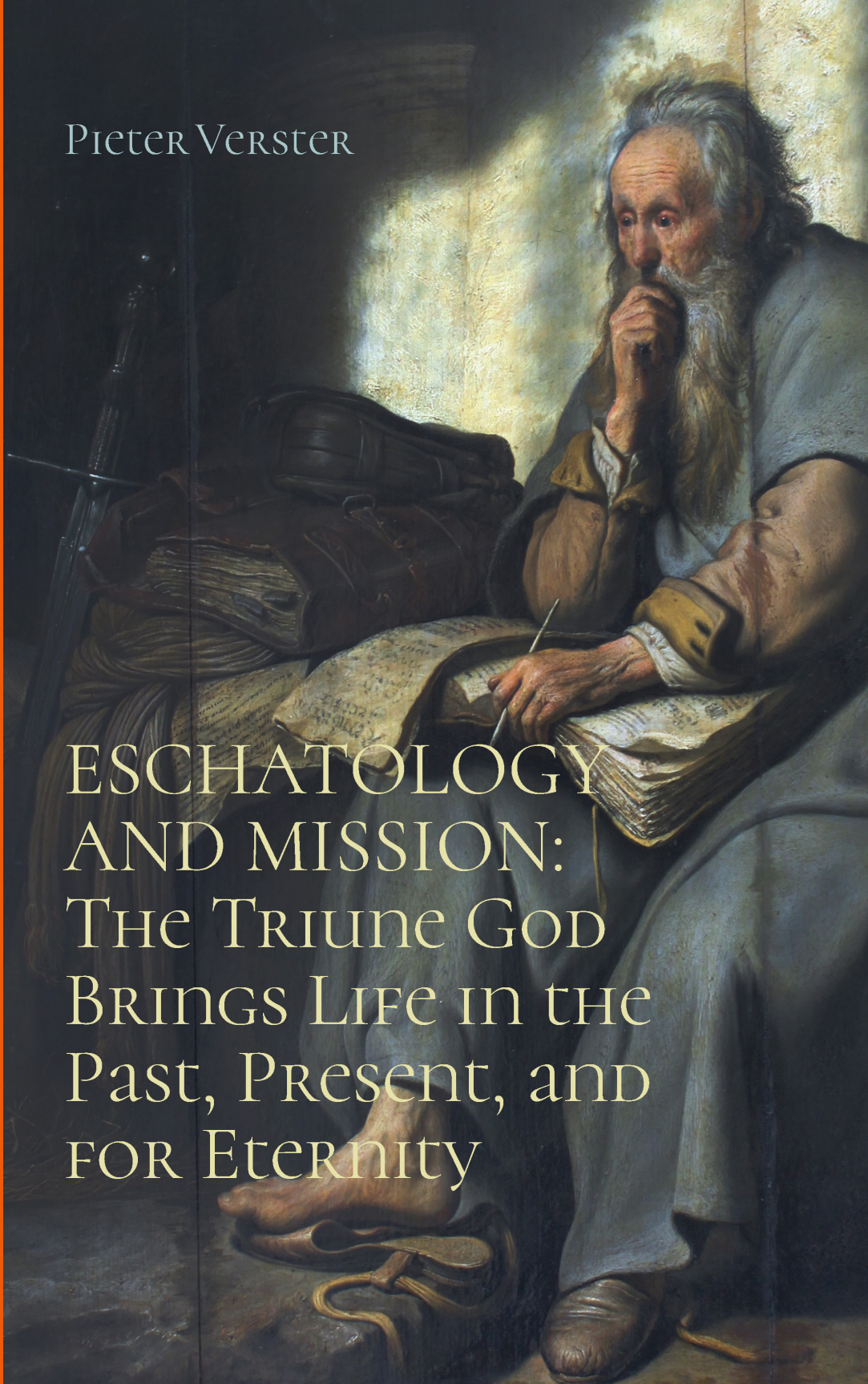
Pieter Verster

Eschatology and Mission: The Triune God Brings Life in the Past, Present, and for Eternity



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UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG

For my lovely granddaughter
Erna Suré Odendaal

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Prolegomena

The purpose of a prolegomena is to discuss the foundational points of a study as well as to explain how questions and problems will be approached and engaged with. It is essential for me, as author, to explain the views and approaches that inform this book from the outset. This is because there are many challenges concerning eschatology and mission. The first way in which we approach the questions and problems grappled with in this book is by considering the same as crucial from a reformed perspective in which God is central. As such, God's Word is the starting point of this book as well as being an essential tool for engaging with the dilemmas posed. Secondly, we acknowledge that the Bible is its own explanation. The revelation of God in the Bible is a seminal component of our approach: God revealed himself as the God of love, which we recognise. The claritas of the Bible as a reformed view, therefore, serves as a foundational underpinning for engagement with problems and questions in this book.

One should engage the critical questions concerning the love of God or regarding his wrath and power as explained in the Bible. One should acknowledge that God rules over the Earth and calls us to a life of obedience. The wrath of God against sin is very clear as evidenced in the Bible. The latter further informs us of the fact that God is the God of love, a fact embodied in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who died and revealed himself as the God of love on the cross. We should always engage the world from the Bible, as the Word of God and the revelation of God in the Bible. Although God also reveals himself in nature, history, and other aspects of life, his revelation is explicit in the Bible. Taking a cue from the Bible as the Word of God in Jesus Christ, the Lord, we should also engage the world around us. We must engage the world contextually by viewing the world's problems through the lenses of both the Bible and the world around us. Therefore, in such engagement, it is essential to explain that God is the God of glory, the Holy God who engages the world around us. One may acknowledge the issues and problems of the world and contend with the problems of the past, present, and future from a reformed perspective. It is important to

continuously acknowledge that God created heaven and Earth and has the right as Creator to every one and to the world around us. The world is a world in sin, and we should acknowledge this from the very beginning; the world needs God's engagement. The world needs to be renewed and this can only happen when God engages the world around us.

God also engages the world beyond the church and the people of Israel when God reveals himself in Isaiah 19 as the God of all.

Egypt, Assyria, and Israel blessed

> 18 In that day five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by the LORD of hosts; one will be called the City of [g]Destruction.
>
> 19In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar to the LORD at its border. 20And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of the oppressors, and He will send them a Savior and a Mighty One, and He will deliver them. 21Then the LORD will be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day, and will make sacrifice and offering; yes, they will make a vow to the LORD and perform it. 22And the LORD will strike Egypt, He will strike and heal it; they will return to the LORD, and He will be entreated by them and heal them.
>
> 23In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians.
>
> 24In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria – a blessing in the midst of the land, 25whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."

God further calls on everyone to the love of all people. Matthew 5 explains that we should even love our enemies:

> [43]You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' [44][o]But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, [45]that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

Luke 24 also emphasises that Jesus calls all to repentance:

> [46]Then He said to them, "Thus it is written, [l]and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, [47]and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. [48]And you are witnesses of these things. [49]Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city [m]of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

From a reformed perspective, we should always acknowledge that God is the holy One who engages the world around us from the perspective of his holiness. To contextualise the Bible in this world of sin, it is necessary to engage it from the perspective of Jesus the Lord who gave his life on the cross and was resurrected.

Furthermore, it is necessary to state the premise that the Bible is regarded as the Word of God; however, not everyone accepts this. Some regard the Bible as human literature without any divine inspiration (Dawkins, 2006:268ff), while others regard the Bible as important for knowledge about God but not as the final Word of God (Müller, 2022:61ff; Spangenberg, 2024:34 ff.). The Bible is also regarded as a human book that, when read, becomes the Word of God through the Holy Spirit (Barth, 1970:457ff). For the purpose of our book, we view the Bible as the Word of God (Calvin, 1956:sp; Heyns, 1978:29-34; DeSilva, 2004:148ff). The Bible is the revelation of God because of the relationship to his glory. In order for us to understand and the relate to God, the Bible needs to serve as a clear guide in this world. The Bible explains how God created heaven and Earth; how he is involved in the life and times of Israel, and how he revealed himself totally in Jesus

Christ, the son of God. However, this grand biblical narrative is challenged from various perspectives. Müller (2022:8ff) notes that some of these pervasive challenges involve, firstly, the belief that there is no need to explain the Bible's grand narrative and, secondly, multiplicitous views and interpretations of different aspects of the Bible. However, it is crucial that we acknowledge that there is a clear, central line in the Bible, drawn between when God is explained as being the creator of heaven and Earth, man's and woman's terrible fall into sin, and God's subsequent involvement in the world through Jesus Christ to save people from their predicament (Wright, 2006:61ff). This distinction points to two focal areas considered in this book, namely (a) current views on creation, discussed prior, and (b) whether God's salvation applies to everyone.

God's salvation is evident in his involvement in the world as saviour even though he is a God of judgement against sin. He rules over the world and also calls men and women to him. God is the holy God and, therefore, God has the right to judge and to call people to judgement because he is the God of judgement. God's right to judgement should be taken as a prominent premise when we engage the world. Concerning the Word of God, many instances in the Old Testament explain the deep essence of sin. Furthermore, in the New Testament, sin is also radically present as the rejection of God. Salvation is in Jesus, who overcame sin on the cross.

Exegesis and hermeneutics also call for attention (Gooder, 2009:20ff). The history of engagement with the Bible offered many different perspectives related to exegesis, including, but not limited to, literary engagements with and understandings of the Bible and, historically, fundamentalistic readings of the Bible. In these perspectives, the Bible was regarded as a book of literary clarity (Bruce, 1977:21ff). Since early times, allegorical readings of the Bible also occurred (Bruce, 1977:21ff), where different aspects of the Bible were read from an allegorical perspective, taking certain aspects of the Bible and linking them to other aspects in the real world. Therefore the stones that David used were understood as stones with specific meanings, such as valour and truth. During the Enlightenment, new ways of exegesis came

to the fore and certain aspects were linked to new philosophical engagements. The relationship of the Bible to the origins of the literature was mentioned and much attention was given to the original reader and author(s) of the Bible. Emphasis was placed on the context (Umwelt) of the author and the understanding of the exegesis in that sense (Martin, 1977:220ff). Therefore, form, redaction, and source criticism were presented as part of the exegesis. The text was analysed and regarded as a text that should be comprehensively dissected (Thiselton, 1977:308ff). As such, it opened up the text to be read from a perspective of originality. In that sense, a modernist approach was present. The text was regarded as important and to be understood from the perspective of the modern world. In a postmodern understanding of the text it is presented as from the reader's own perspective; the text's implications of the text are then understood from the perspective that everyone has their own interpretation. Consequently, interpretations were regarded as multifaceted, as interpretations were as abundant as individuals .

From a narratological perspective, the story became very important, and it is understood that a story had implications for the way in which the text is understood (Tolmie, 1999:2ff; Gooder, 2009:80ff).

All these exegetical tools led to different perspectives (Gooder, 2009:20ff).

If it is accepted that the Bible is from God, pertinent questions still remain. Is the Bible the Word of God? If so, can we understand the Bible from this perspective and how? There are no hard and fast answers to these questions. It is, however, possible to read the Bible hermeneutically through a philosophical lens that has to be understood before the text itself can be understood. As such, one suggestion would be that we consider different contextual perspectives in our reading of the Bible. Three such perspectives are postmodernism, deconstruction, and post-foundational, which all emphasise the relativity of the text. In this sense, relativity refers to 'unknowingness': the human's inability to know everything, know absolute truths, or have truly objective knowledge. Reality, knowledge, and value are, in postmodernism

and deconstructionism, created by discourse or text (Potgieter & Van der Walt, 2015:237ff). Thus, our reading of the Bible could be affected from the philosophical deconstructionist view which implies that one has to deconstruct a text (the Bible) to gain a certain understanding of it. The text, however, remains relevant, though not all-important. Through a postmodern lens, the reader, their interpretation of the text, and the implications of the text for them is more important than the text itself. The text, then, lost its specific perspective and the reader became the focal lens that channelled understanding of the text. This shift leads to different engagements and to a new understanding of the text. It is, therefore, important to engage from a biblical perspective, and acknowledge that hermeneutics play a certain role in the understanding of the Bible.

However, if one regards the Bible as the Word of God, one accepts the value of the text. The Bible's value is again a contentious matter, expressly in terms of the understanding that the Bible is a unity with a clear division as well as the comprehension and acceptance of specific arguments. These arguments pertain to the view that the Bible installs that God is the holy Creator of heaven and Earth, states that sin came into the world, that God judges sin and that Jesus Christ saves those who believe in him from sin, and foretells that, in the end, there will be consummation through the glorious salvation in Jesus Christ (Wright, 2006:505ff). Presently, these views are challenged by many authors because they regard this line of thought as not present in the Bible. The questions of creation, sin, deliverance from sin, the work of the Holy Spirit, and of consummation in Jesus Christ are relevant and have led to a multitude of different opinions and points of view. Consequently, the issues of revelation have become increasingly salient: how did God reveal himself? Is it possible to say that, in the Bible, the revelation of God is present and that in the revelation of God, we can see how God rules the world? This question begets many others: is God truly the creator of heaven and Earth and does he reveal himself totally in the Bible so that more can be learned about him? Is the Bible really the Word of God? Another matter is how one regards passages when some are difficult to understand. Can one read the Bible from the

perspective of other Biblical aspects or contexts? If so, can one then understand the Bible as God's revelation? Although reading the Bible sometimes gives the impression of paging through loose, disjointed thoughts, reading the Bible from the perspective of revelation reveals underlying connections. Although God is the hidden God, he reveals himself in the Bible; revealed in his hiddenness, he is also the God of revelation. One can trace a line of thought throughout the Bible with the aid of the revelation of God. As such, one becomes able to accept God as the creator God because of the many instances in which he is revealed in this role, as the God of the eschatology and of how we should regard this world. The Word of God becomes the will of the living God, and one should then engage the Bible from this perspective without shunning the very difficult questions in this perspective.

The Bible is clear regarding the implications of God's revelation – the clear essence of the Bible is referred to as the claritas. What is essential in the Bible is the revelation of God and his salvation in Christ. It is, however, important to distinguish between perspectuitas (perspicuity), total clarity, and claritas. In terms of the Bible, Heyns (1978:33) states that claritas is the essence of what it wants to be as the Word of God, explaining that God the Creator has saved the world from sin. Therefore, the claritas of the Bible is that God's engagement with people to save them from sin is very clear. The line of thought that God engages the world in both his anger and his salvation and love to save people is evident throughout the Bible. It should be explained that God wants to save the world and that the claritas of the Bible is very clear in that this line of thought runs throughout the Bible. However, this is not the only perspective in the Bible. When we engage the Bible as the Word of God from a reformed perspective, it is evident that the Bible can be explained as the way in which God engages the world that has implications for us in this world.

A Trinitarian perspective is of utmost importance for eschatology and mission. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - the Trinity - are all involved in the eschatological continuation of this world. The Father, as creator, is involved from the perspective of the creation and the influence of the creation of this world. The Son is the One who brings salvation and is involved in the total

regeneration of the world as the embodiment of hope for a future where God will reign in fullness. The Holy Spirit empowers people in this sense. The Holy Spirit as the Spirit of Jesus Christ makes it possible for an eschatological future to be achieved. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are the Trinitarian sense of the God of the past, present, and future, who changes everything in this world to the benefit of people and for the radical regeneration of all. The Trinity makes this possible; the Trinity holds the future in their hands and leads this world to the final consummation.

In brief, it is not possible to have a totally neutral approach to eschatology. It is acceptable to want to engage eschatology and mission from a reformed perspective. It is acceptable to have a clear view and to engage the Bible, the world, and eschatology in this way. In our own views, it is clear that it has implications for how to relate to the Bible and the world around us in mission and eschatology. It is acceptable to put forward our views as a reformed perspective with the acknowledgment that these have implications for all readers of the Bible. It has implications for the whole world. It is acceptable to have a clear view of how the Bible should be used in this regard and to understand that the Bible has implications for us. The Reformed view accepts that God is absolutely holy, that God judges sin, and that God loves the people of this world through his son Jesus Christ, who died on the cross and was resurrected to bring salvation. This view can be beneficial to all, although its benefits are most prominent when viewed from the perspective of eschatological and missionary engagement. We can see that God engages the world in mission through the *missio Dei* so that people can be saved. This is the way in which God leads this world from creation to the final consummation in Jesus Christ the Lord. We must accept that the Word of God is our guide in this instance. If we want to engage eschatology, we have to do it from the perspective of both the Bible and God's holiness and glorification, in order to glorify God. This can be essential for all, although it is a specific and informed value that God judges sin and saves people in his son Jesus Christ on the cross. It must be emphasised that salvation occurs through this radical involvement of God in the world. Mission is, therefore, the *missio Dei*, the mission of God in this world, so that people can be saved

and glorified in Christ. This salvation can be explained by the Word of Jesus Christ. From a reformed perspective, the cross is also central. On the cross, Jesus shows his love so that people can be saved. The wrath of God against the sin of the world must be taken away, and this is achieved by the crucifixion of Jesus. This belief is challenged by those who say that Jesus' death should be viewed in a different way. For some people, Jesus' death on the cross is unacceptable because he was murdered; his crucifixion was not an act of salvation. He is the example of how we should engage the world following Jesus in his death. However, we have to engage the Bible from the perspective of God's revelation.

Eschatology cannot be explained without reference to how it is explained in Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The engagement should be performed from this perspective. Jesus is the central person in engaging the world around us. However, the world is not only a general entity, but also a specific one. Therefore, we should engage the world from the perspective of Africa in this regard. This book is not a general book. It also wants to engage the problems and challenges of Africa. We should thus also refer to post-colonialism and decolonisation. Engaging these issues means that we should take into account the needs in Africa. Eschatology in the Bible deals with the past, the present, and the future and it calls us to engage in the problems of this world and, in particular, of Africa. We should, therefore, not explain that eschatology is only a general view on the future, but engage in Africa's challenges from the perspective of eschatology. We should establish a view to engage in the general issues in Africa and how one should regard these from the perspective of both the Bible and the essential revelation of God in Jesus Christ, the Lord. We should also be critical towards the theology of decolonisation and post-colonialism and call for a general view of Christ in these aspects and how they should be engaged.

Biblical eschatology is not accepted by all, as many world religions hold their own views on eschatology. Buddhist, Muslim and many other eschatologies differ essentially from Christian eschatology. We acknowledge these differences and state clearly, from the outset, that this book is concerned with biblical eschatology. There are many other aspects of eschatology in the

world. A view of the world from a Christian perspective in Jesus Christ the Lord is that Jesus is regarded as the true salvation and revelation of God in salvation. From the perspective of the needs of Africa, engaging eschatology in our world, in order to evaluate our eschatology, is beneficial to the church and to our world for our future.

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1. Introduction

Eschatology and mission relate to some of the most important theological aspects. It is obvious that, presently, the theological discussion about eschatology raises new questions concerning its place regarding the implications for mission. Without a clear understanding of eschatology, missiology is unable to answer the questions of the world in which it finds itself at the moment.

Many present-day theologians mainly want to emphasise the focus of eschatology to be limited to the present world. All the emphasis will have to be put on what is happening nowadays, and eschatology, as something in the future, is mainly rejected.

> The secular eschatology gives rise to a separation that constitutes the culmination of the modern tendency to establish dichotomies: it is the separation between immortality and God. Modernity not only separates man from God, reason from faith, nature from grace, and science from religion (among others), but, if led to its paroxysm, it also separates immortal life from its divine content, making of immortality an immanent value. It is no longer possible to speak, then, of an inclusive disjunction between two different realms of reality. The mind uploading project allows only for an exclusive disjunction, which eliminates the supernatural dimension of the human existential horizon (Gaitán, 2019:413).

To understand eschatology is to understand that God is God of past, present, and future. The future is in God's hands. Is there

hope for the church, for the believer, for the world in the future? How does God make it possible? Is eschatology about a new future a reality?

To answer these questions, we should turn to the Bible to seek guidance on a biblical view of eschatology. To achieve this, we should engage the text with total respect as it is the Word of God. We have to explain how to engage the text. There are many different exegetical and hermeneutical methods. The exegete should explain how they choose to engage the text. The text, however, remains essential.

We should, however, also read the text while considering the environment of the original text and the present world. We should engage the challenges of the present world through the implications of the text. This leads to new possibilities for life before God.

God is the Triune God. In Jesus Christ, the Father engages human beings through the Holy Spirit. We should always regard God's rule over the whole world in light of Jesus' sacrificial atonement. The Holy Spirit makes it possible to confess Jesus as Lord and acknowledge the rule of God, the Almighty. Eschatology must be encountered from the premise that the Triune God wishes to save and give eternal hope.

It is important to also engage mission in this regard. Some issues concerning mission should be addressed. The implications of eschatology for mission in this regard are considerable. It is essential for the future of the church.

The church has an important meaning for the world. To understand the relationship of eschatology and mission has implications for the way in which the church engages the world around it. Therefore, we can understand a great deal that is important from this relation.

Life and death are an essential part of the human predicament. Engaging in eschatology is, therefore, essential. The future is open for the human being who acknowledges God. What is this future? Over decades and years, theology has struggled to understand how God will establish a future for the believer. There

is a major consensus that God is the God of the future and that he will give the believer a final destination. There is, however, uncertainty as to the nature of this end destination. Although this is so, it remains possible to have signposts to eternity. We should establish how to view heaven and hell as final destinations. It is thus essential to consider the implications of eschatology for the future of mission and the church.

1.1 Premises and Methodology

First, it is crucial to mention that the premise of this book is that God revealed himself in Scripture. *Sola Scriptura* is thus emphasised in this book, and it is absolutely and radically needed for understanding eschatology and mission. *Sola Scriptura* should, however, not be regarded as the Bible that fell from heaven, but as a book of God's Word in human tongue. We should, therefore, interpret the Bible by examining different aspects of language very seriously. It is also important to emphasise *Scriptura Sacra Sui Ipsius Interpres est*. The Holy Scripture is its own explanation, its own understanding, and we should regard that in that sense. Therefore, Scripture should always be regarded in light of the Scripture; a difficult text in the Scripture should be enlightened by other aspects of Scripture, in order to understand it better. Naturally, we should take into account that different genres should be acknowledged. Scripture is also crucial for understanding this world, although it is a historical book and a book written from a mainly pre-scientific perspective. This book has much to say about how we should honour God, how we should live, how we should understand the future, and how we should recognise mission in this world. Therefore, it is important always to consider that Scripture has a clear message concerning people, the world, and the future of the world. Therefore, eschatology should be viewed in the sense of what is needed in the world and how it should be engaged. The challenges of the world should be engaged from this view of Scripture. Scripture has something to say; it is the Word of God, that God gave through the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit enlightens not only by reading, but also in the writing of the Word and in establishing the Word of God. Therefore, the Word of God is not to be disregarded, and we should

enter into discussion with others and other theologians from the viewpoint that this Word of God is essential in the discussion. We cannot use aspects from outside the Word of God to discuss the implications of the Word. It is important to regard this as crucial for eschatology and mission.

The way to engage the world by the Word of God is by paying full attention to exegetical and hermeneutical premises. It is necessary to fully consider the essence of the text as it is presented in its specific literary background. We must have a clear view of the text in its environment. Scripture is, however, also a unit and not a haphazard conglomeration of texts.

2. The Triune God of Life

2.1 Mission and Life

We have to understand that mission has everything to do with eschatology. Mission has a relationship with the future of the world. Mission has something to say about the future of both the church and the unbeliever as well as those who reject the gospel. Therefore, we have to understand that eschatology is one of the most important aspects of missiology. Concerning mission and eschatology, we should understand the implications of the future world for the church. Therefore, it is crucial to realise that there are challenges to an eschatological view of the future nowadays.

> Theology invites the reader to enter into dialogue with both the possessor and the dispossessed in order to bring equitable justice and reconciliation. In dialogue, theology refrains from fretting, envy, bias, and anger. The expected outcomes should lead to trusting in the Lord, doing good, dwelling in the land peacefully, delighting in the Lord, commitment to the Lord, remaining calm and peaceful before the Lord, and waiting upon the Lord. All these directives are not dictatorial or imposing. They remind a believer that, although the constitutional processes and legal approaches are in progress, one should remain posted in faith, knowing that all things work together for good for those who are in Christ Jesus (Resane, 2023:11–12).

Currently, one of the most serious challenges is that mission, being so closely linked to colonialism, was blind to the atrocities of colonialism. A new way of understanding theology, namely postcolonial and decolonial theology, is presently required. This means that we should take into account that, in the past, mission, the Christian church, and theology, had some serious flaws in this regard, because they were so closely linked to colonialism.

A few aspects need to be considered. First, we should accept that colonialism did many wrongs. The colonial powers often operated for their own benefit and well-being. They took copious amounts of minerals and other elements from the colonised countries they entered. They subjected the inhabitants of those countries often to a cruel rule and destroyed much of their culture. We should also consider that many of the colonial powers ignored the interests of the colonised countries. Their ideal was to subjugate those countries, and to enslave the inhabitants if they did not accept the rule of the colonial powers. Many people believe that mission was also involved in subjugating the colonised people. Because of the close link with the colonial powers, mission did everything it could in this respect. Mission must thus eliminate the problems caused by the strong links with colonialism. Postcolonial theology and decolonial theology are essential.

Wessels (2021:22) explains:

> Firstly, theology which explicitly positions itself as influenced by the decolonial turn [is] diverse in [its] expressions. This diversity, on the one hand, is both to be expected and beneficial to the ongoing construction of decolonial theology. However, the divergences in decolonial thought are also concerning. The incorporation of decolonial and postcolonial themes to underscore and justify theological movement questions the legitimacy of whether the decolonial turn has brought anything new to the theological table. (Wessels, 2021:22).

Other aspects should also be considered. First, the colonial powers did not, in all instances, only bring destruction and need

to the people they subjugated. In many instances, they also built hospitals, schools, roads, and railway lines, amongst others, to develop the colonised countries. This led to more positive developments. The colonial powers established universities and introduced a totally new understanding of medicine, and how people can be helped. We should thus not reject everything that the colonialists did, but should also take note of the development that was essential for the countries to develop into a new world, with its challenges. Therefore, we should understand that mission and mission theology should also be critical of decolonial theology. Some African theologians have challenged decolonial theology. According to some scholars such as Turaki (1999:328) and Afeke (2002:204), amongst others, it is dangerous to embark on decolonial theology when it is meant to move away from the acknowledgement of the God of the Bible as the only true God and when it is also a way of dealing with the problems of Africa, in the sense that Africa will be saved only by a return to the old African ways. Concerning eschatology, this is crucial because, in the Christian understanding of eschatology, the future and the way in which the future is regarded are very important. Decolonial theology challenges the idea of the future in Christ, the future in heaven, and the future that God brings about. Decolonial theology wants us to put much more emphasis on this world, and on the way in which we live in this world. Theology should always emphasise that there is more to this life than being present in this world. There is the absolute understanding of the future that is possible. Decolonial theology's idea of bringing people back to traditional ways of living should, therefore, be challenged. We cannot return to the old Africa. We have to find a new way of dealing with the problems of Africa. Although research has found that the problems of Africa should also be understood as both challenging and detrimental to many people, theology taking eschatology into account should always recognise that, in Christ, there is a possibility of new life, not only in this world, but also for the future.

Van der Walt's (2003:10-37) excellent overview explains both the positive and the negative aspects of colonialism, when he (2003:11) refers to Khapoya, who mentions certain aspects

on the positive side of colonialism, such as the introduction of Western medicine which led to much better survival of the ill, the introduction of formal education which enlarged people's potential, the establishment of infrastructure for use after independence, the introduction of Western culture and Christianity which made progress possible and finally the creation of borders, shortening the process of state formation.

Van der Walt (2003:12-37), however, also mentions the destruction brought about by colonialism, such as the imposition of alien structures, the invention of tribalism, structural incoherence and general economic destruction.

