christ Jesus your hearts and your minds.

The subject of the verb “guard” is “the peace of God.” However, as discussed in the syntactical analysis, it is reasonable to regard “the peace of God” as a metonym for God himself and in turn to understand God as the agent of the verb’s action. Therefore, the thrust of Paul’s benediction is that Christ is the instrument by which God—particularly, God as the one who gives peace—will guard the hearts of the Philippian believers.

1 Thess 5:18: In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

“God’s will” refers to Paul’s admonition to “give thanks in everything” (and perhaps also to “rejoice” and “pray,” vv. 16–17). Given this, by modifying “will of God” with “in Christ Jesus,” Paul is indicating that Christ is the means by which the Thessalonians give thanks in everything. Additionally, by describing that action as God’s will, Paul is indicating that Christ’s instrumentality in their ability to express unwavering gratitude is part and parcel of his role in God’s purposes. This admonition is no doubt an application of Paul’s previous assurance in v. 10 that Christ “died for us so that whether we are awake or asleep [i.e., ‘in everything’], we might live with him.”

Phlm 20: Yes, brother, let me benefit from you in the Lord. In Christ refresh my affections.

Philemon is here exhorted to “refresh” Paul’s heart or affection by means of Christ. Paul of course means that Philemon should obey Paul’s request to absolve Onesimus and receive him as a brother rather than a runaway slave. Paul frames this act of “refreshing” as something done by means of Christ because he believes it will be possible if Philemon will
view Onesimus as a brother (v. 16) in light of the gospel (v. 6) of what God has done in Christ.  

**Simple Inclusion**

There are thirteen instances in which Paul uses “in Christ” language to specify that a person, church, or group are included among the people of the messiah. Not surprisingly, the prepositional phrase often functions adjectivally to modify a personal substantive. Each instance is clear, requiring no comment.

Rom 16:3: Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.

Rom 16:7: Greet Andronicus and Junia, my relatives and my co-prisoners, who are prominent among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

Rom 16:9: Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ and my beloved Stachys.

1 Cor 3:1: But I, brothers, could not speak to you as spiritual people but as fleshly people, as infants in Christ.

1 Cor 16:24: My love with all of you in Christ Jesus.

2 Cor 12:2: I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body, I do not know, or out of the body, I do not know; God knows—was caught up into the third heaven.

Gal 1:22: And I was still unknown by sight to the churches of Judea in Christ.

Phil 1:1: Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi with the bishops and deacons.

134. In this connection, note Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God*, 20: “God was in the Messiah, reconciling the world to himself, [Paul] says in 2 Corinthians 5.19; now, we dare to say, God was in Paul reconciling Onesimus and Philemon.”
Phil 4:21: Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers with me greet you.

1 Thess 1:1: Paul and Silvanus and Timothy, to the church of the Thessalonians in God the father and the Lord Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace.

1 Thess 2:14: For you became imitators, brothers, of the churches of God that are in Judea in Christ Jesus because you also suffered the same things from your own compatriots as they also did from the Jews.

1 Thess 4:16: For the Lord himself in a commanding shout, in the voice of the archangel and in the trumpet of God, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

Phlm 23: Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you.

Explicit Solidarity

There are seven instances in which Paul uses “in Christ” language to explicitly indicate solidarity with Christ.

Rom 6:10–11: 10 For the death he died, he died to sin once for all, but the life he lives, he lives to God 11 Thus, also reckon yourselves [to be], in Christ Jesus, dead to sin but alive to God.

Paul explicitly indicates solidarity between Christ and the Roman believers here by portraying both as dead to sin but alive to God. Grammatically, Paul predicates of Christ actions, but of the Romans a state of being which obtains “in Christ.” This difference of expression is explained first by Paul’s attention to the singularity of the Christ-event, particularly Christ’s death (cf. ἐφάπαξ, v. 10); and second by Paul’s logic of “reckoning” whereby believers enjoy freedom from the dominion of sin (v. 14), just as the resurrected Christ does (v. 9), although they themselves have not yet experienced physical death and resurrection. Paul’s point is that just as Christ thwarted the reign of death and lived to God, so also the Romans can and should thwart the reign of sin and live to God. Additionally, this
picture of overturning the “lordship (κυριεύω)” (v. 9) of death and thereby the “reign (βασιλεύω)” (v. 12) of sin is similar, though not identical, to Paul’s depiction of the messiah’s subjection of enemies, including death, in 1 Cor 15:24–28. Here in Romans 6, however, Paul not only looks forward to the future resurrection of believers (vv. 5, 8), but also describes their present newness of life in freedom from sin (vv. 4, 6–7, 12). Thus, there is solidarity between the messiah and those baptized into him (v. 3) in their emancipation won on the journey through death to new life.\(^{135}\)

Rom 15:17–18: 17 Therefore, in Christ Jesus I have reason for boasting of things that are to God. 18 For, I do not dare to speak of anything which Christ did not accomplish through me for the obedience of the gentiles, by word and deed.

In these statements, Paul explicitly indicates solidarity between Christ and himself by deeming his accomplishments to be the accomplishments of Christ. Paul predicates of Christ the accomplishment of things resulting in the obedience of the gentiles, and of himself the possession, “in Christ,” of grounds for boasting of his work for the same end. The broader context of this is Paul’s explanation in v. 15 of why he has written boldly to the Romans. He has done so “because of the gift given by God” (v. 15) that results in his mission to the gentiles (v. 16). Paul describes this calling in v. 16 in cultic terms, his ministry being a “priestly service (ἱερουργοῦντα)” to God’s gospel and gentile believers being an “offering (προσφορά)” sanctified by the Spirit.\(^{136}\) From this, Paul draws the inference (σῶν) in v. 17 that he has reason for boasting of “things that are to God (τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν),” an idiom referring to

\(^{135}\) On “dying and rising with Christ” and the significance of early baptismal rituals see Meeks, *First Urban Christians*, 154–157. See also Karin B. Neutel, *A Cosmopolitan Ideal: Paul’s Declaration ‘Neither Jew Nor Greek, Neither Slave Nor Free, Nor Male and Female’ in the Context of First-Century Thought*, LNTS 513 (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 28–30, who explains, “By being a part of the likeness of Christ’s death through baptism, believers share in the cosmic effects of his death: freedom from the power of sin and death” (30).

priestly service. However, Paul qualifies the assertion by modifying the verb “have” with “in Christ Jesus.” Paul then makes the specific meaning of this qualification clear in v. 18, where he provides grounds (γάρ) for this claim: He has grounds for boasting because he is really only boasting of Christ’s accomplishments “through (διὰ)” him. In other words, Paul’s work is Christ’s work.

1 Cor 15:16, 18: 16 For if the dead are not raised, then neither has Christ been raised. … 18 Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.

Here Paul explicitly describes hypothetical solidarity between Christ and believers in a resurrection-less death. His goal is to demonstrate the nonsensical position of accepting Christ’s own resurrection while denying the general resurrection of the dead (v. 12). He therefore repeatedly emphasizes the mutual exclusivity of these two premises: “if there is no resurrection of the dead, neither has Christ been raised” (v. 13); “Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true there is no resurrection of the dead” (v. 15); and “for if the dead are not raised, neither has Christ been raised” (v. 16). In the course of making these statements about the hypothetical impossibility of Christ’s resurrection given the denial of the general resurrection, Paul delineates several hypothetical negative consequences, including the

137. This precise phrase, τὰ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, occurs three times in the LXX, two of which refer to Levitical priestly service to God (Exod 4:16; Deut 31:27) and one of which refers to Moses’s mediatory role (Exod 18:19). It also occurs twice more in the NT and in both cases refers to priestly service (Heb 2:17; 5:1). In light of the cultic language in the preceding verses, Paul is clearly using the phrase here to portray his ministry as priestly service.

138. Stowers, Rereading, 153 therefore overlooks what Paul has actually said, writing, “the real ground for [Paul’s] boasting … is not his preaching as such, since God made him preach, but his self-supported preaching so as to make his message available to all types of people.” Better is the description in Schütz, Apostolic Authority, 213: “[Paul’s boasting] is ἐν Χριστῷ because Christ himself is acting in Paul’s work.”

139. Additionally, Paul’s switch from cultic language in Rom 15:16–17 to conquest language of the obedience of faith in v. 18 (cf. Rom 1:5; 16:26) follows the shift from his portrayal of himself as a priest to his portrayal of Jesus, beginning in v. 7, as the messiah “who arises to rule the gentiles” (v. 12, citing LXX Isa 11:10; cf. Stowers, Rereading, 253). According to Paul’s logic in vv. 16–18, then, he has equated his priestly offering of the gentiles with Jesus’s messianic conquest of the gentiles.
vanity of his proclamation (v. 14), the vanity of faith (vv. 14, 17), the misrepresentation of God (v. 15), and believers remaining “in sin” (v. 17). Here in v. 18, Paul spells out another, more dire negative consequence—the perishing of those who “fall asleep” in Christ. In other words, if Christ died but was not raised, then neither will those who die “in Christ” be raised. Paul’s logic is therefore based on a concept of solidarity in death between the messiah and his people, and this is why he modifies the verbal aspect of the participle οἱ κοιμηθέντες with ἐν χριστῷ. In a world where Christ was not raised, it is not just dying but specifically dying “in Christ” that is acutely tragic. Thus, from a general premise (there is no resurrection of the dead), Paul makes an inference (Christ has not been raised). He then treats this inference as a more specific premise and draws another inference (those who fall asleep in Christ perish). Additionally, Paul’s rhetorical aim to undermine the Corinthians’ apparent denial of the general resurrection explains the shift in Paul’s language from “dying” and “not rising” to “sleeping” and “perishing.” Paul highlights the tragedy of solidarity with a dead messiah by ironically referring to it as “sleep”—a sleep from which one never awakens, a perpetual slumber of ruination (ἀπόθεμα). For Paul, if one dies in a messiah who is still dead, that death is as final as his.

