

Jesus, the Fox, and Politics

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Abstract

This article was about Jesus, the Fox (King Herod Antipas) and politics. Jesus had addressed King Herod in Luke 13 verses 31 to 34 and told the Pharisees that Herod was a fox when they told Him that Herod wanted to kill Him. A text-immanent and narrative-critical reading was done of the New Testament with special reference to Luke 13 verses 31 to 34 to see if Jesus was involved in any form of politics, political activism or militancy, and if so, if He had commanded His disciples to do the same. The study reveals that Jesus was Emmanuēl, send by God to proclaim God's kingdom and to save the world from their sins. He was not involved in earthly political activities, and He did not directly command His disciples to do so. The remark that Jesus had made about King Herod was a political side remark because the king was responsible for the decapitation of John the Baptist.

1. Introduction

This article is about Jesus, the Fox, and politics. In Luke 13 verses 31 to 34 we find a short travel narrative where some of the Pharisees came to Jesus, while He was enroute to Jerusalem, telling Him that King Herod (Antipas) wants to kill Him and that He must leave the place (Hoehner Vol 3:126-145; Van Zyl 1979:140, 147-148). Jesus then said: "Go and tell that fox ("jackal" in the South African context – OAB 1957:90, uses the word "jakkals"; Ras 2024) I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal. In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day – for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem" (NIV 1981:95; Lk 13:32-33).

Looking at the New Testament authors' portrayal of Jesus will assist us to better understand if and how Jesus was involved in politics during His time on earth (Ras 2024). A careful reading of the different New Testament canonical books, following a text-immanent (Ras 2010:115) and narrative-critical (Ras 1996)

approach assist us to better comprehend if He indeed got involved in the political issues of His days, or if He had just made some sideline political remarks.

Brief attention is also paid to the message of Jesus to His disciples to see if He had instructed them to get involved in political activities or not. A brief eclectic overview is first given about Jesus as we find Him in the New Testament (*cf.* Guthrie 1970), and then remarks will be made about Jesus, the Fox (King Herod Antipas) and politics as we find it in Luke 13 verse 31 to 34 (*cf.* Tiede 1988:256-257; Craddock 1990:17-174; Marshall 1992:151; Bratcher 1982:240; Hendricksen 1984:708-709; Lenski 1946:757; Ellis 1991:190; Darr 1998; Beechy 2016:82-86; Van der Sprenkel 1964:256).

2. Jesus

Scholars normally distinguish between the historical Jesus and the Jesus of faith. The historical Jesus refers to the flesh-and-blood Jesus, someone who really had existed in history and had walked upon this earth just like any other historical person. The Jesus of faith refers to the “reconstructed” Jesus that we find in the Bible (Ras 2024; Guthrie 1980 Vol 3:497-583).

A reconstructed Jesus refers to the attempt of the Bible authors to reconstruct or “build a Jesus” out of the existing evidence that they had about Him. When we read the Bible in a systematic manner (Ras 2022:70-71) we discover these “reconstructions” or “profiles” (Ras, Ras & Zondi 2017:111-113) created about Jesus. We find mental pictures or glimpses about Him in the Bible. We believe that these “selected-interpreted-descriptions” about Jesus are descriptions of the real historical Jesus (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

“To see Jesus”, we must look at the Bible, into the Bible, and “through the Bible”, to see Him on the horizon, always getting closer and closer to us as we move closer to Him, or must we rather say, He gets closer to us (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Sehlogo, 2024; Mhlongo 2024). In line with a text-immanent and narrative-critical approach (Ras 1996) we read the different New Testament books as stories (Van Aarde 1994) where each individual book tells as something about Jesus.

3. Data Sources About Jesus

There are clear references to Jesus in the New Testament, especially in the first four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (Ras 2024). These four Gospels are the main data and written sources that we have about Him. However, what we find there are “interpreted reconstructions”, even “postulations” (Ras, Ras & Zondi 2017:113) of the opinions of those that have written these stories.

These stories, what we can call, “constructed-told stories”, were originally gathered qualitative data that the first eye-and-ear witnesses had compiled about

Jesus in the light of what they had seen and heard from, or about Him, somewhere in their past (Lk 1:1-4 & Ac 1:1-2; 15:3). Just like the Biblical authors, we believe that it was the Holy Spirit that had guided these authors to bring these stories and texts into existence (2 Pt 1:19-21; Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Geisler 1982).

The New Testament sources were originally in oral and were later put in written form (Mt 24:1-3, 15; Jn 21:25). The original sources had centred on the speeches (“words”) and deeds (“acts”) of Jesus and these collections were later expanded to also include stories and other material about all His activities (Mt 4:23-25; 7:28; 11:1-2; Combrink 1980:31-61; Du Plessis 1980:156-101; Ras 1996:12-13).

4. Language Sources

The mother tongue of Jesus was Aramaic (Ras 2024). This was a north-western Semitic language consisting of Aramaic and the Canaanite language. The last-mentioned included Ugaritic, Phoenician and Hebrew (Johns 1978:1-2). The mother tongue of Jesus further falls under West-Aramaic, more specifically Galilean Aramaic (Ras 2024; Mk 5:41). Jesus could also read and speak Hebrew, the language of the Old Testament Scriptures (Lk 4:16-20; Jn 5:2) as well as Greek (Jn 12:20) and Latin (Jn 19:20) (Ras 2024).

We believe the original oral sources of Jesus’ sayings and deeds were in Aramaic and were later translated into Greek, more specifically into the dialect that is today known as *Koinē* Greek as we find it in the present New Testament papyri, uncials and minuscule hand-written manuscripts (NA 1995; Ras 2024). The textual information about Jesus that we have today in the canonical text of the Bible, were put together by Greek New Testament text-critical scholars. The most up-to date eclectic Greek New Testament was compiled by Kurt and Barbara Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini and Bruce M. Metzger, and was printed by the *Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft* in Stuttgart, Germany (*Nestle-Aland, Novum Testamentum Graece Ed. XXVII* 1995:45*, Ras 2024).

The approach of modern-day scholars is basically an eclectic one and they normally based their compiled text on the existing papyrus, uncial and minuscule hand-written manuscripts that are available today (Metzger 1981; Petzer 1990; Ras 1998b:810-831). Previous Greek New Testament texts, like the “red text” of the United Bible Societies, second edition (1966) and the earlier versions of Eberhard Nestle’s “blue text” of the *Novum Testamentum Graece*, originally published in 1898, were used by Bible translators to translate the New Testament into English, Afrikaans, isiZulu, seSotho sa Borwa, and other indigenous or foreign languages (Ras 2024).

