



Jesus

And the Jews

**A fresh look at the
Kingdom of God**

Dirk Hiemstra

Preface

At some point it occurred to me to put down on paper my vision of the theology of Israel. On several occasions I have come across discussions on this subject, and often it has turned out that there is a lack of foundation in me. So it seemed good to me to put some things in order for myself, not only for the future reader, but also to be clear where I stand myself, so that my vision, which I believe is the biblical vision on this subject, is more profound and better grounded in the Bible and especially in the teachings of Jesus himself.

It took several hours to get everything down on paper. Writing, rewriting when necessary, and with the help of my dear wife, going over spelling and sentence structure again and again, so that not only did I know what I was writing, but I also had someone read it to see if they understood it and if the message came across.

Thanks also to God, I am convinced that He has helped me to get it right on paper.

I also hope to make a meaningful contribution to an ongoing discussion in the theological field.

Dirk Hiemstra

Table of contents

Introduction	7
In the beginning	14
A Voice in the Wilderness	27
The first Disciples	38
A wedding	43
A clean house	48
Born Again	55
A Strange Woman	63
A lame man	76
Bread to eat	86
The family	100
A Sent One	105
Living Water	113
Caught	118
Light of the World	122
From above	131
A man born blind	144
The Good Shepherd	150

Risen	156
The Entry	166
The Grain of Wheat	170
The House of God	186
The True Vine.....	197
The Farewell	207
Jesus Prays.....	219
Part 3: A look in the Mirror.....	226
Conclusie	245

Introduction

John 20:30-31

*³⁰And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: ³¹but these are written, **that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.***

Over the years there has been a great deal of change in the Christian faith, especially within the various evangelical movements. In many ways, traditional views have been pushed aside and replaced by supposedly more contemporary views. Especially since the nineteenth century, there has been quite a change in common views. Many of these changes seem to be rather cosmetic; here and there, so-called minor issues are looked at a little differently, or at least that's how it's presented. The verse from the Gospel of John with which I began this introduction is emphasised by everyone within the evangelical movements, so it seems that at least the basis is good. In particular, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 and the conquest of Jerusalem by the Israeli army in 1967 have caused quite a shift in evangelical and, to a lesser extent, Reformed theology. Israel is seen by many as God's people, and as such Israel is an integral part of God's plan of salvation for this world. Within this body of thought, in the end times, where many believe we are now, the focus will shift from the Church of Jesus Christ to a restored Israel. At some point the role of the Church will be fully played out.

A number of schools of thought can be identified. In the nineteenth century the rise of the so-called dispensational doctrine, in the twentieth century the rise of various Israel-oriented movements

within the church, and at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century the rise of the messianic movement. Before looking at the various aspects within these movements, I would like to mention one aspect that stands out and is seen as a vision of the future within all of these movements, namely that Jesus Christ, at his return, will settle in Jerusalem and rule from there. What these different visions have in common is the idea that the Kingdom of God will be a future physical reality in the physical world, run from the physical place of Jerusalem, with Jesus Christ sitting on a physical throne in a physical rebuilt temple, in which the people of Israel play a prominent role. To make things a little clearer, I am going to zoom in on a number of characteristic aspects within these movements.

Dispensationalism

In the years from 1830 there was a man by the name of John Nelson Darby who developed and recorded the doctrine of Dispensationalism. John Nelson Darby (18 November 1800 - 29 April 1882) was an ecclesiastical leader of the Church of Ireland. During his life he changed his views on many matters within the church tradition to which he belonged. In particular, the hierarchical structure began to cause him increasing opposition. In 1828 he broke with the church to which he belonged. In the years that followed, he continued to develop his theology. Without going into all the aspects of this transition, I would like to highlight some aspects that are characteristic of this philosophy:

- The history of the world must be divided into a number of different ages, called dispensations, in which God deals with humanity in different ways.
- In Darby's view, two gospels can be distinguished: the gospel of the kingdom proclaimed by Jesus and addressed

to Israel, and the gospel of grace revealed to Paul and addressed to the church.

- Israel and the Church should therefore be seen as two distinct entities which should not be confused.
- Just before the Second Coming of Jesus Christ, the congregation is raptured to heaven and Israel goes through a great tribulation that lasts seven years.
- After the Second Coming of Jesus, Jesus and the remnant of the people of Israel will reign on earth for 1000 years.