Said (1971:503) defines theology of decolonisation as an antithesis to colonial theology:

> Theology of Decolonization is an antithesis to the thesis of Bourgeois Theology, or white theology. Briefly, Bourgeois Theology can be defined as an atheistic, anti-Christ, inhuman, racist, colonial scientific ideology whose main purposes are (1) to save the white races by all means necessary, (2) to exploit non-whites, and (3) to dominate non-whites economically, politically, socially, and spiritually. As an ideology of dehumanization and depersonalization, Bourgeois Theology is the embodiment of all forces of evil which contributed to the misery of the world in general, and to the eternal pains and sufferings of the people of African blood.

This one-sided view should also be challenged, because it does not take into account the positive aspects of Western theology such as the proclamation that Jesus is Lord and because it wants people to return to ways that are no longer possible and to do things that are not in line with the biblical understanding of the world around them. Clarke (2014:200) calls for authentic dialogue to engage one another. Decolonial theology should also be challenged when it wants people to return to ways that are not beneficial for the community and the way in which they live. Mission and eschatology should have a strong link with each other. It is crucial to understand that the future should be regarded as very beneficial

for those in Christ, and that, even when there are persecutions, they also have the living God and the living Christ to follow. We should always understand that the fact that Christ opens up eternal life should also be recognised, and if decolonial theology does not accept that, it emphasises that we must take another route. Turaki (1999:328) asserts that new life is possible with God and that we should not return to our old ways that are not beneficial and not recognised in the way that we should do that.

Eschatology, in this sense, should be acknowledged, and mission should be linked to eschatology, so that the future can be understood in the sense of a new life in Christ. This is possible by proclaiming Christ in the world. Mission also has to proclaim that the living Christ is present in the world and that we must recognise Christ the living God. This means that Christianity should also be acknowledged for its positive influence on people. We should also acknowledge that some missionaries challenged the colonial authorities and found well-known answers to the colonial challenges in the world. The colonial powers tried to have absolute rule over the inhabitants of the colonies. The missionaries also challenged that, mentioning that it is important to understand that we have to live in accordance with the rule of Christ. In that sense, we can turn to missionaries who were subjected to persecution when they stood up for the truth of Christ, the revelation of Christ, and the eschatological value of the Gospel.

Bosch (1991:510) states that it is very important that the present and the future, in the yet and the not yet, should be taken into account. The future is a future that God brings about the beyond, but also already in the event involved in this elevation of the radical and dissemination. Involvement in life is therefore essential in seeking new hope in this world. God brings about this new hope. It is not only for the future, but also for this world. The wonders of God are present in this new hope. Gods' work is work in action and this world is not left to decay. There is, however, also clear reference to a new world coming to complete this life.

> "Christianity in general, and church mission in particular, continue to dominate the story of humankind and remain

> embedded in global patterns of integration. But close scrutiny reveals complications caused by current church mission's density, speed, and multi-directionality. Most modernity and globalisation have led to a paradigm shift in the understanding of mission. Some see mission as evangelism, while others see it as an opportunity for material development. Biblically (and, by implication, theologically), the foundation of the mission of the church is found in the salvific ministry of Jesus of Nazareth" (Kangwa, 2016:137).

Newton (2016:44) explains that mission should be involved in the community and take responsibility for fellow human beings. Jung (2017:300) finds the concept of 'reconciliation' essential. Pernia (2016:99) explains that the essence of mission is to proclaim the Good News. This has to be done regarding the language and culture of the people, the need for inculturation.

Regarding mission, it is obvious that different views have emerged over the past few years. Since the very important works of David Bosch (1991), *Transforming mission: Paradigm shifts in theology of mission*; Bevans and Schreuder's (2006), *Constants in context: A theology of mission for today*, and Skreslet's (2012) *Comprehending mission: The questions, methods, themes, problems, and prospects of missiology*, different perspectives in mission have been presented but are not necessarily exclusive.

> "As originally conceived, 'mission of God' language gave theologians a way to connect the churches and their missionary programmes with the entire history of divine revelation attested in the Bible. Mission is seen not as something begun by any human organisation, but as an eternal reality rooted in God's sending of the Son and the procession of the Spirit from the Godhead. Individual disciples and churches could participate in God's mission, but they were not to presume pride of authorship or claim a right to initiate something that properly fell outside their sphere of competence." (Skreslet, 2012:32).

The relationship with God is extremely important and, although mission is presently viewed only as a confession and not as a radical implication of turning to God, it is still important to view it as something very relevant in the present world. To understand this, it is important for mission to review its sources, to see where it comes from, and to understand what it should be all about. Mission is not only about the saving of souls, but also about the future of people in this world and in the coming age.

> "God's acts in dealing with and redeeming humanity were always holistic; they concerned people's total development and well-being. Creation, God's first act, was intended to provide all that humanity needed to live and experience the fullness of life, or shalom. The reality of sin and its resulting effects imply that the gospel and the redemption that it brings us, if it [is] going to be truly transformational and achieve the total restoration of humanity, must address these various human needs." (Nkansah-Obrempong, 2018:197).

In some instances, people view mission as not acceptable because of the link to colonialism and the history of mission. It is also important to emphasise that mission had much to do about the future of people. Missionaries brought about a new life, new possibilities, new relations and hope in different situations. Mission, therefore, has something very important to say concerning hope for people in desperate situations, even under persecution. Mission has to glorify Jesus and to tell people about the glorification of themselves when they are in Jesus Christ and die in him. Mission has something to say about this world and about the future of the individual.

> "That God loves people is one of the simplest and most direct truths revealed in his written Word and in the life and work of the Lord Jesus. His mission targets people who need life in the midst of a reality of death resulting from the original flight from the Creator's communion. Holy Scripture is the letter of love from a Father who wants to gather children for his eternal home. The reality of God's

> love for people is manifested in the existence of his Church, men and women who live the eschatological communion with the Father promoted by the Holy Spirit. God's mission is his dynamic action coming through the Son in the power of the Holy Spirit to touch the world, to create his Church, in order to bring them in the Spirit through the Son back to the Father "(Linden, 2017:343).

Mission also has much to say for communities. In the past, mission led communities out of bondage and superstition to new relations and the glorification in Christ and to a wonderful new relationship with Jesus Christ in this regard. We should, therefore, view mission not only as something of the past, but also as something of the present and as something of the future. Mission remains extremely important and should be regarded in this way. It concerns the deliverance from sin, and the new relationship with Jesus Christ and with God, as well as with the future in God.

> "The mission of Jesus Christ in the world is accomplished in his calling of every Christian to serve in the priesthood of all believers. This means that the measure of a congregation's faithfulness is never only its purity of doctrine or even its worship attendance but in the fulfilment of the vocations of its pastor and members." (Nadasdy, 2016:50).

Therefore, mission has everything to do with hope. In an important book, Hoek (2004) refers to the implication of eschatology for hope. God brings hope, as established in the Gospel. It is about the fact that God does right. Van de Beek (2008) refers to God as the one who does right. It has to do with Christ as the last one, the eschatological future in Christ, as König (1980) explains. Eschatology has to do with the glorious expectation of life with God, as Van 't Spijker (1999) and others explain.

> "Just as God in Christ emptied himself and moved into the margins of society, so should the church forget the dominant place it held for so long and move into the neighbourhood to be with all peoples, joyfully witnessing together to Christ's sacrificial love. When the church

> stands as God's people united in Christ, commits to love all of his creation, and prepares the whole world for God's eternal feast, then the church becomes the visible sign and foretaste of the coming glorious reign of God. And on that glorious day people from every nation, tribe, and language will proclaim: 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!' (Rev. 7:10)" (Nacpil, 2018:74).

The human being has no right to boast before God. Pride has no place before God. Humbleness is essential. Luther's theology of the cross made it radically clear (Ekka, 2017:155). Prosperity gospel is, therefore, without any merit.

All that human beings can do is to receive Jesus Christ as God's gift; as God's sacrament for their salvation in faith. Those with such critical self-awareness would remain humble before God and compassionate towards the other. Such good news shatters all pretensions of humankind, pride and confidence in human righteousness and the works of religion. To realise and experience this is to attain a deep sense of freedom. It exposes the proponents of the Prosperity Gospel and grants true freedom to those with faith and obedience.

It is very important to recognise the essential aspects of a new way of dealing with decolonisation and postcolonial theology. The question is: How do we relate some of the questions of the old Africa, where the Christian gospel had not yet been totally accepted, and the new Africa, where many Christians face the challenges to this Christian faith? Some people regard the Christian faith as part and parcel of colonialism, and that there should be a change to the religions of Africa. This cannot be accepted. The change came in Jesus Christ and the missionaries had to proclaim Jesus as Lord. It must be acknowledged that the missionaries and the proclamation of the Gospel did not always engage the people of Africa in the correct way. In that sense, we have to speak about colonialism and decolonial theology as utterly essential. A decolonial theology has to bring about new aspects of our engagement with the people of Africa. We have to recognise that the terrible suffering in Africa has to be dealt with

from a positive engagement from the cross, the resurrection, and the second coming of Jesus. This means that the old Africa must not be understood as something wonderful. We must engage in Africa and its challenging aspects. On the other hand, we should also consider aspects of the old Africa. Decolonial theology should always be a theology of justice, but also a theology of acknowledging that Jesus Christ is Lord.

Mission has to do with the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:11-21).

> [17]Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has
> come:[a]The old has gone, the new is here! [18]All this is from
> God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave
> us the ministry of reconciliation: [19]that God was reconciling
> the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins
> against them. And he has committed to us the message of
> reconciliation. [20]We are therefore Christ's ambassadors,
> though God were making his appeal through us. We implore
> you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. [21]God made
> him who had no sin to be sin[b] for us, so that in him we
> might become the righteousness of God.

Human beings need to be reconciled with God. This is only possible because the mediator Christ gave his life as One for the others. Paul pleads that we should be reconciled with God. This is possible in Christ and mission becomes the vehicle of reconciliation. Reconciliation with other human beings flows from this reconciliation with God. Therefore, mission has something to do not only with our living, but also with our death and life after death. It is thus important to understand how mission should be viewed in this world. Mission is, therefore, something radically important concerning eschatology.

Mission should be regarded as the ministry of reconciliation as one of the essential aspects of mission (see Bosch, 1991:409ff). The ministry of reconciliation means that people are reconciled with God through his son Jesus Christ. Jesus is the One for others; he reveals himself as the One in the place of others, the One who gave himself over for the salvation of others, so that others can

be saved. He surrendered so that others can be redeemed. God reveals Christ as the One, so that others can be saved by the cross. The ministry of reconciliation is essential in mission. The ministry of reconciliation means that, as we are reconciled with God in Jesus, he reveals himself as the One who brings about total redemption. We should accept that this is also crucial for our relationship to others, because we are reconciled with God in Jesus Christ. We view others in a new way, because Paul pleaded with us to be reconciled with God. We can also be reconciled with others. Being reconciled with God means that we want to reconcile others with God and bring reconciliation to others. The *missio Dei* is thus a ministry of reconciliation that calls us to reconciliation. Therefore, we are called to be reconciled, because we are in Christ and reconciliation is achieved in Christ. Christ died for all so that all can be saved. This does not mean that there is total redemption of all, but there is always the possibility of redemption. The present reconciliation is put forward for all to reconcile with the living Christ. This also means that we should always accept that the reconciliation should be engaged in a humble and broken way. People are broken before God. The church can never be conceited. The church should always be the broken church of Jesus Christ, broken in this world because of the sins of the church, but also redeemed in Jesus Christ so that new life is possible in him and can be explained. Brokenness means that we cannot be conceited in ourselves. Our present presence in this world is a presence of reconciliation, humbleness, and brokenness. In brokenness, we come to God so that we can be saved. We cannot place ourselves on the same level as Jesus Christ or God. We are humble servants of God. We are humble, because we know our sins and we reject our proudness by following Jesus Christ. What is this brokenness? First, it is a brokenness in sin, because we know our sin and we humbly confess our sins. We know that, in the commandments of God, we see the sins of the world and we see our own sins and confess them. It is a brokenness because we cannot save ourselves. We cannot do anything to save ourselves. We cannot be proud of something that we do or have done so that we can be saved. We humbly confess our sins and ask God to intervene. Brokenness, because we yield ourselves to Jesus Christ. We surrender ourselves in humbleness and call for this redemption in

him. This redemption is only possible in him. From our reformed perspective, the redemption is only possible in Jesus Christ as the One for others in our place. It is also brokenness, because we cannot achieve a life of heaven and for eternity, because we are humbly confessing our sins.

Dulles (2002:113) writes:

> The coming of the kingdom will not be the destruction but the fulfilment of the Church. More than this, it will be the future of the world , insofar as God's gracious power is at work far beyond the horizons of the institutional Church. The final consummation will transcend the dichotomy between Church and world. The glorious, triumphant Church will be indivisibly united with the renewed cosmos, "the new heavens and the new earth," foreseen by the prophets.

Goheen (2011:197-198) mentions five aspects of the missional church as the eschatological people of God. Firstly, the people of God are as Messianic people separated by Him, following Jesus Christ in love and obedience. Secondly, they are a Spirit-filled people led by die Holy Spirit the gift of the last days. Thirdly, they experience the end-time salvation of the kingdom of God; in the fourth place, they have a place in history by the gathering of God of his people. Finally, the form of the people of God are new because they are called from all over the world from all peoples to become the people and Church of God. As eschatological community they have a calling to the end of the world (2011:199).

Regarding the missional theology of creation and culture, van Gelder and Zscheile (2011:139) explain that the missional church participates in the world around it. The church should be present by bringing light and humanity to the world so that people can understand who God is and relate to him. In baptism and in the bread and wine of Holy Communion, the missional church stands in a relationship of radical renewal with God. The church challenges the realities of the world: Western culture and the Gospel have traditionally been enmeshed and a new way of expression of the wonders of God is needed. The unique and

united church should engage the destiny of the community. It has implications for the world through the eschatological expectation of the wonders of Christ and the promises in Christ that the Church experiences.

The church has a clear vocation in the world, posits Bradbury (2013:221), as she was elected and called by Jesus Christ through the Spirit to engage in the world around her. This means that the church of Jesus Christ arises along with Jesus to be present in Jesus Christ in the past but also in the future, to engage in all the activities of the whole creation from the perspective of the cross. Christ will come again; therefore, the church is called to live in this expectation.

With reference to the World Council of Churches (WCC)'s seminal document, *Together Towards Life*, Niemandt (2015:88ff) explains that, in a challenging world, the most prominent issues empower the church in a new way. The aspects specifically listed include the following:

1. Trinitarian foundation.
2. *Missio Dei*.
3. Discernment.
4. The church and mission.

Niemandt (2015:94ff) continues to engage the future of mission in this regard and refers to mission with creation at its heart. He writes:

> The significance of "mission with creation at its heart" is that mission in God's way extends to God's creation, and that participating in lifegiving mission is a crucial part of the church's mission. This entails, at the very least, missiological reflection on appropriate lifestyles and practices as part of Christian mission, and means that eco-justice becomes fundamental to mission. The economic solution has moved to the centre of the stage. One of the significant effects is that poverty and affluence have diametrically grown beyond all expectations. The problem is a destructive consumerism, driving people apart. This calls for a serious reflection from the ecumenical

> community and creative ideas on appropriate lifestyles and practices (2015:95).

Other aspects listed are missional ecclesiology and missional leadership, mission supported by a "transformative spirituality", and mission from the margins (2015:96; 98-99).

Niemandt (2015:100) concludes:

> This new affirmation aims to provide new concepts and directions for mission. My conviction is that the TTL document provides mission and Missiology with a dialogue partner that reminds the church, and those who practise theology – especially Missiology – that we are together on a journey towards life. The changing landscapes on this journey remind us that the church finds itself in the liminal space between an institution and a community of sent disciples participating in God's mission

The implications of this document for eschatology and mission can be summarised as follows.

1. The essential affirmation that the Trinity is the foundation, source, and essence of any missional involvement. Without the Triune God there is no mission and no future.
2. The mission Trinitatis should, therefore, be the guiding light of all mission.
3. The future is in God's hands and Jesus Christ's death on the cross, his resurrection, ascension, and parousia essentially bring hope for the future.
4. Eschatology has implications for this world. Christ is Lord in the yet and the not yet.
5. Together in koinonia in the church we are on our way to the glory which God envisions for believers.

2.2 Challenges in the World

First, we have to understand that the world is in serious trouble, not only in South Africa, but also in other parts of the world. The challenges are absolutely enormous. Challenges concerning

poverty, illness, want, war, and famine. Death is ever present and often determines the world.

> First, we must turn to the sick and dying in our continent. In a post-pandemic Africa and the world, the health and flourishing of God's people in Africa in a healthy environment must become an essential starting point of theology and a central concern of churches. There are so many people who are dying in our continent. The Christian response to these deaths cannot simply be reduced to the ethics of death and dying or the ethics of care and disease prevention. Nor can it be about conducting elaborate Christian burials or the explosion of healing ministries and miracles centers in many African settings (Ilo, 2023:25).

Not only the present war in Ukraine and the war in Sudan, and in Palestine, but also coups in Africa call for new attention to the human predicament. The challenge of the war in Ukraine is extremely serious because super powers are engaged in power play. Not only Russia invaded Ukraine, but other powers of the world also engaged in Ukraine, by providing weapons and support to the Ukrainian people. It is, however, obvious that Russia invaded Ukraine unprovoked.

> The extent of resources committed to military activity on both sides has been substantial. Announcements of purchases of weapons and financial support are reported in the media on an almost daily basis. Beyond the war in Ukraine, military conflicts are currently underway in Yemen, Syria, Libya, Mali, Myanmar, and Ethiopia. A further ten countries are assessed as experiencing ongoing terrorist insurgencies, generating military responses by governments of varying levels of scope and intensity. Israel, Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza have been the arena for military conflicts ranging from civil war, guerrilla warfare, and terrorist activity to full-scale invasions on varying scales since the Second World War. The extent of dislocation resulting from war is substantial, with people fleeing their homes for safety, sometimes remaining within their

> homeland but often having to cross international borders. The UNHCR reported a total of 89.3 million people as being displaced both internally and externally as of September 2022 (Hynd, 2022:82).

A terrible war is also raging in Sudan. It is unclear how it will end, and what will be the solution to that war between two warmongering generals. It has implications for the whole world and for every person in the world. The terrible war in Palestine calls for new engagement. It is also obvious that there is a great deal of tension between China and Taiwan and that a war can explode there .

We realise that this world is full of terrible destruction. Wars occur in many places. The war in Ukraine calls for involvement in order to bring about peace. Engagement is needed to call Russia to withdraw from Ukraine so that there can be peace again. The Russian involvement should be rejected and there should be a new relationship between those countries. It is necessary to call people to peace. In Gaza, it is essential to call Hamas, Netanyahu, and Hezbollah to peace so that people can live in peace. The vulnerability of Africa is also important. The challenges in Africa and the way in which Africa is destroyed by the terrible wars. It is as if Africa cannot get rid of the dictators and the warmongers so that it can have peace. Submission also has to do with how peace can be brought about in the world and in Africa. This is only possible in Christ. Christ will bring about peace. He will change everything so that everyone can come in peace to delivering Christ.

Not only secular communities are engaged in war, but religions also often play a detrimental role. Often people adhering to different religions attack the other because of these differences. It is even more worrying that adherents of the same religion often attack one another.

> One of the most devastating ways that religious practice and political contestation have intersected in the last quarter century has been through religio-ethnic conflict, particularly ethnic cleansing and genocide (Wiinikka-Lydon, 2013:18).

At present, the world also experiences extreme financial challenges. Not only is inflation in the Western world out of hand, but there are also huge financial problems in other fields. The way to curb these problems calls for new understanding. There are also extreme levels of poverty, because coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) led to financial problems and other problems concerning employment and the situation of people in the world.

> On February 19, 2020, investors in the S&P 500 felt that roller-coaster thrill as it jumped to a record high. Within just a few weeks, of course, it had become clear that the novel coronavirus outbreak in China was not contained, and fears of widespread disease took hold of the American consciousness. Suddenly we couldn't wash our hands or go to the grocery store or oversee our children's education without thinking about COVID-19. The repercussions were felt absolutely everywhere – including, of course, in the stock market. A mere six weeks after that February all-time high, the S&P 500 tumbled, falling a devastating 34 percent by March 23 (Perry, 2020:84).

What are the great challenges in Africa? First of all, poverty. One has to understand that poverty is an extreme problem in Africa. One has to engage the poverty of so many people. It is not possible to say that the only reason for poverty is a colonialism. Colonial forces plundered much of Africa. The poverty is, however, also due to other aspects like culture, droughts, and famine, aspects like war, and aspects like strife and ethnicity. One must take that into account to come to a reason of how to in this world bring about the "yet" of eschatology to the people in Africa in their needs. Therefore, the needs of people in Africa should be understood and should be regarded. Poverty is not something to be regarded superficially. Socially there are also struggles in Africa and ethnicity calls for a new way of understanding and to imply that the "yet" of the gospel in this sense is also important to take into account people's lives and how they understand this aspect in their lives. How to regard social differences and social strife. Also very important is the way in which to deal with the wars in

Africa. Terrible wars are waged and intrusion of public spaces by terrorists, in countries like Sudan, Congo, and Mozambique.

The church is also experiencing problems. Not only is there not a clear view on what the church should do and how the church should exist, but there are also challenges in the way in which politics enters the church. The problem of churches that remain financially limited is a great concern. The propagation of the prosperity gospel is extremely troubling. There is also the whole question of how the church should relate to the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LBGT+) community, to people with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS), and to the future in that respect.

This calls for a new way of viewing eschatology and calls for the church to be involved in the future, in order to understand how it should be relevant for the contemporary church. To enter into a discussion about eschatology, it is important to mention the propositions of this book.

> However, many efforts to proclaim the gospel in a contemporary way end up either moralizing or trivializing it. This is primarily due to the fact that the biblical concept of sin is no longer understood or equated with moral wrongdoing. Those who no longer know how to talk about sin also no longer understand why we humans are dependent on God's unconditional grace in the first place and what that means. On the one hand, this leads to the trivialization of God and, on the other, to the trivialization of the problem of human existence. Since being a sinner is no longer taken seriously, then there is no longer a problem in humanity's relationship with God and he no longer demands anything of us humans (Körtner, 2023:7).

Vulnerable in Africa, the church needs to be the broken church, but the church also needs to be the bold church proclaiming the Word of God unashamedly in this world. Being broken does not mean that the church does not proclaim that Jesus is Lord. Being broken means that a church is neither conceited nor proud. The church is

not proud in what it has achieved, but it is broken before the Lord in its vulnerability. Vulnerable in Africa means total commitment to the people of Africa, to the poor, and to the suffering. In the vulnerability of the church, we also see the broken Christ on the cross. Christ surrendered himself on the cross so that we can be saved. On the cross, he committed himself to the vulnerable. In Africa's vulnerability, the cross is central. The cross is the place where we find God in this world. Broken on the cross, Jesus is the One who shows the way to a new life in God. It is possible to live with God in this world when we are broken with Christ but also resurrected with him in a new life (Rom. 6). We cannot be proud of ourselves, other than being committed to the broken Jesus on the cross, so that totally new expectations of new life can be made possible in the resurrection of Jesus.

2.3 Eschatology

Filoramo (1990:s.p.) defines eschatology as

> *Eschatology* ("discourse" or "doctrine"[Gk λόγος/*lógos*] concerning the "last things" [Gk ἔσχατα/*éschata*]) is aneologism that was introduced in the late 18th century in the con- text of the definition of the "last things," i.e. of the *novissima* of medieval theology (death, resurrection, divine judgment, final destiny[Providence]). *Eschatology* became a major topic of philosophical and theological debates during the 19th century. With the increasing importance of the comparative study of religion (Religious studies) in the second half of the century, *eschatology* was used as an umbrella term for beliefs and views relating to the end of the individual (individual or personal *eschatology*), of humankind(collective or universal *eschatology*), and of the world (cosmic *eschatology*).

Concerning eschatology it is important to note that the "yet" and the "not yet" are implied. In the Bible the "yet" is implied in many instances where God is really the God of this universe and engages people from this perspective. Some theologians overemphasise the "yet" in this regard and see eschatology only as a present

reality, that God is the God of this world that we should take this world as all important, and that we should engage this world. The question, however, is if we take eschatology also as the "not yet" as the implication that Christ will empower us to a future that will come to us in this glorious consummation. It is also important to understand that we have not yet received everything in this world. The "yet" is very important in the Old Testament idea of the eschatology and we can see that in the expectation of Zion, the expectation that Zion will come about and that when we receive the glorious consummation in the glory of Zion. This means that in the Old Testament a very strong emphasis on the "yet" of God that God already brings about the glory of consummation and new life, that new life is possible. Therefore, there is very little in the Old Testament concerning life after death, but much about the reality of God's implication for life in this world. The "yet" is also important in the New Testament, where we see that God in his great love and glory empowers people to live according to his Word as disciples living in his relationship with him and glorify him as the glorious God that does what he wants to do. We live in the grace of God and the grace of God is the glorious understanding of the fullness of God. Again, the "yet" is already present in Jesus Christ's presence on Earth and in his disciples and in the believers and the standing of the glory of God in the living in this relationship of Jesus Christ. And one must accept that that will also be present in the way in which one engages others and in Jesus Christ. The "yet" is therefore also important in the sense that a church is the community of faith living in this world from the perspective of the Jesus Christ conservation. In his Word, the glory of Christ is extremely important. This makes it possible to live in relationship to Christ already in this world. It is very important that one is also taking into account this aspect and dealing with the challenges of a continent like Africa, especially the sub-Saharan communities.

3. Eschatology in the Old Testament

It is very important to note that, although eschatology is about the future, we must take into account that God is also the God of the past, of creation. God was present from the beginning in a

relationship with the world, as revealed in Genesis 1, when in the beginning God created heaven and Earth.

We must regard the importance that God is also the God of creation. Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the Earth. Now the Earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light."

Wenham (1987:15) writes that "Gen 1:1 could therefore be translated 'In the beginning God created everything.'\ Commentators often insist that the phrase 'heaven and earth' denotes a completely ordered cosmos. Although this is usually the case, totality rather than organisation is its chief thrust, in this instance. It is, therefore, quite feasible to mention an initial act of creation of the whole universe (v. 1) to be followed by an account of the ordering of different parts of the universe (vv. 2-31)."

> The first verse then is to be understood as a principal sentence. The creation of the world by God is expressed in one sentence as in the praise of God. And because this sentence is prefixed to the actual account of creation it acquires monumental importance which distinguishes it from other creation stories. … He created the world and called people to follow him from the very beginning. God is the God of the beginning, therefore there is light, therefore there is the water above and beneath, therefore there is vegetation and there is also light and day. God of the past is also the God of the creation of human beings (Westermann, 1994:175).

Seilhamer (2009:32) accepts that God created in glory. It is a great theological moment. Three acts of God are present. Because God is God, it should be acknowledged that the creation is creation *ex nihilo*. We should take note of this view. The God of creation is in truth God and also God of the future. This is revealed in Genesis 1:26:

> Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground."
>
> 27So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.
>
> "Then God said let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, the livestock of the Earth, for all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female, he created them."

According to Westermann (1994:177),

> [o]ne can discern in Gen 1 a gradual ascent – toward the creation of human beings. It moves toward the decision to create humans and to the phrase that God created them in his image, to correspond to him, so that something can take place between God and his people. This is the basis of the history that the Old Testament narrates, the history of God with his people. When what is told about Jesus Christ in the New Testament is understood as the fulfilment of the Old Testament, the reason is that something decisive for humankind has taken place in him. When God created human beings so that something may happen between God and these humans, then what is told about Christ in the New Testament is the decisive middle point of this happening.