1 Cor 15:22: For just as all die in Adam, so also all will be made alive in Christ.

See the extended discussion of this instance in ch. 4

2 Cor 13:4: For indeed he was crucified out of weakness but lives by the power of God. For in him [Christ] we are weak also, but we will live with him by the power of God toward you.

In this verse Paul explicitly describes solidarity in weakness between his own missionary team and Christ. Paul is drawing a two-part comparison between his cohort and Christ pertaining both to weakness and to power. One side of the comparison consists of Paul’s statements that Christ “was crucified out of weakness (ἐξ ἀσθενείας)” and that “we are

140. On this same euphemism for death in OG Dan 12:2 see ch. 4.
also weak (ἀσθενοῦµεν).” The difference between these expressions—an adverbial prepositional phrase versus a stative verb—is explained by Paul’s focus on the paradigmatic nature specifically of Christ’s crucifixion versus a quality of Paul and his colleague’s general existence. Conceptually, however, the descriptions of weakness are clearly coordinated, and this is confirmed by Paul’s use of the additive καὶ and the closely parallel expressions comprising the second side of the comparison: “he lives by the power of God (ἐκ δυνάµεως θεοῦ)”; “we will live by the power of God (ἐκ δυνάµεως θεοῦ).” Given this, by qualifying the verb ἀσθενοῦµεν with the phrase ἐν αὐτῷ [Christ], Paul subtly indicates that his team is not merely weak. To the contrary, their weakness is the weakness of Christ in his crucifixion—that is, weakness that is accompanied by power.\footnote{This paradoxical line of thought is similar to Paul’s assessment of a crucified messiah in 1 Cor 1:23–24. Additionally, on Paul’s re-construal of weakness and power in light of the messiah’s crucifixion, see Meeks, \textit{First Urban Christians}, 180–183.}

Phil 2:5: Think this among you, which also [is] in Christ Jesus.

Paul envisions here a solidarity of mindset between the Philippians and Christ. This is apparent from the way the pronouns function in the exhortation. Ὡ in the second clause refers back to τοῦτο in the first clause, which in turn refers back to the description of the mindset Paul is espousing in vv. 3–4: “[Do] nothing according to selfish ambition or conceit but by humility (τῇ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ) regard others as better than yourselves, each one attending not to his own interests, but each one to [the interests] of others.” This is the mindset Paul wants them to adopt within their community, and it is also the mindset that is “in Christ.” This is confirmed in the following Christ hymn, especially in vv. 6–8, where Paul says that Christ “did not grasp after equality with God,”\footnote{Though it does not impact on the argument here, the translation of this phrase—οὐχ ἁρπαγµὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ ἐἶναι ἴσα θεῷ—is much discussed. See the thorough survey of opinions and discussion in Wright, \textit{Climax}, 56–98. The classic study delineating Phil 2:6–11 as a hymn is Ernst Lohmeyer, \textit{Kyrios Jesus: Eine Untersuchung zu Phil. 2,5–11}, SHAW 4 (Heidelberg: Winter, 1961).} but “emptied himself,” “taking the form of a slave,” and “humbled (ἐταπείνωσεν) himself.” While the only lexical overlap between vv. 3–4 and vv. 6–8 are the cognate words ταπεινοφροσύνη (v. 3) and}
ταπεινόω (v. 8), the conceptual correspondence is clear between Paul’s exhortation in vv. 3–4—toward humility, disregard for self, and interest in others—and the first section of the hymn relaying Christ’s self-denial, humiliation, and servitude. The difference in terminology is easily explained by the poetic style of vv. 6–11, the possibility that Paul is using a preexisting hymn, and Paul’s consciousness not only of the paradigmatic nature of the Christ event, but also its singularity. By adverbially modifying the implied stative verb in the second clause of v. 5 with “in Christ Jesus,” Paul makes it clear that the attitude he wants the Philippians to aspire to is none other than the attitude of the messiah.

Phil 3:8–11: 8 I regard everything as loss … so that I may gain Christ, 9 that is, be found in him—not having my own righteousness which is from the law, but that which is through the faithfulness of Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith—10 [to gain Christ and be found in him is] to know him and the power of his resurrection and the participation of his sufferings, being conformed to his death.

In these verses Paul explicitly describes solidarity between himself and Christ in his resurrection, sufferings, and death. In this section of Philippians, Paul is giving an account of his own change of attitude toward the law and the messiah. Verses 8–11 comprise one period, consisting of a main clause in v. 8 (“I regard everything as loss …”) and a purpose clause beginning with the ἵνα at the end of v. 8 and running through to the end of v. 11 (“so that I may gain Christ …”). This purpose clause consists of several layers of explanatory phrases. First, the two main verbs of the purpose clause—κερδήσω (v. 8) and εὑρεθῶ (v. 9)—are joined by an explicative καί, and thus “gaining Christ” is explained as “being found in Christ.” Second, the following expansive participial phrase—μὴ ἔχων ἐμὴν δικαιοσύνην … ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει—is modal, and therefore Paul’s possession of “the righteousness from God” specifies the manner in which he is found in Christ.143 There are of course several interesting debates churning around Paul’s prepositions and genitive constructions in this participial phrase. We may leave these aside, however, because it is the third layer of Paul’s effusions in v. 10 that are directly relevant to the question of solidarity. All of v. 10 is controlled by the genitive

143. See BDF §418(5).
articulair infinitive τοῦ γνῶναι, and the infinitive is to be taken with the main verbs of the purpose clause (κερδήσω and εὑρεθῶ, or possibly just εὑρεθῶ) rather than the intervening participial phrase.\textsuperscript{144} The relation of the articulair infinitive phrase to the subjunctive verb(s) is epexegetical,\textsuperscript{145} and therefore gaining Christ and being found in him is tantamount to “knowing him,” “knowing the power of his resurrection” (cf. v. 11), “participating in his sufferings,” and “being conformed to his death.” In other words, to be found “in Christ” is to experience solidarity with him in his resurrection, sufferings, and death.\textsuperscript{146}

**Implicit Solidarity**

There are twenty instances of “in Christ” language in contexts where solidarity with Christ is implicit in Paul’s thought.

Rom 6:23: For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

\textsuperscript{144} Pace Vincent, *Philippians and Philemon*, 103; and Wolter, *Paul*, 237.

\textsuperscript{145} BDF §400(8). Cf. Rom 1:24; 7:3; and 8:12. It is also possible the phrase indicates purpose, though the meaning would be almost the same.

\textsuperscript{146} Thus Hooker, “ΠΙΣΤΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ,” 332: “The ‘interchange’ of experience works out in the life of the believer. Paul expresses the notion here, not in terms of ‘Christ died, in order that we might live’ but in terms of ‘I died, in conformity to his death, so that I might live, in conformity to his resurrection.’” Beyond this, it is also possible that another aspect of solidarity is implicit in the aforementioned participial phrase of Phil 3:9, namely that there is solidarity between Christ and Paul in possessing righteousness. For this to be the case, τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην must be understood as a quality given to people by God, and πίστεως χριστοῦ must be understood as Christ’s own faithfulness, presumably consisting of his humiliation and obedience unto death (cf. Phil 2:6–8). By virtue of this faithfulness, Christ would possess the quality of being righteous. While Paul never says that the messiah is righteous or has righteousness, he does write in 1 Cor 1:30 that Christ “became righteousness (ἐγενήθη … δικαιοσύνη).” As discussed above, however, this could also simply mean that Christ is the instrument by which God has provided for believers’ righteousness. However, on the possibility that Paul conceived of the messiah as ὁ δίκαιος per LXX Hab 2:4 see Hays, *Faith of Jesus Christ*, 134–138 (regarding Gal 3:11); and Douglas A. Campbell, *The Deliverance of God: An Apocalyptic Rereading of Justification in Paul*, (Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), 613–616 (regarding Rom 1:17).
This statement by Paul is a two-part condensation of the immediately preceding context. The first part concerning death corresponds to v. 21 and the second concerning life corresponds to v. 22. Together, vv. 21–23 summarize Paul’s exhortation running all the way back to v. 12. The nub of this instruction is that the Romans should thwart the power of sin, and Paul infers (οὖν, v. 12) that this way of life is the outworking of the Romans being, “in Christ Jesus,” dead to sin but alive to God (v. 11). The two notions of being “alive to God (ζῶντας … τῷ θεῷ)” in Christ Jesus and gaining “eternal life (ζωὴ αἰώνιος)” in Christ Jesus are therefore coordinated, although they are not identical. In addition to the lexical differences, the former is portrayed as a present reality and the latter a future prospect. Nevertheless, that Paul’s exhortation in vv. 12–20 is based on the premise of being alive to God in Christ Jesus and is summarized with the statement that God’s gift is eternal life in Christ Jesus suggests that both statements refer to different aspects of the same idea—that is, solidarity between Christ and believers in “life.” Moreover, while Paul does not say that Christ himself possesses “eternal life,”148 he does say in v. 9 that Christ “no longer dies (σῶκετι ἀποθνῄσκει).” And just as in v. 9 the fact that Christ “no longer dies” is explicated as his emancipation from death (“death no longer has dominion”), so in v. 21 eternal life is the τέλος of emancipation from sin (“having been freed from sin”). These correspondences confirm that when Paul specifies that eternal life is “in Christ Jesus,” he has in mind solidarity in life no longer subject to death.

Rom 8:1: There is therefore now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus.

While it is unclear how this statement is an inference (ἄρα) from what precedes, Paul also continues on in vv. 2–4 by providing additional grounds (γάρ 2x) for this assertion. Verses 2 is the first reason Paul gives for his statement here in v. 1, and vv. 3–4 comprise a second reason, which explicates what Paul has said in v. 2. We will discuss v. 2 below, but

147. Paul shifts from speaking of the dominion of sin to enslavement to sin in v. 16. While the two images are not identical, they are clearly related, the second being an elucidation of the first.