This doctrine became the central teaching of what we know in the Netherlands as "De Vergadering van Gelovigen"¹. In later years, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, this doctrine was popularised by Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (19 August 1843 - 24 July 1921) and his Scofield Reference Bible, and became commonplace in 80% of evangelical denominations, especially in America. In the course of the twentieth century, this body of thought spread from America to Europe. In particular, the book "The Late Great Planet Earth", written by Harold Lee (Hal) Lindsey (born 23 November 1929), an American evangelist and Christian writer, had a great influence on this process. I remember studying this book myself during my years as a young Christian. Although I already had a number of questions, I was impressed by this book.

Israel Vision

Under the influence of Zionism and the events surrounding the Jewish people in the Second World War, and of course the theology mentioned above, various movements with a central focus on Israel arose internationally. In the Netherlands there are a number of prominent organisations. For example, "Christenen voor Israël"² is

¹ Plymouth Brethren

² Christians for Israel <https://www.christenenvoorisrael.nl/>

the most prominent organisation in this field, but there are also organisations such as "Ebenezer" and "Boete en verzoening"³. Characteristic is the central focus on Israel and its support. A few key aspects:

- Israel, the Jewish people, is seen as the people of God.
- The present state of Israel is the fulfilment of biblical promises.
- There is a sharp division between the Gentile Church of Jesus Christ and the people of Israel.
- The old covenant that God made with Israel at Sinai is still in force.
- The church tradition is accused of adhering to so-called "replacement theology".
- Israel is the noble olive tree of Romans 11, and the Gentiles can also be grafted in by the grace of God.
- Jesus will establish his kingdom on earth at his second coming, and Israel and Jerusalem will play a key role in this.

Especially when it comes to the conflict in the Middle East, between Israel and the surrounding countries, we are supposed to continue to give our full support to the State of Israel, pray for Israel and on the basis of Psalm 122 pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Israel conferences are organised and we also have an annual Israel Sunday, which is observed in a large number of churches.

Messianic Movement

In the last part of the twentieth century we see the Messianic movement, also called "Hebrew Roots" or "Jewish Roots" movement slowly emerging and seems to be gaining a lot of traction, especially now in our time, the twenty-first century. In many places we see

³ Penance and Reconciliation <https://boete-verzoening.nl/>

Messianic congregations emerging, but many churches also seems to be strongly influenced by this movement in various ways. Here are a few key ideas that you will find within this movement:

- Christians, too, are to observe the Sabbath.
- There is a renewed focus on the biblical feasts.
- Jesus and the apostles were Jews, so we must learn to look at the text of the Bible through a Jewish lens.
- In many places, we see that issues such as kosher food and circumcision are being brought back into the spotlight and are often being practiced.

What is widely seen is therefore an enormous influence from Rabbinic Jewish thought. Partly because of the fact that we no longer know how the Sabbath and the feasts should be observed, people tend to widely open the door to the Jewish tradition and to mirror it. Synagogal tradition and liturgy, especially around the Sabbath and feasts, are introduced into the families and practices of these congregations. Many who become involved in this movement are distancing themselves from the rest of the church of Jesus Christ, calling themselves "Messianic" and increasingly distancing themselves from the term "Christian."

Summary

What is characteristic of all these schools of thought is that a kind of lowest common denominator can be identified. Although there are great differences between them, we can still identify a number of things that these movements share. Just a small summary:

- Israel, the Jewish people, is the people of God.
- Israel and the Church are two different entities.
- The Kingdom of God is a future physical reality that will take shape at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ in the form of the Millennium.

- Eschatology, the expectation of the future, focuses mainly on Israel and its role in it.
- The state of Israel is seen as the fulfilment of biblical promises.
- Most of the promises of the Bible will be fulfilled in the future.

Although I have had questions about these things for years, it is only recently that the questions have begun to take shape more clearly in my mind.

I grew up in the Synodical Reformed Church and was an active part of it as a professing member and also served as an elder. When I decided to be baptised in 1992, my function within this church came to an abrupt end, as the Reformed Church at that time could not agree with my decision to be baptised. My search after leaving the church then led me to various congregations and movements of an evangelical nature. From 2014, I slowly became involved in the Messianic way of thinking, which led me to participate in a number of Messianic congregations and initiatives from 2017 until recently, when a series of events forced me to distance myself from them. So for years I have been confronted with different perspectives of the above-mentioned theological orientations.