This means in practice that ordinary people’s perceptions about Jesus today, is mainly based upon what they have read in their vernacular about Him, in what they call, “the Bible”, or “their Bible”, or “The Holy Bible” (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-

Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mashiyane 2024). To be even more specific, when someone reads his Bible today in his mother tongue, he / she reads an “already carefully-selected-elected reconstructed-interpreted Bible”, that we, in faith believe, is “representing” reliable copies of the non-existent original *autographa*, inter alia containing the *verba ipsissima Jesu* (the real words of the historical Jesus) (Ras 2024; Geisler 1982).

5. How Do We Know Who Is Jesus?

We will never know who Jesus was, except, if we accept in faith, the statements that were made by the different authors of the New Testament, particularly Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. However, their statements were based on what they had received from others through oral traditions that were handed over to them (Lk 1:1-4; Jn 21:25; 1 Cor 15:3), or had experienced, through their encounters with those who were the apostles or the first eye and ear witnesses about Jesus (Mt 17:1-9; Lk 6:13). The Gospel author John also said that the Holy Spirit, who reveals the truth about God, will lead them (the disciples) in all truth, and will tell them about things to come, and that He (the Spirit) will take what Jesus had said and tell it to them (Jn 16:13-15; *GNB* 1980:139).

Although believers have the writings and the Holy Spirit to assist, we also do not know for certain who the four Gospel authors were. All what we know is that the headings of the present Greek writings start with the words *KATA MATHTHAION*, *KATA MARKON*, *KATA LUKAN*, and *KATA IOANNĒN*, “According to Matthew, According to Mark, According to Luke”, and “According to John” (*NA* 1995:1, 88, 150 & 247; Ras 2024).

To see if Jesus was directly involved in politics or not, or if He had made some political remarks only, it is vital to see how the authors of the New Testament, especially the Gospel authors had portrayed Him (Ras 2024). Was Jesus involved in one or other political or religious party with political objectives? Was He a political activist or politically militant? Did Jesus, for example, told His disciples to take up arms against the rulers during His days upon this earth? Did He expect from His followers to revolt against the authorities and to set people free for one or other political cause? (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mhlongo 2024). If so, then it can also be expected from all His followers, and the readers, and all those who identify with Him (Ras 2024).

6. The Jesus of Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew starts with the words, *Biblos geneeseōs Jesou Christou huiou David huiou Abraam*. “The Book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abram” (Mt 1:1). Jesus had a birth record. He was regarded as the son of David, the famous King of Judah and the son of Abram. According to Matthew Jesus was coming from a royal household and was also in the bloodline of the first patriarch Abram who was called by God to go to the promised land

(Gn 12 & 15; Ras 2024). He was royalty (Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mashiyane 2024). Jesus is depicted in this gospel as the child of Joseph and Mary (Mt 1:18). He was not biologically and genetically connected to Joseph, because, according to Matthew, his mother Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Mt 1:20; Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Mhlongo 2024). The Greek phrase *prin hē sunelthein autos eurēthē en gastri exousa ek pneumatos hagiou*, “before they came / go together, she was found to be pregnant out of [the] Holy Spirit (Mt 1:18; Ras 2024), is clear.

From a linguistic perspective, the aorist indicative passive verb, *eurēthē*, “she was found to be”, clearly indicates that Jesus’ birth is the result of the Holy Spirit’s divine intervention, and not because of Joseph’s sexual involvement with Mary. The passive form of the verb further indicates the passiveness of Mary in this regard. Jesus’s birth was indeed a virgin birth (Ras 2024; Mashiyane 2024).

Matthew emphasises that Jesus had come from the royal bloodline and that He is the promised Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One. The Greek word *Christos* is a translation of the Hebrew word “*Mashiach*” which means “anointed one” (Abbott-Smith 1977:484). An angel also had appeared to Joseph in a dream and told him to call the baby *Jēsous*, that is, “Jesus”, because He will save his people from their sins (Mt. 1:20-23). He will also be called *Emmanouēl*, which means, “God with us” (Mt 1:23; Van Aarde 1994; Ras 1996:47; Ras 2024). According to Matthew, God had become a human being through Jesus Christ. Jesus was God in human form.

Jesus was a Jew who was born about 6 BC in Betlehem in Judeah (Mt 2:1) in the days of king Herod the Great (37 BC to 4 BC) (Ras 2024; Hoehner 1980 Vol 3:126-145). He was born in Betlehem, the “house of bread” (Hebrew: “*Bet* (house) & *legem* (bread)”). The “Bread of Life” (according to John, not Matthew) was born in the house of bread (*cf.* Jn 6:35). The people of the geographical area Judeah were centuries earlier called Jews; that is why Jesus was also called a Jew (Mt 27:37).

According to Matthew, King Herod (the Great) had sent soldiers to kill all baby boys in the Betlehem region who were two years old and younger, when he had heard that the “King of the Jews” was born. Matthew depicts Jesus as Someone who was born in a house (Mt 2:11) and who has received gifts from the *magoi* (OAB 1957:6 - “*wyse manne*”; GNB 1980:4 - “some men who studied the stars....”; Abbott-Smith 1977:274 - a Magian, someone who conforms to the Persian [modern day “Iran” - Ras 2024] religion) (Mt 2:1-11).

His parents fled with Him to Egypt in North Africa and stayed there until the death of King Herod (4 BC) (Mt 2:13-18) (Hoehner 1980: Vol 3:126-145). Jesus and His parents became almost overnight refugees, and they were refugees in

this North African country until their return to their homeland. After the death of Herod, they had returned to Judeah, but then settled in the city of Nazareth in Galilee (Mt 2:22-23). That is why Jesus was called a *Nazōraios*, a “Nazarene” (Mt 2:23; Ras 2024).

Mathew did not say anything about Jesus’ upbringing during early childhood, but after His baptism by John the Baptist, when He started with His ministry, one can see He had revealed special insights into the sacred scriptures. He was a preacher (Mt 4:17), a teacher (Mt 4:23) and a healer (Mt 4:24). The message of Matthew about Jesus, addressed to his first readers, probably in Antioch, Syria (Carter 1996:25-25; Ras 1998a:450-451), was simple: Jesus is God Emmanuel (Van Aarde 1994:xiii) who came and called upon people to repent (Mt 4:17) and to become His followers (Mt 4:19) or disciples (Mt 28:19-20; Ras 1998b:810-831).