Lohfink (1994:4) shows that the reference to the image of God is a leitmotif in the priestly document. It is all about special closeness to God. Blocher (1984:85) views this as a special relationship with God. God creates human beings as special beings with a special view on creation. Von Rad (1972:47) emphasises that the creation is beyond human imagination and that the creative Word of God makes it possible to belong to God. The image of God shows how

highly exalted God created human beings (Von Rad, 1972:59). Human beings are tasked to serve God.

To understand the whole aspect of eschatology in mission, it is thus important to note that the God of the past and of creation is also the God of the future. What God created in the past is also crucial regarding the future. God's creation is extremely important for the understanding that God also has the future in his hands. Therefore, we must also turn to the very important Psalm 33:6-8:

> 6By the word of the LORD the heavens were made, their starry host by the breath of his mouth. 7He gathers the waters of the sea into jars[a] he puts the deep into storehouses. 8Let all the Earth fear the LORD; let all the people of the world revere him. 9For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. By the word of the Lord were their starry host by the breath of his mouth. So God created heaven and Earth from the very beginning. He gathers the waters of the sea into jars; he puts it deep into storehouses." 8"Let all the earth fear the Lord, let all the people of the world revere him."

In this instance, it is important to note that God should be revered, and that God is the holy creative God, who created human beings as well as heaven and Earth; he is the God of the creation. Wieser (1962:291) emphasises that in this instance, God is proclaimed as more majestic than the Babylonian interpretation of gods. Brueggemann and Bellinger (2014:165) indicate how the wonderful creating God is in history. The wondrous power of God is present (Kraus, 1988:375). Texts in this regard must also be addressed.

Therefore, Psalm 33:12-15 is important:

> 12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord,
> the people he chose for his inheritance.
> 13 From heaven the Lord looks down
> and sees all mankind;

> [14] from his dwelling place he watches
>
> all who live on earth –
>
> [15] he who forms the hearts of all,
>
> who considers everything they do Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord the people he chose from his inheritance. From heaven the Lord looks down and sees all humankind, from his dwelling place he watches all who live on earth.

Craigie (2004:275) explains:

> In Ps 33, there are integrated some of the most basic themes of Hebrew theology: creation, history, covenant, and the human response of worship. And the integration of these themes indicates their fundamental inseparability in Hebrew religion; they are interdependent, not independent. Creation is not an abstract doctrine, providing answers to human intellectual curiosity concerning the origin and nature of the world; rather, creation doctrine deals with the world in its relationship to God, to human history, and to individual human beings.

Kraus (1988:378) explains how this text confesses God's lordship since creation. Wieser (1962:293) shows how the faith in God in history is realised by acknowledging him as the creator God. It is also crucial to note the following in Psalm 10:

God is the God of justice and love and he reaches out to human beings so as to help them.

Psalm 10:

> [16]The LORD is King for ever and ever; the nations will perish from his land. [17]You, LORD, hear the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, [18]defending the fatherless and the oppressed, so that mere earthly mortals will never again strike terror. The Lord is King for ever and ever, the nations will perish from his land. You hear, O Lord, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless

> and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more.

Craigie (2004:128) explains:

> As so often in the Psalms, we do not know that deliverance came. We know only that the psalmist gained confidence that it would come and, thus armed, was able to continue living. And thereby, the psalmist offers an ever timely warning. Belief and morality are not guarantees of happiness and stability; they do not insure benefits and security. Belief in God and the morality which must accompany that belief are, in one sense, their own rewards and promise nothing more with respect to security and a trouble-free life. But, in another sense, they do offer something more than the security and superficial happiness which characterized the life of the wicked. They offer that continuing relationship with God which imparts ultimate meaning to human existence, a relationship within which the psalmist concludes his thoughts.

God reaches out to human beings as the God of love and of compassion. In his compassion, he is the God of creation and the God of compassion, who brings about the new relationship with him. Therefore, concerning eschatology, it is important to note the following aspects regarding the creative God. God's deliverance is clear (Kraus, 1988:196). God is the protector (Wieser, 1962:152). There is hope that God will intervene (Brueggemann & Bellinger, 2014:67).

We can be certain about the future, not because we are in command, but because we know that God is in command. He created heaven and Earth and he is, therefore, the God of creation.

Arnold (2008:4) explains that the concept of eschatology has developed in Israel and that the main emphasis in the Old Testament is an eschatology of the understanding of this world. The fullness of the day of Yahweh was that explicit. Yahweh will have implications for all in this call to judgement in the world, to be in a relation with the living God and to understand their

mission with the living God in the day of the Lord. It will be a consummation that the nations of the world should experience (2008:28). The Old Testament brings about a new understanding of the end times. There is, however, continuation to apocalyptical literature. Israel will receive restitution and the nation will be judged (2008:33).

An important aspect to note considering eschatology is the way in which God rules over the Earth, and because he is the creative God, he also rules in justice and in love. We must note that a great deal about God is revealed in creation. God does not want to stay alone in his glory; he wants to create human beings so that he can be in a personal relationship with them. God is the creative God, because he wants his glory to be shown to people, so that they can live in this personal relationship with him. It is thus very important from the very beginning that God is explained as the personal God. God is the personal God who can come into a relationship with people, which is very important for both mission and eschatology, because the God of the past, the creative God, the personal God, also takes human beings and leads them forth into the future of redemption.

Secondly, God created human beings to live on Earth and to live in a very personal life with the creative beings. Human beings should not extol themselves; they should understand that they are in relationships with other beings on Earth. Therefore, it is very important for human beings to understand that they have to live in symbiosis with the creation. They have to live according to the fact that they are part of creation, and it is thus very important to always consider that human beings have a relationship with animals, plants, and all aspects of creation. This aspect is also important for eschatology, because, in this relationship with the living beings, human beings also understand how to live according to certain aspects of humanity; humanity is being not only at the top of creation, but also in a relationship with all creative things.

Thirdly, it is important to understand that God is the ruler of heaven and Earth. He called it into existence, and he is also the ruler. He is important for all human beings and for life on Earth. He is the one ruler over the Earth and understands how we should

live in the creation and relationship with the glorious God. We should always be present in this sense and realise how we should live according to the aspect of God being the ruler and the King. A humble human being also has the possibility to live in a new relationship with God, in understanding this relationship, and in living in a personal relationship with the living God. It is very important to understand that, for mission, the humble human being should reach out to others, and thus bring about this glory of God. It is also very important to consider that God leads forth the creation in the sense that he enhances creation towards the future. The past is not ended when creation is complete. Creation also continues and God is present in creation for the continuation of life with God.

Zachariah 8 is essential in eschatology:

> [1] The word of the Lord Almighty came to me.
>
> [2] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "I am very jealous for Zion; I am burning with jealousy for her."
>
> [3] This is what the Lord says: "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful City, and the mountain of the Lord Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain."
>
> [4] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Once again men and women of ripe old age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each of them with cane in hand because of their age. [5] The city streets will be filled with boys and girls playing there."
>
> [6] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "It may seem marvellous to the remnant of this people at that time, but will it seem marvellous to me?" declares the Lord Almighty.
>
> [7] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "I will save my people from the countries of the east and the west. [8] I will bring them back to live in Jerusalem; they will be my people, and I will be faithful and righteous to them as their God."
>
> [9] This is what the Lord Almighty says: "Now hear these words, 'Let your hands be strong so that the temple may be built.' This is also what the prophets said who were present

> when the foundation was laid for the house of the Lord Almighty. 10 Before that time there were no wages for people or hire for animals. No one could go about their business safely because of their enemies since I had turned everyone against their neighbour. 11 But now I will not deal with the remnant of this people as I did in the past," declares the Lord Almighty.

Smith (1984:231) refers to God's involvement:

> This verse is similar to 1:14, where the interpreting angel spoke the assuring words that Yahweh was jealous for Jerusalem and Zion. Here the prophet proclaims the message once again that Yahweh cares deeply about his chosen city. Jealousy is an ambivalent term. It is a strong emotion expressed in an intolerance of rivals. It can be good or evil, depending on the legitimacy of the rival. God had chosen Israel and made a covenant with her. He bound her to himself in an exclusive relationship of God and people. "You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex 20:3). Zion and/or Jerusalem was the chosen earthly dwelling place of Yahweh (Ps 132), and Zion became in the biblical materials a symbol for the kingdom of God (Isa 65:17-18).

McComiskey (2000:1137) points out that God will return to Zion and bring glory to the destructed community. It is not incredible that God can accomplish the total renewal and glory of Zion. Wolters (2014:233) explains that these texts show that nothing is too wondrous for God. Jeremiah 31 is also very important:

> "1At that time," declares the LORD, "I will be the God of all the families of Israel, and they will be my people."
>
> 2This is what the LORD says:
>
> "The people who survive the sword will find favour in the wilderness; I will come to give rest to Israel."
>
> 3The LORD appeared to us in the past, [a]saying:
>
> "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness. 4I will build you up again, and

> you, Virgin Israel, will be rebuilt. Again you will take up your timbrels and go out to dance with the joyful. [5]Again you will plant vineyards on the hills of Samaria; the farmers will plant them and enjoy their fruit. [6]There will be a day when watchmen cry out on the hills of Ephraim, 'Come, let us go up to Zion, to the LORD our God.'"
>
> [7]This is what the LORD says:
>
> "Sing with joy for Jacob; shout for the foremost of the nations.

Keown, Scalise and Smothers (1995:109-110) summarise the implications of these verses:

> This poem of restoration recapitulates God's provision for ancient Israel in the wilderness, the settlement of the land, and the choice of Zion as the place of worship in a portrayal of the promised future. This restoration reverses at least six aspects of the judgment suffered by Israel and Judah: no resting place in exile, a nation torn down, celebrations silenced, vines and plants uprooted, watchmen announcing the invading conqueror, and the temple destroyed. The poem also introduces an Israel transformed from a desperate adulteress (4:30) to a joyful maiden on her way back to God.

Bright (1978:284) emphasises that these texts are in the Book of Consolation, where Jeremiah the prophet of doom is proclaiming consolation from God. There is restoration and hope for the future. Harrison (1977:133) indicates how comfort and hope are emphasised. It moves from agony to hope. Carroll (1986:589) opines that there is anew a message of restoration of love and that there is a new future.

Jeremiah 31:23-25 also explains this:

> [23]This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "When I bring them back from captivity,[c] the people in the land of Judah and in its towns will once again use these words: 'The LORD bless you, you prosperous city, you sacred

> mountain.' [24]People will live together in Judah and all its towns – farmers and those who move about with their flocks. [25]I will refresh the weary and satisfy the faint."

Keown et al. (1995:139) refer to the implications of these verses:

> The conclusion to the Book of Consolation uses the more concrete, prosaic language of justice, covenant, oath, and topography to offer assurance and hope to the people who hear the urgent invitation to return to the Lord in chaps. 30-31.

Concerning eschatology and creation in the Old Testament, Brueggemann (1997:528) explains that, for him, it is crucial to view the creation as blessed and fruitful. God blessed creation. God ordered creation, although he does not regard creation as creation *ex nihilo*. It is about the important ordering of God and the clear establishment. Therefore, creation is also very important for understanding eschatology. Creation is, however, in jeopardy (Brueggemann, 1997:534) because there is, in creation, a radical turn against God and, therefore, creation should be renewed. But YHWH conquers the forces of evil (Brueggemann, 1997:537).

YHWH, the creator, enters into creation when creation turns its back on the creator, and God brings about the new creation to bring about new life possibilities. Therefore, it is also possible to bring about new hope for those in the creation.

> The astonishing feature of this statement of Yahweh's freedom and sovereignty (although less astonishing in light of what we have seen about Israel as partner, the human person as partner, and the nations as partner) is that Israel's *witness does not leave the account of creation as Yahweh's partner as a tale of termination, negation and nullification*. Perhaps one cannot speak of Yahweh's passion or pathos-filled love for creation, for there is no hint of such emotional commitment to the creation on the part of Yahweh. It is evident, nonetheless, that something is at work in Yahweh's interior, something to which Israel boldly bears witness, that works against, disrupts, and mitigates

> Yahweh's free exercise of wrathful sovereignty. Something moves against destructiveness, either to qualify it or to begin again post-destruction. There is, in any case, more to YAHWEH's relation to creation than a one-dimensional response of indignant sovereignty (Brueggemann, 1997:543).

Brueggemann (1997:549) continues, stating on creation at Yahweh's behest that it is all about the blessing of Yahweh for creation.

It is also crucial to understand that creation can turn against God and live in a relationship with the angering God. God also brings about radical newness. This is the truth we can hear; that God can bring about a new situation. A recovery, not only of Israel but also of the creation. God has the resolve to turn about everything (Brueggeman, 1997:551), to turn it into a new situation, to embrace the people of God and the creation. It all depends on God's will to change everything for the benefit of the people. Brueggemann (1997:695) explains that Yahweh is also a gift to Israel. The Torah, the kingship, the prophets, the cult, and the sages are gifts from Yahweh to Israel to bring about this new relationship with Israel for hope and to turn about the rejection of Yahweh so that his wrath against Israel becomes salvation. We must understand that human beings turned against God and led themselves to rejecting God.

Gerstenberger (2002:291) mentions the liberating God; this is all about understanding this world. The New Testament offers another concept about God's involvement. In the Old Testament, it is about this world and understanding how God works in this world. Therefore, we must be responsible individuals (Gerstenberger, 2002:293). We also have to understand our responsibility.

Gowan (1986:4) explains that eschatology in the Old Testament has to do with Zion. It is the centre of Old Testament eschatology. We always have to view it in that sense. The importance of Jerusalem is unparalleled. He refers to Zachariah and the city of the future. He explains different aspects of how that will come about; how God will restore Israel, and, although

no king is mentioned, the scorn of the nations will be ended and there will be the wonderful realisation of Jerusalem. Ultimately, there will be a wonderful situation and the curse will end. The good life will be present. Concerning the history of the Zion tradition, he writes that God is the one Yahweh who decided to choose Jerusalem and that it is a very important issue that Zion is the place where God will bring about his realisation of peace and wonder. In Zion, the victory of God will be clear.

Concerning Gowan (1986:7ff), we must understand that Zion is essential in understanding eschatology in the Old Testament. Zion is, in essence, the absolute centre of the understanding of the world through God's eschatology. Therefore, certain aspects are very important, namely peace in Zion, the people of Zion and, ultimately, the transformation of society. The promise of the land is also a very important eschatological aspect, because of the restoration of the land.

Gowan (1986:31ff) draws several conclusions. In the Old Testament, God does not reject the relationship of his people with the land, but they can also serve God in foreign lands, as the exilic texts explain. In the New Testament, it is clear that the whole world belongs to God's people, although they have a final abode in heaven. It should, however, also be acknowledged that commitment to the land, as in the Old Testament, is not rejected.

He then mentions the very important aspect of the Messiah, and how it was understood in Israel. He is the eschatological king of Israel (Gowan, 1986:35). He is, however, also the suffering son of man as the son of man in Daniel. Concerning the nations, eschatology also has a relationship with the nations where God is concerned about the nations (Gowan, 1986:43) and God is also judging the nations and the nation should also come to God and be judged.

In eschatology, we must understand that the nations will have to recognise the people of God as in a specific relationship with the living God. The crucial question arises: Is there any aspect of the forgiveness of sins in the Old Testament tradition? Can we say that sins can also be forgiven in the Old Testament? We must be clear that this is possible. God is God of wrath, but he

is also God of forgiveness and, therefore, in the eschatology of Israel, there is also a question of how the new way of forgiveness of sins will be clear in the future (Gowan, 1986:64-65).

In the covenant, there is also the aspect of renewal, renewal of the heart of the people, renewal of the people themselves. A human being can become a new person by the grace of God (Gowan, 1986:74-75). We must understand (Gowan, 1986:83) that there is also the possibility of a total newness and a total new realisation and of the good life with God now, but also in future. The transformed person is, therefore, also very important.

According to the Old Testament, God is the God of the relationships of people with the living God who said: "I am your God and you are my people." A personal relationship is the crucial aspect of the covenant, and we have to consider that regarding eschatology in the Old Testament. The covenant should be understood and recognised as a very important aspect of the Christian's life in this world. The person in the covenant is, from the Old Testament perspective, the way in which God enters this world, by calling his people to follow him, and to be his people. Nothing is more profound than this; nothing is more wonderful than this, and it should be fully acknowledged. The glory of God is, in this sense, very important and should be acknowledged.

What is covenant about? It is all about God, about acknowledging God as the holy God, as the wonderful God, as the almighty God, and as the God of creation. Regarding eschatology in the Old Testament, we should acknowledge God as the one who brings about new life and a new personal relationship with him. He is the wonderful God who led his people out of bondage and who called them to follow him and to acknowledge him in every instance, by living in this covenantal relationship. The people of Israel had the opportunity of new life in this world. In the Old Testament, the emphasis on this life is crucial. In this life, it is very important to acknowledge that God is God. However, it is not true that, in the Old Testament, there is no regard for a future with God. Even in the Psalms, there are some ideas of living with God even after death. It should be acknowledged that it is possible to acknowledge God and to live with God even after death. For the

Old Testament, it is important to acknowledge that the God of the covenant and the God of the future is one and the same God. Therefore, the God of the covenant and the God of the future can bring about a new situation. The Old Testament is often regarded as a new situation in the sense of turning around the situation of people in this life. It is the calling of people to live according to the law, to follow God's commandments, and to be blessed because they follow God's commandments. The blessings of God for this life are for those who live in a personal relationship with the living God and experience the living God's influence in this world. It is also true that this living relationship with God emphasises a living relationship with God for the future. Although it is not spelt out in this sense in the covenant, the covenant emphasises that, in God, YHWH, the relationship between the Father and the people is very important. Therefore, concerning eschatology, it is important to acknowledge that, even in the Old Testament, the calling of people to live in a new relationship with God, with a view of a future with God, and a future and an understanding of the living with God and a fullness of this understanding, will lead people to understand and live with God. YHWH is the God of creation; as such, he is also the God of this world and the God of the world to come. Therefore, the Old Testament is neither radically against the future, nor radically against future possibilities; it calls for a future where God rules. This is especially so in Isaiah and Jeremiah, where the rule of God means that people will live in a new relationship with him. This has eschatological implications. This means that, in the future, which is in God's hands, God will bring about a new way and a new life. This means that this is not only for this world, although it is emphasised that the lion and the lamb will lie together in this world. It emphasises the future and that this is also possible for those who are living in this new relationship with God. The Old Testament should also be regarded as an eschatological book, with implications for eschatology. God's wrath and God's rule over people should be acknowledged. When God calls some people to follow him and rejects others, this has to do with the God of the covenant who rules over, rejects, and saves people. He is a God who brings about new life, who comes to people and says that they have to acknowledge him. In the Old Testament, God, YHWH, calls for acknowledgement of him as the true God.

People have to acknowledge him; they have to acknowledge God in everything that he does and in what he will do. God has to be acknowledged for his glory and for what he is doing in this world. God is also an important God for living and understanding how to live. God is the God who gave his commandments so that the people can live in God's covenant, be before God, and live in such a way that they can acknowledge him as the true God. This is crucial for understanding eschatology in the Old Testament. Eschatology in the Old Testament has to do with the covenant, and also with the creation, the God of creation. The God of creation is also the God of the covenant. The God who brought about creation and said that this is my world in which I have created and this world is good, also calls on people to acknowledge him as the God of the world in the future.

It is thus important to acknowledge that God has the whole world as well as the present and the future in his hands. It is clear from those passages in Scripture in the Old Testament that the future is regarded as God's way of dealing with people. For the Old Testament, we should understand that Zion is also very important, and that the whole world of Zion and the glory of Zion is in God's hands. God erected Zion to acknowledge him, but, in future, Zion will stand above all the mountains of the world so that people can come and understand that they have to acknowledge God in Zion and to bring the goods of the world to Zion, so that the glory of God may be made present in Zion. This is crucial for the understanding of people living in this world and acknowledging how to live before God. It is important for the future of living before God and for understanding what should be done, and how it should be done in this world.

In conclusion, the Old Testament is not only a book of this world, but it also has a very important aspect of the future. The future can also be understood as a future after death, and a future for living for God.

We must also explain that Zion is the highest of all hills; it is a transformation of nature. Even nature will become new, and God will empower the nations to come to him as a specific reference to Zachariah 2:21-23 as well as to Isaiah 11:6-9 and

43:20. Gowan (1986:75) explains that the characteristic of Old Testament eschatology is suited to this life, this world in which we live at present. Concerning creation as it is and in creation, God and the angry God is working towards the eschatological good life for his people. Secondly, we must understand eschatology in the Old Testament as the relationship with the living God. God brings about the new situation. God changes everything. God enters into human life and brings about change. Not humanity but God brings about the change. People and communities are very important. We must understand that it is not so much about personal salvation, but about the community that will be saved. Lastly, God enters into his creation and brings about a comprehensive new world. A comprehensive realisation that is all about ethics and he calls on us to understand that we should reject absolute power and understand that we are working in this world towards a new realisation of the world with God.

Concerning the Jews, it is very important to recognise that Zion is in the centre of the eschatological expectation of the Old Testament. The Old Testament prophets looked to this for redemption, but we should consider that, in light of the coming of Christ, Zion has new implications. Zion is no longer the final aspect of eschatology. In Jesus Christ, a new aspect of his eschatology came about, namely the life, death, resurrection, and second coming of Jesus. In this sense, we must understand that Zion has new implications, namely of the new heaven and Earth and the new life in Jesus Christ. The question is: What do we say about the Jews? Do we recognise that, for Jews concerning Zion, an eschatological expectation is susceptible? Or do we say that Jews, in light of the New Testament, also need Christ and that, in order to understand that the eschatological expectation is new in Jesus Christ himself, they will have to change to Jesus to become new people? Romans 11 is, in this sense, crucial and we must acknowledge that the apostle Paul recognised that a Jew has a certain position that is still very important and that must be recognised. This important situation must, however, be dealt with in light of Jesus reaching out to the Jews, so that they can become new in Jesus Christ. The Jewish people are no longer the people of God, as in the Old Testament and in expectation of Zion. But the

new people of God are the Jews and gentiles who believe in Jesus Christ. We must be linked to Jesus Christ, to his resurrection at the second coming. According to Paul, this will occur in a wonderful way. This means that it is necessary to turn to Christ, to receive the full blessing of the cross, the resurrection, and the second coming.

For a Christian faith, it is important to recognise that Jesus Christ is present in the creation and that God created through Christ; in the beginning was the Word and the Word was God, all things were created through him (John 1:1). It is, therefore, important to note that, in mission, when Christ is glorified and brought to the people, it should be acknowledged that he was also present in creation. He brought about creation from the very beginning and, in creation, he established his rule on Earth and the way in which we can be in a relationship with him as the living God.

Concerning the past, we must acknowledge that human beings fell into sin. It is very difficult to understand how this was realised, but we must always take into account that sin is the utmost danger to human beings. It led to destruction and evil, although it is very difficult nowadays to understand how it came about in light of evolution. We must take into account that human beings were the real reason for the fall because they rejected God and turned their back on God. Although Adam and Eve and their story may be regarded as past relations, it is also important to note that we have to acknowledge some aspects.

Concerning evolution, it is very important to notice that development as well as changes and processes took place in the world. We should always take into account the biblical message that God made people in his image, but everything changed when Adam sinned. Therefore, although we recognise development in evolution and that we must accept certain aspects of evolution, we must still recognise that Adam caused the sin of the world and that new life was possible only in the cross, the resurrection, and the second coming of Jesus Christ. The image of God in Adam is very important. Although he has sinned, the image is still there, but it is blemished because of the sin of Adam and we should always consider that.

First, God created heaven and Earth in a good way. God created everything and saw to it that it was good. He realised that what he did was good and was a realisation of his creation.

Secondly, God did not wish the fall to come about. God did not wish and is not the author of sin. God is not the author of the terrible situation. God is the author of goodness. Therefore, according to the Belgic confession, I believe in God, the fountain of all that is good. We cannot say that God is the author of sin and that sin came about because God caused it. God brought about glorious things for human beings, and he explains how we should be in this relationship with the living good God. This goodness should be realised, also concerning the life of those he created - God created heaven and Earth so that we can live in this new creation in a positive and fruitful way. But this is the problem with sin in this world. The relationship of God with human beings and the relationship of human beings with heaven and Earth were destroyed. The fact that we are made in the image of God does not mean that we have lost the image of God, but that we have to take into account that we are still in the image of God. We are struck by evil and brought about evil elements in our lives. Therefore, creation, fall, and redemption should all be taken into account when talking about eschatology for mission.

Creation tells us that God who created everything is still the God of heaven and Earth and that we should realise that he is the positive involved in his creation.

We must realise that human beings were created good; they were created not as robots, but with a free will. They were created as people with the possibility to live according to God's Word, because God made them good. He had to make them with free will, otherwise they would have been robots and would not have been able to do what God calls them to do. Therefore, the relationship of God is very important in this sense, but human beings rejected the personal relationship with God and had a totally different view of living with God; they rejected God in that sense. For both creation and redemption, it is important to turn to Romans 3, where he made it explicitly clear that Christ was offered so that we can be saved and live in this new relationship with God.

Regarding the future of Israel, Hoek (2004:47) refers to hope for the people of the world. He explains that there is certainly hope for Israel (Jer. 31), as well as the covenant of Sinai and the covenant of Abraham (Gen. 12). The covenant deals deeply with the people of Israel and they are called to God. Romans 11 explains that there is still a future for Israel, although in a different sense. There is also hope for the peoples of the world, the nations, because of the hope of Israel. The covenant with Abraham also has something to say to the nations of the world and, although there is tension in this relationship (Hoek, 2004:56), the tension is about living with God and understanding but we must accept that God has to do with Israel and the nations. Although it must be said that there are sometimes negative views of Israel in the new dispensation, it must be emphasised that Israel still has a place in the dispensation.

Hoek (2004:81) explains seven views of the continued discussion regarding Israel. We must be careful not to accept the view that the church is the new Israel in the sense that it is a totally new people. We must also be careful not to understand that there are two ways to God, church and Israel. Thirdly, we must understand that the schism between Israel and the church is deeply worrying and unfortunate. Fourthly, God has a way with Israel and the peoples of the world and we must understand God's way in that respect. Fifthly, there must be solidarity with Israel and a positive critical view of the state of Israel. Sixthly, there must be prayer for the salvation of the whole of Israel, and seventhly, we should accept the position of those Jews who acknowledge Jesus as Messiah.

4. New Testament Perspectives

Rowland (2008:57) regards the centrality of eschatology in the New Testament as a given. Eschatology of the New Testament church realises God judges all and eschatology also has developed through various times. The later implications of the eschatological is clear in the gospels – the coming of the Son of God has clear implications for all in the world. God is present in all that has happened and he will be the consummation of the world in Jesus Christ. The kingdom of God is near in Jesus Christ. In the gospel of

John die kingdom of God almost completely disappears, because of the aspect of the eternal life. The fact that Jesus Christ is on his way after the resurrection plays an important role and therefore a new attitude is necessary. New implications, primarily in the apocalypse, clearly indicate that the future also enters into the world. One must take into account that this world is also important and the fulfilment of an eschatological way. (2008:58-68) The kingdom of God already exists in heaven. To participate in it on earth anticipates heaven. There is a clear shift to the expectation of heaven as fulfilment. (2008:69).

Romans 3 is, therefore, the most important aspect of our new relationship with God. Righteousness comes through the glory of Jesus Christ.