148. The phrase ζωὴ αἰώνιος appears in Rom 2:7; 5:21; 6:22, 23; and Gal 6:8, always as a possession or potential possession of believers.
what is most pertinent here is what Paul asserts in vv. 3–4. A cursory glance at Paul’s reasoning in those verses gives the impression of the opposite of solidarity—those in Christ are not condemned because Christ was (v. 3). But this is not precisely what Paul says. Paul writes that God “condemned sin (κατέκρινεν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν),” and that he did so “in the flesh,” that is, in the human flesh of his son. Paul then goes on in v. 4 to say that this was “in order that (ἵνα) the righteous requirement of the law (ἵνα τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου) might be fulfilled in us.” The important question about this for our analysis is, to what does τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ νόμου refer?

Some, given the ethical instruction that follows v. 4, take this phrase to mean the righteous requirements of torah. Thus Paul’s use of δικαίωμα here is likened to the phrase τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου in Rom 2:26 where it has that meaning. The problem with this analogy, however, is that δικαίωμα is singular in 8:4 and plural in 2:26. I consider this difference in number to be more significant than the congruence of the genitive modifier τοῦ νόμου, and the explanation that the singular form in 8:4 is due to “the fact that the law’s requirements are essentially a unity” is special pleading. An alternative solution is to draw an analogy with Paul’s use of the singular τὸ δικαίωμα τοῦ θεοῦ in Rom 1:32 where it refers to God’s righteous decree that those who practice lawlessness deserve death. If this is Paul’s meaning in 8:4, then perhaps it is that the death sentence is “fulfilled in us” because it has been fulfilled in God’s condemnation of sin in Christ’s flesh. The difficulty with this interpretation, however, is that Paul qualifies “us” with the participial phrase “who walk … according to the Spirit,” the Spirit which he has just described as the Spirit of life in v. 2. Paul therefore seems to be pointing in a different direction than the fulfillment of a death

149. See, e.g., Cranfield, Romans, 1:384; and Jewett, Romans, 485. Dunn, Romans, 1:423 avoids the issue altogether.

150. Stowers, Rereading, 140, 157, 253, 320 ignores this, repeatedly translating δικαίωμα in Rom 8:4 as “just requirements.”

151. Cranfield, Romans, 1:384. Leander E. Keck, Romans, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 200 claims the singular is used to denote “conformity to God’s will and character, what the law as such is all about” (italics original).

152. Cf. Moo, Romans, 481.
sentence. Wright suggests what I think is a better approach to the analogy between the uses of δίκαιομα in Rom 1:32 and 8:4. He explains, “we should hear the dikaiōma in question as the mirror-image of the dikaiōma spoken of in 1:32, the ‘decree’ that ‘those who do such things deserve to die.’” Thus in 8:4 δίκαιομα refers “to the ‘just decree’ which, on the analogy of 1.32, and with 2.7, 10, 13b in mind, might be expressed by saying ‘those who do such things deserve to live.’” In short, δίκαιομα refers to God’s just decree—enforced by Torah, a dynamic which accounts for the modifier τοῦ νόμου in 8:4—of life for those who do righteousness or death for those who practice sin.

Given this understanding of δίκαιομα in 8:4, we can distill Paul’s train of thought in vv. 1–4 this way: there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (v. 1) because they have received God’s decree of life (v. 4), a decree that is just since sin was condemned elsewhere (v. 3). But why does Paul describe the recipients of that just decree as “those in Christ Jesus”? He does so because the messiah also has received the same just decree of life. This is implied by Paul’s understanding of Jesus’s resurrection after which he “no longer dies” (Rom 6:9). But it is also explicit in Rom 5:18 where Paul describes Christ’s death as “one righteous act (δικαιώματος) which leads to “justification consisting of life (δικαίωσιν ζωῆς).” Therefore, those who are “in Christ Jesus” need not fear condemnation because, with the messiah, they have received the just decree that they shall live.

Rom 8:2: For the law of the Spirit of life set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

This statement is also part of Paul’s basis for claiming that there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (v. 1). “The law of sin and death” refers to the law’s enforcement of God’s just decree that those who sin will die (Rom 1:32). Analogously, “the

153. Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 901. See also Käsemann, Romans, 217–218.


155. See Wright, Climax, 211. Cf. 1 Cor 15:56: “The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”
law of the Spirit of life” refers to the law’s enforcement of God’s just decree that those who possess his Spirit, and who by his Spirit vanquish sin, will live. Thus in v. 13 Paul writes, “if you live according to the flesh, you are destined to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” The verb “set free,” of which “the law of the Spirit of life” is the subject, is modified by “in Christ Jesus,” not merely because the messiah is the means by which the Romans are freed, but also because the messiah himself lives and the life-giving Spirit is his own (v. 9). Paul therefore writes in v. 11, “and if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from among the dead dwells in you, the one who raised Christ from among the dead will also make alive your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you.” To be set free by the law of the Spirit of life is to be assured of life in solidarity with the messiah.

Rom 9:1: In Christ I speak the truth—I do not lie; my conscience confirms it to me in the Holy Spirit.

Here at the beginning of Paul’s lament over his fellow countrymen, he makes a vow confirming his trustworthiness—“in Christ I speak the truth.” Paul takes a similar, though not identical oath, in 2 Cor 2:17 and again in 2 Cor 12:19. There he claims of himself and his partners in ministry, “before God, in Christ, we speak.” This oath is more elaborate probably because Paul is engaged in a more contentious defense of his ministry with the Corinthians. Nevertheless, his meaning in 2 Corinthians is quite similar to that here in Rom 9:1. As will be discussed in detail below, there is clear contextual evidence in 2 Corinthians that Paul believes his speech is trustworthy because his words are actually the words of Christ. He speaks, therefore, “in Christ.” Since the oaths in 2 Corinthians are the only other instances of Paul making vows which use the phrase “in Christ” and which specifically concern the trustworthiness of his speech, they provide the best parallels for understanding Paul’s claim
here in Rom 9:1. Thus, the Romans are to be assured that Paul speaks the truth, because Paul speaks in solidarity with the messiah.

Rom 12:5: So we, the many, are in Christ one body, and individually members of one another.

Paul’s claim that believers are, “in Christ,” one body is premised on the fact that Christ, of course, had one body. In other words, there is solidarity in oneness of “body” between Christ and the corporate entity consisting of believers. This solidarity is implicit; Paul never writes that “Christ has one body” or “Christ is one,” presumably because this was eminently obvious. Paul does, however, take pains to make explicit in Rom 12:4 and 1 Cor 12:2 the general notion that a body is one unified thing consisting of many members. And in 1 Cor 10:17 he stresses the oneness of the loaf which signifies Christ’s body (cf. 1 Cor 11:23–24). Less obvious is the singularity of Abraham’s σπέρμα who received God’s promise, a promise which, according to Paul in Gal 3:16, was made “as to one … which is Christ” (ὡς ἐφ’ ἑνός … ὃς ἐστιν χριστός). In any case, unity for Paul is never an abstract concept, but rather an extension of the integrity of the messiah. Believers are therefore one specifically “in Christ.”

1 Cor 15:31: Daily I die—I swear by [my] reason for boasting in you[, brothers], which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The statement, “which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord,” is a qualification of an interjected oath (though of a different kind than the one discussed above). Paul’s claim that

156. Compare, however, the slightly more convoluted assertions about his word being “yes” in Christ in 2 Cor 1:19, to be discussed below. On Paul’s other oaths which do not use “in Christ” language see Matthew V. Novenson, “‘God is Witness’: A Classical Rhetorical Idiom in Its Pauline Usage,” *NovT* 52 (2010): 355–375.

157. He does, however, write in Rom 3:30 and Gal 3:20 that “God is one,” an observation perhaps less self-evident in Paul’s context than the oneness of Christ.

158. Paul’s emphasis on the oneness of the “offspring” in Gal 3:16 may be why in Gal 3:28–29 he does not write, “you are one body in Christ Jesus,” but rather “you are one in Christ Jesus … you are Abraham’s seed.”
he faces death on a daily basis is part of his larger argument from personal experience for the reality and importance of the resurrection. Taken in combination with his statement in the following verse, “if the dead are not raised, ‘then let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die’” (v. 32), Paul’s point is that he would not put himself in harm’s way if he was not sure of his future resurrection. Having made the rather extreme claim, not that he *faces* death daily, but that he actually “dies daily (ἡµέραν ἀποθνῄσκω),” Paul bolsters himself by interjecting this oath—“I swear by my reason for boasting in you.” As he often does when the subject of his boasting arises, Paul qualifies what he means. In this case he explains that his reason for boasting is something he has “in Christ Jesus our Lord.” This construction—with καύχησις as the object of ἔχω, and ἔχω modified by the prepositional phrase ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ—is almost identical to that in Rom 15:17–18 discussed above. There Paul makes it clear that what he means by his use of the phrase “in Christ Jesus” is that his basis for boasting is not actually his own work but the work of Christ through him. What is explicit in Rom 15:17–18 is implicit here,\(^\text{159}\) and this is confirmed by Paul’s statement earlier in 1 Corinthians 15: “I toiled more than all of them [the other apostles, v. 9]—though not I but the grace of God with me” (v. 10).

2 Cor 1:19: For the son of God, Jesus Christ, who was proclaimed among you by us, by me and Silvanus and Timothy, was not “yes and no,” but in him it has been “yes.”