According to Matthew Jesus went into the temple of God in Jerusalem and drove out all those who were buying and selling there, and He also had overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the stools of those selling pigeons (Mt 21:12-13). He did that because He told them that the temple must be a house of prayer and not a hideout for thieves. Matthew uses the Greek words *spēlaion lēstōn* (Afrikaans: “rowerspelonk” - *OAB* 1957:29; English: “a den of robbers” - *NIV* 1981:28; *GNB* 1980:31 – “a hideout for thieves”). Abbott-Smith (1977:413 & 269) correctly translates it with “a robber’s cave”. According to Matthew He had acted alone when He did this and did not call upon His disciples to assist Him or to overthrow the temple authorities in a violent manner (Ras 2024).

According to Matthew, the believing disciples must do God’s will, be abundant in righteousness (Combrink 1980:104), and like Jesus, live a life of full obedience to God His Father. The essence of all this is to love God and the neighbour (Mt 22:37-40; Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo 2024). Just like Jesus was “God with us”, so His followers, the first disciples, and us, must be like God in this world. The disciples must carry Jesus’ cross, Emmanuel’s cross, in this world (Mt 10:32-39; Mhlongo 2024; Mashiyane 2024).

The disciples were not instructed to take up swords, sticks and to carry shields to be used against the temple authorities, the religious rulers in His days (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024). In fact, when Jesus was arrested by the temple authorities, the one disciple of Jesus, acting like a personal bodyguard, had drawn his sword and had chopped off the ear of the servant of the high priest, but Jesus immediately had commanded him to put his sword back (Mt 26:50-53). In Matthew’s Gospel there was no intention from Jesus’s side to lead a physical rebellion or to organise an uprising against the temple authorities (Ras, 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Isidiho 2024).

7. The Jesus of Mark

In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus is the Son of God (Mk 1:1). Someone with no birth record. Someone who was baptised by John the Baptist, who was driven by the Spirit, and who was served by angels (Mk 1:9-13). He had proclaimed the kingdom of God and had called upon people to repent. He was a fisher of men (Mk 1:14-20). He was learning with authority and had performed miracles also on the Sabbath because He was different (Mk 1:21-22). He had cast out demons, had healed people, and He was a man of prayer (Mk 1:21-35). He was sent to preach (Mk 1:38). He had identified with the social outcasts and with the marginalized (Mk 1: 40) because He wanted to do that. He said that he had come to call sinners to repentance (Mk 2:17), not righteous people.

He said that the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath and that human beings are more important than the sabbath (Mk 2:27-28). He had chosen his twelve disciples and He loved parables. He is pictured as someone who control even nature (Mk 4:35-41) because He had calm down a storm. He could raise people from the death (Mk 5:21-43), could multiply the bread and fish (Mk 6:3-44), and had walked upon the waters of the sea (Mk 6:45-56). He did not stick to old traditions of people regarding outside cleansing, but instead, had focused on the inner cleansing of the heart or soul (Mk 7:1-23). To become His disciple, one must take up the cross, and followed Him (Mk 8:34-38).

His message was direct and at times confrontational (Ras 2024). He was perceived to be radical for the people of His time (Mk 9:38-50). He loved children (Mk 10:13) and told people to forsake everything to follow Him (Mk 10:17-31). Mark mentioned that Jesus had driven people out of God's temple because He had regarded the temple not as a business place but as a place of prayer (Mk 11:15-17). He did not try to overthrow the temple or burnt down the temple through an act of arson (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Isidiho 2024), but He only had chased out those who were trying to make money inside His Father's house by selling sacrificial animals or doing foreign money exchange (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

He also had demanded respect for the Roman Caesar and for God (Mk 12:17). He did not try to convince His followers to rally against Caesar (Tiberius - cf. Lk 3:1) or to try and overthrow the imperialist and colonial Roman Empire, based in Rome (Italy), but with a strong presence in Galilee, Samaria and Judeah. He had told His disciples that there will come difficult times when many of them will be killed because of Him (Mk 13:5-13). He also had called upon them to guard and pray (Mk 13:33-37). However, this "guarding" was spiritual, not physical (Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Snyman 2024).

He was captured with swords and sticks and religiously charged that He had blasphemed God because He had acknowledged that He is the Christ, the Son

of God (Mk 14:60-65). He was crucified because He was falsely regarded as the King of the Jews (Mk 15:12-24) but He never had tried to set up an earthly kingdom with Himself as Head (Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024).

There were many women who had followed him (Mk 15:40-41: Mpungose 2024). Mark said that He had been buried but according to Mark a young man in the grave had said that Jesus stood up. Although Mark has an abrupt textual ending at chapter 16 verse 8, there are other text-critical readings that added verse 9 to 20 (Ras 2024). In this passage Jesus had appeared to different people. He told them to go into the whole world and proclaim the gospel. He then was taken to heaven where He sit on the righthand side of God (Mk 16:9-20).

For Mark, the disciples must be like Jesus, the Son of God, and they must do what He told them to do. Discipleship is not an instantaneous thing, but it is a process of becoming. “Becoming” a disciple, a follower, a *mathētēs* (learner), and “staying” one, is what it means to follow Jesus. *Becoming and being* a disciple and at the same time *becoming and being* more like the Son of God, is the essence of Mark’s teaching about Jesus.

He did not instruct His followers to gather arms, slings and swords to prepare for a physical take-over of the temple in Jerusalem, the Roman authorities, or to storm the Roman Senate in Rome (Italy). Jesus’s proclamation of His (God’s) kingdom was a spiritual one (Mk 1:14-15), not an earthly one, where He had rallied His followers to overthrow the despised Roman imperialists and Roman colonial power. He also did not lead a physical revolt against the paying of the taxes, but instead, told His followers to pay their taxes to Caesar (Mk 12:13-17; Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Snyman 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

8. The Jesus of Luke

According to Luke Jesus was born in the city of David (Betlehem) and there was no lodging place for His parents. The herdsmen found Jesus with Joseph and Mary in a manger (Lk 2:16). He was circumcised when he was eight days old (Lk 2:21) and was given the name Jesus, “Saviour”. He was brought before God in the temple of Jerusalem and two doves were offered as a sacrifice, to cleanse Mary, His mother. This indicates that they were poor at that time because they could not afford the customary lamb (Lv 12:8 & Lk 2:24; Ras 2024).