Over time I have had very big question marks about the above ideas and whether they are biblical. The purpose of this book is to try to further formulate and answer these questions. I want to do this using parts of the Gospel of John, supplemented by most of the First Letter of John. Step by step I want to go through the text with the reader, highlighting in particular those aspects that have to do with the question of how we should look at the above questions. I have deliberately chosen the Gospel of John because in it we are confronted with the words of Jesus Christ. The doctrine of dispensationalism, because of the fact that there are so-called two

gospels, still gives an opening to play off the teachings of Jesus and the teachings of Paul against each other. However, I am convinced that Jesus and Paul are in complete agreement, and therefore there is only one gospel, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul explains it this way:

*¹⁶For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.
(Romans 1:16)*

The best way to show the similarity between Jesus and Paul is to use the text of the Gospels and the words of Jesus Christ himself, and sometimes to compare them with the words of Paul. In addition to an explanation of the Gospel of John, special emphasis will be given to those aspects that relate to the kingdom of God and how this relates to the vision of Israel.

I hope you will be willing to experience this "journey" step by step through the gospel with me and not to drop out prematurely, because you simply have a different opinion. I personally see the Bible in all cases as the ultimate authority, on which we should fall back and test our personal opinion, and not the other way around. I wish you a lot of enjoyment of studying and challenge you to be willing to take a critical look at the ideas you have become familiar with, if necessary.

In the beginning

John 1:1-2

1In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2The same was in the beginning with God.

Right at the beginning of the Gospel, John chooses to go back to the very beginning and build his Gospel from there.

To begin with, I will give a rough outline of the Gospel.

- Chapter 1:1-18 can be seen as an introduction in which a number of basic truths are set out and developed in the following chapters.
- From chapter 1:19 to chapter 12, the main theme is the confrontation that Jesus had with his contemporaries and their leaders. It is noticeable that most of the confrontations take place in Jerusalem during the biblical feasts.
- Chapters 13-17 are specific teachings to the small group of disciples who were to form the apostleship. This teaching takes place during the Last Supper and could be seen as a kind of farewell speech just before Jesus goes to the cross.
- Chapters 18-20 describe Jesus' death on the cross and his resurrection.
- Chapter 21 describes the final appearance after his resurrection. This clearly shows that this small, weak group of people are called to go out into the world with the Gospel and become the leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Who was John?

John was one of the sons of Zebedee, a fisherman from Galilee, who owned a fishing business with two of his sons. John was called by Jesus to follow him from the very beginning. John never mentions himself by name in the Gospel, preferring to remain anonymous. A phrase that appears several times is "the disciple whom Jesus loved", almost unanimously accepted by biblical scholars as referring to John himself. In chapter 1:37 there are two disciples who were with John the Baptist, one of whom is identified in verse 41 as Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. The disciple who remained anonymous must have been John. John, like the other disciples, was a child of his time, brought up in a Jewish religious environment, brought up on the TeNaCH, the Old Testament scriptures that were studied weekly in the synagogue. In order to be able to say something meaningful about his Gospel, this background information is of great importance. I will return to this in more detail later in the book.

While the other evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, focus primarily on Jesus' ministry in Galilee, John chooses to focus primarily on Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem. Jesus was in the habit of going up to Jerusalem during the feasts, as was expected of any grown man, to take part in the festivities.

Just a summary⁴:

⁴ There is much difference of opinion within theology about the duration of Jesus' ministry, some choose a ministry of one year while others choose a period of between two and a half and three and a half years. Personally, I have chosen to assume that Jesus' ministry represents the "acceptable year of the Lord", and I therefore assume a ministry of one year. Further discussion and elaboration of this subject is beyond the scope of this book.

- John 2 and 3 describe Jesus' activities during the first Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- John 5 describes Jesus' ministry during Shavuoth or the Feast of Pentecost.
- John 7 describes Jesus' ministry during Succoth or the Feast of Tabernacles.
- Chapter 10 refers to the Jewish Feast of the Renewal of the Temple.
- From chapter 12 on, the events of the second Passover are described, in which Jesus fulfils all the things to which these feasts relate by his death on the cross and resurrection.

The text

John begins his Gospel with the same words as the Old Testament, with the phrase "In the beginning." He seems to want to make a connection with **Genesis 1:1**

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth

Genesis 1 describes the beginning of the creation of heaven and earth, and Genesis 2 describes the beginning of the human race. You could say that it is about the origin of physical reality and the place that man should occupy in it. The emphasis is on what we can perceive with our five senses, what we can see, hear, taste, smell and feel.