Romans 3:21-26 explains this well:

> 21But now apart from the law the righteousness of God
> has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets
> testify. 22This righteousness is given through faith in[h] Jesus
> Christ to all who believe. There is no difference between Jew
> and Gentile, 23for all have sinned and fall short of the glory
> of God, 24and all are justified freely by his grace through
> the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. 25God presented
> Christ as a sacrifice of atonement,[i] through the shedding
> of his blood – to be received by faith. He did this to
> demonstrate his righteousness, because in his forbearance
> he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished –
> 26he did it to demonstrate his righteousness at the present
> time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who
> have faith in Jesus.

According to Dunn (1988:183),

> [t]his section (vv 21-26) is clearly of crucial significance in the development of Paul's argument and exposition of his gospel, as is confirmed by the repeated emphasis on the key words of his earlier thematic statement (1:17): in the six verses, "righteousness" and its cognates occur no less than seven times, while "faith" (noun and verb) appears four

> times. So it is well worth pausing to summarize the central points made. (1) The answer to the plight of all humankind "under sin" has been given by God in his provision of Christ as a ransom and expiatory sacrifice. (2) This saving act of God is in complete continuity with and fulfilment of his covenanted promises to Israel. (3) Participation in or benefit from this righteousness of God comes through faith – trust that Christ's ransom and expiatory sacrifice has been effective, and trust in Jesus himself; and since all alike have the same need of God's righteousness, so it comes to all alike in the same way – through faith.

Jesus, who was present in creation, also brings about the new life and the new realisation of a relationship with the living Christ. This realisation of a living Christ is as a result of the sacrifice of God on the cross. Therefore, when talking about eschatology and the life before God, we must always take into account that Christ suffered and died on the cross and because of the cross of Jesus Christ, it is possible to understand that new life came about and is possible in this sense. Therefore, eschatology and mission always have to consider that eschatology is only possible because it is in Christ. Christ brought about the eschatology and made it possible through his life and death.

Ziesler (1989:106) opines that the power of deliverance is evident in that God's righteousness is clear and sin was conquered in Christ. Sin is a dark reality but the freedom of grace is conferred by faith in Christ. Barret (1979:73) points out that God is present in this life in Christ. The relationship with Christ is glorious.

The forensic doctrine of justification is evident. God justifies us regardless of our own merit. In Christ, the honourable relationship with God is possible, not by human effort, but by God's grace. It is the free gift of redemption (Jewett, 2006:281). Wrong people are put right in God's justice (Ziesler, 1989:115).

It is not possible to understand it in any other sense as that the future is in the hands of Christ, and that we have to understand that he brings about this future through his love and glory. He has to be followed and has to be glorified by those who follow him. Therefore, new life is possible in the resurrection. In

the resurrection, God makes new life possible and he rectifies the problem of sin by bringing about this new relationship that leads to a glorified life with the living Christ. In Christ, it is possible to realise a new life and a new world is possible. Therefore, Christ opens up creation to glory in the future. This does not mean that God will take this fallen creation and keep it as such. God will totally change creation, and in Christ the new life will come about. A total new creation in Christ of a new world, and a new heaven, where Christ is present and where the presence of Christ must be confessed, so that this can be seen and understood in mission.

According to Revelation 21, this new life will be brought about by God in his glory:

> Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth,"[a] for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death'[b] or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."
>
> 5He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."
>
> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

Aune (1998:1133) explains in this regard :

> The descent of the New Jerusalem is accompanied by an explanation from the throne that God now dwells with

> people and that all death and suffering are now eliminated from human experience (vv. 3-4) since primordial conditions of bliss and perfection have been reinstated. In some strands of Jewish eschatology, the heavenly Jerusalem descends to earth to replace the earthly Jerusalem, or a heavenly temple becomes a replacement for the earthly temple. The climactic statement of God found in vv. 5-8 succinctly summarizes the central message of Revelation. It is introduced with a commission to John to write, accompanied by an oath formula: "Write, for this message is trustworthy and true" (v. 5).

This new life and the presence of God in the future are, therefore, crucial for the life before God. In this life, we see the evil, the destruction, the cross of Jesus, but we also notice that he is the resurrected one and we can realise the fullness of his resurrection and the glory of his resurrection by what he brought about. The resurrection of Christ makes the new Jerusalem and the new creation possible. According to Revelation 21, he said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life."

This glory should be explained in glorified terms so that all can hear and understand it. The glory of Christ can be explained to all in mission. It is always important that the fullness of Christ be understood and proclaimed to all.

In his explanation of the glory, God made use of the relationship of people to him, so that they can be in a new relationship with him. God makes it possible to have a personal relationship with people. It is possible to know the God of creation, the God of redemption, and the God of the future. We can be in a relationship with God, and this should be fully confessed and glorified to all people so that all can hear that it is possible to know God and live in this personal relationship with him. Christ makes this possible by his death on the cross. Therefore, the cross is the deep end of human beings' self-sufficiency. In the cross, self-sufficiency ends and God becomes the one who leads us into a new relationship. Therefore, it is possible to live in this

new relationship and be related to God in Christ. Christ makes this relationship possible.

How does he make it possible? By helping people come into this new relationship with him and by his glorification through the Word of God. He makes it possible; he enhances it, and he gives people the possibility to live in this new relation. It is also possible to confess Christ in mission. It is not only a confession of the past that God is the creative God and that we have to be in a relationship with the living God, but it is also a creation of the future. We can proclaim Christ as the one in whom we live and see the glory.

> In the new creation to come, we will be defined not just by who we are but by how we live, as we live out our salvation and participate with God in the work of his kingdom. This rich vision of eternity in turn affects our lives today and gives purpose and hope to our work, as we bring heaven to earth here and now, living out our salvation in the already-not yet kingdom (Whitaker & Brouwer, 2023:9).

The New Testament is clear about eschatology, and we should understand that eschatology in the New Testament is mainly emphasised in the sense of Christ being the One who came and gave himself up so that the future may be possible. In this present world and in the future, God will bring his wonders and his glory. He will bring glorification for those in him. This future is not a future that ends in this world. This future has a future for the world to come. The New Testament clearly states that Christ makes it possible for us to look forward to this new world in which everything and everyone will acknowledge God.

How did Christ bring this about? By his death on the cross, which should be the essence of eschatology of the New Testament. The cross explains that we have this relationship with the living God and that we have to be in a fellowship with him and understand that he is the living God. We should have a relationship with the living Christ. The living Christ opens the future for the people in him. This concerns the covenant. The covenant, where God says I am your God, and you are my people, in Christ becomes

the new covenant where Christ says to the people, follow me, you are my children. He saves them from destruction, from death, and leads them forth to a new life in him. Christ becomes the one who brings about the new life and the new situation. Christ is the one who connects us with God in the future, and in that sense he is the One from God, who humbled himself (Philippians 2), so that he can become part of our living, change this world of living so that we can have a future. It is possible to understand that in this sense in the new life in Christ. Therefore, we should take into account that, in the New Testament, the future is the future of Christ who is the resurrected One and the One who ascended into heaven. He is the One with the future in his hands. Therefore, we look towards the future in light of Christ's glorious salvation of human beings. This is very important for understanding eschatology; we have to understand eschatology in the sense of Christ's death on the cross, resurrection, and ascension. There is no eschatology if Christ is not resurrected. There is no eschatology if Christ is not seated on the right hand of God. Christ brings about the most glorious living with him and the most glorious understanding of life with him. Christ makes it possible to follow him and to live in a personal relationship with the living Christ.

Therefore, it is crucial to consider a few aspects concerning eschatology. Eschatology not only has something to do with the future; it also has something to do with this world. This world is also important and we have to understand that, and live in this world every day. The persecuted and rejected person in Christ has a view of glory that surpasses everything in this world. This view of glory makes it possible to bear persecution and rejection, to be strong in persecution and rejection, and to look forward to the glory of being with Christ. Therefore, it is very important to acknowledge that Christ is regarded in the present world, and also in the future world. This future world should lead us to a new relationship with the living Christ. A new relationship with Christ is made possible by the Holy Spirit, so that a person can live through the Holy Spirit in a relationship with Christ. Therefore, the Holy Spirit makes it possible to acknowledge Christ, and to have an eschatological view of the future, through Christ in and through the Holy Spirit. It is possible to understand that the future

is possible in Christ. We can understand that Christ can bring about a totally new world and that this world can pass and a new world can come about. Again, it is very important to perceive that in connection with the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension of Jesus Christ. All that we say about eschatology in the New Testament has to be linked to this living Christ, bringing about this glorious resurrection of the dead and the glorious new life for the future of those in him. The concept 'in Christ' is very important. We should consider that 'in Christ' means that we are with Christ, that we are in Christ because we are saved in Christ. That we are in Christ because he brings about the glory for the one who lives in him. That he brings about glory for everyone who has a future in him. Christ is the One who brings it about. Christ is the One who makes it possible. But we have to be in Christ. Faith is very important. Faith means that we trust in Christ, that Christ is the trustworthy one who gave his life trustworthily and who brings about new possibilities. Christ is the one who calls us to be in him, because it is not possible to understand eschatology without being in Christ. Christ makes it possible and he is the One who leads us forth in this new relationship with him. It is not possible to talk about eschatology without acknowledging that faith in Christ is necessary. Christ is the one calling us to faith. Does that mean that the person who is not in Christ cannot experience any future? All that this world can experience is also possible for a new future, because God brings about a total redemption of the world. But we must take into account that God will judge, that the world will be judged, and that the living God is the one who judges. In his judgement, he decides on the future of the world. We should consider that the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension also have to do with the coming of Christ in his judgement. He is the One who will judge. His judgement will be final and glorious, and he will bring about the goodness of the judgement. The judgement in Christ is glorious and wonderful, because he brings this about for us, so that we can follow him and acknowledge him as the One who brought about the new future.

But this judgement is a judgement of salvation. Christ brought about salvation and, therefore, salvation and judgement must always be linked to one another. Christ wants all people to

be changed and saved so that they can understand the fullness of life with him. He brings about the glory, the new life, the glorious new world. This new, glorious world will have no tears and no evil. This new world will be the new world of God, where God brings about the future that is glorious for every one who lives in Christ. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that the cross, the resurrection, the death, and the future in the living Christ are very important for us to understand how to live before the living God. We have to live before God, with the expectation of the glorious new world. We have to live with the expectation that it is possible in Christ to bring about the new world, and we have to understand that this is only possible through the living God who brings about the new world in him. The resurrection is a very important link to the second coming and the judgement of Christ, because he is the resurrected one who can rule over us and our future.

A summary is now needed. Eschatology calls for deep engagements. The hope in God is central and fills the world with new possibilities. In all the darkness the light of the cross and the resurrected Jesus is shining. Hope is possible. One should not despair. Biblical eschatology renews and calms. A new dawn is rising. Jesus is alive.

5. Guidelines on Eschatology

Some very important theologians engaged and supplied their own views regarding eschatology. Regarding the emphasis on the different theologians, it is necessary to note that they all have important views on eschatology in their theology. Some were selected to engage in their reformed views on eschatology, others for their diverse views necessary for engagement. The task of the theologians is to engage with the views of others in order to evaluate their own views. It is necessary to engage with different views.

5.1 J. Calvin

Evans (2015:22) explains that Calvin's eschatology is fully viewed from Scripture:

> The first is that Calvin demonstrated a remarkable sensitivity to Scripture, both in refusing to say more and less than does the Bible. One cannot read the Institutes, the commentaries, and the controversial literature without sensing just how concerned Calvin was to do justice to what the Bible teaches.

Calvin wants to remain as near to Scripture as possible and his high regard for Scripture is clear. In his Institutes, he explains his views (Inst. 1,6,1). His view on eschatology is clearly engaged in the text.

> As John Calvin holds Scripture in one hand and the patristic writings in the other, he formulates a notion of quasi deifican that is thoroughly consistent with both. Calvin should be commended for this breadth of vision and theological openness that makes him truly a 'breath of fresh air' (Ollerton, 2011:253).

According to Calvin, eschatology has everything to do with the living Christ. In Christ, there is hope and a future. This should also be viewed in light of the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the body. This hope is, according to him, very real. Christ earned the grace and salvation of human beings by his death on the cross. There is thus also a future present (Inst. 2,18,1).

Calvin's view on eschatology can be understood as both infralapsarian and supralapsarian. His infralapsarian eschatology views it as radically related to Jesus' life, death, resurrection, ascension, and parousia. Calvin's supralapsarian eschatology regards the human being as the image of God. The human being is not Deificate, becoming God; they are created in the full image of God. This has implications for the future of the human being. As image of God, the human being finds purpose in a future as being with God.

> One grouping of eschatological events is contingent upon the dynamic of Fall, Incarnation, and Christ's reconciliatory work: Christ's resurrection and ascension, his return and the last judgment. We can call this Calvin's infralapsarian

> eschatology. But Calvin also has a supralapsarian eschatology: his vision of the original, essential, eschatological goal for which God has destined human beings devoted to 'the knowledge of God the creator' (Van Driel, 2017:282).

Calvin also regards the coming of Christ as judge and ruler as a reality. In Christ, the elect will experience full bliss of the resurrection of the body. Christ will be the true judge. His judgement will be totally justified (Inst. 3,25,1). After death, the soul does not sleep, but there is an intermediate time until the resurrection of the body. Calvin rejects the Platonic view that the body is not acceptable.

> Calvin breaches the Platonic man-and-soul perception in at least five aspects: He has great appreciation for the human body. He emphasises the resurrection of the body. The soul does not exist from time immemorial but is a creation of God (Inst. 1.15.5). The soul is not inherently immortal but receives its immortality from God. The soul does not incarnate; it exists in the presence of God after death (and, with the resurrection, is united with the body) (Van Wyk, 2001:197).

For Calvin, the resurrection of the body is wonderful but not deification:

> According to Calvin, we will be partakers of the divine kind, but not of the divine essence. We will be like God, but we will not be God. For Calvin, righteousness and immortality are called divine righteousness and divine immortality because God is its author. They are gifts from God, not God's own essence. Calvin says that we are God's offspring, but in quality, not in essence, inasmuch as he, indeed, adorned us with divine gifts (Lee, 2010:272).

There will be separation after death between the righteous elect and the unrighteous. Eternal damnation is a reality. For the elect,

it will be glorious to come into the realms of God. Wonderful peace, happiness, and glory awaits them (Inst. 3,25,1).

> Hence, there is a connection, albeit a subtle one, here in the Institutes between the eternal happiness of the saints, which has as its source the inexhaustible fountain of God himself, and the attainment of that happiness in the kind of vision of God spoken on in the first epistle of John (Schendel, 2018:33).

In Christ, the grace of God is radically conferred to the elect. As sin is a reality, the future of the human being is only possible in the salvation in Christ through faith in him. The resurrected body will be both new and in relationship with the created body.

Although this world is in sin, the human being is tasked with living for God's Kingdom and bringing it about.

> Calvin had no interest in changing or transforming the civil order as embedded in the natural order. In this sense he was not a transformationist, but in fact quite conservative. Yet, sin corrupts God's original order. Calvin thus maintained that God's redemptive reign is realized in and through history in the sense that Christ's redemption causes an outward movement that restores and renovates God's intended original order. In this sense Calvin was quite progressive. In sum, Calvin's main concern was order and the restoration thereof in a world radically disordered by sin, while recognizing that only God can ultimately consummate God's reign (Vorster, 2017:447).

Yeaton (1986:201-202) is of the opinion that heaven is where we experience the presence of God. We cannot give a full picture of heaven and hell. However, the Bible explains that such places do exist. Young (2020:27) explains that the picture of the final judgement is varied and confusing. Van Vlastuin (2014:191) refers to the fact that Calvin differentiates between the enjoyment of the creation and the enjoyment of the Creator because there is an ontological difference between Creator and creation.

Finally, Theron (2001:211) concludes that Calvin refers to the cross and the resurrection as the way in which God is present in this world:

> Neither faith and hope, nor cross and resurrection can be separated from each other. The one is the obverse of the other. As God is revealed sub contraria specie, the resurrection is revealed in the cross. In the entire creation, God's glory is revealed, but in contrast to a theologia gloriae, God's glory nowhere shines more brightly than on the Cross.

5.2 K. Barth

We should always consider Barth's view when discussing eschatology. Although he did not write directly on eschatology, much can be inferred in this regard from his theology in general. He does not primarily enter into discussion about life after death, but rather about the hope in Jesus and the parousia. Unlike the incarnation, the parousia is visible for all as the redemption of *this* world. It will be an event in time and all boastings of human beings will be rejected. Belonging to Christ is essential and, in him, the resurrection of the dead will take place. Eternal life is present in Christ. Both life on Earth and eternal life have continuity and discontinuity. Eternal life will be reconciled with God. The last judgement is a reality, but the coming judge is also the saviour. The Holy Spirt leads the congregation, even now to the consummation in Christ (Etzelmüller, 2013:61-63). Time leads to loneliness of the person of endless time. God defines time. God gives us time and opens eternity for us. Therefore, we have to view our temporal life in light of God's gift of time. Christ inaugurated new time; real time is a gift. The resurrection is a gift from God, a gift of eternity from him. In death, we are in Christ and we have hope in him (Busch, 2004:164-279).

> Eschatology has traditionally been the study of the 'last things' and the doctrine that issues from such study. However, the great Swiss theologian Karl Barth saw eschatology as dealing not with the future but with the

> breaking of eternity into time, the 'eternal moment' in which the Gospel demands a person's ultimate decision (Innes, 2009:126).

Sauter (1999:410) clearly views Barth as an eschatological theologian:

> Against this, Barth directs his bold assertion from the second edition of his Epistle to the Romans: 'A Christianity that is not wholly and utterly and irreducibly eschatology has absolutely nothing to do with Christ ... Can we wish to be anything other and better than men of hope, or anything additional?', that is, anything other than wholly and utterly directed toward redemption, to the 'impossible, which confronts us as hope'?

What is the essence of Barth's eschatology? First, the end time is present in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Barth, 1972:107). In Jesus the pledge of God is fulfilled. He is the eternal God and the eternal person (Barth, 1961:117). There is no linear timeline to the parousia as final consummation. It has come in the death and resurrection of Jesus. In his person, the new time has dawned. Eschatology has everything to do with Christology.

Kim (1991:75) writes on Barth as follows:

> During the time of history Jesus Christ was sent by the Father, died and was resurrected. The Resurrection sets off the dawning of the Last Day. The time between the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the Parousia is viewed as one unit – 'the end time'. Therefore, the Resurrection is the beginning of the end – time...

Kelly (2021:376) explains:

> Finally, Barth also relates the resurrection to the divine Yes and No, the divine election and rejection. The rejection Christ took to himself in his death, Barth claims, is 'left behind' in his resurrection.

Secondly, the judgement of the world is also in Christ. God's "Yes" and "No" to the world is seen in Christ. The judgement has been annulled in Christ's death (Barth, 1972:149). Satan and God are present at the cross as well as God's judgement. But, in the resurrection, the "Yes" of God who alone is present is overwhelming.

> What must theology say above all else? That God's judgement has been carried out in Jesus Christ once and for all and for all people, and so concretely, that we could never picture it and therefore could never speak it. If the curtain goes up, then we cannot applaud and cheer: 'How beautiful – may it always and eternally be and remain so!' If the tetelestai, the 'It is completed!' is valid, then this means that our whole reality is already transformed into something totally different, which we cannot yet see as such (Sauter, 1999:427; Tseng, 2018:337.)

McDowell (2000:323) writes the following:

> By coming to reject the Logos asarkos in favour of the Logos ensarkos, Barth does not entertain the existence of a human being temporally before creation. Moreover, this eternal election does not undermine incarnational historicity by promoting an accomplishment of reconciliation in a remote eternal past, as Brunner and others suggest.

Thirdly, the judgement of God is not an eternal damnation, but the rejected are also rejected in Christ. In him, they are the cursed and the redeemed. Not all view this as apokastasis and some regard Barth as unclear on his view of election (Barth, 1972:188). However, the election and rejection is always in Christ.

Fourthly, ethics is also in Christ and must not be viewed as the promise of God in this world, as social ethics and the theology of hope propose (Sauter, 1999:415).

> The value of Barth's understanding of hell is that it redirects our gaze onto Jesus Christ; and it does so because even here Barth remains consistent with his commitment to think

> through his theology in the light of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ. ... Yet because Barth locates their rejection as the consequence of their eternal election, this handing over is an action filled with grace. In other words, those who are handed over are not given up, but are handed over for the very purpose that God has always had in mind for them, that they may become his faithful covenant partners whom he will love for eternity. (See also Smith, 2015:189; Bartholomaeus, 2015:189-190)

König (1970:223) explains that, for Barth, eschatology is not, in the first instance, a view on the future, but rather the critical stance of eschatology to our present world. In Christ, the end came.

Kim (1991:80-81) explains that Barth does not have a fully worked-out eschatology but it is present in his work. The person of Christ remains the essential issue. He takes to his own interpretation of eschatology rather than clear exegetical evaluation, reinterpreting it totally without rejecting the main gist thereof and accepts the final return but not in the language of the general views. He regards the biblical pictures of the eschatological events as parables. His view of Scripture weakens his view of the eschaton, as the Bible can be used as record but not as the true Word of God.

Harris (1963:114) rejects Barth's view on damnation: "Barth proceeds to contradict this teaching of the Bible with what I can only call a semantic deception." Jesus will be the judge and come as rewarder and punisher. The last judgement is a reality.

Chung (2005:67) refers to Barth's view on natural theology, but explains that Barth does not reject the implications of creation for eschatology.

> The knowledge that God will not abandon this present creation, but will bring it to fulfilment, should inspire us to work with God's purposes and towards their completion. Part of our Christian responsibility is to care for and safeguard what God has created. We shall be judged by the discharge of our ecological responsibilities, as much

> as our social and evangelistic mission. That we are part of the divine work of bringing in the Kingdom is a powerful encouragement to persevere in our ecological mission. It should also guard us against ever imagining that ecological salvation depends entirely on us. God is not an absentee landlord. God is a loving Creator, a present help in trouble and a coming Redeemer, the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Within the divine purpose we are called to serve and safeguard creation and to be instruments of God's salvation for the created world. We know enough of God's plans for the earth to direct our best efforts towards God's future (Innes, 2009:143).

5.3 J. Hoek

Jan Hoek's book, *Hoop op God: Eskatologische Verwachting* (2004), is an important book about eschatology. To understand hope, Hoek (2004:92) mentions that we must consider the following. The Bible is the Word of God. The Holy Spirit has to lead us. The Scripture explains itself. The Scripture has a scopus and a view around it. The message that the Scripture is also timely in the time and Scripture asks for a salvation historical interpretation and that there are different genres in the Scripture. Hoek (2004:118) explains seven ways of reading Scripture that are very important for the future. First, prophecy is preaching God's intention for the now and the future. Secondly, prophecy is contextual and asks for the transposition to our own context. Thirdly, it remains fragmentary. Fourthly, we have to have respect for prophecies' own aspects. Fifthly, we have to understand the relationship between spiritualisation and eschatology, and be aware of the dangers of spiritualisation. Next, deep separation between prophecy and the apocalyptic is not possible. There is hope after death and he explains that, in the present day, there is such tension for many people concerning death and the future of the people after death. People are struggling with the issue of death. Some say that death is the end of all our lives, but some people are calling for hope after death. They are struggling to stay in life, but they do not understand how they should go from this in the present day.

He starts off by explaining that there should be hope in the storm, in which we live with a culture of hopelessness. There should be hope, because we believe in God as the eternal one, because God has a Name and is not silent and we can explain the name of God, because, thirdly, God is love. Fourthly, God is grace. Fifthly, God is justice and holy. Sixthly, God is trustworthy and, seventhly, God is almighty and therefore the biblical hope also has implications. Hoek (2004:20-28) explains these different aspects of faith in God. According to him, there are seven very important aspects of biblical hope (Hoek 2004:29-42). First, biblical hope lives in the acceptance of God's promises. Secondly, it hopes on the One and only God. Thirdly, it is theocentrically aimed at God's Kingship. Fourthly, it has to do with faith between the now and the not yet. Fifthly, it is something that is beyond death and there is a possibility beyond no possibility. Sixthly, biblical hope lives in the hope of the wonder of the resurrection. He explains this wonder of the resurrection in five ways. The wonder of the resurrection of Christ on Passover; the wonder of the resurrection of people called back to life such as Lazarus and the young man of Nain; the resurrection of believers on the youngest date eternal life; the resurrection of all who have died on the youngest day, and the resurrection of the spiritually dead through the conversion to Christ, saved by Christ and sealed in baptism. Seventhly, biblical hope is anti-Docetic; it is not only a spiritual reality; it also has implications for this world. It is not only the soul, but it is the whole life of God that is important.

5.4 A. König

In his book, *Jesus Die Laaste* (1980), König regards eschatology as absolutely in Christ. Christ is the end, the eschatology. Christ IS eschatology and to understand eschatology, we must always understand this in light of Jesus Christ, namely how Jesus existed and exists and what Jesus did and does. Eschatology is always understood in the life, death, resurrection, and future of Jesus Christ. Because Jesus is so important for eschatology, he understood Jesus as the fundamental basis of eschatology. For him, it is crucial to realise that Jesus fulfils eschatology. It is to be understood Christologically.

Although he mentions that theological Christology is absolutely important, it is not exclusively limited to the person of Christ. It will be fulfilled in the coming of Christ (König, 1980:55). In Christ, the end is already present, especially through his living on Earth (König, 1980:56). Jesus' death and resurrection are the purpose of God with us and it is fulfilled in Jesus. Jesus finds the purpose of God with us in the second coming, the parousia (König, 1980:95-102).

The eschatological character of Jesus' first coming is also clear from the fact that he became human, was crucified (König, 1980:100) and was resurrected (König, 1980:102). Therefore, the first coming of Jesus has eschatological meaning, because Jesus finds the purpose of God for us in the incarnation, the crucifixion, and the resurrection. In his humanity, Jesus became One for us. In his crucifixion, he took the sin upon himself and took it away. In his resurrection, he fulfils it in a certain sense.

It is important to mention Jesus' first coming. It is radically important to understand that, in his humanity, crucifixion, and resurrection, Christ received God's purpose for us because peace was made with God. The enmity between God and us ended. Jesus also revealed his purpose for and in us. Specially in us through the Holy Spirit because the Holy Spirit makes it possible. A way of living is present in the background of the Kingdom of God. This is important to understand and the fact that he is ruling is right in everything that he does. König (1980:161) explains fully that Jesus' rule over the powers of evil is radical and complete.

König (1980) understands eschatology in Christ in the following way. Jesus and the Father are in a relationship as God. The covenant should be understood as the purpose for creations. Jesus has a clear relationship with the covenant. God mentioned: I will be your God and you will be my people. The creation is fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Therefore, we must talk about the Kingdom of God and its aspects. He wants to accept the notion of the covenant rather than the Kingdom of God. Therefore, he understood that Jesus received the purpose for us (König, 1980:89). He emphasises what Jesus did for us in his first coming, what he is doing in us,

through the Holy Spirit, and what he will be doing with us at his parousia. Jesus does wonderful things in, with, and for us.

5.5 A. van de Beek

First, Van de Beek (2008:13) explains that eschatology and speaking about eschatology have become very difficult, because many people challenge the whole concept of eschatology and the reality thereof. He refers to Bultmann and Schweitzer and how they, in their understanding of eschatology, raised certain questions about the way in which eschatology should be understood. Van de Beek himself answers that God's time, way, and longsuffering with us have certain implications. First, our understanding of time and God's understanding of time are not the same. Secondly, God is full of grace. Thirdly, we cannot see the fact that the second coming of Christ is not already present. But this must be viewed in a new way.

