The Future in the Present:
The Eschatological Character of Justification in Romans

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It was E. Kasemann who first set afire contemporary conversations on justification with a short lecture on "The New Testament Today," at the Oxford Congress in September 14, 1961. For Kasemann, justification and its related term, righteousness, are set in an eschatological context: "*dikaiosone theou* is for Paul God's sovereignty over the world revealing itself eschatologically in Jesus."[1] The righteousness of God that we receive by faith is "already present," yet its "ultimate realization is lying still in the future" (in today's refrain, "already but not yet"), in what Kasemann calls, Paul's "double eschatology."[2] A. Oepke has noted that the revelation of the righteousness of God is "an eschatological event."[3] H. Ridderbos cites 1:17 and 3:21 as indicative of the eschatological character of Paul's view of justification.[4] Following Oepke and H. D. Wendland, Ridderbos concludes that Paul's doctrine of justification is "a definite interpretation and application of his eschatology."[5]

An investigation of the eschatological character of justification in Romans must begin then in the disclosure of the righteousness of God through the redemption he accomplished in Christ. The aim of this study is to ascertain the eschatological nature of the disclosure, which is both future and present. A related concern is how the future aspect of justification overlaps with its present aspect in eschatological tension. We shall attempt to determine how Paul weaves the eschatological dimension in justification, by an exegetical and theological analysis of those texts that exhibit such tension.

The Revelation of God's Righteousness as the Locus of Pauline Eschatology

Paul has established that in the gospel is the righteousness of God ἀποκαλύπτεται, "being revealed" (1:17).[6] The continuing act of revealing God's righteousness in the present indicative, ἀποκαλύπτεται, is significant, in that what may be involved here is not merely the unveiling of the message of the gospel. There is also the element of the continuing impact of the unveiling of God's righteousness, in his eschatological purpose for the Jew first and then for the Gentiles.[7] Thus, the gospel is the power of God, because it manifests the righteousness of God continually in the present age. As the wrath of God, by which God rejects people, is now being revealed as his eschatological verdict (1:18),

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[1] Ernst Kasemann, *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969), 180. See Karl Paul Donfried, "Justification and Last Judgment in Paul," *Interpretation* 30/2 (April 1976): 140-152. Cited October 9, 2010. Online: http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=11&hid=109&sid=52dfbc48-35b3-4d29-922d-e7ee4956a4a4%40sessionmgr112.

[2] Kasemann, *New Testament*, 170.

[3] Albrecht Oepke, s. v. "ἀποκαλύπτω," *TDNT* 3: 583.

[4] Where there are no Scripture abbreviations, the verse number refers to Romans.

[5] Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (trans. John Richard De Witt; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 162.

[6] The lexicon used throughout this study is that of F. Wilbur Gingrich, *Shorter Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1983).

[7] James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1-8* (WBC38; ed. Ralph P. Martin; Dallas: Word, 1988), 47-48.

so is the righteousness of God, by which he accepts believers, is also now being revealed in the gospel as an eschatological event.[8]

One of the interpretations of Ps. 143 in the Midrash and Ps. 51:4 in the Targum is that justification shall be revealed only in the *eschaton*, but not in the present age. A person is declared righteous only in the last judgment, when the divine sentence is in his favor. The function of the last judgment is to verify whether the merit earned by obeying the Law outweighs the demerit of disobeying it.[9] In this Jewish framework, justification is eschatological. Yet the uniqueness of Paul's eschatology is that the **δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ** is revealed, not in the age to come, but "now," in the present age—a present reality already fulfilled in Christ (3:24-26; 5:1, 9, 17; 8:30; 9:30).[10] For Paul, the wrath of God is now being revealed, but the eschatological day of wrath and final judgment is also anticipated (2:5). Likewise, as God's righteousness is now being revealed, there is a coming revelation of God's righteous judgment (2:5-11). It is in this context that Paul expects an eschatological justification for the doers of the law (2:13; cf. Gal. 5:5). Thus, righteousness and wrath are already being manifested in the present era, but the final revelation of righteousness and wrath is not yet, awaiting consummation on the last day.