Paul’s statement here is the grounds (γάρ) for his claim in v. 18 that “our word (λόγος) has not been yes and no”—his rebuttal to the accusation of vacillating reported in v. 17. Given this, the subject of the verb “has been (γέγονεν)” is probably “our word.” Paul, then, is claiming that “in Christ” his word is always true, and thus this may perhaps be understood as a sort of convoluted vow. The reason Paul’s use of the phrase “in Christ” here should be taken as implying solidarity is that the vow is otherwise illogical. As Thrall points out,

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\(^{159}\) Thus Fee, *1 Corinthians*, 770: “The boast is his, but it is not self-serving nor self-exalting. It rests completely on what Christ had done among them through his labors.”
The argument holds good only if the readers accept Paul’s own understanding of himself as Christ’s ambassador through whom God himself speaks (5.2) and Christ speaks (13.3), and as the one in whose apostolic existence the Christ-event is dramatically represented (4.10–12).

In other words, there is no reason to believe that the consistent affirmative of God’s promises in Christ (v. 20) translates to Paul’s own reliability unless Paul speaks in solidarity with Christ. This is evident from the fact that Paul grounds his claim that “in Christ his word has been yes” by going on in the next verse, not to describe his own reliability, but rather the reliability of Christ as the affirmation of God’s promise.

2 Cor 1:20: For however many are promises of God, in him [they are] “yes,” therefore also through him “Amen” to the glory of God through us.

As just mentioned, Paul’s statement here is a truism about Christ which serves as the grounds (γάρ) for his claim in v. 19 that his word “has been yes in Christ.” At first glance this would appear to be an obvious case of simple instrumentality—Christ is the means by which God fulfills his promises. However, Paul elsewhere portrays the messiah and his people as both being recipients of God’s promises and beneficiaries of their fulfillment. On this basis Paul’s “in Christ” language here should be understood as implying solidarity between Christ and believers.

Not surprisingly, all of Paul’s uses of the word ἐπαγγελία cluster around his discussions of the Abraham narratives in Romans and Galatians, with the exception of two instances in 2 Corinthians—here in 1:20, and again in 7:1. In 2 Cor 7:1 the phrase “these promises” (ταύτας … τὰς ἐπαγγελίας) refers back to 2 Cor 6:16–18 where there are three scriptural citations: Lev 26:12, Isa 52:11, and 2 Sam 7:14. The last of these, “I will be a father to you and you will be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord God Almighty,” is of

162. On 2 Cor 6:14–7:1 as an interpolation see the discussion in ch. 4.
most interest for our present question because it is a promise made concerning David’s seed (σπέρμα, LXX 2 Sam 7:12), who in Rom 1:3–4, as discussed in chapter three, is interpreted as the messiah, the son of God. In 2 Cor 7:1, however, the same promise of sonship is democratized to believers generally (cf. Gal 3:26). This is a case, therefore, in which solidarity between the messiah and believers as recipients of God’s promises is implicit in Paul’s thought. Also, a similar dynamic is clear in Galatians where promises were made to Christ (Gal 3:16, 19) and therefore those who are “of Christ” (χριστοῦ) are also “heirs according to the promise” (κατ’ ἐπαγγελίαν κληρονόμοι) (Gal 3:29).

It is not clear specifically what promises Paul had in mind here in 2 Cor 1:20, but 2 Cor 7:1 is the only extant lexical parallel his original readers would have had. Moreover, in all three contexts just discussed there is at least a cursory interest in sonship. In 2 Cor 1:19, Jesus Christ is called the son of God; in 2 Cor 6:18–7:1, believers are called sons and daughters; and in Gal 3:26–29, believers are sons of God in solidarity with Christ. Given these other contexts, Paul’s statement in 2 Cor 1:20 that God’s promises are, “in Christ,” “yes” is based on an implicit conception of solidarity between the messiah and his people as recipients of God’s promises. Thus, while it is true that God’s promises to believers are fulfilled by means of Christ, the reason that is the case is because they are also fulfilled for Christ.

2 Cor 2:14: But thanks be to God who in Christ always leads us in triumphal procession and who makes manifest through us in every place the odor of the knowledge of him.

The dynamic of solidarity in this verse depends largely on the meaning of the verb ἐθριαμβεύω. The externally attested use of the term with an accusative object (as we have

163. See Thrall, 2 Corinthians, 1:146.

164. See the discussion on Gal 3:26 below.

165. That Paul has solidarity with the messiah in mind is also confirmed by his play on words in the following verse where he writes, “God established us with you into the anointed one (χριστόν) and anointed (χρίσας) us.” On this see Novenson, Christ among the Messiahs, 146–149.
here) has the meaning “to lead captives in triumphal procession.” Some, however, take the verb θριαμβεύω to mean either “to cause to triumph over,” or “to lead co-victors in triumphal procession” despite the lack of external evidence for these connotations. For instance, C. K. Barrett opines that “notwithstanding the lack of supporting lexical evidence it is right to … tak[e] Paul to represent himself as one of the victorious general’s soldiers sharing in the glory of his triumph.” Conversely, Scott Hafemann insists that the lack of external evidence is decisive, observing that when θριαμβεύω is accompanied by a direct object it always describes the act of leading conquered prisoners in triumphal procession, normally culminating in their death. Therefore, in 2 Cor 2:14 “Paul pictured himself as one of God’s previously conquered enemies … being led by God to death in order that he might display or reveal the majesty, power and glory of his conqueror.”

Hafemann’s judgment that the verb should be taken in its conventional sense of leading conquered enemies in procession is sound. The potentially contentious assertion, however, is that Paul intended to imply that he was being led to death. Paul’s repeated discussion of his suffering and death elsewhere, though, suggests this is entirely plausible. In Phil 3:10 he expects to “be conformed to Christ’s death”; in 1 Cor 15:31 he claims to “die daily”; in 1 Cor 4:9 he asserts that “God exhibited us apostles as last, as sentenced to death”; and in 2 Cor 4:10 he describes his team as “always carrying about the death of Jesus in the body.” If Paul is figuratively portraying himself in 2 Cor 2:14 as being led to his execution, then it is thoroughly congruent with his apostolic self-understanding expressed elsewhere.

166. See LSJ, s.v. θριαμβεύω, 2.1; BDAG, s.v. θριαμβεύω, 1; and Montanari, Brill Dictionary, s.v. θριαμβεύω, 1.
167. See LSJ, s.v. θριαμβεύω, 2.2; Montanari, Brill Dictionary, s.v. θριαμβεύω, 1; and especially BDAG, s.v. θριαμβεύω, 2–3 which notes the lack of external evidence for these meanings.
171. See also Thrall, 2 Corinthians, 1:195.
But how does this pertain to solidarity with the messiah? A partial answer is found in the verses already mentioned—Paul does not conceive of his death simply as his own experience, rather he views it as taking part in Christ’s experience. Thus in Phil 3:10 it is not simply that Paul anticipates death, but that he specifically anticipates “being conformed (συμμορφωθήσεσθαι)” to Christ’s death. And in 2 Cor 4:10 it is not just that Paul suffers, it is that he bears the “death of Jesus.” As Wayne Meeks describes it, “the apostolic career becomes a mimesis of Christ.”172 Moreover, this dynamic is something Paul envisions for believers generally in Rom 8:17 when he speaks of “co-suffering (συμπάσχομεν) with Christ.” The other part of the answer which confirms Paul has this dynamic of solidarity in mind, is found in the rest of 2 Cor 2:14. God not only leads him in triumphant procession, he also “makes manifest through us in every place the odor of the knowledge of him.” That is to say, Paul’s suffering, including the inevitability of his death, reveals the suffering and death of Christ.173 Apostolic suffering, therefore, is the “stench (σμή) of death” to “those who are perishing,” but it is “the fragrance (σμή) of life” to “those who are being saved” (vv. 15–16).174 Or as Paul had put it in his first letter to the Corinthian church, “the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18). Dieter Georgi is therefore correct in saying that Paul understood his march in God’s triumphal procession “in the sense of worldwide revelatory activity.”175 The premise that undergirds this idea that the messiah’s suffering is revealed in Paul’s suffering is


173. Compare the language of 1 Cor 4:9 (ἀποδείκνυμι, θέατρον) and 2 Cor 4:10–11 (φανερῶ 2χ) with 2 Cor 2:14 (φανερῶ). *Pace* Schütz, *Apostolic Authority*, 211, who claims that 2 Cor 2:14 refers specifically to Paul’s preaching.

174. Cf. BDAG, s.v. σμή, 1a and 1b.

Paul’s solidarity with the messiah. Paul is thus led in triumphal procession specifically “in Christ.”

2 Cor 2:17: For we are not, like so many, peddlers of God’s word, but as from sincerity, as from God, before God, we speak in Christ.

Having just described the apostolic ministry as a display of the very meaning of the cross (2 Cor 2:14–16a), Paul then poses the obvious questions, “Who is sufficient for these things?” (v. 16b). His answer here in v. 17 is that he and his team are the ones who are sufficient in part because of their “sincerity (εἰλικρίνεια).” In making this claim, Paul uses the oath, “before God, we speak in Christ,” to confirm his sincerity. This particular expression is used by Paul only once more, in 2 Cor 12:19. The oath again consists of speaking “before (κατέναντι) God” and “in Christ.” The thrust of the first prepositional phrase is intuitive enough—one does not lie in the presence of God. The meaning of the second prepositional phrase, “in Christ,” is clarified by a statement Paul makes in 2 Cor 13:3: “Christ is speaking in me.” Paul’s claim to trustworthiness is premised on his belief, not only that he speaks by means of Christ, but also that his speech is in fact Christ’s speech.

176. And indeed also with his missionary cohort and with believers generally (cf. Rom 8:17). That being said, the discussion in Schütz, Apostolic Authority, 207–208 perhaps overstates the correspondence between Paul’s apostolic self-understanding and his general understanding of believers as pertains to “in Christ” language.

177. Or again as Georgi puts it, the “us” of 2 Cor 2:14 are “those who belong as victims to the triumphal procession of the corporate Christ” (Georgi, Opponents of Paul, 336).