Van de Beek (2008:109-143) refers to what is extremely important for understanding eschatology, namely that, in Christ, eschatology is engaged with the world and with the person. The cross of Christ is eschatology. In Christ, the essence of eternal life and death must be understood. At the cross, Christ judges and forgives the world. On the cross, the radical realisation of new life is possible. How does this realise in the church? Through baptism and the Eucharist, there is life with God. Life with Christ is possible. The church becomes the new eschatological community and, in this sense, eschatology is also limited to what is happening and what is being done in the church, without rejecting the possibility of the future and the resurrection of the one who died. Van de Beek (2008:109) explains that eschatology is Christology, because in the last days God is present in his Son. This means that the fullness of time has come and God revealed his son in this world. Therefore, it must be emphasised that the fullness of time has come with Christ in his revelation of God. The son of God is present in the fullness of time and was crucified, but also resurrected. All those who engage with the New Testament revelation of the son of God should accept the fullness of this time. Not only Jesus' own preaching, but also that of John the Baptist indicate that the kingdom has come in Jesus Christ because God

judges the world. In the judgement of the world, Christ is present as the One who has judged the world. The judgement took place in Christ.

The judgement of God in Christ as eschatology is also present in the healing element of Christology. Healing is presented as in Isaiah where God mentions that his people will be healed. God is the One who heals. The kingdom of God is near in the healing of Christ, but he is also the judge in his judgement. The fulness of time has come. His judgement also reveals bliss and well-being. Therefore, in Christ, the new time of healing has come. Jesus brings healing (Van de Beek, 2008:115). He is more powerful than the powers of the world. He is powerful over death, and he raises the dead so that they can live before God. It is clear that realising the kingdom of God's presence in Jesus Christ will also have implications for the resurrection of the dead. It is clear that Christ is not only the Son of God, but also God who became human in Jesus Christ. This message of the Bible should be emphasised. The emphasis should be on Jesus Christ, who is the fullness of God who overcame death and was resurrected.

Regarding Jesus' knowledge of his task and who he is, it is clear (Van de Beek, 2008:124) that Jesus knew that he came from God. In that sense, Van de Beek's view differs from that of Wright. It should be understood that, while explaining in his preaching and in his miracles, his death, and his resurrection, Jesus is the one from God, the One and only One from God who is truly the One with God and he knew that.

Therefore, we cannot say that this world improves and that we will, ultimately have a new world, a continued new world of this present world that will be wonderfully completed. It is crucial to realise that Jesus brought judgement on this world and that this world will pass. The resurrection of Jesus Christ also emphasises the fact that this world will be radically changed. The day of the Lord will come in the cross of Jesus and the day of the Lord will bring about a totally different world (Van de Beek, 2008:118).

Jesus is also the King on the cross. Jesus was the King, although his enemies did not want to accept that. But he is the King on the cross, the King of the Jews, and the King of the

heathen. The rulers of the world will have to accept that he is the new King. But who is this new King? He is the King dying on the cross. Jesus radically judged this world, the heathen, and the Jews concerning his kingship. He is the King of the world. He brings about the new understanding of the kingdom of God. He is a different King, but in the death on the cross and in his resurrection he is proclaimed as the true King, the King of God (Van de Beek, 2008:134). When the King of God comes to the world, it is on the cross, a cross of judgement. God, in Jesus Christ, is present in the cross in his judgement. In his glorification, he is also the One of the cross. The day of the Lord is present in the cross. An earthquake occurred and people were resurrected (Van de Beek, 2008:137). Jesus tells the murderer on the cross that he will be with him in paradise, because the cross is also the moment of paradise in Jesus and in his promises. Glorified life is radically immediate in the resurrection. It is important to note that Jesus was resurrected on the third day to emphasise that he was really dead and that he overcame death in that sense. At that time, the people understood that the resurrection will take place because it is immediate in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ himself. And there we find the restoration.

According to Van de Beek (2020), eschatology also concerns the Holy Spirit, and we must interpret eschatology in light of the Holy Spirit who proclaims the glory of God (Van de Beek, 2020:141). In Christ, a radical decision was made over this world. The end of time has come, and the church gloriously experiences it, in the Eucharist, that they are in the midst of persecution, gloriously linked to Jesus Christ. Van de Beek mentions that we must understand that these are border events, and that it is fundamental to understand how Christ came into this world. Concerning Revelation, Van de Beek explains that, in Zachariah, there is a different view of the city than in Revelation, and that we must understand this in Zachariah 2:1-5 and Revelation 21:12 and 27. Therefore, we must not view this as literal explanations of the future. The apocalyptic literature is realised in really difficult times. Persecution, rejection, and the Christian understood that God was with them in his glory. In Revelation, it is not literal events, but the present and how in the present Christ is present

in the Old Testament (Van de Beek, 2020:145). There is also a time of peace in the church, to be understood as the thousand years. It is very clear, therefore, that this world will not become better. We do not see a utopian world, where everything gets better. We must understand that Christ is resurrected from the dead, that we will suffer, but that we will live with Christ.

Van de Beek mentions that there are different views concerning the resurrection of the body. First, after death, there is nothing. Secondly, he will go to the underworld. Thirdly, the body dissipates and the soul lives as a different entity (Van de Beek, 2020:148). Fourthly, the human being disappears, lives a new identity with God, and can be resurrected physically. This means that we are not the same as now, but that we will have a glorified body. We exist not only in God, but also with God and by God, and our body is concrete. We must understand that judgement of God in this world (Van de Beek, 2020:151-152). Sometimes, it is understood as outside the church, there is no glory. The glorious resurrection and salvation is in Christ. God will deliver the human being, and that is what it is all about, namely the final judgement.

5.6 J.A. Heyns

When Heyns talks about eschatology, we must understand that, in eschatology, there will always be the fullness of the end of time and that God in his justice, glory, love, and grace brings everything together. The fullness of time is about the beginning of God and through him alone. The fullness of time is also for us and not without us, but with us, because God includes human beings in the fullness of time (Heyns, 1978:390). Eschatology is the final act of God. It is an understanding of events in the time as events in the end of time, but it has a chronological dimension. It is never separate from the present. We see a knowledgeable God who has come to this life. It is about the vertical understanding of the relationship with the glory of God. Therefore, the coming of Christ in a parousia is a central event. He will come back to recreate the end of the cosmic reality. But as God said, the creation will continue; therefore, it is not the end of the cosmic reality. The old is saved from destruction; the creations' possibility is realised. It is the re-creation of creation. There is a future perspective

in eschatology. Eschatology is not a projection of the human soul, but it is the fruit of the revelation of God in the Holy Spirit. We will also receive glory in eschatology. We must talk about death because death has both a physical and a spiritual aspect to it. Life must be understood as religious, or religiously ethical (Heyns, 1978:394). Heyns mentions that unbelief, without God and against God, means death. Sin is about death, without God. The total human being is established by death. Heyns (1978:398) rejects the following unscriptural views. First, all materialistic understandings, where it is understood that death is the total destruction of human life. Secondly, all forms of re-incarnations. Thirdly, all the ideas of the sleeping of the dead. Fourthly, all spiritual understanding, where we can make contact with souls. Fifthly, the understanding that, in death, we get a kind of spiritual ethereal body and lives in time. Sixthly, the believers will continue after death, but the non-believers will cease to exist. Seventhly, the idea that death is not already the judgement and that, after death, we can have a second time to convert. Eighthly, death belongs to God's good creation and human beings would in any case die, even if there is no sin in the world. Heyns also explains that there will be a universal eschatology. He mentions the signs of the time and their different components; the world becomes more chaotic.

5.7 N.T. Wright

According to Wright (2008), there is some confusion amongst Christians of what hope really entails. There are many different views on that because we have different implications of how we view heaven and how we understand what heaven is about (Wright, 2008:21-25). The key question is: How are we supposed to understand hope? He asks the following questions: How do we know all this about hope? Do we have immortal souls? The starting bid for all Christian thinking about this would be Jesus' own resurrection. The early Christian hope should be understood; early paganism and early Judaism had an understanding of resurrection. To understand is to the body synonymous with life after death.

Some Jews understood that it is a kind of eternal life, but some understood it as disembodiment from the soul. Philo believed in ultimate resurrection. What was the early Christians' view of hope? Wright (2008:41) mentions that there is no spectrum of belief; it is about life beyond death. There are many different views of life after death. Only one hundred and fifty years after the time of Jesus, people wanted the resurrection to be quite different from Judaism and early Christianity, namely spiritual experience in a present, leading to disembodied hope in the future.

Second-temple Judaism did not understand resurrection as being so important. In Judaism (Wright, 2008:43), resurrection is almost always left vaguely as some kind of body resurrection (1 Corinthians 15). The early first-century Jews expected a large-scale event for all God's people. Not one person will be resurrected, except maybe Enoch and Elijah.

Wright (2008:58ff) explains the vital importance of the resurrection of Jesus as a reminder of the reality of the resurrection of the dead. However, Wright cautions that one should carefully consider one's beliefs regarding life after death, as he explains that many Christians' view of life after death is more Platonic than biblical. God is the living God who brings heaven to Earth, which has implications for this world. As such, this world should not be rejected: God loves this world and to live in the expectation of its renewal in the light of the resurrection is important. As in the resurrection of Jesus, love should overcome. Despite the common evils of this world, it is evident that God's new world, represented by Jesus, should overcome these evils.

According to Wright (1996:596), the victory of God is in Jesus: "My proposal, then, as the way of making sense of all the data before me, is that Jesus believed it was his god-given vocation to identify with the rebel cause, the kingdom-cause, when at last that identification could not be misunderstood as endorsement."

The resurrection of Jesus is, according to Wright (2008:163), not only a sequence of events but also a foundational event, the implications of which still affect those living and rediscovering hope in the present century. Jesus comes as Judge to set all

things right and that is his way of resurrecting the bodies in the resurrection of the bodies.

According to mission he writes (2008:164):

> I hope I have said enough to make it clear that the mission of the church is nothing more or less that the outworking, in the power of the Spirit, of Jesus's bodily resurrection and thus the anticipation of the time when God will fill the earth with his glory, transforms the old heavens and earth into the new, and raise his children from the dead to populate and rule over the redeemed world he has made.

The Christian view is that a suffering Jesus came to this world, lay down his life, and was resurrected so that the new world can come about through his death. Evil should then be regarded as the opposite of the eschatological renewal of the world in Jesus Christ. The demand for the redemption in Christ is clear (2008:96) and Jesus' wonders should not be underestimated. The resurrection remains essential.

The parables are, in his opinion (2008:176), not an actual description of the life after death. Rather, these are views about ancient Judaism indicative of a search for justice in present life when justice was not previously insisted upon. The bodily resurrection of Jesus identifies with God who forms the old heavens and Earth into the new.

Wright (2013:1068) further states:

> The cross is the victory through which the powers of the old age are brought low, enabling the new age to be ushered in at last. Hence, once again, we see what was foundational for Paul: that which Jewish eschatology looked for in the future, the overthrow of the enslaving evil powers and the establishment of YHWHs reign instead, had truly been inaugurated in and through the messianic events of Jesus' death and resurrection.

5.8 J. Moltmann

For Moltmann (1979), the whole question of transcendence, representations of transcendence, and how that is understood is very important. How do we understand the present and the future? How do we understand how different people view that, and the righteousness of God (Moltmann, 1979:27). Moltmann (1979:41) refers to methods in eschatology, the question of hope, and development (Moltmann, 1979:49). He is thus in favour of understanding eschatology in the sense of hope, of Christian hope for God's Kingdom. The resurrection of Christ (Moltmann, 1979:52) as well as the anticipation and the waiting for the coming of the Lord in the presence of Christ (Moltmann, 1979:54) are very important. Moltmann (1979:55) mentions that we must talk about the future in different ways. The anticipation of the future of what God is bringing.

> But, as we have said, the desirable future by no means stands there, empty and open. The reduction to technical thinking about the future conceals the obvious wish for the perpetuation of existing distributions of power. That is why the Christian faith cannot simply elevate and stimulate previous conditions which are in the process of evolution, by way of its ultimate hope. It cannot either simply aim to free reason from reasonableness, but it is bound to ask: *Cui bono*? That is to say, it must expose present interests, conflicts of interests with regards to desirable future and must lay bare the ideological backgrounds of technocracy (Moltmann, 1979:57).

The theology of the cross is thus essential for understanding eschatology. The suffering of God in Christ is to be understood as to way in which eschatology must be viewed. The doctrine of the trinity undergirds the understanding of the future with God.

> The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ in us and us in Christ for the glory of God the Father. By bringing this about, he unites us in creation with the Son and the Father, as he unites the Son himself with the Father. The Spirit is the bond of fellowship and the power of unification. Together with God the Father

> and through God the Son, he is unifying God. The history of the Spirit is the history of this unifications (Moltmann, 1979:91).

Therefore, very important for Moltmann is the cry for freedom, the cry for people to be engaged with the hope and the story of hope and that liberty will come about when the hope is realised. The church has to be a community in the Holy Spirit, working towards this hope. Moltmann (1979:110) has five dimensions of liberation: the struggle for economic justice against the exploitation of man; for human dignity and human rights against the political oppression of man; for human solidarity against the alienation of man from man; for peace with nature against the industrial destruction of the environment, and for hope against apathy in asserting the significance of the whole in personal life.

Justification and creation must be understood in the sense of justification in Christ. The knowledge of Christ and the understanding of justification in that sense.

It is not possible to understand Moltmann's (2004) views without referring to his book, *In the end-the beginning: The life of hope*. Eschatology is not solely something of a future in which all will face the final judgement. The final judgement does not mean that God will judge and there will be separation between people, namely the just and the unjust, some to go to heaven and some to go to hell. God is the God of justice and will redeem all in his justice, also in the consummation of this world. The child that comes into the world is considered to be a beginning, and in the end of the final consummation, the God of justice will show his justice. It is very important that this means that eschatology must be seen in the light of the continued expression of the justice of God already in this world and already in the final consummation and deliverance of God.

He (2004:s.p.) explains

> "As the coming judge of victims and perpetrators, the risen Christ will do away with the suffering of the one and the burden of the other, and will bring both out of the dominion of evil into the community of God's righteousness and

> justice. The purpose of his judgement is not reward or punishment, but the victory of the divine creative righteousness and justice, and this victory does not lead to heaven or hell,, but to God's great day of reconciliation on this earth. On that day 'every tear will be wiped from their eyes', the tears of suffering as well as the tears of remorse, for 'there will be no more mourning, nor crying nor pain any more' (Rev. 21.4). Judgement is not the last thing of all. It serves the new creation of all things. It is therefore not last but penultimate. What is last and final is the new word of creation: 'Behold, I make all things new' (Rev. 21.5)."

This justice will be fully revealed in the whole experience of the life that God will bring about. A new dispensation in this world is very important and life in this world is already an eschatological life, understanding that the God of righteousness is also already involved in this world. God was present in the past and God will still be present in the future. The fullness of the mission of God is in justice, as the redemption. This world has been redeemed and is in Christ.

He (2004:s.p.) writes

> "Life here and now is a life in time, that is true. But temporal life is not just a transitory life. It appears to us only as transitory to the extent to which we look to the past, and are forced to say farewell to what we cannot hold on to. But it is at the same time a life that begins every moment, and an awakening vitality, provided that we look to the future and welcome the possibilities of the new morning. Every moment in life is an end of the past and a beginning of the future. If we only have our death before our eyes, the impression that all the things we love are transitory, gains the upper hand. If we look beyond, and through, the dark horizon of dying into the daybreak colours of God's new day, then the 'beginningness' of all the things we love makes us living, and it is to this beginningness that we are attentive."

5.9 C. Hill

Craig Hill (2002:20) is an important contributor to the question of eschatology. He discusses the problem of how Christians understand the whole issue of eschatology, and how Christians enter into eschatology. Some books view eschatology in a fundamentalist way, where people understand eschatology in such a way that it is not relevant to the eschatology of the New Testament. We must understand that the Bible is not about eschatology, a prophetic book or about the future. Therefore, Hill understands that this is not a one-sided understandable eschatology. We must understand that the biblical view is sometimes not about the future, but about the time in which it was written and that many of the biblical concepts were influenced by other religions and other peoples in classical times. Our own interpretation is also limited by our own culture and understanding. It is, therefore, necessary to delve into the books of the Bible, in order to understand eschatology in that sense. We must also view eschatology not as the sole reviews of the fundamentalists.

Concerning biblical prophecies, Hill mentions that we must understand that, although they speak from God, they use literature from the time in which they speak. They speak about a covenantal future that will be realised. Therefore, in the prophets, this relationship to the covenant of Sinai and the future is very important. We must realise that the covenant was broken, but also established and restored by God (Hill, 2002:52). We must also view apocalyptic literature as wanting to communicate a specific aspect to the reader or the people it addresses. In the apocalyptic literature, some aspects are quite clear. In it, history is divided between the old and the new age dualism, determinism, exclusivism portrayals of judgement, expectation of the end, code words, numerology, and cryptic symbols, means of revelation, transportation of divisionary and heavenly realm, exultations to endurance, and demonstration of God's justice.

It must be mentioned that, in the intertestamental period, some of these apocalyptic aspects were emphasised. Daniel and Revelation should thus also be considered (Hill, 2002:94). The

trouble is that emperors such as Antiochus IV, Epiphanus, and Dometianus, at the time of the apocalypse in the New Testament, who limit themselves or empower themselves to be in power over people, must be viewed as the way in which they call for apocalyptic literature and the revelations in this regard and understood from this perspective. We must view revelations as explaining that people suffered under Dometianus and understand that aspect in that sense. He is of the opinion that Revelation does not give full meaning to heaven, the future, and the end times. It calls on us to reject the unjust powers of the world. It is about steadfastness under persecution and hope in God's justice.

5.10 E. Conradie

Conradie (2023) regards eschatology as totally part of this present world. Hope for a better world leads to new possibilities. It should not only be an expectation for the future. Therefore, ecology should be an intrinsic part of eschatology. Renewal is possible, by renewing the world and taking responsibility for engaging in ecological questions.

In his review of eschatology in the South African context, Conradie (2023:25) refers to the implications of the views of African theologians. Tutu emphasised justice in an unjust society. Conradie explains that, according to these theologians, evil will be overcome and new life in society in Christ is possible. The emphasis is on God entering into the world, and bringing justice and peace.

Conradie (2023:31) emphasises that hope is essential in Christian eschatology. He explains that we should also take note of sin. Eschatological hope is not only salvation from sin, but also liberation from oppression and injustices and an ultimate victory over evil.

> In my view, Christian eschatology should guard against a departure from its roots in soteriology and, therefore, its rootedness in particular experiences of place and displacement. An eschatology that focuses exclusively on the far future or the ultimate dream of a future utopia

> remains exactly that – something that has no place… (Conradie, 2023:32).
>
> The eschaton is, therefore, best expressed with a series of categories such as fulfilment, consummation, reconciliation, and recapitulation. Such categories defy easy conceptual clarification but express in one way or another the hope that God the Creator is more than the world, that God cannot be confined to the limits of space and time, and that God's loyalty and love encompass all things, including the victims of history (Conradie, 2023:37).

One must, however, realise that for Conradie the future is not empty. God is still the God of the future. Ecology should also point to the future. The new realisation of our ecological task, concern and responsibility should also take the renewal of the future world into consideration.

5.11 Engaging Exponents

Engaging these different exponents of eschatology, we always have to take into account that the biblical message is clear: new life is possible in Christ, and this new life will come to fruition in the resurrection and the second coming of Christ and this will lead to the consummation of the new world, that we will ultimately receive. When we engage Calvin, the full blessing of the eschatological life in Christ is clear. He accepts the cross, the resurrection, and the parousia of Christ as the essence of eschatology. We must take into account that Calvin has an infralapsarian and supralapsarian view of eschatology. It is crucial to emphasise that sin is not God's will and that an infralapsarian view is more in line with aspects of eschatology. It is important to note that God does not recognise death in such a way that we have no hint of salvation from him, from the beginning, but not in a sense that it is so deterministic that we cannot see the value of a relationship in God in Christ. Therefore, we have to differ from Calvin's supralapsarian view and mention that an infralapsarian view is, in this regard, more biblical in terms of the life and death of Christ in this world and the salvation of Christ from his cross in this world.

Concerning Barth, we must understand that there is also a view of the future that should be recognised. While Barth has very important guidelines regarding the yes and no in Christ and the fact that eschatology is present in Christ, we have to consider that the future is also a possibility and that the future should be taken into account. We should look towards the future and that not everything is in this world. We have to take into account and fully understand that a yes and no of God leads to the second consummation in Jesus Christ when everything is changed.

Hoek emphasises hope, that there will be hope and a new possibility of hope in the eschatological consummation which God brings about. His emphasis on Jesus Christ as the one who brings about hope is crucial and should be recognised. We should always engage eschatology from the perspective that hope is only possible in the eschatological expectation in Jesus Christ, because of the new life that Jesus will bring about. Hoek, therefore, opens up a new world of eschatological expectation in the sense that Jesus is giving new hope for us. Therefore, hope also emphasises the world and the new expectation of total newness in Jesus Christ.

Heyns has links to Calvin and others concerning the eschatology that is brought about by the cross, the resurrection, and the second coming of Jesus Christ. He clearly views the second coming of Jesus Christ as a radical possibility and that Jesus will overcome again and bring about total redemption. New life is possible in him. We also have to take into account that he emphasises the Kingdom of God in this world, where we have to work for, and have a relationship with, the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is not only something for the future; the Kingdom of God is also present in the world. Heyns emphasises the fact that we have to acknowledge and deal with the Kingdom of God in this world, working with the Kingdom in what we are experiencing. The Kingdom, however, is not a final consummation. The final consummation is in the new Earth and in the new heaven. The Kingdom is crucial for this world.

Concerning Van de Beek, it is very important to recognise that much attention is paid to the fact that Christ himself brings about the final consummation. He always considers the church

as extremely important and, although he has knowledge and acceptance of the future and the future life with Christ, his emphasis is on the cross of Christ in this world. He opines that it is possible to know God in the cross of Jesus. We see the new life and experience life with Jesus Christ in the cross. It is possible to see what happens in this world for the benefit of the believer. The cross is, therefore, the essence of what we know about God. The emphasis on the cross is highly acceptable, but the future expectation also remains essential.

N.T. Wright has a different view and opines that to speak about heaven and the expectation of heaven should be revisited and that, ultimately, there will be the resurrection of the dead. He is, therefore, careful not to mention that we are going to heaven when we die and that we will, therefore, experience bliss and protection in heaven. We have to differ from Wright. In 2 Corinthians 5, it is clear that we live in a tent in this world; the tent will be broken down and we will experience the fullness of life in the new life and in the glorious news of consummation of life in Jesus Christ. This expectation has no clear implications for the believer and the eschatological future of people in this life. This should be understood very clearly.

Concerning König, we should take into account that we can overemphasise Christ the person as eschatology. We should guard against doing that and not take all of eschatology in the person of Christ. We should consider that the future is also a possibility with the second coming of Christ and with the future possibility of living with Christ. This new possibility is always a reality. Once we consider that, we should guard against overemphasising eschatology and Christ because Christ is more than eschatology Christ, the Son of God, who came to this world and is even more than eschatology.

Hill points to many wrong understandings of eschatology in the sense that people view his prophecy as when Christ will come about. In that sense, we have to agree and say that it is indeed very important to recognise that nowhere in the Bible can we infer when Christ will come; a future in Christ and Christ's coming are in God's hands. This means that we will have to be attentive to the

fact that the living Christ will come at any time, and bring about total redemption. We must live in expectation of Christ.

Conradie has knowledge of ecology. We must engage in ecology concerning the second coming of Christ and eschatology. He emphasises that this world is also very important and that ecology has to be considered. However, the emphasis on this world is so important, as in the ecological views. The total future of heaven and life after death and the future of new heaven and new Earth should remain important. The future of the new heaven and the new Earth should be emphasised for all, so that they can experience the future and live according to that. This is, however, not absent from his theology.

Moltmann recognises that there must be justice and peace in this world, and that we must seek justice and peace with everything we have. Then again, a very important aspect is lost, namely the future of Christ and the future of Christ already in this world, but also a future coming in Christ, the future that Christ will bring about and that we will experience the future in him, and that we have to look to the new heaven and the new Earth, and that we experience suffering and want in this world. The new world will come about in Christ's second coming and we have to look forward to that new coming and experience that in his resurrection and second coming. We must emphasise that fully for the future in Christ, so that we can become new people in Christ.

Concerning the different views that were explained here it is important to come to the understanding that eschatology has to do with creation, the present world and the future. It is, however, extremely important to notice that in Jesus Christ, the future is very real. Living in this world does not have the last word. It is important to recognise the fact that we are pilgrims on our way to the future. Is it important to say although God is the God of creation of this world and the future, the fact that we are pilgrims on the way to the future makes it possible to live according to the Word of God in this world with our eyes fixed on the future and the heaven in which Christ rules, according to Colossians 3:1-5. Therefore, one has to come to the understanding that Hoek, Calvin and Heyns, from the perspective they present,

the explanation of eschatology is that God is the God of the future and that God makes things possible that are not possible from the human view in this world. Suffering and trouble are very real, but God shows us that in the future he can change our predicament and it is possible to live with him and to experience the fullness of the heavenly realms. Therefore, one has to also in the evaluation of these different views emphasise that the glory in heaven where God will rule in all his fullness is a possibility for those who believe in Jesus Christ. He makes it possible, because he is the true God . Salvation is for every one who believes in Jesus Christ. Therefore, one should explain that eschatology has to do with this new world and the new expectations of this new world. This will be explained more fully in the following chapters.

6. Death, Resurrection and Eternal Life

6.1 Death

Some regard death as part and parcel of our lives on Earth, that we cannot understand it from a different perspective than the perspective that death is part of creation that from the very beginning death is there, and that we should understand that we can do nothing about that with regarded as a natural force from the very beginning There are those who differ from that and say that death is something not to be regarded from the very beginning, but to be understood as something as an intrusion in the good creation of God The death of humans was an intrusion into the creation of God. It is. It is difficult to understand death as late intrusion, if one takes it from a perspective of evolution From an evolutionary perspective, it is clear that people died and that there was a revolutionary development from people who died. On the other hand, it's possible to say that God in his grace wanted people to live in a close relationship with him. To live with the God of creation in this sense, death is regarded as the enemy of the people, as an enemy from outside regarding the lives of people and including. Some aspects of this relation.

Exalto (1999:555) refers to death and eternal life in the Old Testament. In the Old Testament death often has a negative view.

Death is terrible. We are cut off from the land of the living (Ps. 19:7, 19: 11; Gen. 2:17). Sheol is the underworld where death reigns. There are, however, also signs of hope in death (Ps. 16:10, 73, 24). Exalto (1999:561) notes much clearer signs of life after death in the New Testament. He opines that the New Testament explains that death does not belong to us.

Hoek (2004:133) asks: What is a biblical view of death? The possibility of death was given with the creation but the reality of death came with sin in the world. Since the fall in sin, death has power over human beings (Hoek, 2004:133). In the Old Testament, there are still different views of death. It was radical and could not be ignored. If we die, we go to sheol, we are in the power of death. In death, God is not present; we praise God in this life. Death becomes a barrier but God is still the God of what happens after death. With the different aspects of the Old Testament, new ways of understanding it emerged, so that death was understood as a relationship with the living God. As far as the eternity of the soul is concerned, it must be said that the past dichotomy between soul and body is no longer accepted. Some view the relationship to radical and do not understand that there are some aspects of soul and body in the Bible. God alone can give eternity but Scripture explains that we do not die and that everything ends at death. There is also life after death (Hoek, 2004:137).

Concerning the sleeping of the soul when we die, there is not an aspect of living while we sleep until the last day. It is rejected in light of Phil. 1:23. We are bound with Christ and death will not disrupt this; in death, we are with Christ for eternity.