He grew up in the Spirit and was full of wisdom. When he was 12 years old, He was found between the teachers of scriptures in Jerusalem. He had deep insights into the things of God, His Father. He was an obedient child in Nazareth. Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist and the Holy Spirit came upon Him in the form of a dove (Lk 2-3). He stayed without food for 40 days and was led by the Holy Spirit. He made the scriptures applicable to His listeners. He had contextualised

it. He casts out demons, heals the sick, multiplies the fish. He had come to forgive sins of people and to call sinners to repentance (Lk 5:24, 32)

He has added new meaning to existing traditions and had emphasized that love and compassion are more important than traditions itself (Lk 5:33-6:11; Ras 2024; Snyman 2024). His teachings were filled with a life filled with love (Lk 6; Mhlongo 2024). He rose the death (Lk 7:11-17), forgave sins (Lk 7:48), preached and proclaimed the kingdom of God (Lk 8: 1-2), and healed people. He did miracles (Lk 9:10-17). He taught that people must show compassion (Lk 10:25-37; Mhlongo 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mpungose 2024; Mashiyane 2024).

He had warned against earthly possessions and riches (Lk 12:15), and emphasised richness in God (Lk 12:21). He said His message carries a radical division where people will be divided because of Him (Lk 12: 49-53). He made a truthful remark about King Herod (Lk 13:32) but He never had rallied His followers against him (Ras 2024). He had compassion and had shown His emotions (Lk 19:41). He was perceived to be radical by the temple authorities because He had challenged and had overturned temple traditions and practices that He saw as wrong, like running businesses in the temple like selling and buying (Lk 19:45-46; Ras 2024).

Luke also narrated that Jesus had said that people must give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's (Lk 20:25). He did not attack Caesar or talked bad about Him (Ras 2024). He said that difficult times were laying ahead (Lk 21). He instituted the new covenant as symbolised by the bread and wine (Lk 22:15-20). He was crucified because of His doctrines that have upset the Jewish religious authorities (Lk 23:5-33). He believed in paradise, and He had handed himself over to His Father (Lk 23:46). He was buried but stood up (Lk 23:53-24:3) and appeared to some and explained the Scriptures to them (Lk 24:27). His resurrected body was a normal human body, and He ate food to prove it to them (Lk 24:42-43). He left His disciples and went up to heaven (Lk 24:51).

For Luke a disciple is someone who knows Jesus comprehensively (intimately) (Lk 1:1-14) and do what He commanded them to do (Lk 6:46-47). The essence of everything that He said is this: love God and your neighbour as you love yourself (Lk 10:25-37). In Lukan theology Jesus' love is universal and specifically includes the marginalized and those that were despised by society (Lk 14:13-14). Jesus' love is always inclusive (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024), the disciples' love must be the same (Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

In this earthly world the disciples must expect and will experience difficult times during the end times before the Second Coming of Christ (Lk 21:5-37), but the first disciples were instructed to constantly watch and pray so that they can be

considered worthy to escape all these mentioned things and to stand in front of the Son of Man at the time of the Second Coming of Christ (Lk 21:34-36).

There was no call-up made by Jesus to take up arms against the Romans or the Jewish temple authorities or against religious groups like the Pharisees or Herodians in the Gospel of Luke (Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024). Jesus' kingdom was spiritual, not physical. God's kingdom is already present through Jesus, but it will also become physically present in all its fullness at the Second Coming of Jesus (the Son of Man / the Son of God) (Ras 1996; 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

9. The Jesus of John

The Jesus of John is the Logos. The eternal Word who was from all beginning with God and who was God (Jn 1:1). Jesus is pictured as God the Creator who had become a human being, the One who had become *sarx*, "flesh" (Jn 1:14). He is described as the Lamb of God who will take away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29). He did miracles and changed water into wine (Jn 2).

John specifically had mentioned that Jesus was passionate about His Father's temple (God's temple) and that He had made a whip and had chased the people out who were selling there (Jn 2:13-17). He appears to be radical and militant to the religious authorities because of His religious zeal for God (Jn 2:14-17), but it was because of His belief that the temple must be a place of prayer and not a trading store (Ras 2024). Like Matthew, Mark and Luke, John did not portray Him as an earthly political agent, a political or religious activist, or one or other freedom fighter or terrorist (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

Jesus' solution to change was "regeneration". One needs to be "born again" - a change that can only be wrought through water and Spirit (Jn 3:5; Ras 1987). Although He was seen as the eternal Logos (Jn 1:1-2), from a Godly perspective, He was also depicted from a human perspective, as a man who got tired (Jn 4:6). He spoke to a Samaritan woman (Jn 4:7); something that was prohibited because of the past socio-cultural and historical-political issues of Israel's past (Kelso 1980:244-247). He went against this (His) perceived "ungodly custom" of His days and simply spoke to her, but He did not rally His followers against the Jewish religious-cultural authorities who had maintained and tried to enforce it (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024). He had mixed with social outcasts and those that were marginalized. His spiritual and religious convictions had made Him different (Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

His God's consciousness had directed His life so that obedience to the will of God was everything. He had healed on the Sabbath – something that was not allowed (Jn 5). It is clear that His religious conduct had challenged the

religious-cultural *status quo* of His time. He had performed miracles most of the time; from changing water into wine (Jn 2), feeding five thousand men with five loaves of bread and two fish (Jn 6:8-10), and walked upon the waters of the sea (Jn 6:16-21). He had brought Lazarus back to life (Jn 11:38-44). He was perceived to be seen as a direct threat to the Jewish authorities (Jn 11:45-48) but His commandment was love (Jn 13:34). Jesus' ministry was not characterized by a *legio* of militant, radical, anti-temple, anti-government, anti-colonial, anti-Roman slogans or manifestos (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mpungose 2024; Mashiyane 2024).

He was telling His disciples about His Father's place and that He would send them the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:15-26). He was crucified because the Jewish leaders said that He had made Himself the Son of God (Jn 19:7). The Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem had regarded Him as the King of the Jews, a political opponent of the Roman Caesar (Jn 19:12-13), and because Pilate was scared that the Jewish leaders, who had believed that, would tell the Roman Caesar that he (Pontus Pilate) is not the Caesar's friend, he (Pilate) had allowed Jesus to be crucified (Jn 19:12). One can say that Jesus was crucified because of the wrong accusation that He was committing high treason against the Caesar, originally known as *perduellio*, and later known as *laesae maiestatis* (Snyman 2008:31; Duvenhage sa:160; Ras 2010:117), while it was indeed not the case.

To be a disciple in Johannine theology is to be like the Logos. To be like God, to do the things that the Logos told His disciples to do. It is the Holy Spirit that will remind the disciples of the Logos; what He had said and what He had taught (Jn 15:26-27; 16:7-14). The Spirit of Truth (the *Paraklētos* – Jn 15:26) will lead the disciples and will glorify Jesus. John's Jesus also said that followers of Him will have tribulation in this world (Jn 16:32), but Jesus said that the disciples will have peace in Him. He had encouraged them to be in good spirit because He had conquered the world (Jn 16:32).