In Jewish thought, the final righteous verdict of God is vindicated only in the last day. Present righteousness determines final vindication. But now, the righteousness of God is being revealed. Being manifested in the present age, it anticipates the final age.[11] In this sense, future hope is executed in the present. The revelation of God's righteousness is thus eschatological, for not only is divine righteousness previously hidden now unveiled in history, but that now a new eschatological reality is manifested in the present age.

The promise of God's Son in the OT was revealed to the apostles in history. This revelation then is the intrusion in space and time of that which was once hidden, but is now disclosed—the revelation of Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:7). The revelation of Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the salvation historical plan of God in the fullness of time, when God sent forth His Son (Gal. 4:4). It is revealed, **Νυνι**, "Now," at "the present time" (3:21, 26).[12] The adverb, **Νυνι** (the emphatic form of **νῦν**, "now"), may exert a logical stress (cf. 7:17).[13] Yet in 3:21, **Νυνὶ δὲ**, "but now," exerts a temporal stress (cf. 15:23, 25), indicating a contrast between the old era of sin and the new era of righteousness,[14] and a shift from the old covenant to the new (5:9-11; 8:1; 11:30-31; 13:11).[15]

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[8] Traugott Holtz, s. v. "**αποκαλύπτω**," *EDNT* 1: 131.

[9] B H. Strack and P. Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, vol. 4 (Munich: Beck'sche, 1926), 11, in Gottlob Shrenk, s. v. "**δικαιοσύνη**," *TDNT* 2: 197, 207, 213.

[10] Schrenk, s. v. "**δικαιοσύνη**," *TDNT* 2:207; Ridderbos, *Paul*, 164.

[11] C. K. Barrett, *The Epistle to the Romans* (rev. ed.; BNTC; ed. Henry Chadwick; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 71.

[12] All Scripture is taken from *The ESV Classic Reference Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001).

[13] Robert H. Mounce, *Romans* (NAC27; ed. E. Ray Clendenen; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 113.

[14] Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 221; Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB; ed. William Foxwell Albright and David Noel Freedman; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 343.

[15] Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (BECNT; ed. Moises Silva; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 180; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 164; Walter Radl, s. v. "**νυνί**," *EDNT* 2:480.

In the old covenant, the OT promise looks forward to the day when God shall demonstrate his saving activity apart from the Mosaic covenant (3:21; cf. Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27). "But now," in the new covenant, the promise is fulfilled in Christ. The old epoch is characterized by the law of sin and death, proneness to sin in the flesh, and the wrath of God (1:18-3:20). "But now," the new epoch is qualified by the law of the Spirit of life, the realm of the Spirit, and the righteousness of God (3:21-8:17). In the past age, those under the law can never be justified by obeying the law (3:20). "But now," in the present age, the righteousness of God apart from the law has been manifested through faith in Christ (3:21). For Paul, the new epoch has begun in Christ. The old era is ended with the death and resurrection of Christ; and the new has come; thus, the new has begun at the end of the old (1 Cor. 10:11).[16]

The perfect indicative, πεφανέρωται, "manifested" (3:21) is important, in that it links with 1:17, indicating completed action: God's righteousness has been manifested already. In 1:17, the righteousness of God is being continually revealed in the gospel to the Jew first and then to the Gentile. In 3:21, it has been made known "now," through the redemption of the cross apart from the law (3:23-24), as the epochal time of invasion of the divine righteousness for both Jew and Gentile. In that 1:17 and 3:21 speak of eschatological fulfillment of past OT promises, both texts therefore underscore its salvation historical character. That the righteousness of God is now made known "apart from the law," indicates that the old era of the Mosaic covenant is now past, and the new covenant in the Spirit is now in effect.[17]