We should also consider the aspect of death, and how we understand death. We should understand that it is a very serious challenge to theology to understand death. Was death there from the very beginning, and would all people have died, and is it only the aspect of eternal death that came into being after the sins of Adam and Eve? Or should we understand that death is a natural way of departing life from this world, but we have to understand that this is how we see the world. Death is part and parcel of this world from the very beginning. God created everything; he created it good, but he also limited people and animals so that they will

not receive the fullness of the glory without understanding that death is a reality.

If we take into account the present understanding of evolution and the way in which theologians regard it, some realise that death is there from the very beginning. This is how God made the world are views presented.

Satan is, however, the murderer from the very beginning and we have to consider this when thinking about death. Should we understand death only as a partial development or should we understand death as a terrible challenge to the faith of the living people? Should death be understood as destruction or should death be understood as a way of continuing in this life towards the future? Should death then be understood as something to lead us towards a new life with God in a new perspective and that the problem with Adam and Eve is that God rejected them because they fell into sin and death destroyed the person because death also leads to eternal death if we are not saved?

To understand death, we should take into account that, in many instances in the Bible, death is regarded as detrimental and destructive. Death is very often viewed as the end of this life, as the end of all possibilities and is the judgement of God on people for not doing what they should do and for rejecting the truth of God. Death is then viewed as a way in which God brings about an end to the evils of people by arranging, calling, telling, or bringing them to the end. One should, therefore, also take into account that this may be a serious challenge to the way in which death is understood. In many instances, we should perceive that death in both the Old and the New Testament is a very serious challenge to the glory of living before God. Living life before God, living in a relationship with God ends in death when that relationship is destroyed. According to my understanding, death in the Bible has a negative ring to it. Death is a negative understanding of life, and the end of the relationship with the living God. But this does not mean that God cannot change eternal death; even in the Old Testament, sins are forgiven and, in the New Testament, Christ brings about the true salvation for people, so that they can have eternal life and live with him. Death is not the last word. Death is

not the final destruction, because God enters this life and makes it possible to live with him. Even if death in both the Old and the New Testament is viewed as destructive, in Christ, it is possible to see the change so that God can bring about eternal life and eternity in the new world. In our understanding of eschatology concerning death, we must understand that God makes it possible for us to live in a relationship with him, looking towards the future and understanding that the future is possible and that we can live in a future with God.

6.2 Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus and of the believer is emphasised in Scripture. It entails full life with God. Jesus conquered death. In the Hellenistic world of the New Testament, the resurrection of the dead was not widely acknowledged but divine power was accepted. In Acts, God's involvement in life and his glorious renewal by Christ, the resurrected one, are evident (Badley, 2023:35).

> This affirmation of life is developed in two ways in the Acts narrative. First, Acts proclaims that the life of the prophet, Jesus of Nazareth, is the life which God has vindicated by raising him from the dead. Second, Acts describes a community of people whose communal life is a gift of God given so that they can be witnesses to God's life (Badley, 2023:35).

Wright (2008:75) refers to the fact that the resurrection was expected to have started with Jesus. The early Christians believed that they had to work with God to bring about a new life in personal and political life. The metaphorical use of resurrection was also understood (Wright, 2008:46). It was viewed in light of the Messiah. First, they do not use the Old Testament text as proof of the resurrection. Secondly, the presence of women as principal witness. The portrait of Jesus himself. Thirdly, the Christian future is not mentioned.

> And this is the point where believing in the resurrection of Jesus suddenly ceases to be a matter of inquiring about an odd event in the first century and becomes a matter of

> rediscovering hope in the twenty-first century. Hope is what you get when you suddenly realize that a different worldview is possible, a worldview in which the rich, the powerful, and the unscrupulous do not after all have the last word. The same worldview shift that is demanded by the resurrection of Jesus is the shift that will enable us to transform the world (Wright, 2008:75).

Wright (2008:93) then mentions that certain aspects are very important. First, the citizens of heaven colonising the Earth. He does not mention that we will go to heaven, but that we have to live on Earth. From heaven to Earth, that is very important (Wright, 2008:100). God will be everything, everything in everything. Then new birth is possible (Wright, 2008:103). The marriage of heaven and Earth (Wright, 2008:104) becomes a reality.

> "We thus arrive at the last and perhaps the greatest image of new creation, of the cosmic renewal in the entire Bible. This scene, set out in Revelation 21 to 22, is not known or considered well enough. Perhaps because, in order to earn the right to read it, we should really read the Revelation of John first, which proves to be daunting for many. The image is that of marriage. The New Jerusalem comes down from heaven like a bride to her husband."

About resurrection and the life of the bodies, Wright (2008:148) mentions that the clearest and strongest passage often ignored is Romans 8:9-11. Paul states that, if the spirit of God, the spirit of Jesus the Messiah dwells in you, then the one who raised the Messiah from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies, through his spirit that dwells in you. God will not give life to a disembodied spirit. Not to what many people have regarded as a spiritual body in the sense of not a physical one, but a mortal body (Wright, 2008:149). Wright (2008:179) avers that judgement is necessary, otherwise nothing will come of all the injustices in the world.

> God is utterly committed to set the world right in the end. This doctrine, like that of resurrection itself, is held firmly

> in place by the belief in God as creator, on the one side, and the belief in his goodness, on the other. And that setting right must necessarily involve the elimination of all that distorts God's good and lovely creation and in particular of all that defaces his image-bearing human creatures. Not to put too fine a point upon it, there will be no barbed wire in the kingdom of God. And those whose whole being has become dependent on barbed wire will have no place there either (Wright, 2008:179).

We can sum this up in the following way. The revolutionary new world, which began in the resurrection of Jesus - the world where Jesus reigns as Lord, having won the victory over sin and death - has its frontline outpost in those who in baptism have shared his death and resurrection (Wright, 2008:249).

What are the implications of the resurrection of Jesus? First, it is an eschatological event. Breaking into time, eternity is present in the resurrected Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus breaks the bonds of death in this world. Eternity is now open. But the resurrection is an event in this world. The disciples acknowledged the risen Christ here and now. Secondly, Christ's resurrection is a bodily resurrection. Jesus has risen. His dead body was resurrected. He could show himself to his disciples. They did not always recognise him in the beginning, but he did open their eyes. It was the same Jesus who had risen. Thirdly, his resurrected body was also a new body. The Gospels explain that he could show himself in glory. This was a body after death. He overcame death totally. He went through death. This glory is present in his new body. Fourthly, his resurrection is beneficial to all in him. Now we can also go through death to glory. This is beautiful and the beauty of the resurrection is glorious for all in him. The resurrection of the body is Christ's gift to all who believe in him.

Concerning the resurrection, it is important to confess that Christ's resurrection is a fact. The implication of the resurrection is so wonderful and should be understood as very important. Christ's resurrection is not something of a spiritual experience of the disciples. It is not true that they only experience a spiritual enlightenment and, therefore, think that Christ was resurrected.

The Gospel is very clear that they had a meeting with the living Christ. Although this meeting with the living Christ is glorious and wonderful and not always easy to understand, we should recognise that the Christ who was resurrected was the same Christ who died. But he was now resurrected; He went through death. He is the new Christ, the living Christ. We should understand that the resurrection is understanding new life in Christ. He brought about new life and change. It is possible to understand that he is the future of people, because he was resurrected from death. We have to understand the resurrection in light of the intertestamental understanding of resurrection where persecuted people resurrected again and could live before God. It is also possible to understand the resurrection of Christ in this sense as a true resurrection of the person who was changed and came to life again. A true resurrected living is possible in Christ.

Does that mean that the resurrected body of Christ is the same as the body that was killed on the cross? Yes, but it was renewed, totally renewed. Christ could meet these disciples in a totally new way. Christ's resurrection was always to be understood as this glorious way in which God changed life and brought about a new situation. The resurrected body is, in this sense, very important. we should consider that we will all be resurrected and that some will be in the final judgement and receive the glory of God for eternal life, while some will be rejected. The question is: Will it be the same body? Paul is very clear about that. It will be like a seed from which a new person will come about. A totally new person will be the resurrected person, a resurrected body. We should not disregard the body. We should understand that the body is also very important, and that when we are resurrected, the body is resurrected, and that we will still have a body, although it is a spiritual body, but still a body. Although it is a spiritual body, we should understand that it is a body that brings about new life, and lives in a new relationship with God in this resurrected body. This resurrected body will be so glorious and so wonderful that we will be in a wonderful new relationship with the living God. Magnify, glorify, and understand God as the one we have to acknowledge. The resurrected body is a body of truth, of relationships, of the future, and of new life. It is always possible to understand this

body of new life in this sense. The resurrected body will lead us into this new relationship with God. The resurrected body helps us understand who God is, because we are then in the final personal relationship with the living God and understand that we are living with him and his glorious resurrection.

I shall now turn to the resurrection of the dead. 1 Cor 15

6.3 The Resurrection Body

35But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With
what kind of body will they come?" 36How foolish! What
you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37When you
sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a
seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38But God
gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind
of seed he gives its own body. 39Not all flesh is the same:
People have one kind of flesh, animals have another,
birds another, and fish another. 40There are also heavenly
bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendour
of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendour of
the earthly bodies is another. 41The sun has one kind of
splendour, the moon another, and the stars another, and
stars differ in splendour.

42So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body
that is sown is perishable; it is raised imperishable; 43it
is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in
weakness, it is raised in power; 44It is sown a natural
body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45So
it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"[f];
the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. 46The spiritual did not
come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual.
47The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man
is of heaven. 48As was the earthly man, so are those who are
of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those
who are of heaven. 49And just as we have borne the image

> of the earthly man, so shall we[g] bear the image of the heavenly man.

Barret (1978:370) explains that Paul gives full meaning to the transformation of the body in Christ. The bodily transformation in the new age that God brings is glorious. The new body is dependent on Christ. Although we retain our individuality, total renewal is possible. Thiselton (2000:1269) shows how God's inexhaustible power changes the body to full newness. There is both exclamation of the glory and confirmation of how the new body is conceived in God.

The question of the resurrection and the resurrection of the dead is extremely important for Van de Beek (2008:37). First, the resurrection of Christ and the fact that God, in the resurrection of Christ, forgives those who live in sin, and that God in Christ also brings the resurrection of life. Secondly, it is the resurrection of life. Christ was crucified as the just one. Justice is also for those who are cursed by the law; a total new resurrection is possible. A new life after death is only possible if we understand this in Christ and the way in which Christ brought that about, namely by causing the resurrection of the dead and the possibility of new life. Van de Beek (2008:52) refers to four different views on the Old Testament. First, we would go to the underworld, Hades, or Sheol. This was the view at the first days of Israel and Helas as well as in early thought in the last millennium before Christ. Secondly, it was regarded that the soul goes to God. This was the view in Greece and in Judaism of the last millennium before Christ. Thirdly, the view was that in the end after death there is no hope. The Sadducees and the epicureans had this view, and lastly the view was that the body will be resurrected. This was an apocalyptic view and the view of the Pharisees. But, according to Van de Beek, God's justice is noted in the life and history of Christ. The question then is: Can the body be resurrected? Van de Beek answers that, with Christ, we have already been resurrected in him. In Christ is the resurrection. There can be continuity and discontinuity with our body. But, we must guard against saying that a body is something to be rejected, because the body has

certainly the fullness of God's creation. We are not platonic in the sense that the body is only a cell for the soul.

Van de Beek (2008:79) mentions that it is obvious that we see and touch the body of Christ after resurrection.

Hoek (2004:221) has three views of the resurrection of the dead. First, we receive a new body like Jesus did. We receive our own body, continuity with our old body, and total discontinuity. Secondly, it is a wonderful eternal life with God. Thirdly, it is eternal prayer to God, to the living God. Those who are saved will live in a reality knowing one another. It is not uniform but has colourful possibilities. It is not a place where we do not have any possibility, but it is glorious.

6.4 Heaven and Hell

Concerning heaven and hell, it is essential to engage the Bible from the perspective of the Bible and not from our modern views concerning the Bible. We have to engage the Bible from the perspective of the Bible itself. The Bible puts forward some challenging aspects. Some individuals explain that the implications of hell are so unacceptable in the modern world that we cannot accept them at all. It is not acceptable that God, a loving God, would ever reject people. First, a loving God would never do that. Secondly, it is a grave judgement for people's minor sins. Thirdly, how can it be eternal when life is only limited? Fourthly, it is clear that, if we die, we die totally. Fifthly, it is not acceptable to explain that a soul will experience eternal torment. Sixthly, it is also difficult to understand that there will be bliss in heaven, while people experience that others suffer tremendously. How can they then experience bliss if they know that some of their beloved ones are in hell? The answer to this is obvious. We must read the Bible and see whether it explains this. It is essential to engage the Bible fully, because it is crucial for mission to understand eschatology from the perspective of the *missio Dei*. First, it is God's will that all people will be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). God wants to save all people (Cor. 5:11-21). Paul calls all to reconciliation with God, because all people must be reconciled with God, but all do not accept this. Secondly, it is also clear that God's judgement is real and that

not all are saved and not all enter into heaven. Many instances in the Bible clearly state that God will judge and that God will judge righteously and that the resurrection of the dead means that some will experience eternal bliss and others damnation (John 5:28-29). Thirdly, experiencing the fullness of salvation will be so complete that we can only shout out that the judgement belongs to God and that all will accept that the judgement is from God. The judgement is true and acceptable, because God judges in righteousness. Ultimately, we have to accept that God judges in righteousness. The question still remains as to whether God does save all people because of the faithfulness of Jesus in his truth on the cross. We must, however, consider the many references to God's judgement and that we have to be in Christ in order to be saved.

Concerning the reference to heaven, many theologians challenge the view that heaven should be accepted as a place of bliss for those who are saved. Final consummation, when people can live with God in heaven, is challenged. Wright (2008:41ff) opines that it is a Platonic view that the believer will go to heaven. We must rather refer to the resurrection of the dead. Some reject the reference to heaven, because it is regarded as a mythological understanding of life after death. This means that we should not take into account that life after death is possible in the sense of living in a heavenly realm. The classical cosmology of Earth here and now, heaven above, and the underworld beyond the world has been rejected. The present cosmology no longer refers to those realities. Rather, it views the cosmos as absolute vastness, and it is not possible to see a place up there as heaven where God resides. It is a mythological understanding they say. To refer to heaven as the place where people go after they have died and are saved in Jesus Christ should be challenged. These concepts should be regarded in a totally new way. Many regard heaven as experiences on Earth, where bliss is experienced in a relationship with God in the church; there may be bliss knowing God, but not in life after death. Secondly, they say that it is hardly possible for us to understand that the soul will continue to live in heaven. A person will die and experience nothing after death. Death is final, according to them, and we cannot accept that we will experience that. We will experience something after death. Thirdly, people say that the

reference to heaven in Revelation should be regarded as applicable only to apocalyptic literature that has no special relevance to the present. It refers to the persecuted and their hope to heaven. Life is to be lived here and now. Furthermore, they say that it is impossible to understand that God will save only some for heaven and send others to hell. God is a God of love. Ultimately, all will be resurrected. That is what life is all about. We must experience life in this world fully and understand how it is possible to live in this life, in order to experience life and to understand what it is all about. Living one's life before God and dying in God but not experiencing eternal life in any sense is suggested. The first question is then whether we should accept that it is mythological language and that it is only a cosmology of antiquity that we speak about heaven. It is clear that, in many instances, the biblical authors understood life as being here on Earth and heaven up there. Therefore, there are different views on heaven. However, we should take into account that Paul understood this life as passing and that we will receive a future life, living with God with totally new expectations. He refers to that in 1 Corinthians 5:1-10. The earthly tent will be broken down and it will receive an abode from God in heaven. This is not only a suggestion or possibility, but it is a clear reference to how to live with God and experience eternity. In John 5, Jesus makes it very clear that he is the bread of life that will give eternity to those who are in him. Eternal life is possible from the very beginning in the New Testament. This is clearly explained by Paul and by Jesus in the Gospel of John. It is all about living with God and experiencing total bliss being with God in his heaven after death. This means, however, that the dead will be resurrected, and will experience the fullness of the resurrection of the dead when the seed that has been sown will be resurrected and glorified. 1 Corinthians 15 explains that a glorified body will live with God in heaven, clothed and glorified with the living God. This is possible because we are in God and saved in him as such.

The promise of the future and of hope entails that suffering and want will ultimately be overcome by God. According to Exalto (1999:563), we cannot cut out the references to hell in the Bible (John 3:36). We must see to it that life, resurrection, and eternal life are always viewed in the context of peace and help (Exalto,

1999:566). The resurrection of the body is confessed in the church. In the Old Testament, the end in Daniel 12 shows that it is personal resurrection. Christ's resurrection is extremely important (Exalto, 1999:573). It is clear that, in Romans 8:11, this is the guarantee of our eternal life. We can also speak about the resurrection, but we do not understand the how of it (Exalto, 1999:576).

As far as hell is concerned, Hoek (2004:251) explains that people discuss it and reject it all the more, saying that it is not possible to believe in the idea of hell in the present world because God has unlimited love. It is not a view to be understood, if we regard all the different views in the Bible about good and evil and humanity. We cannot accept eternal hell while we have a short lifespan. It has no purpose. This means that Christian theodicy cannot fully be accepted because there is always, in future, the aspect of sin and suffering. Hoek also refers to the fact that hell is explained in the Bible. We have to consider that and re-interpret hell. Some say that it is a symbol or a method of preaching. It is only an aspect of purification. Some view it as annihilation, while others view it as a reality (Hoek, 2004:240-250). According to Hoek, we do not believe *in* the hell. He avers that many of the traditional views of hell are not true and that hell is actually the place where God's reality, God's presence, is not seen. He is not absent, but he is present as a creator and judge and hell is the end of sin, the end product of sin. That is not against the love of God. In hell he judges justly. We can, with fear and with tears, speak about hell, about God's new world, the whole cosmos is being saved and we have to take that into consideration. Earth will not be destroyed by fire, but a purified Earth becomes not Godly, but fulfilled in God. Earth will not only be transformed, but it will also have a new understanding, a new creation. Hoek then mentions eternal life, which is totally different, but also present.

The topic of hell is a very difficult topic, because, in the present world, people reject much of the biblical views of hell. But one has to take into account that there will be judgement, and that God's judgement is the truth and that we have to acknowledge his judgement. When we talk about hell, we have to understand that the Bible speaks about hell in very strong terms. Falling into God's hands is terrible and a fire is burning. There are strong metaphors

of being away from God, of being judged by God, of rejection, of rejection by God of those who reject him. Those who reject him will certainly be made to acknowledge that, and that hell is a reality. Therefore, one has to acknowledge that, in the Bible, it is not possible to have the idea that all will be saved and that no one will experience the wrath of God. This is happening in this world already, but it is also happening in the world to come. We must not say that those people who are suffering in this world, are people who have already been judged by God. God judges, but God saves, and the love of God should be emphasised. Concerning hell, it is also important to acknowledge that God loves us so much that he wants to save us all and bring us to glory in a new way, and a new life with him, so that we can live in this new relationship with him as the living God. It is possible to live with God because he makes it possible. God wishes to save all, but it is clear in the Bible not all come to Christ so that they will be saved. Therefore, in mission concerning eschatology, the message must go out, that we have to turn away from our evil deeds, so that we can be saved from the wrath of God and experience the fullness of the love and glory of God in Christ, helping us to be in a new relationship with him.

According to Van de Beek (2008:83), we must move to the question of heaven and hell and guard against viewing heaven in the sense that we do it literally and that we interpret revelation literally and want to see heaven literally. It is the wonderful living of God in his glory and, in his glory, he makes it possible to live with him in the church and we can experience the true life with God in Christ. Therefore, heaven must also be viewed in different earthly metaphors. Hell is also very important as it was present in the early church and was discussed at length between the reformists and the early church and the Roman Catholics, concerning the purgatory. Calvin especially did not accept purgatory, but rather a new life in Christ. On the question of hell, the whole issue of pain comes to the fore again. Although hell is explained, it will always be interpreted as that the judgement of God was established on the cross, in Christ. Eschatology is also Christology because the coming of the Kingdom in Christ is present in eschatology. Christ is present in what he does. Christ is present in his resurrection. Christ is present because he brings

about the new life and new revelation with him. He brings about total redemption. This and the second coming of Christ must be considered.

I conclude with Hebrews 10:26-31:

> If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. 28Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace? 30For we know him who said, "It is mine to avenge; I will repay,"[d] and again, "The Lord will judge his people."[e] 31It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Hoek (2004:140) refers to Van Niftrik's explanation of how the Bible speaks about heaven. Heaven is regarded as the love of God in his Tri-unity. Heaven is the created heaven where God's throne is and where God rules over this world, people, nature, and from where he comes to save us. Heaven is revealed on Earth and is taken up in the flesh of Jesus' humanity. Heaven is the place where Christ sits on the right hand of God. Heaven is the eschatological purpose of the church and the triumphant church will live in the realisation of heaven. Paul's reference to be in Christ is the key to understanding what heaven is. In the Old Testament, God is already calling us to live in a relationship with him. Therefore, he explains that heaven exists (Hoek, 2004:142); secondly, that it is theocentric; thirdly, that heaven is radically in relationship with Christ (Hoek, 2004:146), and fourthly, that we can know heaven because we have acceptable views for heaven in the Bible, although it is explained differently. Heaven is also the waiting room for eternity and is open for us to enter in Christ. Therefore, there is hope for history. In history, there is hope and we should have faith, vision on the history in order to understand that (Hoek, 2004:159).

It also means that the fullness of life is possible in God. The future is also in God's hands. God's grace makes it possible to experience the fullness of life in expectation of the future (Dreyer, 2020:5):

> Therefore, the ultimate focus must be on God and not on us or our future. Our future is with God as the creator, the destiny, the alpha and omega. He, as the I AM what I AM and the I AM whatever I AM, gives meaning to life.

Van de Beek (2008:111) is very clear on that. We must not do that in the sense of a time lapse, of a time in future, but Christ already came in his resurrection and ascension. Christ is present in the world. It is a Kairos moment in the New Testament. Therefore, it is very important to mention that eschatology is seen in Baptism because baptism is the sign of the resurrection of Christ and of the forgiveness of sins. Baptism and the covenant are, therefore, also viewed together. In Baptism, we are taking part in the death of Christ. And that is the important thing that we must always take into account, the death of Christ and the baptism have everything to do with the death of Christ and the fact that we are present in the death of Christ through baptism. Therefore, we are baptised in that sense. Baptism in the name of Christ is characterised by death with Christ. Baptism in the name of the Holy Spirit gives us new life, and the power to live with God and to gather new life. Baptism in Christ and baptism through the spirit are linked. It is, however, one and the same baptism. Faith is also very important according to Van de Beek.

Concerning heaven and hell, we should consider that the Bible has clear messages of heaven and hell that cannot simply be disregarded. Nowadays, many people such as, amongst others, Rob Bell (2011:63ff.) disregards the view that God will judge and commit people to hell. A few people such as Barth (1972:107)), who leans strongly towards all being saved, do not regard the issue of heaven and hell in this way. The Bible speaks very clearly about the possibility of heaven and hell. We should consider 2 Corinthians 5, where Paul writes that our present body will be brought down like a house and clothed by a new temple in the heavenly glory of God. This glory is clothing with a new body in Christ. Glory with Christ

clearly implies heaven for those who believe in Christ. This is very clear in the sense that heaven is a possibility that came about through the glorious death and resurrection of Christ. This does not mean that we all have implications of heaven ready. We know that it is possible to be with Christ. According to Paul, "I long to be with Christ", and when we are with Christ, we experience the wonderful life with Christ, the glorious way in which we are with Christ. It is possible to experience that, because heaven is a reality. But that does not mean that we have a clear idea, although the Bible speaks of a wonderful world without fear, a world without trembling, a world in the presence of God, a world where God self is the light of the people. We do not have a clear picture of that, but we have the reality of the living God and we have to acknowledge that God makes it possible to live after death and experience the fullness of life after death. To experience the wonders of living with God and to experience the wonders of a new life and a new world, which God brought about. The truth of this makes living useful and valuable, because we understand that there will be a life after death with God, and that it will be absolutely wonderful.

7. Return of Christ

According to Balke (1999a:519-522), the signs of the times call us to a radical expectation of the coming of the Kingdom of God. We cannot establish this timeline. The coming of Christ is clear, although we are warned as to what will happen. For those who do not believe, there is no question of the signs of the times. For those who believe, it is a surreal question and we have to understand that, in this world and its chaos, there is a radical rejection of Christ. The coming of God is certain. Only through the Word of God can we understand the signs of the times, and that time itself is one of the signs of the times. It is about the message of the signs.

Van de Beek (2008:236) states that we should also be interested in the world so that we do not become unworldly. It must be emphasised that we are foreigners in this world. But that does not mean that we are not interested in the world, to bring about the new life and its new aspects. Therefore, it is also important to care for our body. Van de Beek (2008:257) makes a

very important observation. We have to look to Christ; we do not have to discuss everything about eschatology if we do not look to Christ, then our discussion is wrong. We have to look to Christ and the Kairos of history. We must be aware of utopian thought.

The death and parousia of Christ is a Kairos event (Van de Beek, 2008:257). The parousia of Christ differs from utopia. The eschaton is different from a future room. The Kingdom of God is different from this worldly holy state. First, the parousia is God's act; God comes in Jesus Christ. Secondly, it is a radical event. Thirdly, it is the end of all events. It is not a continuation of the history of the fulfilment of history. It is in our presence, in this Kairos in which we now believe in Christ. According to Van de Beek (2008:284), in Christ God judges the world. God judges the world in his deliverance; he came to this world; he is in this world. God loved the world so much that, in this world, he speaks his forgiveness. He says so to the murderer on the cross. The history of Christ's death is so radical and glorious that we cannot understand it. It is non-understandable from God. It is something totally wonderful. We do not understand God's justice and righteousness. People judge Christ unfairly, but God forgives. God gives life because this is his world. Even this world of injustice and suffering must be judged, but God does it on its own death warrant. The King of the Jews, the Christ, because the one who hangs on the cross is the judge. God is in this dying, godless, cursed world. God loves this world to be saved (Van de Beek, 2008:384).

According to Hoek (2004:202), because Jesus comes in truth majestically and gloriously, we are in a reality. Jesus comes as bridegroom and then he has three on the last judgement. It is the last judgement. It is separation. It is theodicy.

Acts 1:

> [6]Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"
>
> [7]He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. [8]But you

> will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."
>
> 9After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.
>
> 10They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11"Men of Galilee", they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Concerning the second coming of Christ, it is very important to acknowledge that there will be a return of Christ in judgement. We cannot walk away from the judgement of Christ and when he comes again, he will be the judge and he will judge according to the life lived. He will judge according to what he called us to do. He will ask it from us, but in Christ the judgement will be taken away. In Christ, there will be glory, there will be a proclamation that those people in Christ will not suffer eternally, that they will understand the fullness of Christ and that they will glorify him. The second coming of Christ, the return of Christ will, therefore, be glorious for those in Christ and they will gloriously explain that and confess that and glorify that to all people.