John, however, chooses to go back to the pre-creation situation. He describes the state of that situation by stating a number of characteristic things that apply to THE WORD, namely

- Everything begins with THE WORD.
- THE WORD is with God
- THE WORD was (or is) God

Here he is describing the divine origin of THE WORD before THE WORD became flesh (man) (see verse 14). John 4:24 indicates that God is SPIRIT, which means that God cannot be directly perceived by any of our senses. It is important to note that before our reality, namely heaven and earth, was created as described in Genesis 1, the eternal spiritual reality already existed. Of course, the same is true of THE WORD before it became flesh. What we can deduce from this is that spiritual reality is the essence of all things, while physical reality, the reality of which we humans are a part, is a kind of reflection or mirror of spiritual reality. In the Old Covenant, God comes to His people, He descends on Mount Sinai⁵, He manifests Himself on earth by letting heaven descend on the mountain, as it were. Later, he descends in glory on the tabernacle prepared by Moses⁶ and, still later, on the temple built by Solomon⁷. God's presence on earth is thus linked to these physical places. I will come back to this in more detail later in this book. What John is trying to make clear with this choice of words is that we need to shift our focus from physical, earthly reality to heavenly, spiritual reality.

John 1:3

3All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

In the actual creation of heaven and earth, THE WORD was involved in the whole work of creation. Paul emphasises this also in his letter to the Colossians. Just the text:

16...for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be

⁵ Exodus 19:20 And the LORD came down upon mount Sinai....

⁶ Exodus 40:34 ...and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle...

⁷ 2 Chronicles 7:1 ...and the glory of the LORD filled the house. ...

thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: ¹⁷and he is before all things, and by him all things consist.
(Colossians 1:16-17)

So Jesus Christ, THE Word, is not only our Saviour, but He is also the Creator, emphasising that He is Fully God. So God the Father does nothing without the Son being involved⁸.

John 1:4-9

⁴In him was life; and the life was the light of men. ⁵And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. ⁸He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. ⁹That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.

In Genesis 1 it is clear that on the fourth day God created the great lights that illuminate us to this day. But on the first day, God says, "Let there be light". Before the sun, moon and stars were created, there was already light on earth. When Jesus Christ is called "the true light" in this text, it should be clear that all that Jesus is in the heavenly reality becomes visible in our physical reality at this particular moment. This is underlined by the expectation expressed

⁸ Within the Messianic movement there are more and more voices questioning the deity of Jesus Christ, in my opinion this is to accommodate Jewish thinking that God is one and therefore their Messiah cannot be God. Therefore, at the trial of Jesus, the high priest Caiaphas sees the claim that Jesus is the Son of God as a form of blasphemy and condemns Jesus.
(See Matthew 26:63-66)

in Revelation 21 that the sun and moon will no longer be needed.

Just the text:

... 23And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.

(Revelation 21:23)

What is clear so far is that our physical reality, the reality we live in every day, comes from the spiritual reality where God is and was brought into being by THE WORD.

The man who appears here in this situation is John the Baptist. This John the Baptist can be seen as the last great prophet of the Old Covenant and is used by God to announce the coming of the Messiah. He is mentioned in all four Gospels, so he plays a key role in this phase of history. We will return to this later in this chapter. So John can be seen as the completion of everything from the old covenant, he is not the light but he is there to testify to it. If we take this further, we can conclude that the old covenant was meant to bear witness to the light. Jesus and the new covenant are the true light that comes into the world.

John 1:10-13

10He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. 11He came unto his own, and his own received him not. 12But as many as received Him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: 13which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

According to verse 10, Jesus Christ is fully present in the world of which we are a part, but we can only see Him if we are open to Him.

Mankind as a whole has not known Him, even though He is the designer of our world. The world has been blinded to this truth. But not only the world was blinded, his own people, the Jewish people, his own, his fellow countrymen, did not know Him and therefore did not receive Him. The only exception is those people, both fellow countrymen and later others from the world, who accepted Jesus. In Greek, the word received is rendition of the word λαμβάνω (lambano)⁹, which means to accept or receive. In this acceptance, therefore, there is an active component, we are expected to actively choose to receive Him into our lives. From that moment on, the group of people who have accepted Him constitute "the children of God". While in the Old Covenant the people of Israel were the children of God, the people of God, in the New Covenant the people of God are "all who have received Him", Jew and Gentile together. Peter emphasises this again in his first epistle:

*7Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient,
The stone which the builders disallowed,
The same is made the head of the corner,
8and
A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence,
even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient:
whereunto also they were appointed.
9But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: 10which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.*

⁹ Strong G2983

(1 Peter 2:7-10)

What in the old covenant was almost exclusively for the people of Israel, although others such as Rahab¹⁰ of Jericho and Ruth¹¹ the Moabitess could also join the people, we can say that the election is now extended to all nations, Jew and Gentile together, provided they receive Jesus Christ into their lives.