178. On the pertinence of sincerity to sufficiency in Paul’s apostolic self-understanding, see Hafemann, Suffering and the Spirit, 163–176.

179. Compare the figure of speech “God is witness” (θεὸς μάρτυς, Rom 1:9; 2 Cor 1:23; Phil 1:8; 1 Thess 2:5, 10), meaning that God vouches for one’s trustworthiness. See Novenson, “‘God is Witness’,,” 355–375.

180. See also 2 Cor 5:19–20: “… assigning the word of reconciliation to us. Therefore we are ambassadors (πρεσβεύουμεν) on behalf of Christ (ὑπὲρ χριστοῦ).”
Paul thus conceives of solidarity between himself and the messiah in his apostolic utterances. 181 He therefore he speaks “in Christ.” 182

2 Cor 5:14–15, 17: 14 … one died for all, therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer to themselves, but to the one who died and was raised for them. … 17 Therefore, if anyone [is] in Christ, [there is] a new creation. The old passed away; look, the new has come.

Here in v. 14 Paul makes an explicit statement of solidarity: “one died for all (ὑπὲρ πάντων), therefore all died.” What follows in vv. 15–17 is a three-part exposition of what Paul means by saying “all died.” The first part of this exposition (v. 15) is presented as a purpose clause (ἵνα), and this purpose is a change in the person for whom believers live. 183

Having framed all of this literally in terms of life and death, Paul glosses “Christ” in the second half of v. 15, not simply with ἀποθανόντι (cf. v. 14), but also with ἐγερθέντι. The prepositional phrase ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν—analogous to the earlier ὑπὲρ πάντων—is inserted between the article and these participles, and therefore it modifies both. By asserting that Christ was also raised “for them,” Paul implies that just as Christ “died for all (ὑπὲρ πάντων) and therefore all died” (v. 14b), Christ also was raised for all and therefore all were raised. This is an implicit concept of solidarity. Therefore, vv. 15–17 are an exposition not only of Paul’s claim that “all died” but also of Paul’s implication that also “all were raised.” 184

The second and third parts of this exposition consist of two results (ὡστε 2x). In v. 16 the first result is a change in the way believers know the messiah and others. In v. 17 the

181. On 2 Cor 2:17; 12:19; and 13:3 see Hafemann, Suffering and the Spirit, 43. Schütz, Apostolic Authority, 210–212 neglects to factor 2 Cor 13:13 into his account of Paul’s “speaking in Christ.”

182. Additionally, though Paul does not speak here in 2 Corinthians 2 about the location of the exalted messiah, the combination of his notion of speaking in solidarity with Christ with the image of speaking “before God” is consonant with his understanding, derived from OG Psalm 109, that Christ himself resides in God’s presence, “in” his right hand (ἐν δεξιᾷ, Rom 8:34).

183. They no longer live “for themselves.” This is expressed simply with what BDF §188(2) deems to be the “dative of advantage”—ἐνεπτοῖς.

second result is an epochal change. The existence of believers manifests a “new creation,” which Paul urges his readers to behold. Because this change is premised upon solidarity with Christ in his death and his resurrection, Paul prefaces his announcement of the new epoch, not with contingencies like “if anyone walks by faith” (cf. 2 Cor 5:7), or “if anyone is reconciled to God” (cf. 2 Cor 5:20), or “if anyone accepts the grace of God” (cf. 2 Cor 6:1), but rather with the phrase “if anyone is in Christ.” New creation is the result of the resurrection status which believers possess in solidarity with the risen messiah.  

2 Cor 5:21: He made the one who did not know sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The meaning of the phrase “the righteousness of God” here and in other places in Paul’s epistles is debated. It is possible, however, to establish that Paul’s use of the phrase “in him” indicates solidarity without entering into that debate. There are two factors that evince the idea of believers’ solidarity with the messiah. The first is the immediately preceding clause in which Paul says of the messiah that “God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us.” An unstated but obvious assumption is that the “us” here are “those who do know sin.” Thus, the messiah, according to God’s purposes, entered into solidarity with sinners by being “made to be sin.” Given this, Paul’s use of the phrase “in him” to modify the purpose clause which follows—“so that (ἵνα) we might become the righteousness of God”—indicates not just that Christ was the instrument by which God accomplished this purpose, but that he was God’s instrument specifically in that he entered into this solidarity with sinful humanity.

185. This protasis of course delimits the referent of πᾶς in vv. 14–15, though one must look to the wider context to discover how Paul thinks someone comes to be “in Christ.” The statements in nearby context from which these hypothetical protases are drawn would be informative in this regard.

186. Thus in Rom 8:19, 23 Paul says that creation longs for the revelation of God’s children—that is, “the redemption of our bodies.”

187. Cf. 1 Cor 15:3 and esp. Rom 5:8: “while we were still sinners Christ died for us.”

188. See Macaskill, Union with Christ, 234–236 where he discusses the possibility of the influence of Isaiah 53 on Paul’s thought here.
observation. Paul says here that “we become (γενώμεθα) righteousness” and he has written in his previous letter to the Corinthians that Christ “became (ἐγενήθη) righteousness” (1 Cor 1:30). Whatever the meaning of δικαιοσύνη, it is a simple fact that Paul has predicated it of both believers and the messiah using the stative verb γίνομαι. Paul’s use of the phrase “in him” to modify this predication concerning believers, therefore, is a clear indication of solidarity.

Regarding the connotation of “righteousness,” there are two basic positions (though with variations within them). “Righteousness” is either a trait belonging to God or a trait belonging to people. The latter is usually considered the traditional reading according to which Christ, as the sinless and obedient one, possesses righteousness, and “in him” believers are also granted that status and thereby reconciled to God (v. 20). 189 Paul’s description in Rom 5:18 of Christ’s death as “the one righteous act (δικαιώματος)” which leads to “justification (δικαίωσιν)” would perhaps support this interpretation. Alternatively, some argue that “righteousness” is a quality of God’s character manifested in the Christ event, or as Douglas Campbell puts it, that Christ is the “definitive disclosure of God’s δικαιοσύνη.” 190 This meaning would also obtain in 1 Cor 1:30—Christ became righteousness in the sense that he manifested God’s righteousness—and then here in 2 Cor 5:21 believers also become, “in Christ,” a display of God’s righteousness. 191 Wright’s particular version of this position relates “righteousness” to “covenant faithfulness,” and this is reflected in his translation of 2 Cor 5:21: “The Messiah did not know sin, but God made him to be sin on our

189. See Thrall, 2 Corinthians, 1:442–444.
190. Campbell, Deliverance of God, 684 (see further 912–913 where Campbell provides a brief analysis of 1 Cor 1:30 and 2 Cor 5:21; and 1129n8 where he admits that these instances contribute little to his argument for a consistent meaning of the “righteousness of God” across Paul’s epistles).
191. Thus Ernst Käsemann, “‘The Righteousness of God’ in Paul,” in New Testament Questions of Today, (London: SCM, 1969), 173: “[the righteousness of God] appears in I Cor. 1.30 as the direct manifestation of the Christ, and in II Cor. 5.21 as that of the community” (see also 181).
behalf, so that in him we might embody God’s faithfulness to the covenant.”

In either case, Paul envisions believers—whether as possessing righteousness or evincing God’s righteousness—in solidarity with the messiah.

2 Cor 12:19: All along you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Before God, we speak in Christ; and all, beloved, is for your building up.

Paul here repeats the same oath he uses in 2 Cor 2:17: κατέναντι θεοῦ ἐν χριστῷ λαλοῦμεν. See the relevant discussion above.

Gal 3:26: For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith.

Paul often refers to Jesus as the “son of God,” though he does not do so in the course of his argument in Galatians 3. He does, however, explicitly mention two other related identities that Christ and believers share. They are both Abraham’s offspring (σπέρμα, vv. 16, 29), and they are both recipients of God’s promise (Christ as τὸ σπέρμα ὧ ἔπήγγελται, v. 19; believers as κατ’ ἐπαγγέλιαν κληρονόμοι). Therefore, the designation of believers as υἱοὶ θεοῦ should be understood as part and parcel of this rationale according to which there is solidarity of identity between Christ and believers. This is confirmed by the fact that Paul

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192. Wright, Paul and the Faithfulness of God, 881. Wright argues that this interpretation comports with Paul’s emphasis in the surrounding context on his apostolic ministry as a display of God’s faithfulness (883n308). In this connection, Meeks, First Urban Christians, 185–186 notes that Paul typically speaks of “justification” only in contexts concerning the relation between Jews and gentiles. He goes on to explain, however, that “[t]he important text 2 Cor. 5:21 is only a partial exception, for the formulaic statement, ‘Him who knew no sin he made sin on our behalf, that we should become in him God’s righteousness’, stands at the climax of Paul’s apology for his missionary career” (186).

193. Paul refers to Christ as God’s son in Gal 4:4, although the statement there is part of a distinct (though of course related) train of thought.
hails Christ as the son of God elsewhere in the epistle. Accordingly, Paul modifies “you are” with “in Christ”—the filial status of the Galatians is none other than the messiah’s own status.

Gal 3:28: There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is not male and female. For you all are, in Christ Jesus, one.

The premise of this statement (though not its application) is the same as that in Rom 12:5—oneness “in Christ Jesus” is derivative of the oneness of Christ himself. As mentioned above, Paul has just emphasized the oneness of the “seed, which is the messiah” in v. 16, and then in v. 29 he will go on to say that those “of the messiah”—that is, those who here in v. 28 “are one in the messiah Jesus”—also share his identity as “seed.” Like Rom 12:5, then, this formula in Gal 3:28 is also a statement of implicit solidarity with the messiah. See also the discussion on Rom 12:5 above.

Phil 1:13: so that my chains have been manifest in Christ among the whole prison guard and to all the rest.