In the Jewish apocalyptic scheme of "temporal dualism," history is divided into two epochs—the present age and the coming age (1 En. 71:15; Heb. 1:1-2). The present age is viewed as evil and full of distress; but the age to come is seen as the eon of divine order and vindication of the righteous. Between these ages is the earth-shattering intervention of God at the appointed time (Dan. 7:12; 1 En. 62-63; 71:15; 85-90; 4Q416 1 1-18; Wis. 2-5).[18] Pauline theology shares some fragments of these apocalyptic characteristics (Rom. 8:10, 21, 35; 1 Cor. 11:32; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 6:12; 1 Thess. 5:1-11). Yet contrary to the variegated Jewish anticipation of the messiah, the Messiah has come. The new messianic epoch has begun, but the old age is not yet abolished; and the new has not yet replaced the old. Hence, both the old and the new exist in a synchronic overlap in the "now."

The "now" in 3:21 then can be taken literally, as the period between the two ages or between the two comings of Christ. The first coming occurred at the end of the old epoch, marking the beginning of the new. The second coming marks the end of the old. Hence, the "now," which is the period between the two eons, also belongs to both.[19] For those in the present age, we live in the "now and not yet," in that "now," we are still in the old epoch. Yet we live in the "not yet," for we do not yet live in the state of the new. We are thus in a state of existential overlap of the ages. In justification, we are justified in

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[16] Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 344.

[17] Schrenk, s. v. "δικαιοσύνη," *TDNT* 2:204; Schreiner, *Romans*, 180. God's righteousness was certainly demonstrated in the law, but the law operating in sinful flesh only produced a law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2-3).

[18] B. C. Gregory, "Wisdom and Apocalyptic" (DOTWPR; eds. Tremper Longman III and Peter Enns (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2008), 852-853.

[19] Gustav Stahlin, s. v., "νῦν," *TDNT* 4: 1114.

Christ presently, but there is the sense that we are not yet justified ultimately, since that will happen on the last day (2:13). The "now" is the time of fulfillment, in that we are justified in the present age. It is also a time of promise, in that we shall be justified in the coming age. From the viewpoint of the OT looking forward to the fulfillment of salvation history therefore, the "now" is located at the end of the "waiting ages." It is the καιροῖς, "appointed time" (Tit. 1:3) of the eschatological realization of the promise of redemption.[20]

Yet Pauline thought is not "in terms of the eons"[21] or the chronological significance of the overlap, as in its character of the two epochs—the old epoch dominated by death and condemnation, and the new, by life and vindication in Christ. The Christ-event ended the old age, bringing in the new messianic age. The gift of the Spirit was an eschatological realization of the OT promises. The righteousness of God has been manifested in the redemption on the cross.

The locus of Paul's eschatology then is the eschatological revelation of the righteousness of God. It is set against a salvation historical framework. In this framework is seen the history of both the periods of divine promise and the periods of salvific events as fulfillment of that promise. For Paul, redemptive history was fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ apart from the law. God accomplished redemption in Christ on the cross. The cross has made known his righteousness. The cross therefore is the focal point of redemptive history, in which the promises of the past are fulfilled, and future glory is anticipated.[22] The revelation of the righteousness of God on the cross is thus an eschatological event.

F. C. Baur posited that "at the time when mankind was ready for it, Christ came into its midst as son," arguing that Christianity is likewise "a state in the development of religion." G. Bornkamm however counters that the time of redemption is the time of God's grace. "It was not the time that occasioned the sending of the Son," as M. Luther pointed out, "but the reverse: the sending of the Son brought the time of fulfillment."[23]