Jesus' disciples know and believe that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah), the Son of God, and that they, through their faith (believing in Him) will have (eternal) life (Jn 20:30-31; Ras 2010:118). The Jesus as portrayed in the Gospel of John was not a political activist, a religious terrorist, or a militant commander. He was the Lamb of God, who had come to take away the sins of the world (Jn 1:29; Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

10. Jesus in the Book of the Acts (The Acts of Luke)

Jesus is depicted as the One who had elected the apostles, had given them commands through the Holy Spirit and told them to wait in Jerusalem for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Ac 1:1-5). He was the One through which God had performed miracles and wonders, and He was raised from the death (Ac 2:22-24). It is in His Name that miracles happen (Ac 3:6). He is the Child Jesus

through which God bless those who repent (Ac 3:26).

It is through faith in Jesus' name and through the confession that Jesus Christ is the Son of God that those who seek God become His children (Ac 8:37). He is seen as the exalted Jesus who had confronted Saul, who then became Paul (Acts 9: 3-5), and who had sent him (Paul) to the gentiles (Ac 26:17). The militant and aggressive Saul, driven by his Jewish zeal, after he had met Jesus on the road to Damascus, had radically changed, and had become a follower of Jesus, proclaiming that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ (Ac 9:20,22). Jesus never had instructed him to form any form of political pressure group to effect one or other earthly change in government. He was called to proclaim the kingdom of God (Ac 20:25; Ras 2024; Mpungose 2024).

Luke says that Jesus is the One from Nazareth that was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit and power and who had travelled through the land to do good and to heal those under the power of the devil because God was with Him (Ac 10:38). He was crucified and resurrected and who bestow the Holy Spirit upon those who believe (Ac 10:44-48). It is through Jesus that the heathen had received forgiveness of their sins. That was the central message of the apostle Peter (Ac 10:37-43) and Paul (Ac 13:38).

According to Luke, the author of Acts, the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and executing Jesus' commands. He had emphasised that the church (believers) (Ac 8:1) is not free from persecution when executing Jesus' missionary command, but that they are constantly on the move. The message of salvation is for all people, not only for Jews, but also for the non-Jews, the gentiles. From Luke's perspective God uses anyone to spread the message of salvation. The disciples must expect persecution when busy with evangelism and missionary work and they must be willing to stand up for their faith in Jesus Christ - just like Stephanos, the first martyr (Ac 6:8-7:60), and Peter (Ac 12:1-17), and Paul (Ac 16: 16-34; 21:30-23:11; 23: 12-35; 25:1-12; 28:16, 30-31).

11. The Jesus of Paul

In the *Corpus Paulinum*, from Romans to Philemon we read the following about Jesus. According to Paul, Jesus was God's Son that had revealed Himself to him on the road to Damascus (Ac 9; Gl 1:15-16). This revelation has altered Paul's life and made him a follower of Jesus. The righteousness of God (Bavinck 1980:439-468) consists of faith in Jesus Christ (Rm 1:16-17; 3:21-26). It is the grace of God, no good deeds, that saves man, and this salvation comes through faith in Jesus Christ (Ridderbos 1978:183-188). All people, Jews and heathens, can be saved through faith in Jesus Christ (Rm 10:11-12). The gospel or good news of God is simple: He had sent Jesus Christ His Son and whoever believes in Him (Jesus) will be saved (Rm 1:16-17; 10:4-17; Ras 2024).

Jesus is the Resurrected Jesus, the One who physically was resurrected and stood up out of the death, and at the end of time, all those who had died in Christ will be made alive again and stand up, each in its own order. Jesus is the One who will also hand over the kingdom of God to His Father (1 Cor 15:14-16, 22-26). It is through Jesus Christ that God the Father will resurrect all believers at the end of time, and it is during this resurrection that they will receive their eternal physical bodies (1 Cor 15:50-58).

Believers were elected in Jesus (Eph 1:4-5) and all things under heaven and earth one day will be united in Christ (Eph 1:10). The believers were saved through grace, through faith, not out of their own good works or deeds (Eph 2:8-10). It is Jesus, who is the Christ, who, through faith, stays in the hearts of the believers (Eph 3:17-19). Believers are called to become strong in Jesus, the Lord (*Kurios*) and to put on the whole armour of God to stay standing against all the methods of the devil (Eph 6:10-13; Ras 2013:39-49). There can be no doubt that for Paul there was / is a spiritual warfare going on in this world and that believers are engaged with that and not with physical warfare (*cf.* Ras 2002:1-17).

The apostle Paul further said that he had the internal compassion of Jesus Christ (Phlp 1:8), that the Lord Jesus Christ is our Saviour, and that the believers can do all things through Jesus (Phlp 3:20; 4:13). Everything we do we must do as if for the Lord, that is for Jesus (Col 3:23). Paul said he wish that the Lord will make the believers rich and abundant in love for one another so that their hearts can be strengthened to be strong in holiness before the Second Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Th 3:12-13).

The Jesus of Paul will come down from heaven to earth at His second coming, with the sound of the trumpet, and those who had died in Christ will stand up first, and then those who are still alive at the time of His coming, to meet the Lord, that is Jesus, in the air. Believers must encourage one another with this message (1 Th 4:13-18).

According to Paul, it is through Jesus that we get salvation – there is no other way (1 Th 5:9). When Jesus comes again, He will destroy the antichrist (2 Th 2:1-8). He is also the (only) Mediator (Greek: *Mesitēs*) between God and man (1 Tm 2:5). This Jesus was also the “ransom” for all people to set us free (1 Tm 2:6). Paul said that the words of Jesus were sound, and he (Paul) also said that material things were not important in life (1 Tm 6: 7-8).

Paul saw himself as a slave (Greek: *doulos*) of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ (Tt 1:1) – an apostle, through the will of God (2 Tm 1:1), and through the command of God (1 Tm 1:1). God, Jesus is our Saviour (Tt 1:3-4; 2:13; 3:4-6). Paul said to Titus that God, through Jesus, had saved them (“us”) through the bath of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit that He abundantly

bestowed upon them through Jesus Christ, our Saviour, so that they, justified through His grace, can become heirs according to the hope of the eternal life (Tt 3:4-7).