Some say that it is such a long time since Jesus was on Earth that we cannot accept that he will return again. So many years have passed. It is impossible to say that Christ will return to the world. How is it possible? This, however, was also uttered in the time of Peter and people said that it is such a long time since the promises of the fathers that Jesus will not return. Peter's answer to this was that a return of Jesus is not according to time. For the Lord, one day is like 1,000 years and 1,000 years is like one day. Therefore, he opines that the second coming of Christ will take place. Others say that, according to their belief, Christ, who died, was buried, resurrected and ascended into heaven will not come again. This Earth will continue and it will become a better world as it expects new life. Therefore, Christ will only come in the sense of helping us understand a new life on this Earth. We have

to understand the message of the second coming of Christ not as a physical return of Christ to this Earth, but rather as a spiritual understanding of new life that will be brought about by Jesus in different ways. Others say we must realise that Jesus will enhance people's lives but not in the sense of bringing new life by coming again physically. It is also part of the understanding of cosmology that a return of Christ to Earth is not possible. Some people say that it is not possible to continue to believe that a second coming of Christ is possible. If we turn to the passages and pericopes regarding the return of Christ, it is explicitly mentioned that the early Church expects the return of Christ. So real was the expectation that many of them thought that Christ will return to Earth during their life on Earth. Peter did mention that one day for the Lord is like 1,000 years and that 1,000 years is like one day. God will decide. God will decide when his Son comes again and the glorification of his Son will be so wonderful that it is not possible to say that not all people will experience that. The experience of the coming of the Son of God will be a total redemption and those who believe in Christ will expect that this will be the final consummation for mission. We must continue to proclaim in the world that Jesus will come again so that the eschatological coming of Christ in the end times will call people to believe in Christ and to return to Christ in a new way so that they can experience the fullness of the experience of new life in Jesus Christ. It is possible to experience new life, because he makes it possible in life. He will complete his task finally when he comes again and everything will be committed to him and he will commit all to God. This means that the second coming of Christ should be regarded as a reality. Come, Lord, come soon so that we experience that in the fullness of time.

8. The Anti-Christ

Balke (1999b:529-535) explains that the anti-Christ is coming in the last hour, and this could be viewed as an anti-Christian power, where the name of Christ is not accepted and the church can also be warned. Luther talked about the anti-Christ in his time as some people in the Roman Catholic Church. Calvin also mentioned that

the Pope of Rome is the anti-Christ. In fact, for Calvin, anti-Christ is the enmity against Christ in the church of Christ itself.

Concerning the anti-Christ, it is important to note a few things. First, although the anti-Christ is specially mentioned in the Bible and one has to take that into account, one has to say that John already mentions many anti-Christs in the world. The anti-Christ sets themself radically against God, rejects God, and rules over the world in a rejection of God. According to 2 Thess 2, the anti-Christ will come before the second coming of Christ, therefore, one has to expect that the anti-Christ will live in a total rejection of Christ and will turn against Christ. The anti-Christ will be the person who rejects any relationship with the living Christ and persecute the Christians. In the Bible, 666 refers io the understanding of the anti-Christ, and while some people say Nero or Domitian, it is very clear that the anti-Christ will be of the future rejecting Christ. Therefore, it is very important to acknowledge some eschatology in mission; we should warn against living in such a way that one is not following Christ and living with Christ. That one follows the rule of the anti-Christ and do what the anti-Christ calls us to do, and following the ways of the rejection of Christ, and we must always set ourselves against the rejection of Christ, and call people to redemption and to conversion when they do not want to acknowledge in this regard.

Essentially, we must regard the anti-Christ as totally rejecting Christ's salvation and peace. The anti-Christ is against God's rule and glory. The anti-Christ rejects Jesus' love. The anti-Christ propagates a new rule, the rule of evil and unlimited power. S/he or it wants to be God, the original sin. Nothing comes in its way. But Christ, the slain lamb, will overcome by his love.

The Bible clearly states that Christ will not come before the anti-Christ has been revealed. This is a serious matter and some say that it is only a spiritual understanding of people rejecting God's will. Those who reject God's will are the anti-Christ in that sense, and they stand against God in the sense of rejecting the will of God. 1 John mentions that there are many anti-Christs in the world. However, Thessalonians explains that the anti-Christ will come and will be against God and Christ and will reject the Word

of God. This means that there will be a time when the anti-Christ will set himself up against Christ and reject Christ. Therefore, the call must go out to all in mission: beware of the anti-Christ. Beware of those who reject Christ. Turn to Christ so that you can be saved and experience the fullness of God and the fullness of resurrection in him. He makes it possible to live with him. Those who follow the anti-Christ will be judged, because they follow the anti-Christ and not the true living God in Jesus Christ.

9. Final Consummation

The final consummation is the fulfilment of the promises of God. The end will be the end he brings about. Finally, all will be before him. He will reign supreme. Everything will be in his hands.

Revelation 20:

> [11]Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. The earth and the heavens fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. [12]And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. [13]The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what they had done. [14]Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. [15]Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Hoek (2004:262) writes that, first, history stands in the light of creation and God's rule of the world. Secondly, history stands in the light of reconciliation. Thirdly, history stands in the light of the end of history. Fourthly, history is viewed in the light of the cross of Jesus. Fifthly, in the end time, there will be a radical polarisation in history. Sixthly, we have to accept human responsibility for what we do and in history. Lastly, it is important that the glory of Christ be viewed in the Eucharist, the eschatological dinner. In the text about the Eucharist, it is the

last days. Jesus sang the hallel with his people. The resurrection of Christ is also noted in the Eucharist. Participation is very important. The community calls Maranatha, the Lord will come and the words, to my remembrance, have to do with the Messianic acceptance. The eschatology dinner in the New Testament has been through the Eucharist. It is a question of Eucharist and eschatology. There is no difference between the two, and only those who are baptised can take part therein. Those who have not been baptised are not part of the community.

Jesus and the events to come explain that we should not understand Jesus as a person separate from how the New Testament authors portrayed him. When we talk about the historical Jesus, he is not a person totally different from his portrayals in the New Testament.

According to Hill (2002:142), Jesus emphasised very strongly the Kingdom of God, and how the Kingdom of God will come about. He will play an important role in the coming of the Kingdom. How will God turn everything around, change everything? Humanity views things in a certain way. God will change it around. Jesus will change it around; God and the coming of his Kingdom are both present and future. Ultimately, Jesus will be vindicated. Jesus' humanity must be taken very seriously. It is also important that the future Kingdom, of which Jesus spoke, will come. We must understand that it should be regarded as tension between the present and the future and that Paul was of two minds about understanding the future. It is also important to understand the theological orientation.

> The Bible provides us with numerous models of hopeful expectation. The dreams, visions, and predictions it records are consistent on some levels and inconsistent on others. The latter fact cautions us against holding certain ideas about what lies ahead. We should remember that certainty about God's plan rendered some – including, for a time, the disciples themselves – incapable of recognizing Jesus. Faithfulness does not require such certainty, and easy certainty is a poor substitute for true faith. At its core, eschatology is about the character of God. If God can be

> trusted, then the future can be trusted with God (Hill, 2002:197).

Kovacs, Rowland and Callow (2004:218) refer to the long, blessed period of peace that God brings about. Koestner (2001:190) explains that, ultimately, there will be both grace and human accountability.

Revelation 20:

> 4I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God. They[a] had not worship[p]ed the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. 5(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

The reality of the judgement of Satan must, however, also be regarded. Revelation 20.

> 7When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog – and to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. 9They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

According to Hoek (2004:191), we should consider some of these aspects and not reject all of them, but only choose one. Hoek explains that the following should be taken into account. Revelation is not a prophetic code or a code for the future. We must not understand Revelation 20 chronologically after Revelation 19. We should always understand Revelation 20 in light of the Kingship of Jesus Christ. The Revelation of the resurrection and the ascension of Jesus is, therefore, very important. We should guard against considering speculation. According to Hoek (2004:198), the future is in the glory of Christ. He also explains that hope becomes reality, where people realise the understanding of the future that comes in Christ, the Kurios.

Balke (1999b:545-553) mentions that all the numbers in Revelation must not be viewed literally, but as symbols. The question of how we should deal with Israel and what we should understand is also a sign. He talks about the conversion of Israel and the profound way in which the church and Israel are linked to one another. God has something to do with the Israelites during all these years of persecution. God remains true to his church that is not true. The question is: Is the church always a mirror of holiness, catholicity, and apostology? We have to speak from God on Israel and the church.

Concerning Revelation 20, König (1980:172) writes that there is no time difference between the Kingdom of God and Jesus' life on Earth. Therefore, a thousand years must be viewed as the glorious victory of Christ over the devil. Although the devil continues to attack the Kingdom of God, God will remain triumphant. König (1980:179) explains that the Holy Spirit is very important for Jesus' way of bringing eschatology in people. Through the Holy Spirit it is important to understand the glorious resurrection, the glorious salvation of Jesus in this world. The Holy Spirit is an eschatological gift; therefore, it is important to understand that in the fullness of the eschatology. The Kingdom of God must be viewed as that the glory of God is present in Jesus. The ongoing kerugma of God in the world and preaching the explanation of the glory of God in the mission are very important and, through the Holy Spirit, the Gospel of Christ is brought to the whole world and the purpose of God will be received.

The final consummation is also very important. In the final consummation, the new life and the new world will come about. God will make a new life and a new world possible. God changes this world, so that new life is possible and he brings about the new world and one can expect that in eschatology. The eschatology of the Bible is clear about the new world that God brings about, and a new heaven. He brings this about by glorifying those who are in him and by changing the world. The question is: Is this new world a continuation of this world, and can we then say: In this world we build temples of the world to come? But it is as if the explanation of the new world, that the old world is totally destroyed, a total new world is coming about. A total new world in glory in Christ and that total new world is possible only through the glorious influence of God. The future is then in God's hands and we must take that into account when we talk about the future. That the future is in God's hands and that in Christ this future is made possible so that we can live in this glorious relationship with Christ. That is how the future is brought about, and the future of those in Christ with him for the glory of living with him.

It is also obvious that a final consummation will happen. When Jesus comes again, it will be the consummation of this world. It will not be a continuation of the old world. A totally new world will come about. The covenant explicitly explains that Christ will come again, that God will be our God, and that we will be his people in the final consummation. It will be obvious that God is God over all of us and that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. This final consummation will be a glorification of Christ. Everyone will acknowledge him. Salvation will be complete. Jesus Christ will be acknowledged as the One who came to Earth, died, and was resurrected and saved many, so that we can experience the fullness of life in him. This consummation will mean that the new Earth and the new heaven will come about. God will bring it about so that we can experience the fullness of the final consummation. It is a clear call to all to come to God and, in mission, this promise can be made to all so that all people can come to God and experience the fullness in God in that sense. The final consummation is the end of all suffering and pain. But it is also a challenge to live in a new relationship with God, in order to

experience this fullness of the final consummation. This is only possible in Jesus Christ the Lord, because he makes it possible. Therefore, mission must call all people to him. The judgement of Satan will then be complete. This means that, ultimately, everything will be completed. Does this mean that a judgement of Satan will, ultimately, complete everything and that everything will be in order? Does this mean that that is the end of everything, and that God's final judgement of Satan will end all rejection of God? According to Revelation, we cannot say that this will be the end of all judgement. God's judgement also continues in the final consummation.

The future is, therefore, found in Jesus Christ and is relevant in Jesus. Jesus completes the future. We see the future of this world. Jesus Christ brings about a new future and, in mission, we should tell people that it is possible to live in Jesus towards the future from the past. The creation and the covenant also reveal the future with the fullness of God that will be experienced in the fullness of God. It will be a totally new life with the living God. The future consummation and the future will be complete. Therefore, we can look towards the future for this wonderful consummation. This is different from the views of those who see a future in this world such as Moltmann's theology of hope. This is not a theology where we will have the new hope on Earth. It is a theology of hope for a new way of living in a totally new dispensation. This world will pass and a new world will come about. This future will be a future of God, the future where God intervenes and God changes everything. This future is the future of God. This future is the future of living with the living God.

10. The Future

Velema (1999a:581) mentions that judgement is both positive and negative. It must be said that the judgement of God is biblical. According to both the Old and the New Testament, God will judge humanity.

To many scholars such as Barth, Berkhof, and Verkuyl, there is no eternal damnation (Velema, 1999a:588). The arguments against eternal damnation are as follows (Velema, 1999a:591).

First, the justice of God; God will not judge in that sense. Secondly, Jesus took the sins of the world upon himself (John 1:29). Thirdly, God as judge will also give grace. Fourthly, God cannot judge God as anomaly in God. There are also other arguments such as that God wants the salvation of all. The psychological argument is how is it possible. The triumphant argument is that God's glory will overcome all sin and the devil will not have glory. The essence of the question is the relationship between God's justice and God's love. God's justice means that God keeps to his word and we must accept that God will keep to his word, and he will judge according to his Word. We cannot take away the judgement of God (Matt 13:41-42; 25:41-46; 8:12, 10:28; John 3:18, 3:36). If we take sin seriously, we must also take the judgement of God seriously. We must talk about eternal life which is present and eternal (Velema, 1999a:596).

Matthew 25 explains:

> 31When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. 32All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.
>
> 34Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 35For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, 36I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'
>
> 37Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? 38When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? 39When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

> [40]The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'
>
> [41]Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. [42]For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, [43]I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.'
>
> [44]They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'
>
> [45]He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'

Hagner (1995:746) explains:

> The time of the great judgment wherein the righteous and the unrighteous are finally separated will arrive with the glorious coming of the Son of Man. All the nations of the world – that is, every individual of those nations – are to be judged on the basis of their treatment of disciples of Jesus. This perhaps surprising statement points at once to the unique relation between Jesus and those who follow him and to the supreme importance of the mission and message of the church to the world. To treat the disciple, the bringer and representative of the gospel, with deeds of kindness is in effect to have so treated Jesus. Conversely, to fail to meet the needs of the Christian missionary is to fail to meet the needs of Jesus. There is thus a most remarkable bond of solidarity between Jesus and his disciples. Although disciples are naturally also called to do good to all people (cf. 9:13; 12:7), deeds of kindness must begin with brothers and sisters of the faith, with the church (cf. Gal. 6:10).

Velema (1999b:601) refers to the new heaven. In the Old Testament, God tells about new life and new heaven. The signs

and the metaphors are evident in both the Old and the New Testament, especially in Revelation 21 and 22. The glory of that is explained well. Glorious metaphors and signs tell about the glory of living with God. It is a symbol of life and new life with God and joy. There is continuity and discontinuity. our work implies that it is a new way to understand. God through grace gives us payment.

11. Excursion: The Parables

It is important to turn to the parables that convey so much about eschatology. We must take note of essential references in the parables.

First, we must list the parables. Then, the most important ones concerning eschatology must be noted. Finally, suggestions concerning eternal life must be made from the parables.

Table 1: List of parables (Chara Project, 2024)

PARABLES	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
Salt of the earth	5:13	9:50	
Lamp under a bowl	5:14-16	4:21-22	8:16, 11:33
Wise and foolish builders	7:24-27		6:47-49
New cloth on an old coat	9:16	2:21	5:36
New wine in old wineskins	9:17	2:22	5:37-39
The two debtors			7:40-43
The sower	13:1-23	4:1-20	8:4-15
The good Samaritan			10:25-37
The friend at midnight			11:5-13
Growing seed		4:26-29	
The rich fool			12:13-21
The watchful servants		13:35-37	12:35-40
Unfruitful fig tree			13:6-9
The weeds	13:24-30, 36-4		
The seed	13:31-32	4:26-30	13:18-19
Yeast	13:33		13:20-21

PARABLES	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE
The concealed treasure	13:44		
The pearl	13:45-46		
The casting of the net into the sea	13:47-50		
Owner of a house	13:52		
The Lost Sheep	18:12-14		15:3-7
The unforgiving servant	18:23-35		
The Vineyard Workers	20:1-16		
Lowest seat at the feast			14:7-14
The great feast			14:16-24
Cost of discipleship			14:28-33
The lost coin			15:8-10
The prodigal son			15:11-32
The shrewd manager			16:1-13
The rich man and Lazarus			16:19-31
Master and his servant			17:7-10
Persistent widow			18:1-8
The two sons	21:28-32		
The vineyard owner	21:33-44	12:1-11	20:9-18
The marriage feast	22:1-14		
Fig tree	24:32-35	13:28-31	21:29-33
Faithful and wise servant	24:45-51		12:42-48
The pharisee and the tax collector			18:9-14
Ten virgins	25:1-13		
The talent	25:14-30		19:11-27
The sheep and the goats	25:31-46		

DeSilva (2004:337) explains that exegetical skills are essential when interpreting the parables. This refers to the fact that the parables were part of Jesus' original teachings. DeSilva refers to the fact that an allegorical interpretation prevailed in earlier times, especially since Augustine's interpretation of

the parable of the Good Samaritan. Later, it was evident that many interpreters differed from the view that a parable must be interpreted allegorically. It was agreed that a parable should be viewed from a different perspective; parables are not allegorical; their original context must be taken into account, and they have to be understood by how Jesus understood them and sought to make only one point. Exegetes differ from these aspects and ask whether a parable should not be understood from different perspectives. DeSilva (2004:340) provides suggestions and guidelines for interpreting parables. Some guidelines are essential in the interpretation of the parables. First, DeSilva explains that context is all important and that we should consider the context of the original readers of, or listeners to the parable. Secondly, we should also consider how a particular evangelist explained the parable with its different views and explanations. Thirdly, it is also essential to know how the hearers viewed Jesus' original parables. What were the implications in that sense? How did they respond to them and how did they apply them? Furthermore, the parables should be explained in light of Jesus over all teachings and we should view how the parable fits in with what Jesus taught. Fourthly, we should take into account that parables have their own implications and not try to force implications on the parables, as Augustine did. Lastly, we should consider how the parables have implications for the present world and how we should understand them. It is important to note that the parables provide information about the relationship to God. Parables are stories told by Jesus to enlighten his disciples and the people around them about the Kingdom of God and its implications. We must take into account that parables do not provide detailed information about the use of all the future of people regarding heaven and hell. Parables provide information about the relationship to God. However, parables are not only stories; they also have implications for understanding how God relates to people and the future of people.

A very important parable is Luke 16:19-31.

The rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16)

[19]There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. [20]At his gate was

laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores [21]and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

[22]The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. [23]In Hades, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. [24]So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

[25]But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. [26]And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been set in place, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.'

[27]He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my family, [28]for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

[29]Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.'

[30]'No, father Abraham', he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.'

[31]He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'

Following DeSilva, it is clear that this parable has some relationship with the previous ones of the lost sheep and the lost son, but also about the law and the Kingdom of God. It is very clear that we should take it into account in the context of this parable. The context is the context of the kingdom of God and how the kingdom of God should be received. The hearers, listeners, and readers of this parable should take into account that God judges according to the relationship of the people to the salvation of

God. They have to be children of God in Abraham. We must acknowledge that, in this parable, the context is that he should be a child of Abraham because he was saved in that sense. The rich man was not listening to the fact that he should be a child of Abraham. Furthermore, according to Jesus' teachings, it is clear that the rich man is judged because he has not accepted the poor Lazarus and reached out to him. Therefore, the poor Lazarus is at Abraham's lap, while the rich man is not saved. Finally, we must note the implications of this parable. It is very clear that there are those who belong to Jesus and receive the fullness of glory in the lap of Abraham and those who are rejected, because they have had all on Earth and did not consider the love for their neighbours. The message of this parable is clear that God will call those who follow him to be in his presence and those who reject him to be rejected. Therefore, the man calls on Abraham to send him to warn his brothers so that they can come into the glory of God and not be rejected. Considering the entire parable, it is clear that, according to the teachings of Jesus, there is judgement and, according to this, relationship with the living Christ.

Nolland (1993a:832) writes as follows:

> In due course, both men died. In keeping with the indignities of his life, Lazarus had no one to bury him. But once both men are firmly across the portals of death, there is a radical reversal. Lazarus' body is not left to rot. Instead, he is translated to heaven, to that place of intimacy and consolation on the bosom of no one less than Abraham himself, the father of all Israel. In Jewish tradition, a few distinguished people, beyond Enoch (Gen. 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kgs 2:11), had been translated to heaven either alive, or immediately after death. Now Lazarus had joined their privileged ranks. (The story does not tell us exactly why Lazarus is so privileged since the rich man is the protagonist of the tale: not every poor person is so privileged.) By contrast, the rich man was placed in the earth with all dignity, but he found himself in torment in Hades, the place of the departed dead. In some strands of Jewish tradition, one expected to experience in Hades in a preliminary way

> what would be one's fate at the last judgment. The rich man was experiencing his fate! Now Lazarus enjoys freedom and peace, and the rich man is constrained and tormented.

Morris (1976:255) explains that life is possible in the risen Christ. There is differentiation in after life. Marshall (1978:639) mentions that miracles will not convince anybody.

Other parables about eschatology should be considered, in order to understand the future of the person before God. Another important parable is that of the ten minas (Luke 19:11). Jesus told the parable of the noble who went out and was crowned king. The people had to give their money or talents. The one with ten minas had many more, the one with five minas had more, and the one with one mina buried it because he thought that God would judge him. The question is: Why then did you not pay? You put my money on a deposit so that when I come back, I could collect it with interest. It is very clear that God expects us to live according to his Word in a personal relationship with him and to use the challenge that God gives us to the best of our abilities. For our future with God and for the expectation of eternity, it is important to live in this life according to the will of God and according to what he has given us. Therefore, we must take into account that we are to live before God and experience the fullness of life before God. Those who acknowledge God, live with God and use their talents, so that God may be glorified, experience the fullness of this life with him.

DeSilva (2004:333) explains that emphasis on labour in the meantime waiting on the coming of the kingdom is also essential. Luke views the time of waiting on God as time of expectation and service before God.

Nolland (1993a:912).explains the implications from Jesus kingship well

> "Jesus is about to enter Jerusalem, and he will do so as a royal figure. However, he enters not as a royal pretender seeking to take the throne but as one about to journey far away to gain his royal commission to rule. He will leave behind servants who must see themselves as entrusted with

> resources to be used to gain profit for their master, and fellow citizens who object to his royal pretensions. When he returns with his royal authority secured, he will receive his servants and, in accord with their fidelity, share his rule with them. Upon his return he will also liquidate those whose response to his royal claims was treasonable: they have no place in his kingdom." His view of the possibility of nominalism can be challenged because of Jesus' royal right to judge

Another parable is that of the great banquet in Luke 14:15. Jesus tells this parable of people being invited to the great banquet and many made excuses such as I have bought a field; I must go and see I have five yokes of oxen; another got married, and then the servant is ordered to go out into the streets to go to as many people as possible to lead them to join in the banquet of the Lord. He also says that not one of those men who were invited will get a taste of my banquet. This reveals the way in which God calls all to come to him, especially the people of Israel, so that the Israelites can join the big banquet. But they all have excuses. God will go to those outside Israel and call the heathen to join in the big banquet, so that they can be in a relationship with God.

> It is not the people with the most publicly obvious claim upon an invitation to partake of the eschatological banquet who will finally be found there. Jesus is currently being snubbed by many as he calls people to come into the kingdom of God, and it is the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind who are finding their way into the banquet (Nolland, 1993:754).

The parable of the rich fool (Luke 12:13):

> [13]Someone in the crowd said to him, 'Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.'
>
> [14]Jesus replied, 'Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?' [15]Then he said to them, 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions.'

> [16]And he told them this parable: 'The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. [17]He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.'
>
> [18]Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. [19]And I'll say to myself, 'You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.'
>
> [20]But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'
>
> [21]This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God.'

From the context of the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12 from verse 13, Jesus must be recognised and be followed and honoured to glorify Jesus. Even the sin against the Holy Spirit is mentioned. Again the original meaning of this text is important. The rich man was conceited and proud and did not consider that God would judge. Judgement is a special aspect of this parable. According to Jesus' teachings, there will be judgement and the original readers and this text imply that Jesus will rule and that we will be judged according to our life. What is important? To have riches in God or to have riches with God.

Nolland (1993:687-688) explains as follows:

> The focus of answerability moves now from the need for a clear-cut acknowledgment of Jesus to the need for a right evaluation and use of material wealth. The appeal to Jesus to intervene in an inheritance dispute threatens to be a bizarre and inverted repetition of what happened when Moses intervened in Exodus 2:14. The rich man, feeling that all his life's needs are fully satisfied by his recent bumper crop, finds that he is in for a rude surprise.

A rich man had a good crop and thought to himself that he has no place to store it. "I will make it even bigger. I have plenty of good

things." Verse 20: But God said to him: You fool, this very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself. This is a warning that God will judge people and that they must be warned not to live according to their own preferences, but that they should note that they have to live before God and that God will also judge them according to what they experience in life. This man did not consider God.

For eschatology, it is crucial to always consider God. The parables call on people to consider that they live before God and that they will be judged by God. Jesus will come again and he will come as a judge. The parables call people to repentance. This is very important for mission and eschatology because mission is a call going out to the people to turn to God, to be saved by God, and to change their lives and become people before God.

The parable of the seed and the sower (Matthew 13:1-9) is also very important, because the sower of the parable explains that we have to be in a relationship with God, respect the Word of God, and live according to the Word of God. Some people did not acknowledge that and lived in that personal relationship with God. There are different ways of experiencing the Word of God and those who listen to the Word of God will, ultimately, be able to harvest the crop. Clearly, some people accept the Word of God, but ultimately lose it. Those with a noble and good heart hear the Word of God, keep it and produce a crop. The parable thus calls people to harvest the crop, to use their talents, to experience a life with God, and to explain that the life of God brings about much peace and glory.

Hangner (1993:369) emphasises the grace of God, even in this parable:

> "The parable addresses the failure and success of seed in the goal of fruit bearing. Specifically it describes the environment in which the seed comes to no effect and that in which the seed becomes productive. These circumstances, it will be seen from the following pericope, are not the result of accident, as in the case of sowing, but involve the grace of God and the responsiveness of human

> beings. The growth of the kingdom is, as the rest of the chapter will show, the work of God."

Even the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) explains that it is important to live in the Kingdom of God according to the rules of the Kingdom. To live according to the rule of love for our neighbour and to experience the love for our neighbour. To be a person who reaches out to the person in need. This is a call from the Word of God so that we can experience this relationship with him. The good Samaritan looked after the person who was in trouble, but the priest and those who were called to do that went far away from him. So Jesus makes it abundantly clear that, for the future of a life with God in the Kingdom of God, it is necessary to be in a relationship with God and to acknowledge God.

DeSilva (2004:319) also mentions that forgiveness of sins for all is also present in the way that the grace of God is shown to all.

Nolland (1993a:597) correctly lays claim on the aspect of mercy from the victims perspective .

For much of the history of the church the parable has been understood by taking the Samaritan to be Jesus, and this view has found fresh support in some modern scholarship. The idea has also been canvassed that the wounded man represents Jesus. The more usual modern view is that the parable is an example story in which the Samaritan shows us a compassion unrestricted by national, racial, or religious barriers. This is certainly better than the more allegorical approaches, but in the end is not quite correct. We need to keep in mind that the story is told from the perspective of the wounded man, and not from the perspective of the Samaritan. This is true in the story itself, and in the attached dialogue at the end, it is the wounded man who ends up with a neighbour, not the Samaritan. The story is a challenge to take up the victim's perspective.

The person who looked after the man who fell into the hands of the robbers experienced God's truth and life with God. In the Kingdom of God, God is looking for those who want to be saved. He wants them to come into his community and live before him.

The parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son (Luke 15:1-32) explain abundantly that God wants to call people to him, so that they can be in this personal relationship with him. He wants to find the lost sheep, he wants to find the lost coin, he wants to find the lost son. God reaches out to them. He is a good father, the overflowing fountain of all that is good, so that people can be saved and come in this relationship with him. The lost sheep is the person who leaves 99 sheep in the open country and goes to look for the lost sheep, so that it can be saved. It is said: I tell you in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven if one sinner will repent over 99 righteous people who do not do repent. In this interaction with the Pharisees, Jesus calls them to repent and to accept that he is the One who went out to people so that those who were in need can be saved. In the parable of the lost coin, there is rejoicing when the lost coin is found. God will also go out and find the future for people who are lost. The parable of the lost son explains that there is hope for those sinners who fell into sin, who are far away from God, and who have turned around and come to the good Father who accepts and allows them into his house with joy. It is obvious that, for the future of the sinner, God is opening the Kingdom of God so that people can enter it. This parable has something very important to say for the future of the person living before God, and for the future of the person to accept God. These parables are juxtaposed with the parables of Lazarus and the rich man. The separation and wrath of God against the rich man and the acceptance of those who are lost and asked to come into a relationship with God, so that they can be saved.