In Jewish eschatology, righteousness is pronounced on the last day. Justification in Paul however is granted at the present time, for the righteousness of God is now being revealed in the present age. The condemnation of sin in the flesh is not forthcoming in the age to come, but already accomplished "now" in the present age, when God sent his Son into sinful flesh as a sin offering (8:1-3). The judgment that God was to execute on the last day, is for Paul deemed executed, when God judged sin, by the sinless sacrifice of his Son on the cross. Jewish apocalyptic sees the future cataclysmic end of the present evil world order, when God intervenes in history and sets up a new world. But the distinctiveness of Pauline eschatology is that the Christ-event—the sending, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus—comprises the "turning point in the ages"—the pivotal, epochal invasion of divine purpose in history, which forever changes it.[24]

The Propitiation of Christ as the Point of Eschatological Breakthrough

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[20] Ridderbos, *Paul*, 47; Moo, *The Epistle*, 69.
[21] Ridderbos, *Paul*, 53.
[22] Moo, *The Epistle*, 26.
[23] Gunther Bornkamm, *Paul* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 198-199.
[24] Bornkamm, *Paul*, 199.

The acquittal of sinners by the righteousness of God is both an OT and Essenic concept (Ps. 143:1-2; Ezra 9:13-15; Dan. 9:16-18; 1QH 4:37; 11:30-31).[25] In Pauline theology, the basis of that acquittal is not the righteousness gained by obeying the law, but by the obedience of Christ on the cross. In that they do not earn righteousness by the works of the law, those believing in Christ receive the righteousness of God as a gift and as the saving activity of God in Christ. They are transferred from the old era of condemnation to the new era of justification. For Paul, all those believing in Christ are δικαιούμενοι δωρεὰν τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι, "being declared righteous without cost by his grace" (3:24). The present condition, "being declared righteous," is a present reality implying an anticipation of the final verdict in the future judgment. Thus, we see here an initial demonstration of the future in the present: what is reserved for final judgment is now declared a present reality—tomorrow's acquittal today. Pure grace makes it so.

The means of this judicial act of acquittal is διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, "through the redemption in Christ Jesus" (3:24). The stress on the fulfillment of the OT promises in Christ in 3:21 should guide our interpretation of ἀπολυτρώσεως and ἱλαστήριον in 3:24.[26] The noun, ἀπολυτρώσεως, "*release, redemption, acquittal*,"[27] is an OT concept, yet in the context of 3:21-26, carries with it eschatological overtones. It presupposes a state of imprisonment, bondage, and judicial penalty. Redemption then is release from it. In the frame of 3:21-26, redemption denotes both liberation from the unrighteousness of sin and acquittal from the wrath, judgment, and condemnation of God against sin (3:5-7, 9-18, 23). As to the question of whether a price was paid for redemption, the text indicates that justification is δωρεὰν, "without cost" or "for nothing," as Fitzmyer succinctly puts it.[28] The gift of God's righteousness in the judicial act is given at no cost to the justified, but certainly at great cost to God, the justifier. Redemption was accomplished through the cost of the blood of Christ, which was the price paid (3:25).[29]

God justifies sinners through the means of the redemption he accomplished in Christ, ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον, "whom God planned as the place of propitiation through faith in his blood" (3:25). The word, προτίθημι, may denote, "set forth publicly," or "*offer*,"[30] indicating a visible, public sin offering,[31] evoking the use of blood signifying the new covenant (Ex. 24:3-8).[32] However, the aorist middle indicative, προέθετο, "planned," signifies the divine initiative to intervene in the sinful human condition, which would fit the theological context. It is God who manifested his righteousness in the present age (3:21). The redemption is realized because God planned to offer his Son in the fullness of time, as a sin offering for the sin of all sinners (3:23). It is God who proves that God is righteous through the redemption he has accomplished in Christ (3:25). This

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[25] Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 351.

[26] Schreiner, *Romans*, 180.

[27] BAGD, s. v. "ἀπολύτρωσις."

[28] Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 347.

[29] Schreiner, *Romans*, 190; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), 86.