Paul also said that he is a prisoner of Christ Jesus (Phlp 1:1) in his letter to Philemon. The statement that Paul had made in the Corpus Paulinum about Jesus had made it clear to us that Paul was someone who was heavenly-minded (Col 3:1-4), Jesus-minded (Phlp 1:1; Gl 1:11-12), God-minded (Eph 1:3-2:10), someone who was willing to suffer like a soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Tm 2:3-4) or as a prisoner of Jesus (Phlp 1:1; Eph 6:20). Paul's teachings were emphasizing what God did in Jesus Christ for the believers (church) and that they (believers) were called to do what is right and good in expectation that Jesus will come again (1 Cor 11:1, 15:1-4). Simply put, Christ's disciples must be imitators of God, "walking" (Greek: *peripateō* – walking around) in love (Eph 5:1).

At no stage did Paul call up the believers to become radical political activists, terrorists, or militants fighting for an earthly kingdom. He was referring to the coming kingdom of God as a coming Christocracy (Afrikaans: "*Christokrasie*"), that will followed-up at a later stage by a Theocracy (Afrikaans: "*Teokrasie*") when Christ will hand everything over to God His Father (1 Cor 15:22-28). There will be a physical future kingdom for all God's believers after the Second Coming of Christ (1 Cor 15:22-28, 50-58; Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024), but it is not something that believers can bring into existence through earthly political efforts and means (Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Mpungose 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

12. Jesus in the Book of Hebrews

The author of Hebrews said that God (the Father) had spoken in the last days through His Son, that He (the Father) had appointed as Heir of everything, and through whom (the Son) He had made the world (Hb 1:1-12). The Son is Jesus (Hb 2:9) who is described as the Apostle and eternal High Priest (Hb 3:1) that went into the tabernacle first (Greek: *prodromos* – Afrikaans: "*Voorloper*") (Hb 6:20) to make atonement for our sins (Hb 7:25-28; 9:24-28; 10:19-20).

Jesus is also seen as the Leader and Finisher of the faith (Afrikaans: "*Voleinder van die geloof*") (Hb 12:2), the Mediator of the New Testament / covenant (Greek: *diathēkēs neas*), and the Great Shepherd of the sheep (Greek: *ton poimena tōn probatōn ton megan* - Hb 13:20). What this means in praxis is that the believers must see Jesus as their example, their Leader, and that they must follow Him, willing to even carrying His reproach (Hb 13:12-13), because He had suffered for us to set us free. As a result of this, the believers, despite all forms of persecutions, even death (Hb 11:32-12:4), must now be willing to endure in faith and do God's will and that which is well-pleasing in His sight (Hb 13:21; Ras 2024).

Despite all the physical and emotional suffering of the believers, through the ages (Hb 11:32-40), the believers in the Book of Hebrews were not called to actively get involved in political activities to effect any structural change like changing authorities, governments, regimes, or imperialist or colonial rulers (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024; Snyman 2024).

13. Jesus in the Epistle of James

Jesus is portrayed as Someone who makes no distinction between people who are rich or poor (Jm 2:1:5; Mashiyane 2024; Mhlongo 2024). The believers are told to do the same and must be impartial and never treat the rich as more important than the poor (Jm 2:9). The believers, addressed as “my brothers” (Greek: *adelphoi mou* – Jm 1:2), are instructed to show their good deeds (“works”) (Greek: *erga*), as a visible sign of their “faith” (Greek: *pistis*) (Jm 1:17; Ras 2024).

The believers in the diaspora (Jm 1:1,2, 6) must show their *pistis* (faith) by doing *erga* (work) that will please God. Believers must visit orphans and widows, remain unpolluted by the world (Jm 1:27), be impartial (Jm 2:9), control their tongue (Jm 3:6-12), practise wisdom from above (things like peace, friendliness, compassion – Jm 3:17), acknowledge the Lord in their daily activities, by saying, “If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that” (Jm 4:15), and be patient with the rich (employers) that withheld the wages of the poor believers (Jm 5:1-7) until the Second Coming of the Lord (Jm 5:7; Ras 2024).

Jesus is seen by James as a Judge who will judge the rich (Jm 5:1,4,5,6,7,8 & 9) for not paying the believers who had worked hard for them during harvest time. As a result, these believers had cry to God for His intervention. James said that because God (Jesus) will judge them at His second coming (Jm 5:4-9), the believing brothers must be patient (Jm 5:10-11). The brothers must also not swear, neither by heaven, neither by earth (Jm 5:12), they must call the elders of the church, and they must pray for the sick and anoint them with olive oil (Greek: *elaiō*) (Jm 5:14-16), they must confess their “sins” (Greek: *tas hamartias* – NA 1995:597) or their “faults” (Greek: *ta paraptōmata* – the Majority text reading – NA 1995:597), and must convert those who err from the truth (Jm 5:19-20; Ras 2024).

In short, the believers in James were never called to physically fight those who oppressed them in any manner whatsoever, whether political or economically. They must not incite riots against those who owe them money or who hold back their wages despite all their hard work (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024). Instead, believers are called to do what is right, to pray, and to do pastoral work (Jm 5:13-20; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

14. Jesus in the Petrine Letters

According to Peter, God the Father, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, had

regenerated the elect (Greek: *eklektōis*), so that they can obtain an inheritance in heaven through faith (1 Pt 1:5). The believers are called to be holy because they were bought through the precious blood of Christ (1 Pt 1:15-19), and they are instructed to do good because that is the will of God (1 Pt 2:15; Mashiyane 2024; Mhlongo 2024); Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

The beloved (1 Pt 2:11-17), believing servants (1 Pt 2:18-25), believing women (1 Pt 3:1-6), believing men (1 Pt 3:7), all the righteous (1 Pt 3:8-12), are called to live according to the will of God (1 Pt 4:2), and to sanctify God in their hearts (1 Pt 3:15), because through baptism they had obtained a clean conscience and must now no longer live according to the flesh (1 Pt 4:1-4). Believers must glorify God in everything through Jesus Christ (1 Pt 4:11) but they must know that they will not be free from persecution and that Christians will suffer (1 Pt 4:16).

Jesus is also described as the “Chief Shepherd” (Greek: *tou archipoimenos*) that will come and reward the elders who must look well after the flock of God (1 Pt 5:1-4). Believing Christians must resist the devil (1 Pt 5:8-9) and stand fast in faith because afflictions are experienced by all believers around the world. Peter, an apostle of Jesus, who later was regarded as the first Pope by the Catholic Church (Mashiyane 2024), did not say that Jesus had called upon them to take up arms to overthrow the colonial oppressors or enemies of their time (Ras 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mpungose 2024).