Nolland (1993a:789.) claims that joy is central to these parables: "

> "This large parable completes the section 15:1–32. The "joy in heaven" of the earlier parables prepares us for thinking of the parable father in close connection with God, and also causes us to come to the parable with images of discovery, repentance, and shared joy. The parable itself helps us to see that in the ministry of Jesus, sinners, who in their need draw near, are finding the free and generous love of the heavenly Father. Despite the elder son's misgivings,

> there is nothing here that should disturb those who are concerned with holy living; here the faithful are regaining lost brothers whom they should welcome and whose restoration they should celebrate."

An interesting parable is that of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14). The Pharisee goes to the temple; he is full of himself and he prays to God thanking him that he is not like the other men. But the tax collector stood at a distance and said: "God have mercy on me, I am a sinner." It is an important parable for understanding how we relate to the Kingdom of God and to the eschatological future of the people who are with God. The self-righteous will not receive the Kingdom. Those who admit their sin and humble themselves before God will receive the Kingdom. It must be explained and emphasised that the future of the person is the future of the person in God who receives the future through God and who lives before God. This enables a person to enter into this relationship with God and experience the fullness of the future with God. Concerning the parable of the tax collector and the Pharisee, according to the teachings of Jesus, we must be humble and broken. Following the law and boasting about following the law or being humble and following Christ and submitting to Christ is very important. The meaning for today is that submission to Jesus Christ is important in that sense.

Nolland (1993a:878–879). refers to the change in perspective in the parable.

> "To read our parable well requires a positive starting image for Pharisee and a negative starting image for tax collector. It is the work of the parable subtly to qualify the level of our initial approval of this Pharisee, and to cause us to begin to see that there may yet be hope for those who have been written off by respectable society"

Another important parable is that of the tenants (Luke 20-9-19). It is about a man who planted a vineyard, rented it out, and went away. He sent his servants to collect his due and they rejected him. In the end, he sent his own son, and they killed him. The owner said: "I will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to

others." This is a stern warning to those who do not accept that Jesus is the Lord who came to save them, but they reject the son of God and turn their back on him. It is a call to acknowledge the relationship of the living Christ and to enter into a relationship with him. Therefore, it is written that the stone, which the builders rejected, has become the capstone. Those who fall on that stone will be broken to pieces. But those, on whom the stone falls, will be crushed. This wonderful relationship with God is possible, if we come to Christ and accept him as the son of God. We have to take responsibility for the vineyard, for the Kingdom of God, and for living in this new relationship with the living God.

Nolland's (1993b:954). view should be accepted namely:

> "A certain inspiration for the parable comes from Isa 5:1–7, where the owner of a vineyard is also a God-figure. While in Isaiah the focus is on the vineyard itself, in our parable the focus is on those who have responsibility for the vineyard, that is the leaders of God's People, identified in v 19 as the scribes and the chief priests.
>
> In our parable, the owner is absent and deals with his tenants by means of a series of messengers. At the start of the parable it is clear that his absence is only temporary, but as the action unfolds, the key figures, and even the listeners, lose sight of this fact. This motif has to do with the perceived remoteness and therefore powerlessness of God. In the end, the parable declares any thought of God's powerlessness to be a delusion."

The parable of the weeds (Matthew 13:24)

> 24Jesus told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. 25But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and went away. 26When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared.

> [27]The owner's servants came to him and said, 'Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds come from?'
>
> [28]'An enemy did this,' he replied.
>
> "The servants asked him, 'Do you want us to go and pull them up?'
>
> [29]'No,' he answered, 'because while you are pulling the weeds, you may uproot the wheat with them. [30]Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn.'

Concerning the parable of the weeds, to live according to the will of God is crucial. It is placed just after a parable of the sower and seeds and it means that we must be in a general relationship with the living Lord and the Word. In the Kingdom of God, the enemy sows the weeds amongst the wheat, and that leads to danger. The disciples asked whether they must pull the weeds out, but Jesus told them to leave them in because, in the Kingdom of God, the end will ultimately be all important. God will decide and, ultimately, there will be clarity as to what will happen to the weeds.

According to Hagner (1993:384),

> [i]f we restrict ourselves here to the self-contained world of the parable, suspending its application until the discussion of vv. 36-43, we may at least conclude that the field sown by the man did not turn out as he desired. He had sown good seed, but an enemy had sown weeds in the same field. The result was a mixture of wheat and weeds. The solution, however, was not to be in an immediate separating of the two. Instead, for the time being the two were to be allowed to grow together, so that the field was not an ideal field but one manifesting the contradiction of good and bad. This state of affairs, moreover, was to remain so until the full maturity of the wheat and the time of harvest, when finally the wheat would be separated from the weeds. Then the

> evil would be brought to its end, and the good alone would remain. The kingdom of God has indeed come, but it has not yet brought the eschatological judgment.

It is very clear that, in this instance, there is separation between the good seed and the weeds. God will judge those who reject him, but not during this world but in the consummation. Ultimately, there will be a separation, and there will be judgement and we have to take that into account concerning the future of people. Therefore, it is also important for mission work to understand that people have to be called to repent and to a new relationship with God, so that they will not be uprooted and be part of the weeds that will be rejected in the future.

Another important parable is that of the two sons in Matthew 21:28. The two sons were asked to go to work and the one said "No, I won't go." The other one said "Yes, I will." But one did go to work and the other did not. Jesus told them in verse 31: "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God ahead of you." This implies that the Kingdom of God is for those who accept and listen to the Word of God, and who accept Jesus and enter into a personal relationship with Jesus and glorify him. Therefore, the future belongs to those who are in this relationship with the living Christ in the Kingdom of God.

Hagner (1995:614–615) correctly refer to the sinner can be saved :

> "Doing the will of the Father, for Jesus, is more than simply a matter of words; it is always a matter of deeds (cf. esp. 7:21–27; 25:31–46). It is one thing to say one does or will do the will of the Father; it is another thing actually to do it. Words alone mean nothing. A certain claim of serving God and being faithful to Torah went with being the religious leadership of the Jewish people. Yet in fact these leaders were not obedient to God. They had not heeded the message of John the Baptist, just as they now opposed the message of Jesus himself. But the paradox lay in the fact that the despised sinners, the tax collectors and harlots - those with no claim to righteousness whatsoever - believed both John and Jesus. Thus they, rather than the "righteous"

> establishment (cf. 9:13), were entering the kingdom of God. They who knew themselves to be desperately needy of grace were the ones open to it and thus the ones who received it.

Collins (2020:39) refers to Jesus' role in the new life:

> The New Testament holds out the prospect that the injustices of the present will be erased in the future. In the meantime, however, something must be done to ease the plight of the poor. Here the New Testament, beginning with Jesus, follows the lead of Second Temple Judaism in advocating almsgiving. When the rich young man asked Jesus for advice, Jesus told him that he lacked one thing: "Go sell what you own, and give your money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven." Likewise, he tells his followers in Luke 12:32-44: Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. If the treasure is in heaven, that is presumably where the kingdom will be too. There are several instances of almsgiving in the Book of Acts (9:36; 10:2, 4). Almsgiving is also at issue in the judgment scene in the Gospel of Matthew (25:31-46). Here Jesus separates the sheep from the goats.

12. Eschatology and the Glory of God in Mission

It is important to know that eschatology is concerned, firstly, with God's involvement in this world and, secondly, with how he leads this world from creation to final consummation. Regarding the former, God has been involved in the world from the beginning, from creation. The world is God's creation because God called it into existence, and God is involved in creation after the fall, when humans rejected him and wanted to go on their own way. In the case of the latter, God's leadership towards his final destination for the world, Christ is always present. We must consider both of these eschatological elements seriously. God is involved in this

world; eschatology is concerned with God's involvement from the beginning to the end, including how God leads this world to final consummation in Jesus Christ. Eschatology is future-oriented and, as such, we have to take into account what will happen in the future when God brings everything to final consummation.

Mission is chiefly focused on eschatology; according to the latter, God is the ruler of the world and will lead the world to the final consummation in Jesus Christ so that salvation can be complete in a new world. Mission also has this explicit view that God will complete this world and that mission is tasked with communicating this wonderful essential part of God's revelation. Consequently, mission calls people intensively to a new relationship with the living God. It is this very calling in mission that emphasises the significance of justice, specifically in the sense of waiting for the final consummation. We must call people to follow Christ; this is, essentially, a call for universal justice based on trust and belief in God. Therefore, mission does not only call the faithful to God to live before him, but also to live in justice. The latter becomes another core focus of mission.

The route between eschatology and mission can clearly be charted by including justice as a central point between them. Eschatology means that God will be the ruler of the Earth, that everyone will know that the anti-Christ will be revealed, that Satan will be judged, and that God will, ultimately, be the One who brings about total redemption and consummation. Similarly, mission means that people will be called, as Paul mentions in 2 Corinthians 5:21, to be reconciled with God. This is a complete calling that goes out to everyone: to be reconciled with God in Christ because of new life in him. This call should still go out in mission; the latter should not shy away from the calling so as to enable people to reconcile with God. The ministry of reconciliation stretches even further when we consider that everyone will have to honour God and experience the fullness of life with him.

Yet mission in eschatology also implies the essential nature of humbleness and brokenness before God. Mission calls all people to be vulnerable in their relationship with God by bringing their brokenness to him. Such vulnerability is also a calling to come to

God and live with God in a new way, to experience the fullness of living with God and to experience a new life with him. Mission, therefore, is to be humble and broken, but also to be revealed as the children of God. This revelation will help others to see and comprehend the fulness of God. This fullness refers to God's worldly presence. Mission guides people to understand that it is possible to come to God and be healed, that there is healing from brokenness in a relationship with the living God.

Taking the aforementioned discussions into considerations implies that eschatology certainly has an effect on the present world and on the future destination of humankind. This destination is only possible through Jesus Christ's redemption: he sacrificed himself so that he, as the one for the others, can bring about the future. In this sense, eschatology should be recognised as the way in which Christ is involved in this world up to the final consummation. After his resurrection and ascension, Christ, the glorious King of the world, is involved in everything that occurs in the world until the final call of the trumpet. This means that we have to consider not only an end time, but also the way in which Christ is involved in humankind. The end times are, therefore, not the end of time, but the end times of the call to understand that God steers this world to its final destination.

Across the globe, new possibilities for growth are needed. The same is true of Africa, a continent with a multitude of unique challenges and as many resources and diverse cultures. It is known that issues such as socio-economic injustice, inequality, gender-based violence, war, and famine are grave concerns in some African nations, as is true in many other countries. Apart from humanitarian efforts to alleviate these concerns, along with legislative, social, and cultural changes that take place each day, the church in Africa also has a role to play. Christ is the vehicle for new hope, and the church in Africa should consider prioritising confessing and sharing anew Jesus as hope for renewal and redemption in the world.

As the ministry of reconciliation, mission has to take into account that proclaiming Christ as the source of hope is crucial. The ministry of reconciliation means that people have to be

reconciled with the living God. According to 2 Corinthians 5:11-21, this reconciliation is only possible in Jesus Christ who gave his life so that this new consummation of the world can be possible in him. Reconciliation with God means that human beings can live in a new relationship with God. Paul calls all people to convert and to believe in Jesus Christ. This call means that Christ is different from any other religious leader: he, the one without sin, sacrificed himself so that we could be saved and could experience the fullness of the glory of Christ in him. Mission is concerned with the future of the human being, and ministry from the church will go out into the world and call all people so that they can become new in Jesus Christ and experience a new reconciled relationship with the living God. From this reconciled relationship, justice and a new life emerge. This is a relationship of glory and hope because inherent in it is a future with the God of the beginning, the God who created everything and who is also the God who leads forth the world to the final consummation. This is only possible because God is the living God who brings about this new life. The creator God changed the world of sin into a new possibility through Christ who gave his life. Christ is at the centre of eschatology. The future, the future life, the promise of eternal life, and the resurrection of the body are not to be shunned and must be considered. This fullness is clear in what Christ does, and how Christ does it for the benefit of the believer.

Apart from the above-mentioned established connections between eschatology and mission, various other aspects related to eschatology also bear discussion. The first of these is sin. We should acknowledge that sin is a reality. Furthermore, we must also consider the effect of sin on the sinner and the fact that the sinner can end up in debt before God. That all sinners will be judged by God in the final judgement; the final judgement from Christ will lead people to acknowledge their sins. Sin is not only a few wrongdoings. It is also a radical move or turn against God, a rejection of God, and not being what God calls us to be. We are, therefore, reminded that God is a God of justice.

Another predominant concern is that Christ brings about the hope of the final destination where everyone will stand before God. According to the Bible, this eschatological implication

should not only be regarded metaphorically or symbolically. Instead, it also speaks to our worldly reality and the reality of the final consummation. These realities, given by God, are true realities. Here, therefore, we have to differ from Barth, who takes a symbolic view and interprets it from his own perspective and his view of Scripture. We must consider that Scripture has definite implications for eschatology, for it affects how we view the future of life after death and also in the final life with God where all the tears will be wiped off our eyes. Therefore, it is crucial to acknowledge God who brings about this new life.

In musings regarding eschatology, it is also not uncommon for specific questions to arise. One such a question is: is the Bible not limited in the sense that it is from a different worldview, where there is a three-tiered world understanding of creation, the Earth, the heavens, and the waters below the Earth? Is this the worldview we must consider when we want to decide on how to engage the current world? It is true that the Bible has a specific worldview. Essential truths are relayed in the Bible and we should never understand these as a metaphor or a symbol. The truth is very clear and we should understand that and enter into that relationship with God. Thus, we must consider that the Bible is clear about many things concerning eschatology. First, eschatology is grounded in the creation of God, when God mentioned that what he created is good. In John 1:1-2, Christ is regarded as being present in the creation; through him, everything is created. Therefore, we must also consider Christology when we talk about eschatology. We should also differ from König who mentions that Christ is the eschaton. Christ is more than that: he is the glorious Son of God. Christ is one with God whereas eschaton is only a part of God's rule and his consummation of the world. Therefore, Christ should not be considered the eschaton alone, but part of the eschaton, as the one who steers and glorifies himself in the eschaton. The eschaton is further discussed by Calvin and Heyns, who hold definite views of the eschaton in light of its Biblical implications. They want to be certain that we take into account how God leads the world to its final consummation.

Calvin has a great deal to say about the bodily resurrection, another eschatological matter. He claims that, after death, the

body will be resurrected. It will be a new body, a wonderful body. However, 1 Corinthians 15 proclaims that the physical does change upon resurrection. Instead, it becomes a spiritual being: this body will be a new body, although it will also be the body that dies; the body that died will be like a seed and from the seed the new plant will grow. In this instance, we have to agree with Calvin that God wants us to understand that the body will ultimately be resurrected. The bodily resurrection will be the end hope of the believer because they will live in this new body before God. It is also important to consider that there will be an intermediate state after death until the bodily resurrection occurs. Van de Beek mentions that we have to consider the time after death and that the time after the final consummation will be different from the time in this world. God will be more than time and will give us the experience of life before him. Because time has a different implication, we cannot say that death and being with Christ in heaven and the final resurrection will be of a different time. God will bring these events together in his glorious implications for this new life.

How this will come about bears consideration. First, life and death are very important. Life is God's gift to human beings. It is a gift of beauty to live before God, to experience God, to live in this world, to understand the world, to experience all the goodness of the world, and to experience the love of God and his ruling in this world. We should always be cognisant of how to live before God and glorify him. Yet we must be aware that this life is also a life of sin. Our journey in our life with Christ is living with the dual awareness of the glory of life with Christ and the reality of sin. Eschatology is essential to understand that God will bring about new life after death, where sin will no longer be a reality. After death, God brings about the glory of a new life with him. Life after death, including bodily resurrection, is a reality we should keep in mind when reading the Bible. God, the glorious king and lord, will bring about the new consummation and the glory of living with God for ever and ever.

The issues of heaven and hell necessarily come to the fore when considering death and life after death. Although, according to some people, heaven and hell should not be recognised in the

modern world, the Bible is very clear on the matter. There is life after death with the living God. Death is not the end, but it is the glorious meeting with Christ, being with Christ, as the apostle Paul declares. In Philippians 1:21-26, he says:

> [21]For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. [22]If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! [23]I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; [24]but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. [25]Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, [26]so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

Later, in Philippians 3:7-14, he observes:

> But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. [8]What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ [9]and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in[a] Christ – the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. [10]I want to know Christ – yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, [11]and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.
>
> [12]Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. [13]Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, [14]I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Paul indicates that he longs to leave this world behind because he yearns to be with Christ. The promise of eternal life with God removes the sting of death. Death holds no threat for the Christian in Christ, because God has promised that the Christian will leave this world, be with Christ in glory, and all the tears will be wiped of their face.

The glory of heaven is to be considered in all essence. It should be noted that the Bible provides clear pictures of heaven in the parables and in Revelation. These are only pictures we can see through the lens of this world; they have implications for life after death. We must understand, firstly, that we will be with Christ immediately after our death in Christ. We will experience the bliss of being in his glorious realm. We will be glorified in Christ and experience his glory; we will be with him to experience new life as well as good and new relations with God. Secondly, all the tears will be wiped from our faces. All the terrible want and destruction of the world will end. We will experience the beauty of being in the vicinity of God. We will experience the fullness of God and of his glory. Thirdly, God will rule there in all essence. His fullness is complete and replete in heaven, his will be done as we often pray – now, we can also experience it.

Heaven is also viewed as the way in which God turns around this sinful world into a new world where he is present as ruler. Hell, however, is an opposite reality in the Biblical picture of eschatology. We cannot turn away from it and the many instances where it is explained. Hell is called the place of burning, the place of destruction, the place of rejection, and the place where sinful people will experience the wrath of God. In Hebrews 10:31, we are reminded that it is "a fearful and terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God", incurring his judgement and wrath. We cannot remove this from the Bible; this text cautions us and calls us to redemption and conversion. We have to turn around and come before God to experience his goodness and mercy. A turnaround is necessary in order to turn away from hell. Though the Bible sometimes depicts versions of hell that do not seem eternal, and although we cannot say who will be in hell, it is important that we acknowledge that hell is a reality for those who do not believe and repent.

The Roman Catholic religion propounds the existence of purgatory, an ethereal space between being dead and alive. Here, the souls of sinners dwell in agony while expiating their sins before they can ascend to heaven in the event that they did not confess and were not absolved of all their sins before their death. The concept of purgatory should not be accepted as no Biblical reference to it exists. The Bible clearly distinguishes between the living and the dead. No evidence in the Scripture supports the notion that people will continue to live in purgatory and then experience heaven. Although we speak about these things, we are in the hands of the living God. In his justice and wonder, God can bring about the consummation of the world as the true God who saves the world. He can bring about new life and a new way of living through his influential distinction of new life. We can thus understand that eschatology has to do with God's love and God's final implication of a new life. God can do what people cannot envisage because he is the God of new things. In eschatology, we should always be open to the truth that God can change this world and the final consummation into something totally new. The Bible itself alludes to this by saying that there will be no temple because God will be the temple; there will be no light because God will be the light of the people. God brings that about in Christ. The most important aspect is Jesus' death and resurrection is that he makes it possible for us to live in this new creation and in a new relationship with him.

What are all the implications of all of these eschatological factors for mission? Mission, as the ministry of reconciliation, must lead people to reconcile with God, to have peace of mind, and to being taken up in heaven and experience the resurrection of the body as a true resurrection of the new person. Therefore, the church must go out into the world and call people to redemption and to conversion so that they can come into this new relationship with God with their eyes on the future: the future of living with God in glory. The church cannot be silent about this. It should explain, confess, and glorify this to the world in Jesus' name.

The church are bearers of Christ's sure message. Mission is also involved in leading people out of darkness into the wonderful light of God. This crucial missionary task of the church cannot be

denied or underestimated, and the church cannot be silent about it. Although we do not know how God will finally judge those who hear the gospel, we know that the Bible says that we must confess Christ. In Romans 10, it is clear that those who confess and know Christ will be saved. The glorious salvation will come in the end, when we are saved in Christ and experience the fullness of this glorification.

Both mission and eschatology are related to justice. We cannot speak of eschatology without mentioning justice for the person and justice for the world. Global issues of extreme poverty and need as well as the extreme challenges of the ecological crisis call us in mission to regard ecology as a new way of living in this world, and to consider eschatology as a new sense of ecology. In the same way as did Conradie, we should confess that this world is also important to God. Although this world will pass away and a new life will be possible, a new creation will come about. It is also impossible to live in this world if God does not make it possible, according to the Word of God. People must do what God requires of them in order to be in a personal, living relationship with him. We must confess that eschatology is possible in Christ alone, because he sacrificed his life; as the Son of God, he makes it possible for people to live according to his Word. He opens up new life and new possibilities because he died on the cross, surrendered himself, and created a possible future for us.

In an important article, Hoek (2024:13ff) explains that we currently live in changing times in expectation of the eschatological end. Therefore, Hoek argues, it is crucial to emphasise the transcendent aspect of eschatology, where the latter concerns the wonderful implications of the transcendent God in this world. In these final days, it is important to recognise that God works in this world and explains to us how to live according to his word during this time. Many have tried to explain how we should recognise and acknowledge the final day. The question pertaining to when Christ will come again has led people to attempt to explain when it will happen, often resulting in incorrect assumptions. According to Hoek, we must accept that living in the final days does not mean that we are certain about the day or the times, as these remain in God's hands. We live a life

of rapid expectations we can see how what we expect is realised in this world: wars, famine, climate change, and more. All these events emphasise that Christ will come again soon.

However, there are also positive aspects in these times, such as the confession of Christ and the missionary work of the church. The Word of God is explained to the entire world. Many people will come to Christ in the final days and recognise him as the true and wonderful Saviour of the world. These are positive signs of the coming of Christ. Some prophecies are fulfilled and others still expected; regarding the latter, we have to see to it that they will be totally fulfilled in the future. Although, according to God's Word, we live in the final days, we can also enjoy in full the wonders of life before God and the glory that God gives us to experience. We must be watchful and sober while waiting on the Lord. Hoek makes much of faith, hope, and love in these final days. As we live in expectation of the final days of the coming of Christ, Hoek argues, we have hope and we have to live in faith, expecting to live in a good relationship with God and also in love with our fellow human beings and in the expectation of the coming of Christ. As pilgrims in the Kairos, we continue on the road to the new world. Three important points can be taken from Hoek's paper. Firstly, eschatology must always be viewed in light of the transcendence eschatology, which implies that transcendence itself should be acknowledged. Secondly, we should be cognisant that we live in the final days, but be at peace in the expectation that God will decide when the end will come. Thirdly, can live in enjoyment and in recognition of God's reality in this world.

For Hoek, there is no question that the wonders of the new Earth and the new world will come about. God is our hope and is also the focal point of our hope (Hoek, 2004:200). In this hope, we live in expectation of the new world that God will bring. The old world will be destroyed with fire and flame. There will be continuity and discontinuity with the old world. It is not a *nova creatio*, a total new creation, but a *recreatio*, a renewal of the old world. The *recreatio* is, however, radically new, and several aspects within in should be acknowledged. Jesus will truly come; unquestionably, Jesus will return and bring about new life and hope for all who belong to him. He will come majestically to save

the world (Hoek, 2004:208) and will be recognised as the King of the world, which he will rule over. There will also be a last judgement that will put things right again (Hoek, 2004:214ff). Those who are in God will be separated from those who are against God, and his justice will be seen (Hoek, 2004:220). Resurrection of the dead will occur and we will have a new body like Christ. We will also be in a new relationship with God; not only will we live in a continuously new body, but also in a wholly new body that God will bring about. Therefore, we should recognise, according to Hoek, that the God of hope brings about completely renewed hope which should be considered when discussing eschatology. As such, it could be taken into account that the new world is possible in God and that God will bring about new things, which we should recognise in what we are called, considering God's involvement in this world. It becomes evident, then, that our hope in God, in the renewal and changing and bringing about new redemption, is a crucial aspect in dealing with eschatology in general.

We thus look to the future, to see the final consummation; we live with our eyes and hearts raised up, according to Colossians 3:1, to the glory that is in Christ. We are able to do this through Christ giving his life to lead people in this world the new life. Christ's involvement with the Holy Spirit is equally important. We have to acknowledge that the Holy Spirit makes many things possible in Christ because the Holy Spirit confesses that Christ is the Lord. Already in this current life, the Holy Spirit brings about new life and calls us to the glory of a life with God in the future. This Holy Spirit blesses us with the favours of Jesus Christ so that we can accept the glory of Christ already in this world. However, the critical question - whether everyone will be saved - remains. There is no indication in the Bible that this is true. Although there are certain elements that God's salvation is universal and for everyone, it is not a revelation that everyone will be saved in that sense. It is clear, in both the writings of John and Paul, that God will judge the world. We have to take seriously the call people to repent and to enter into new life in Christ. The church will always convey this call so that this new life and possibility is conferred to people. It is a glorious way of confessing that Christ is the Lord.

Christ is the slain Lamb of God; he was broken on the cross. It is also in the light of brokenness that eschatology should be regarded. Christ calls us to follow him in brokenness. In this world, the church must also be broken, following the broken Christ. The parousia of Christ is also the coming of the slain lamb. But he is also the One who can open the book of history (Revelation 5) and bring about the final consummation; glory is therefore present in brokenness, the broken is also resurrected. Christ will come again to bring about the wonder of the new world. This is only possible because he was slain on the cross on our behalf. In Christ, the church is also healed and on the way to glory in Christ.

As the truth can be understood and recognised, the implication is that we cannot determine who God will and will not save. Will we have to look at Barth anew and say that the calling of God is universal? We know that the impossible does exist, but also that we can reject it. When we talk about the possibility of being rejected, of not being saved, we talk about that humbly and with sorrow because it is only in God that we can be saved and we have to confess that and call all people to salvation in Christ. It must be said that it is possible to glorify God and to enter into this new world with him. Only God decides who is saved, but we can confess that, in Christ, salvation is a possibility for all. We have to confess that we have come to Christ and have been saved in him, because he alone brings about the new consummation and the glory of living with him. God makes this possible because he is the living God and so we can live according to his Word and can be in him through Christ. It is possible because Christ sacrificed himself and, by doing so, opened up the future. We were stuck in the sinful world, in our sin, but Christ enabled us to experience the possibility of experiencing heaven and a new life in the resurrection of the body. This does not mean that we will still have to suffer in future: God will take away the suffering. In this world, the suffering is the reality, and the suffering leads to very clear challenges. Because we are one with Christ, we will still suffer in this world, but we will also experience the fullness of the glorification, only through him who makes it possible, Christ the Lord.

Therefore, the final element of eschatology is that we will experience the fullness of God, that God will change everything. God the creator made everything good, and leads us forth to the final consummation in Jesus Christ so that we will experience the absolute fullness of the glorification in Christ through what he has done.

13. Conclusion

Christ has called us to come to him, to experience this new life, so that we will be in him and experience this new life in the future. We can only say that, in eschatology, we glorify Christ with everything we have. Only the glorification of Christ makes eschatology possible. We glorify Christ immediately and with fullness, but we also glorify Christ in this future. We do so through the Holy Spirit who enables us. The Holy Spirit engages us and makes it possible for us to live in this new creation with Christ. This creation is the new creation of God, the creation of the new body, a new soul, and a new life with God. A new life with God, a new life in perpetuity where we can experience the fullness of living with God. This is why eschatology is always essential for mission: mission has to experience the fullness of Christ. It is through the Holy Spirit that mission can explain that the fullness of Christ in future and a glorious life with God are possible.

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