[30] BAGD, s. v. "προτίθημι;" Franz Schnider, s. v. "προτίθεμαι," *EDNT* 3:182.

[31] Sanday and Headlam, *A Critical*, 87; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ed. D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 179.

[32] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 170; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 349.

redemption finds its origin in God's "eternal purpose of grace."[33] The eschatological overtone of redemption makes the meaning possible in the context, in view of "the present time" of showing God's righteousness (3:26).

In any case, two things stand out. First, in that God acted in Christ in redemptive history, final judgment being executed in the death of Christ, Paul's eschatology therefore is decidedly Christological. Second, Paul uses the term, redemption, in eschatological tension. Believers are already redeemed in the present age, but not yet redeemed from their mortal bodies in the age to come (8:23; cf. 1 Cor. 1:30; Eph. 1:7, 14; 4:30; Col. 1:14; 1QM 1:12; 14:5; 15:1).[34]

Christ then is the ἱλαστήριον τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι, the "place of propitiation in his blood." The phrase speaks of a Levitical motif, harking back to the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16).[35] Yahweh commands Aaron to kill the goat as a sin offering and sprinkle its blood over הַכַּפֹּרֶת, "the mercy seat" or literally, the "cover over sin,"[36] to וְכִפֶּר, "make atonement" (Lev. 16:15-16). In the Piel, the verb כִּפֶּר, denotes, "*to cover over, pacify, propitiate*."[37] The blood of the goat was the price paid for the sins of the people. Thus, the bloody sacrifice of the goat had a dual meaning. It meant expiation—to cover for the sin of the people against Yahweh. It also signified propitiation—to appease the wrath of Yahweh against sin.[38] In linear fashion, expiation is the effect of propitiation: the sin that caused God's wrath is expiated by God's gracious act in Christ and thus, no longer causing it.[39] Hence, expiation is to the offense of sin, while propitiation is to the One offended by it. The death of Christ was both expiatory and propitiatory, in that it satisfied the divine demands against the offense of sin, as well as appease divine wrath against sin. The righteousness of God is manifested then at the cross, for at the cross, God propitiated God.

The expiatory and propitiatory death of Christ was πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ, "towards the demonstration of his righteousness in the present time" (3:25). Paul's repetition of the phrase, ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης in 3:25 and 3:26 is significant, for repetition means emphasis, and the emphasis in this pericope is the righteousness of God. That Paul repeats the phrase, δικαιοσύνη θεου, "righteousness of God," four times and the verb, δικαιόω, "justify," two times, stresses the eschatological justifying action of God through the atonement. It reinforces our contention that Pauline eschatology is centered in God's righteousness. The phrase ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ, "in the present time," is strongly eschatological, denoting the time between the present age and the age to come, as the climactic time of salvation history (cf. 8:18; 11:5; 2 Cor. 6:2). The present time is the "now" of 3:21—the time of showing God's righteous demands against sin on the cross, as the means of satisfying those demands. In light of the new covenant established in the

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[33] C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (vol. 1; ICC; ed. J. A. Emerton and C. E. B. Cranfield; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1975), 209.

[34] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 169.

[35] Schreiner, *Romans*, 192-195; Moo, *The Epistle*, 232-236; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 170-172; Fitzmyer, *Romans*, 350.

[36] BDB, s. v. "הַכַּפֹּרֶת."

[37] BDB, s. v. "כִּפֶּר."

[38] Likewise—Morris, *The Epistle*, 180; Contra—Fitzmyer, who finds no support for it in the LXX and Pauline usage. However, this overlooks the element of the wrath of God now revealed (1:18).

[39] Barrett, *The Epistle*, 74.

sacrificial death of Christ, the present time shows God's righteousness in planning the sin offering of Christ to fulfill his promise in the old covenant.[40] Thus, in the fulfillment of the promise in the old covenant with his people concerning their sins, the righteousness of God is established.