Believers are called to increase in virtues and to increase their knowledge of Jesus Christ and be aware of false prophets and teachers that may take them back to fleshly and worldly things (2 Pt 1:3-8; 2:1-22). They must also not give up on expecting the Day of the Lord (second coming) because it will come, despite what people say. Then the heavens and earth will be destroyed by fire and new heavens and a new earth will come where righteousness will be at home (GNB 1980:301). Peter said that the church must increase in grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pt 3:13,18).

The Petrine believers were part of the diaspora (1 Pt 1:1) that were geographically-speaking, part of the Roman empire (Guthrie 1970:792-795). Despite their persecution and suffering (1 Pt 4:1-6,16) the believers were explicitly told to submit themselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, or to governors, who are sent by Him to punish those who do wrong (1 Pt 2:13-15; *NIV* 1981:294-295).

Peter, the apostle of Jesus, clearly taught that believers must obey the authorities, and not fight or revolt against them (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024). Believers were never asked, or taught, or mobilised to organize themselves into one or other political party, or mass movement, or trade union or religious-cultural movement to effect some earthy change. Instead, they were encouraged to serve God, and

to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ and not to be led away by the errors of lawless people (GNB 1980:301; 2 Pet 3:17-18).

15. Jesus in the Johannine Letters

Jesus is depicted as the One who was from the beginning with the Father. He is eternal life, and He proclaims eternal life because He is the Word of Life (1 Jn 1:1-2). God is light and the blood of Jesus cleanse the believers of all sins (1 Jn 1:5-7). This letter points out that God's children know Jesus because they keep His commandments (1 Jn 2:3), and because they love one another and walk in the light of God (1 Jn 2:10; Mhlongo 2024; Mpungose 2024; Ras 2024).

Because the believers were born out of God (1 Jn 3:9), they have the anointment of the Holy Spirit that stays within them (1 Jn 2:20,27) so that they can discern the different antichrists and the coming Antichrist that are doing lawlessness and sin (1 Jn 2:18-20,27-28; 3:2-4). John said that believers are born out of God and who walk in the light and love of God, keeping His commandments – people whose heart do not condemn them (1 Jn 3:9-10,17-24; 4:1-21).

The believers are persons who can discern the spirits and identify those who deny that Jesus Christ came “in the flesh” (Greek: *en sarki*) (1 Jn 4:6). Jesus is seen as the Son of the Father (2 Jn 1:3) who had become a human being (a real flesh and blood man) because He came *en sarki* (2 Jn 1:7). Those who deny this belief is seen as antichrist. This belief is part of the “teaching of Christ” (Greek: *tē didachē tou Christou*) (2 Jn 1:9) according to the Majority text (Ras 2024).

True believers are those who will live according to the right doctrine (belief-system). Nowhere in the Johannine letters is there any call to take up arms, based on Jesus's former teachings, and interpretations about Jesus, against those who spread false doctrines or who had threatened the Christian faith through erroneous beliefs. God's children are called to love because God is love (1 Jh 4:8; Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Mashiyane, 2024; Snyman 2024).

16. Jesus in the Epistle of Jude

Jude saw himself as a slave / servant (Greek: *doulos*) of Jesus Christ and wrote to the called saints, who, according to him, “are protected for Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:1). He had commanded the beloved (Greek: *agapētoi* – Jude 1:17) to remember the words of the apostles of Jesus Christ that in the last days there will be people that will do godless things (Jude 1:4), who cause divisions (Jude 1:19) and do not have the Holy Spirit (Jude 1:19). The believers are called to build themselves up in faith, to pray in the Holy Spirit, to keep themselves in God's love, and to wait upon Jesus Christ (Jude 20). There was no call to organize themselves around one or other political cause and to fight people with different heretic beliefs because the believers' hope is eternal life in Jesus Christ (Jude 20;

Ras 2024; Guthrie 1970:929).

17. Jesus in the Apocalypse of John

John said this is the revelation (Greek: *apokalupsis* – Rv 1:1) of Jesus Christ which God gave Him to show His servants (the seven churches or believers – Rv 1:4) what is going to happen. This revelation is a prophesy. The words, “words of the prophesy” (Greek: *tous logous tēs prophēteias*) are used (Rv 1:3; 22:9-10). In the revelation to John Jesus is described and depicted as the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Son of Man (Rv 1:11,13; 22:13), the Lion from the tribe of Judah, the Root of David (Rv 4:5), the Lamb that was slaughtered (Rv 4:6,12; Ras 2024).

Jesus is depicted as the only One who can open the book with the seven seals (Rv 5:1-5; 6:1,3,5,7,9,12). The fifth seal reveals the souls of those who were killed because of the word of God. The killing of the believers because of the word of God is a clear indication that believers are not exempt from persecution like some of the first apostles and followers of Jesus had experienced. Christians are not immune against earthly persecutions when it comes to their faith (Rv 6:9-11; Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024).

At the opening of the sixth seal a description is given about the events that will hit the earth and its inhabitants, when the One on the throne and the wrath of the Lamb becomes visible (Rv 6:12-17). A description is then given about the multitude in front of the throne of God and the Lamb (Rv 7: 9). At the opening of the seventh seal, a description is then given of the seven angels with the seven trumpets (Rv 8:1-2) and their individual punitive actions. In this part of the Apocalypse, it is said, that the faithful brothers had conquered Satan through the blood of the Lamb and through the word of their testimony (Rv 12:9-12).

What becomes clear in these descriptions is that the followers of Jesus, the believers, the faithful, are not immune against an earthly death in times of persecution (Rv 7:9-17; 14:9-13). Not only is the Lamb of God described as standing upon Mount Zion (Rv 14:1), but He is also depicted as the One who has a golden crown and who sits on the cloud with a sharp sickle in His hand to punish those upon the earth (Rv 14:14-20). It is clear in the Apocalypse that judgment belongs to God, not to the believers (Ras 2024).

The Apocalypse makes the believers aware that they will be persecuted for their faith, but that God will judge and punish those who persecuted them (the believers) at the end of times. Then seven other angels are called to go and pour out “the seven bowls of God’s wrath” (Greek: *tas hepta phialas tou thumou tou Theou*) upon the earth (Rv 16:1; *NIV* 1981:323; *NA* 1995:663). After this apocalyptic description of the wrath of God, poured out on earth (Rv 16:1) through the seven angels who had carried these bowls, we get a description of

the wedding of the Lamb.