As mentioned in the syntactical analysis of Phil 1:13, Paul’s meaning here is abstruse, especially regarding his use of the phrase “in Christ.” Lightfoot captures the likely meaning most simply, glossing the phrase φανεροὺς ἐν χριστῷ γενέσθαι with “have been seen in their

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194. See Gal 1:16; 2:20; 4:4, and 6. Also, note Macaskill, *Union with Christ*, 222: “Notably, it is ‘in Christ’ that Paul’s readers are sons of God ‘through faith’ (διὰ τῆς πίστεως). Paul develops his discussion of adoption in Galatians with a statement concerning the baptism of believers into (εἰς) Christ which has resulted in their clothing themselves with him (3:27). The pairing of the prepositions ‘in’ and ‘into’ suggests that here we are indeed dealing with a locative construal of union, with the clothing metaphor depicting the transfer of Christ’s identity onto those who are located in him: his appearance becomes theirs. The link between his identity as ‘son’ (4:4) and the adoption of believers is, therefore, vital.”

195. The statement here in Galatians is often considered part of a traditional baptism liturgy. See Neutel, *Cosmopolitan Ideal*, 24–28 on its integrality to Paul’s thought regardless of its hypothetical provenance. Romans 12:5 depicts believers as “one body in Christ,” not simply “one in Christ.” However, as Boyarin, *Radical Jew*, 23 notes, the image in Gal 3:27 of “putting on Christ” “is certainly a reference to the topos of the body as a garment.”

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relation to Christ, have borne testimony to the Gospel.” This comports with Paul’s use of the conjunction ὥστε, which indicates that what follows results from the fact that Paul’s imprisonment is “for the progress of the gospel” (v. 12). Precisely how, though, does Paul’s imprisonment advance the gospel? First, as mentioned above in our discussion of 2 Cor 2:14, Paul elsewhere makes it clear that he views his suffering as a participation in the messiah’s sufferings. In Phil 3:10 Paul aspires “to know … participation (κοινωνίαν) in [Christ’s] sufferings, being conformed (συμμορφωμένος) to his death,” and this is part of Paul’s explanation of what it means for him to be “found in Christ” (Phil 3:9). Paul also articulates something similar in Rom 8:16–17 where he says, not just of himself but of all believers, “we are … co-heirs with Christ if we suffer with [him] (συμπάθειαν) so that we might be glorified with [him].” In this connection, Fee suggests that here in Phil 1:13 Paul probably means something like, “it has become clear that I am in chains because I am a man in Christ, and that my chains are in part a manifestation of my discipleship as one who is thereby participating in the sufferings of Christ himself.”

Second, Paul also indicates elsewhere that he views his own sufferings as a revelation of Christ’s sufferings and thereby a testimony to the gospel. As also discussed above, this is what Paul means when he explains to the Corinthians that through his and his cohort’s suffering God is “making manifest (φανεροῦντι) the fragrance of the knowledge of [Christ] through us.” Given this rationale, it is clear that Paul’s imprisonment advances the gospel because it, as a participation in Christ’s sufferings, is thereby also a revelation of Christ’s salvific work. Therefore, Paul’s point in Phil 1:13 is implicitly premised on the idea of

196. Lightfoot, Philippians, 88.

197. Vincent, Philippians and Philemon, 16 notes that ὥστε is used here, as it is in 1 Cor 1:7, to introduce a result that elucidates the meaning of the more general notion preceding it. In other words, the progress of the gospel has played out specifically in Paul’s chains becoming “manifest in Christ” to the prison guard.

198. Fee, Philippians, 113.
solidarity with Christ in his sufferings, and this is why he modifies the adjective φανερούς
with the phrase ἐν χριστῷ.\textsuperscript{199}

Phil 1:26: so that your reason for boasting might abound in Christ Jesus in
me through my coming to you again.

Paul’s use of the parallel phrases “in Christ Jesus (ἐν χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ)” and “in me (ἐν
ἐμοί)” signals that he has in mind his solidarity with Christ. Paul’s rationale here is very
similar to what we have already seen in Rom 15:17–18 and again in 1 Cor 15:31. In Rom
15:17–18 Paul has, “in Christ” a basis for boasting because his work is actually Christ’s
work. In 1 Cor 15:31 Paul has, “in Christ” cause to boast “in the Corinthians” for the same
reason. Here in Phil 1:26, Paul believes that a purpose (ἵνα) for his remaining alive and with
the Philippians (vv. 24–25) is that the basis of their boasting will abound. It will abound “in
Paul” because it is his presence that is the immediate cause of their pride, but it will also
abound “in Christ” because Paul labors in solidarity with Christ. Whatever he does that gives
the Philippians cause to glory is really something Christ has done.\textsuperscript{200}

Phil 3:14: I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God
in Christ Jesus.

Lest he be misunderstood as claiming to have already arrived at the resurrection of the
dead (v. 12), Paul explains here that he is still pressing on, still running toward the prize.
Since Paul’s whole train of thought running from v. 12 to v. 14 is a caveat to his aspirations
for resurrection mentioned in v. 11, it is clear that here in v. 14 “the goal,” “the prize,” is to

\textsuperscript{199} Thus Silva, \textit{Philippians}, 62: “The use of \textit{en Christo} here reflects in a notable way Paul’s
conception of solidarity with Christ. We should see in this choice not a careless overuse of the phrase
but Paul’s recognition that he is sharing in Christ’s sufferings.”

\textsuperscript{200} Paul’s opening statement of the letter suggests he would also conceive of a similar solidarity
between the Philippians and Christ. In Phil 1:5 he mentions their “partnership (κοινωνία) for the
gospel” and then goes on in v. 6 to refer to “the one who began a good work in you” (“good work”
entailing their efforts for the gospel). Indeed, in v. 7 Paul describes the Philippians as “partakers” with
him “of grace (τῆς χάριτος),” both “in imprisonment” and “in the defense and confirmation of the
gospel.” Cf. Rom 15:15 where Paul also uses χάρις to refer to his apostolic calling.
“arrive into (καταντήσω εἰς) the resurrection of the dead” (v. 11). There is some debate about the relation of the genitive τῆς ἀνω κλήσεως to “the prize.”

To use Paul’s imagery, this “upward call” is best understood as the race which, once won, culminates in the prize. This “upward call” comes from God (τοῦ θεοῦ, subjective genitive) and is “in Christ Jesus.” Paul has modified “the upward call” with “in Christ Jesus” because it is a call to where Christ is. That is to say, it is a call to solidarity with Christ in his resurrected existence by which he is fit for heavenly residence. Or as Paul puts it in 1 Cor 15:49, a call to “bear the image of the man of heaven (τοῦ ἐπουρανίου).” This line of thought is evident in the verses that follow in Phil 3:17–21.

After his autobiographical comments in Phil 3:4–14, Paul summons the Philippians to imitate him (v. 17). This is a summons to live, not as enemies of the cross (v. 18), but as those whose citizenship exists in heaven, from where we await our savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our body of humiliation to share the likeness

201. Thus Fee, *Philippians*, 349: “the sense is easier to sort out than the grammar.”


203. See the discussion “pneumatic existence,” especially as it relates to 1 Cor 15:48–49 in Thiessen, *Paul and the Gentile Problem*, 150–154. Thiessen relates this specifically to Phil 3:20, to be discussed presently, but not to Phil 3:14 (153–154). In this connection, see also Troels Engberg-Pedersen, *Cosmology and Self*, 43 who relates 1 Corinthians 15 to Phil 2:15 where Paul writes that the Philippians “shine like stars” (cf. OG Dan 12:3, mentioned in ch. 4).
There are two things to note in this dense description. First, Paul understands Christ to be in
heaven. This is the obvious implication of saying that heaven is the place from which Christ
is awaited (v. 20). The same notion with the same implication is also found in 1 Thess 1:10
and 4:16. This is also evident in Rom 8:34 where Christ is pictured at the right hand of God.
This image derives from the enthronement paean, OG Psalm 109, and Paul’s allusion to it
again in 1 Cor 15:25, suggests that there too he pictures Christ at God’s right hand, though
reigning rather than interceding.207 This is confirmed in 1 Cor 15:47–48, mentioned above,
where Christ is called “the man from heaven (ἐξ οὐρανοῦ)” and “the heavenly one (ὁ ἐπουράνιος).”208 Additionally, the installment of the resurrected Christ in heaven is probably
also what is in view in Rom 1:4 where the messiah “was appointed the son of God in
power,” and in Phil 2:9 where “God highly exalted him.” The relevance of Phil 2:9 to these
images of Christ’s heavenly residence is also indicated by the common theme of Christ’s
complete dominion in Phil 2:10 (“every knee shall bow,” cf. Isa 45:23) and Phil 3:21 and

204. Literally, “who will transform our body of humiliation similar in form (σώματος) to his body of
glory.” The phrase εἰς τὸ γένεσθαι αὐτῷ (“so that it itself might be”) is inserted before σώματος in D1
K L P Ψ 075. 33. 104. 365. 630. 1505. 2464 _MR, the entire Syriac tradition, Irenaeus, and Ambrose.
This is likely a later addition to clarify Paul’s dense grammar. Per Lightfoot, the insertion “must be
struck out as a gloss, though a correct one” (Lightfoot, Philippians, 157). Cf. Fee, Philippians 375n3.

205. On “body of glory” compare 1 Cor 15:40–43 and see M. David Litwa, We Are Being

206. “Himself” is legitimate translation of αὐτῷ since the antecedent of all the masculine singular
pronouns throughout the sentence is κύριον Ἰησοῦν χριστόν (Phil 3:20). This explains the reflexive
αὐτῷ attested in the later witnesses Κ2 D2 L Ψ 6. 81 (uncertain). 104. 326. 630. 1175. 1241 _MR
(equally divided), the Vulgate, and a portion of Old Latin versions. Cf. Lightfoot, Philippians, 157;
and Fee, Philippians, 375n2).