The next phrase answers the question of why the cross as propitiation of sin was necessary. It is διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων, "on account of the passing over of the sins happening before" (3:25). Because ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ, "in the forbearance of God" (3:26), he has passed over former sins (Acts 14:16; 17:30), his righteousness is now called into question. But the propitiation of Christ establishes the righteousness of God in the present age, showing that he is indeed righteous in his revulsion of sin and his judicial demands against it. The outcome then is that with the death of Christ, the justice of God has not been conceded.[41] He remains just in his character, and the justifier, in his saving actions, of the one who has faith in Christ (3:26).

For Paul then, the old covenant of Temple atonement is supplanted by the new covenant in Christ's blood. The redemptive historical turning point emerges here, in that the OT promise of redemption is now fulfilled on the cross. The old epoch of forgiveness by the Law is no longer in effect. The new era of justification is at hand, by the acquittal from divine judgment that God planned through the propitiation of his Son. Thus, the final judgment of God on the sins of the world yet future has now occurred in the present time: it is manifested in the death of Christ. This means that those who put their faith in Christ stand acquitted under the judgment of God in the present age.

The Future in the Present State of Justification

We have argued that the righteousness of God is the center of Pauline eschatology. In this locus is found the propitiation of Christ as the focal point of eschatological breakthrough. We shall now analyze other relevant texts showing that future justification has a present dimension for Paul. In Paul's discussion of Abraham's righteousness through faith in the promises of God, he touches on the state of justification in 4:23-24, using the language of eschatological tension. The justification that was counted to Abraham—μέλλει λογίζεσθαι, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, "will be reckoned to believers" also (3:24). The present indicative with the infinitive, μέλλω λογίζεσθαι, may refer to a present action that must follow a divine decree, "*is destined, must, will certainly*."[42] Justification as a completed reality in the new era is to be reckoned in the believers' present life (4:25; 5:1).[43] Though acknowledging the future reference of μέλλω, T. R. Schreiner argues that it is future from the viewpoint of Gen. 15:6, but now accomplished in NT believers.[44] However, had Paul used the OT text as such, he would have used the aorist tense, "it is reckoned," to believers now. Yet the text is aptly translated, "it will be reckoned," or "it is about to be reckoned," to believers. The verb, μέλλω, may well refer to future action, "which is subsequent to another event and closely related to it—'to be about to.'"[45] Paul uses the same verb in an eschatological context in

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[40] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 174. Contra—S. K. Williams, who sees God's righteousness as alluding to his fidelity to his promise to Abraham, which blesses Gentiles through Christ. Sam K. Williams, "The 'Righteousness of God' in Romans," JBL 99/2 (1980): 241-290.

[41] Schreiner, *Romans*, 196; Morris, *The Epistle*, 182.

[42] BAGD, s. v. "μέλλω."

[43] Cranfield, *A Critical*, 250; Moo, *The Epistle*, 295.

[44] Schreiner, *Romans*, 242.

[45] L&N, s. v. "μέλλω."

4:24; 5:14; 8:13, and 18, where it refers to the *eschaton*, the expected future, future life, and judgment.[46] That μέλλω may indicate final justification on the final day of judgment in 3:24 is evident in Paul's use of δικαιόω in the future tense (2:13; 3:20, 30).[47]

Yet Paul also affirms the completed reality of justification of believers. Believers are Δικαιωθέντες οὖν ἐκ πίστεως, "being justified accordingly out of faith" (5:1). The aorist participle, Δικαιωθέντες, speaks of an accomplished condition of justification. There is thus the contrasting picture of anticipation of future justification, but based on a state of justification in the present life. The description of believers in 3:24 as, "those believing," is significant. In view of an eschatological justification of believers on the final day, they continue to believe in the One who raised Jesus from the dead (3:24). The present justification of believers thus awaits their future justification on the last day. Yet the expectation of future justification informs their present condition. Thus, they keep on trusting God. Having peace with God, they have access to his grace, rejoicing in suffering in their hope of God's glory (5:1-5). For Paul then, there is the present condition of justification for believers, but also a future justification on judgment day.[48]