What John then adds is that we must be born of God. We cannot derive any rights from our physical origin, our blood. We cannot rely on our own merit, our flesh, and finally our human adoption. If you look at the old covenant, it was important that you were descended from Abraham, that is your blood bond. Also that you had to abide by Moses, the Law, or that you had been accepted or adopted, like Rahab and Ruth, and that way you were added to the people of God. Later on in this book, when we come to chapter three of John's gospel, I will look at this in more detail.

John 1:14-17

¹⁴And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. ¹⁵John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me. ¹⁶And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace. ¹⁷For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

THE WORD entered into our physical reality, became flesh and dwelt in the midst of us men, and this man, Jesus Christ, was from that

¹⁰ See book of Joshua in Chapters 2 and 6

¹¹ See the book of Ruth

moment on the bearer of the glory of God on earth. We have already seen that Mount Sinai, the tabernacle of Moses and finally the temple in Jerusalem were the places where the glory of God was connected to, from the moment Jesus became part of our world as a man, He is the bearer of the glory of God. In Matthew 1 this is underlined by the statements of the angel when he explains to Joseph what is going on with Mary. Here's what the angel said:

20...Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. 21And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. 22Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, 23Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. (Matthew 1:20-23)

Quoting Isaiah 7:14, the angel makes it clear to Joseph that this child with whom Mary was pregnant is "God with us". As long as Jesus walked the earth, He was the representative of God in our midst, so if you really wanted to meet God at that time, you had to look for Jesus, He was (is) Emmanuel.

John the Baptist testifies to this by declaring that Jesus was there before he was. It is clear from the Bible that John was born six months earlier than Jesus, so when John says that Jesus was there before him, he is not referring to the physical birth of Jesus, but to the divine origin.

Jesus was full of grace and truth, so when you met Him, you became a part of Him. By meeting Him, by receiving Him, we become

partakers of the fullness of grace and truth, and we even receive grace upon grace.

The Law of Moses, with all its rules, could only reflect this new reality. With the coming of Jesus Christ, we become partakers of the real reality of grace and truth, and Jesus is full of it. If we are born of God, we have become partakers of this fullness.

John 1:18

¹⁸No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.

In addition to all this, Jesus' coming also meant that as the only begotten Son, in his human capacity, he showed who God really is. This is a theme that comes up again and again in the confrontation with the Jewish leaders later in the Gospel. The coming of Jesus makes it abundantly clear who God really is. While Moses and the Law give us only a glimpse, Jesus shows us the heart of the Father.

The conclusion

What John does is to summarise the most important aspects of the Gospel. The core truths enumerated here form a kind of framework for understanding the rest of the Gospel, the teaching of Jesus and the confrontation with his contemporaries. All this is supplemented by teaching specifically for the disciples, in which these matters are further explored with the prospect of the future in mind. Jesus will no longer be physically present, but his place will be taken by the Spirit of Truth¹².

The intention is to go through the gospel step by step. The focus will be especially on the controversy between the old covenant, with all its physical aspects linked to physical reality, and the spiritual reality,

¹² John 14:16-17

which is of a completely different nature and in which we can participate through the ministry of Jesus, his death on the cross and his resurrection.

Part 1 The struggle with the old

This first part discusses the great conflict that Jesus had with the Jewish culture, especially with the scribes and Pharisees. If we do not recognise the intensity of this conflict, we are likely to downplay the significance of the new covenant. The new covenant is so fundamentally different from the old covenant that it cannot be overemphasised. The conflict seems to focus on secondary issues, but when we learn to see the depth of the conflict, it turns out that we are dealing with fundamental truths that are characteristic of the gospel and the kingdom. The conflict shows in no uncertain terms how far the Jewish culture and leadership of the day had strayed from biblical thinking. In Matthew 23 we find the following remark of Jesus to the Pharisees and scribes:

*¹³But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.
(Matthew 23:13)*

Jesus makes it clear in no uncertain terms that the question is whether or not the Pharisees and scribes, who together with the Sadducees formed the spiritual leadership of that time, are part of the Kingdom of God. In line with this, the question of whether or not they have been retained is justified. So it is not a question of minor side issues, but of fundamental truth, which must also be understood by us.

In this first part, we will trace the public ministry of Jesus step by step. We go through chapter by chapter through the Gospel of John, in order to bring to the surface this fundamental struggle step by step.