208. See ch. 4.

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1 Cor 15:27 ("all things subjected," cf. OG Dan 7:27 and OG Ps 8:7). In light of these texts, it is clear that Paul, drawing upon several scriptures interpreted messianically, understands Jesus to be the resurrected messiah and lord exalted to heaven, where he reigns and intercedes, and from whence he will return.

The second issue of note in Phil 3:20–21 is that Paul envisions believers as already having a stake in heaven which will result in their resurrection. In Phil 3:20 this is depicted as “citizenship in heaven (δ̣πολίτευμα ἐν οὐρανοῖς).” In Gal 4:26 Paul also uses a political image for the same idea, writing that “the Jerusalem above (ἐν οὐρανοῖς)” is “our mother.” Paul expounds the idea of believers having a stake in heaven differently in 2 Cor 5:1–3, although there too he relates it to resurrection as he does in Phil 3:20–21. Employing a mixed metaphor, he writes that believers have a “dwelling in heaven” (v. 1) with which they long to be “fully clothed (ἐπενδύσασθαι).” Paul is of course speaking of the resurrection. But instead of saying, as he does in Phil 3:20–21, that believers have citizenship in heaven from whence Christ will return to raise the dead, he writes that believers have a heavenly dwelling with which they will be clothed. Paul makes no explicit mention of Christ in 2 Cor 5:1–5, rather only God and the Spirit. However, given that Paul speaks of being clothed with Christ in Rom 13:14 and Gal 3:27, his use of the same image here perhaps suggests that by “heavenly dwelling” he means the messiah himself. In this connection, Gal 3:27 is especially significant since there Paul is referring to baptism, which in Rom 6:3–4 he sees as effecting

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209. Regarding the exaltation of Christ in Phil 2:9–10, note the interesting correspondence between heaven and earth conjectured by Meeks, First Urban Christians, 148: “the ‘hymn’ that Paul quotes in Phil. 2:6–11 pictures a heavenly enthronement of Christ in which, at the signal ‘in the Name of Jesus’, everyone kneels. Those doing obeisance in the mythic picture are superhuman powers; we would probably not go far wrong to imagine that the Philippian Christians were accustomed, on hearing the same formula at some point in their worship, probably in connection with baptism, to bend their knees and confess, ‘The Lord is Jesus Christ’. What is done on earth is confirmed in heaven—or, rather, the reverse” (italics original; see also 155–156). See also Hurtado, Lord Jesus Christ, 113–144; and Jipp, Christ Is King, 147.

210. The notion of citizenship is inherent in Paul’s idea of belonging to a city. Paul puts this in maternal terms in Galatians 4 because of his use there of the Sarah/Hagar narrative and LXX Isa 54:1. Galatians 4:26 and Phil 3:14 are the only places in the undisputed epistles where the adverb ἐν οὐρανοῖς appears (cf. Col 3:1–2).

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solidarity with Christ’s death and resurrection. Paul’s meaning in 2 Cor 5:1–2, then, would be that believers have a share in the resurrected Christ’s heavenly residence (that is, they have a “dwelling in heaven”) and are therefore guaranteed solidarity in his resurrection (that is, they will be “fully clothed” with the heavenly dwelling). At the very least, Paul is saying in 2 Cor 5:1–5 that having a stake “in heaven” guarantees resurrection. And in 1 Cor 15:48, he is quite clear that this is tantamount to solidarity with the heavenly Christ: “as is the heavenly one, so also the heavenly ones (ὁ ἐπουράνιος, τοιοῦτοι καὶ οἱ ἐπουράνιοι).”

Returning now to Phil 3:14, Paul is describing the same idea which is found in 2 Cor 5:1; 1 Cor 15:48; and Phil 3:20. In Phil 3:14, however, that idea is couched in terms of a race since Paul’s purpose is to encourage endurance. The “upward call of God” corresponds to having a heavenly dwelling (2 Cor 5:1), being counted among the heavenly ones (1 Cor 15:48), and being citizens of heaven (Phil 3:20). And “the prize” corresponds to being fully clothed with that heavenly dwelling (2 Cor 5:2), being heavenly just as the Heavenly One (1 Cor 15:48), and sharing in the likeness of Christ’s glorious body (Phil 3:14). The premise undergirding all of this for Paul is that heavenly residence is the privilege only of the resurrected. The Philippians and Paul, however, are not yet resurrected. But in solidarity with the resurrected messiah, they nonetheless already have a stake in heaven—that is, they have an “upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Phil 4:19: And my God will fulfill your every need according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

This would appear to be a case of simple instrumentality. The verb “fulfill” of which God is the subject is modified with “in Christ Jesus” because the messiah is the instrument by which God fulfills the needs of his people. This is surely part of what Paul means.

211. On the relationship between Paul’s use of clothing imagery and early rituals of baptism involving de-robing and re-robing, see Meeks, First Urban Christians, 151, 155.
212. As Paul puts it in 1 Cor 15:50, “the perishable cannot inherit the imperishable”; or in 1 Cor 15:53, “this corruptible body must wear (ἐνδύσασθαι) incorruptibility, and this mortal body must wear (ἐνδύσασθαι) immortality.”
However, as discussed above at length, Paul’s previous statement in Phil 3:21 that God will transform believer’s bodies to “share in the likeness of [Christ’s] body of glory” suggests that the “riches in glory” according to which God will fulfill the Philippians’ needs are those aspects of glory which the exalted messiah himself experiences.\(^\text{213}\) Indeed, the rest of Phil 3:21 which speaks of Christ’s “subjection of all things to himself” points farther back in the letter to Phil 2:9–11 where Paul describes the exaltation of the messiah as Lord. This, in turn, is the end result of Christ’s own humiliation which Paul explains ought to inform the way the Philippians treat one another (Phil 2:3–5). Over the course of his whole letter, then, Paul has exhorted the Philippians to humility, told of Christ’s own humiliation and subsequent glory, described how believers will share in that glory, and, here in Phil 4:19, concluded with a benediction asking for God to supply their needs according to that same glory. All along the way, Paul has conceived of a correspondence between the lives of the believers to whom he is writing and Christ himself. His use of “in Christ” here should then be understood as an indication of that solidarity.

Phlm 8–9: 8 Therefore, even though in Christ I have much boldness to command you to do what is fitting,\(^\text{214}\) 9 I instead appeal to you on the basis of love.

Because Philemon has a record of showing love to believers (vv. 5, 7), Paul wants him to release Onesimus to him on the same basis—love—rather than mere obligation or begrudging obedience (v. 9). Even so, Paul evidently wants Philemon to remain aware of Paul’s authority to command him, and he expresses this in the concessive participial phrase, “even though in Christ I have much boldness to command you.” “In Christ” specifies how or why it is that Paul has enough boldness to demand compliance from Philemon (though he would rather not). Paul’s meaning here is similar to that in Rom 15:17 where “in Christ” he has reason to boast in his work because his work is really the work of Christ. In Phlm 8, Paul


\(^{214}\) See Rom 15:17; 1 Cor 4:15; 15:31; and Gal 2:4 for the common use of ἐν χριστῷ with ἔχω.
has, “in Christ,” boldness to command because his command would really be the command of Christ. Paul therefore distinguishes between an appeal, which Philemon presumably could protest, and a command, which Paul thinks he could not. In other words, he distinguishes between sources of authority.

In 1 Cor 7:25 Paul makes a similar distinction when he differentiates between a command of the Lord (ἐπιταγὴν κυρίου) and his own judgment (γνώμη). Despite the distinction, though, Paul is the one delivering the guidance in both cases. The difference is the source of the authority of his command. This is confirmed earlier in 1 Cor 7:10 when he inserts a parenthetical remark appealing to the Lord’s authority: “I command—not I, but the Lord” (so also 1 Cor 7:12). Thus, Paul sees himself as having the capacity to make commands that carry the authority of the Lord, indeed to make commands that are in fact the Lord’s commands. As discussed above, in 2 Cor 2:17 Paul also makes a similar claim about his apostolic preaching in general. He speaks in solidarity with Christ, who in fact speaks in him (2 Cor 13:3). The comparison Paul makes between an appeal, which Philemon could disregard, and a command, which he could not, makes most sense if Paul’s notion of “having boldness in Christ to command” is understood as invoking a higher authority on the basis of solidarity between himself and Christ. Different degrees of persuasiveness between an appeal and a command do not account for the unspoken premise that Philemon would be bound by the command but not by the appeal. It is therefore implicit in Paul’s rhetoric that the boldness he has in Christ is based on solidarity with Christ in his authority.

**Summary and Observations**

The results of the conceptual analysis are as follows:

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I would like to make two brief observations about these results. First, the phrase “in Christ” is clearly not a “formula,” which consistently connotes “mysticism” or the like. The definition of “solidarity” with which I am working is of course not the same as what is meant by “mysticism” in earlier scholarship, though the two are related. Even if they were equal, however, fewer than one half of the instances of the “in Christ” language in the undisputed Pauline epistles are used in this way. The trait that is common to all instances of “in Christ” language, therefore, is neither a uniform syntactical construction (as demonstrated in part one) nor a uniform connotation (as demonstrated in part two). Rather, it is that the expression and its various meanings all arise from Paul’s messianic interpretation of scripture. As obvious as it may seem to say so, the unifying feature of Paul’s “in Christ” language is that it is language about χριστός—it is messiah discourse.