In contrasting the judgment that brought κατάκριμα, "condemnation," on one man's sin, Paul asserts that the free gift of righteousness brought δικαίωμα, "justification," over many sins (3:16).[49] The question arises as to whether δικαίωμα refers to the present or future state. The answer is embedded in 3:17, which gives the basis for 3:16, by the introductory phrase, εἰ γὰρ, "for if," in the protasis. For if, by one's sin, death ἐβασίλευσεν, "reigned," through Adam, much more—λαμβάνοντες, "those receiving," the free gift of righteousness and abundant grace, βασιλεύσουσιν, "shall reign" in life through Christ (3:17). Two epochs are clearly contrasted in 3:16-17. There is the epoch of Adam under a state of condemnation and ruled by death. There is the era of Christ under a state of justification and ruled by his abundant grace and the gift of life. In Adam, the aorist, ἐβασίλευσεν, implies suddenness and closure. In Christ however, the present participle, λαμβάνοντες, and future indicative, βασιλεύσουσιν, implies a present process and future hope. The contrast between the present and future states here is revealing. Those "receiving" God's abundant grace and gift of righteousness in Christ are in the present condition of justification. Yet they "shall reign" in life through Christ. As J. D. G. Dunn well points out, they are already receiving righteousness, but not yet ruling. This means that their reign in life through Christ is the outcome of their present justification (cf. Dan. 7:22, 27; Wis. 3:8; 5:15-16; 1QM 12:14-15).[50] Hence, Paul is not speaking merely of the reign of life replacing the reign of death, but that believers shall live as kings themselves (Pss. Sol. 3:12; 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4; 22:5).[51] That the kingly reign of the saints is not characteristic of the present age bolsters its futurist character. Justification has an eschatological dimension in 3:17 then, since it anticipates the believers' future reign in life in the age to come.

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[46] Walter Radl, s. v. "νυνί," *EDNT* 2:404.

[47] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 223; Barrett, *The Epistle*, 92.

[48] Morris, *The Epistle*, 213.

[49] Why "justification" fits δικαίωμα (lit., "regulation; righteous deed") here is beyond the scope of this study. Commentators cite ample reasons. See Shrenk, s. v. "δικαίωμα," *TDNT* 2:222; Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 281; Schreiner, *Romans*, 285; and Cranfield, *A Critical*, 286.

[50] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 282.

[51] Cranfield, *A Critical*, 287; Mounce, *Romans*, 145.

It is evident also in how Paul connects, "justification" and "life" in the genitive, δικαίωσιν ζωῆς, "justification of life," in 3:18. It may be genitive of product—"justification which produces life," in that life results from justification.[52] Viewed eschatologically, the believers' reign in life follows their present state of justification. It is not improbable to take it as a descriptive genitive then—"justification characterized by life," or a genitive of source—"justification coming from life," for we shall be saved by the very life of his Son in the *eschaton* (3:10). It may also be a genitive of destination—"justification that leads to life."[53] The sense is rich. Jesus' one act of righteousness on the cross results to justification that moves towards life in the *eschaton*, which produces, comes from, and is characterized by Christ's life.[54] That the noun, ζωή, "life," refers to life in the *eschaton* is seen in its use elsewhere in Romans as normatively eschatological (2:5; 5:18, 21; 6:22-23; 8:6; 11:15), as Schreiner acknowledges.

Yet Schreiner argues that since the *eschaton* has invaded the present for Paul, justified believers reign in life now, but only fully in the age to come.[55] This view flounders, if it implies that the dative, ἐν ζωῇ βασιλεύσουσιν, "reign in life," refers to a reign in the present life. The ζωή, "life," through Christ is contrasted with the θάνατος, "death," through Adam in 3:17. Believers shall thus reign in the realm of Christ's life, and not in the present life. Further, in the three of four times that Paul used the phrase, πολλῷ μᾶλλον, "much more" (5:9-10, 15, 17), the language is eschatological. Believers "shall be saved" from the wrath of God (5:9). Though presently reconciled with God, they shall yet "be saved by his life" (5:10). They shall also "reign in life" (5:17). Theologically, this means that our present justification is incomplete without final salvation on the last day, which includes our final acquittal before God. That justification is eschatological in 3:17 is buttressed further by the use of the inferential conjunctions, Ἄρα οὖν, "so then; therefore," which gives the logical conclusion in 3:18. In 3:17b, those who receive the free gift of righteousness shall reign in life. Since 3:18 presents a logical thought based on 3:17, the conclusion is apparent. "Therefore," Jesus' act of righteousness leads to justification that leads to life—life beyond the last day.

From the motif of trespass and righteousness in 3:18, Paul then adds the motif of disobedience and obedience in 3:19. Through the obedience of Christ, the many δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται, "shall be set righteous" (3:19). The future indicative may exert a logical force, and justification here thus refers to a present reality (5:1, 9).[56] Yet the future indicative here should not be overlooked. The future, δίκαιοι κατασταθήσονται, "shall be set righteous," also echoes δικαιωθήσονται, "shall be justified," in 2:13. It thus probably refers to final acquittal on final judgment (cf. Gal. 5:5).[57]

Paul affirms the present justification of the many in Christ. Yet he also anticipates their future righteousness, and the future reign of grace through this righteousness (3:21). This future expectation is not simply an indication of the already-but-not-yet eschatology

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[52] Shrenk, s. v. "δικαίωσις," *TDNT* 2:224; Cranfield, *A Critical*, 289; Schreiner, *Romans*, 287.

[53] Likewise—Morris, *The Epistle*, 239.

[54] Contra—Sanday and Headlam, who posit that the justification is the "immediate" result of justification. Sanday and Headlam, *A Critical*, 141.

[55] Schreiner, *Romans*, 246; Cranfield, *A Critical*, 288; Morris, *The Epistle*, 217.

[56] Cranfield, *A Critical*, 291; Sanday and Headlam, *A Critical*, 142.

[57] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 285.

of Paul. Rather, it indicates Paul's theology of justification, which sees justification not merely as a status of initiation, but a condition of being acquitted and sustained by his abundant grace, leading on to eternal life in Christ.[58]

Conclusion

The center of Pauline eschatology is located in the revelation of the righteousness of God in the death and resurrection of Christ. That justification is eschatological is evident. But for Paul, the *eschaton* has entered the present age. The righteousness of God is now being manifested in the gospel. Justification is an accomplished reality for believers at the present time. That God declares believers righteous in Christ now, is a snapshot of the future in the present: final judgment is now a present acquittal by means of the propitiation of Christ. Yet while Paul considers believers justified in Christ presently, he also projects the sense of anticipation of an eschatological acquittal in final judgment. As justification is expected in the future, it is also received as a gift in the present. Therein is the paradox of justification. Paul's now-and-not-yet eschatology takes on a future-in-the-present dimension, in which our final acquittal on the last day becomes ours today.

God's action in justification is not merely to declare believers righteous in the present age, but to sustain that state of righteousness in the present time by his grace, and then to execute final justification on the last day. Conversely, Paul's eschatology is such that God has condemned sin on the cross, and hence, those who trust Christ are acquitted in the present age, while awaiting final vindication in the coming age. Indeed, Christ was delivered up for our sins, and was raised for our justification. We shall be saved from the wrath of God then, because by the death and resurrection of Christ, our future justification is now applied in the present age. We therefore stand acquitted while anticipating our final acquittal.

[58] Dunn, *Romans 1-8*, 300; Morris, *The Epistle*, 240.

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