The second observation is that when Paul uses “in Christ” language to indicate solidarity with the messiah, he often uses it specifically pertaining to himself or his missionary team. The distribution is as follows:

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On the one hand, this is not surprising since Paul thought of his life as paradigmatic for the believers in his churches. On the other hand, given Paul’s general understanding of the solidarity between the messiah and his people, it is unusual that he would conceive of himself as experiencing that solidarity in a specialized way. However, this specificity should not be overstated since Paul often clearly indicates that the particular ways he experiences solidarity with Christ as an apostle also pertain to believers generally. This includes the ideas

\[\text{215. See ch. 1.} \]
\[\text{216. Rom 6:11, 23; 8:1, 2; 12:5; 1 Cor 15:18, 22; 2 Cor 1:20; 5:17, 21; Gal 3:26, 28; Phil 1:26; 2:5; and 4:19.} \]
\[\text{217. Rom 9:1; 15:17; 1 Cor 15:31; 2 Cor 1:19; 2:14, 17; 12:19; 13:4; Phil 1:13; 3:9, 14; and Phlm 8.} \]
\[\text{218. See 1 Cor 4:16; 11:1; and Phil 3:17.} \]
of suffering with the messiah and thereby disclosing the salvific import of the cross (see the discussions on 2 Cor 2:14 and Phil 1:13, for example), rising with the messiah (cf. Rom 8:17; Phil 3:20), and even boasting of accomplishments which are actually the messiah’s (cf. Phil 1:26). In fact, the only category of solidarity which Paul ascribes to his own experience but does not directly relate to the experience of the believers in his churches is that of speaking “in Christ,” speaking the very words of Christ himself. These instances comprise five of the twelve instances describing solidarity between Christ and the apostolic cohort, and not surprisingly they cluster in 2 Corinthians where Paul’s apostolic authority is an issue of contention. This use of “in Christ” language is rooted in Paul’s scripturally-informed understanding of solidarity between the messiah and his people, but it is a specific extrapolation from that concept occasioned by Paul’s apostolic self-understanding as a χριστοῦ δοῦλος possessing unmediated revelation of the messiah.

Conclusion

These syntactical and conceptual analyses of every instance of “in Christ” language in the undisputed epistles have demonstrated that Paul’s uses of the expression are, as I described them in the beginning of the chapter, innovative extrapolations from his messianic interpretations of the traditions concerning Abraham’s seed and the Danielic heavenly man. They are innovative in the sense that Paul deployed the idiom in syntactical constructions that are different from that in which the LXX Genesis phrase ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου is found. Thus Paul’s letters exhibit a common characteristic of ancient messiah discourse by re-appropriating scriptural idioms in new ways. Furthermore, Paul’s uses of “in Christ” language are at the same time extrapolations from his messianic interpretation of scripture. By this I mean that the concepts he communicated by using the phrase can be related back to his scripturally-derived messianology. The messiah is the one “in” whom God’s redemptive

purposes are accomplished, “in” whom individuals and communities are designated as belonging to God’s people, and “in” whom they experience and possess the same things as the messiah. Therefore, while Paul uses the phrase ἐν χριστῷ with diverse connotations and in diverse thematic contexts, all of its uses may be gathered under the category of messiah discourse.
CONCLUSION

Summary of the Argument

In this study I undertook to explain Paul’s development and use of the expression ἐν χριστῷ and its variants within the framework of ancient Jewish messiah discourse. I began in chapter one with a history of the problem, which showed that Paul’s modern interpreters have consistently neglected the apostle’s messianology when attempting to explain his hallmark idiom “in Christ.” This methodological error has been due in part to the prevailing opinion that Paul—despite his prolific use of the noun χριστός—had left behind Jewish messianic ideology. Chapter two, however, recounted the historical implausibility of any such “messianic idea” according to scholars of ancient Judaism and proposed an alternative model for assessing Paul’s “in Christ” language. In doing so, I drew upon revisionist accounts of ancient messiah discourse that emphasize the creative interpretation of scripture by authors of ancient messiah texts in response to their varying individual circumstances. On this model, it is possible to explain both the diversity of messianic portraits emerging from ancient messiah speculation and the common modes of scriptural interpretation which generated these portraits. Specifically, I delineated two interpretative features of ancient messiah discourse relevant for assessing Paul’s “in Christ” language. The first was the frequent reuse and re-appropriation of scriptural idioms—syntagms borrowed from scriptural messiah texts or other scriptural texts interpreted messianically—in new literary contexts. The second was the common practice of constructing these new literary contexts with imagery drawn from a separate, relatively small pool of scriptural sources, none of which themselves are scriptural messiah texts sensu stricto. These two features provided a framework by which I was able to explain how the phraseology ἐν χριστῷ and its various
contextual functions arose from Paul’s messianic interpretation of scripture. Chapters three and four delineated specifically how this was so.

In chapter three I demonstrated that the syntagm ἐν χριστῷ was Paul’s messianic adaptation of the LXX Genesis idiom ἐν τῷ σπέρματί σου borrowed from the Abraham saga, and that this adaptation was part and parcel of a larger interpretative phenomenon which identified Abraham’s seed with David’s seed and David’s seed with the messiah, the firstfruits of the “raising up” of the dead. Therefore, I contended that though the expression “in Christ” is distinctive, being unprecedented in the sources, it was nevertheless generated by Paul’s participation in ancient messiah discourse. Moreover, I argued that Paul’s use of “in Christ” language to indicate the instrumentality of Christ in God’s purposes and to indicate the inclusion of individuals and communities in God’s people arose from his interpretation of Abrahamic traditions. Yet to be accounted for, however, was Paul’s so-called “participatory” use of the phrase “in Christ.” Chapter four, therefore, proposed that Paul’s usage was also informed by his messianic interpretation of the heavenly human figure of Daniel 7—a commonly adduced text in ancient messiah speculation. I showed that Paul drew upon the imagery there of solidarity between the “one like a son of man” and the saints in their victory over God’s enemies in order to portray solidarity between the messiah and believers in their victory over death—a dynamic Paul captured with the terse expression “in Christ.” Furthermore, I asserted that Paul extrapolated this specific understanding of solidarity in resurrection to a more general concept of messianic solidarity pertaining also to suffering, death, filial status, corporate unity, accomplishment, and authority. In this, Paul again exhibited the innovative re-appropriation of scriptural imagery common to ancient messiah discourse.

In chapter five I undertook a two-part analysis of every instance of “in Christ” language in order to illustrate the explanatory potential of my account of Paul’s messianic interpretation of scripture. Part one was a syntactical analysis elucidating the grammatical ingenuity with which Paul deployed his messianically adapted idiom ἐν χριστῷ. And part two was a conceptual analysis establishing that Paul’s uses of the phrase to indicate instrumentality, inclusion, and solidarity were anchored in his messianic interpretation of the
scriptural traditions discussed in chapters three and four. In sum, the development and use of the idiom “in Christ” was catalyzed by Paul’s participation in the Jewish interpretative enterprise of messiah discourse. I now want to comment briefly on the import of these findings for assessing past scholarship and proposing future avenues of investigation.

Retrospect

This study is a corrective to scholarship that has eschewed messiahship as an explanatory category for Paul, and it is an amelioration of the minority position which has attempted to integrate messianology into accounts of Paul. The perspective of Baur, Deissmann, Reitzenstein, and Bousset that Paul’s calling to the gentiles prompted him to leave behind parochial messianism is unsustainable. While Paul does not cite the patriarchal oracle, “in your seed all the nations of the earth will be blessed,” outside of Galatians 3, he does use its verbiage ubiquitously in the phrase “in Christ.” This indicates that the oracle was of formative importance for him. Thus for Paul, the messiah was not a relic of Jewish nationalism, he was the very bridge to the nations, the one “in” whom the blessing of Abraham’s family had gone out to the gentiles.

Alternatively, I am in basic agreement with, for instance, Schweitzer, Davies, Wright, and Jipp that messiahship is integral to Paul’s thought generally and to his “in Christ” language specifically. I differ, however, on precisely how to assess and describe this integrality. Pace Schweitzer, Davies, and Jipp, Paul’s messianology cannot be described on the basis of purported pre-existing messianic or royal ideologies to which Paul was heir. And pace Wright, the most enlightening linguistic analogies for Paul’s “in Christ” language are found in the scriptural sources Paul actually uses.
Prospect

This study suggests additional lines of inquiry for explaining “participation” in Paul and further describing Paul’s messianology more broadly. While the linguistic phenomenon of Paul’s “in Christ” language is not equal to the concept of participation, Paul’s use of the phrase, especially to indicate solidarity, does inform our understanding of participation. It was outside of the purview of this study, however, to hypothesize Paul’s understanding of the basis of that solidarity or the metaphysical mechanism by which solidarity is experienced or established. These questions too, however, are best approached from the angle of messianology since the messiah is of course the “anointed one.” With what is the messiah anointed, and are those “in the messiah” also anointed, and what role does anointing play in establishing solidarity with the messiah? Paul only speaks of anointing as such once, in 2 Cor 1:21–22: “God is the one who establishes us with you into Christ, and has anointed (χρίσας) us, and has sealed us, and has given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” This suggests that exploring Paul’s pneumatology in light of his messianology—exploration along the lines of Thiessen’s work especially—would be fruitful for expounding participation in the messiah by means of being anointed with the πνεῦμα χριστοῦ (Rom 8:9).

Finally, if Pauline messianology is framed in terms of the prevalence of linguistic phenomena, then my description of the phrase ἐν χριστῷ—his favorite use of the word χριστός aside from its juxtaposition with the name Ἰησοῦς—is a significant advancement in sketching the contours of messiahship according to Paul. For Paul, the messiah is the seed of David, the seed of Abraham, the man of heaven—the one in whom the resurrection of the dead has begun, the one in whom God’s purposes are accomplished, the one in whom believers gain their defining identity, and the one in whom they live, work, speak, hope, boast, suffer, die, and rise. Even so, there is more to explore. Analyses within the framework used by this study of Paul’s other messiah phrases and his readings of other scriptures he believed spoke of the messiah will add new dimensions to Paul’s portrait of the messiah as well as our portrait of Paul, the apostle who so longed to be found in him.
## Appendix: Index to Chapter Five

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