The Lamb is Jesus, the Son of God (Rv 5:5-6,8-10) and the clothes of the bride is described as the good deeds of the believers. The bride is His disciples, the believers, those who have the witness of Jesus (Rv 19:7-10). Then, in the final stages of the Apocalypse, Jesus is portrayed as the One who comes down from heaven on a white horse followed by the armies of heaven in white clothes (Rv 19:11-14; Ras 2024).

Then the beast, and the kings of the earth who had followed him, were taken captive by Jesus on the white horse (Rv 19:19-21). Satan is then bound and thrown into the abyss and kept there for a thousand years (Rv 20:1-3). After this period Satan again is released and then defeated with his assembled armies when they move against the holy city (Rv 20:7-10). This is then followed by white throne judgment (Rv 20:11-15). At the eschatological end, according to the Apocalypse of John, a new heaven and earth emerge as well as the holy city, the new Jerusalem (Rv 21:1-2). In the Apocalypse, at the Second Coming of Christ, He will come to deal with the unbelievers and those who were persecuting the believers and all those who did not follow Him (Rv 21:6-8; Ras 2024; Tenney 1980 Vol 5:98-99).

The bride of the lamb is now seen as the new Jerusalem (Rv 21:9-10), no longer the believers (Rev 19:7-8). In the last part of the Apocalypse a pure river of water is flowing out from the throne of God and the Lamb (Rv 22:1), and an invitation is given to all those who are thirsty to come and drink from the eternal waters for free. What stands out in the Book of Revelation is that God is portrayed as the One the who judge and punishes, not man, because He (God the Father), through Jesus (the Lamb), controls the seven seals (Rv 6:1-17), the seven trumpets (Rv 8:1-13; 9:1-21; 11:15-19; 12:1-17; 13:1-18; 14:1-20; 15:1-8), and the seven bowls of God's wrath (Rv 16:1-21; 19:11-21; Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

No believer, according to the Apocalypse, is called upon to retaliate and fight any earthly authority when they are experiencing persecution. Believers are called to be patient until the Second Coming of Christ and there is no proof that they got involved in earthly politics to fight for their individual and collective political rights against the mighty Roman Empire (Blaiklock 1980 Vol 5:133-141) ruled by Caesar through the Roman Senate (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024).

18. Jesus in the New Testament

A careful reading of the New Testament reveals that Jesus was not portrayed as a political or economic freedom fighter, a guerilla fighter, or a cultural or religious terrorist that wanted to overthrow the government or the temple authorities of the day (Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024; Sehlogo 2024). He did not hate the oppressed Romans or those who were appointed by the Caesar to rule over Him and the

Jewish nation (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

Jesus did not call upon His disciples to gather weapons like swords and slings to assassinate and take out His perceived enemies (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024). In fact, He taught just the opposite. He said they must love their enemies and do good to them (Mt 5:44; Snyman 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Mhlongo 2024). All Bible believing Christians will know that the central message of God is to love Him and one another (Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Mpungose 2024).

Saul, who later became Paul, was on a “search and destroy” mission with letters from the Jewish high priest to persecute anyone belonging to the Way (Ac 9:1-6), but after he had met Jesus on the Damascus Road, he started to proclaim the gospel and God’s kingdom (Ac 9:18; Gl 1:12-16; Ras 2024). He did not rally people to overthrow their perceived enemies or the Roman government, even after several Roman imprisonments because of his faith in Jesus (Ac 16:19-26; 21:30-33; 24:1-27; 25:1-26:32; 28:16,30).

Paul, in imitation of Jesus, was in favour of civil obedience and openly had acknowledged that the Roman government carries the sword that God gave them (the authorities) to punish those who are disobedient (Rm 13:1-7); and this obedience, he (Paul) had based on his understanding of the sound teachings of Jesus (1 Cor 15:1-10; 1 Tm 1:10; Ras 2024).

19. Jesus and Politics

According to the New Testament there are references that have political dimensions. When King Herod the Great, had instructed that all Jewish male children under two years be killed to protect his own throne (Mt 2:13-16), in order to eliminate the King of the Jews during the time Jesus was born (Mt 2:1-12), Jesus’ parents (now refugees) simply fled away from Judeah to Egypt in North Africa, and had stayed there with Him until Herod had passed away (Mt 2:19-23; Ras 2024).

Nothing is mentioned that His parents, or He (Jesus) Himself, at a later stage, got involved in any attempt or coup to fight back to return to their land of birth and to overthrow the Herodian dynasty, or the Roman Empire under Caesar Augustus, who had allowed Herod the Great to rule over Judeah. There was no desire or implementation of the Mosaic Jewish *lex taliones* laws – “an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth” (Ex 21:23-25; Mt 5:38-45; Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

Matthew said Jesus was paying even the compulsory temple tax in Capernaum through a miracle that He had performed (a *statēr* coin in the mouth of the fish). Matthew specifically mentions that Jesus had instructed Peter, although they,

in Jesus's explanation, are free and not supposed to pay taxes, not to offend the temple tax collectors, but to go to the lake and catch a fish, and inside the mouth of the fish there will be a *statēr* coin that will cover the compulsory temple tax of both Jesus and Peter (Ras 2024; Mt 17:24-27; Van Aarde 1994:204-228).

In this socio-cultural context that refers to the *politico-religio* affairs of Jesus' day, the Roman Empire had collected tax from inter alia the Jewish temple in Jerusalem, and the tax collectors of the temple again had to collect it from the Jewish people, including Jesus and Peter. It is striking that Jesus simply paid the taxes although He had said by implication that it was not necessary (Ras 2024).

According to Matthew, Jesus was crucified, because of wrong religious accusations and interpretations, that He could break down the temple and again rebuild it in three days (Mt 26:61), and that He had said that He is the Son of God, the Son of Man (Mt 26:63-65). This perceived blasphemy by Jesus, according to the religious leaders, had disrupted their religious belief-system, and any disorder that may emanates because of religious intolerance, again may lead to social unrest that may threatens the political order of the day. In simple terms, religious clashes may lead to political unrest (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024).

Matthew, however, did not portray Jesus at any stage as someone who intentionally and deliberately had threatened the socio-political structures of His day through any form of political or religious violent means (Ras 2024; Snyman 2024). He only is depicted as Someone who had brought new meaning to the interpretation of how people in His days were taught and accustomed to do things (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024).

Matthew had emphasized Jesus' emphasis on God's righteousness that must be in abundance (Mt 5-7; Combrink 1980:104). It was all about what God wants from them, namely, to love God and to love one's neighbour as one loves oneself (Mt 22:34-40), and nothing else (Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mpungose 2024).

According to Mark, Jesus was doing good, even though the religious Pharisees had conspired with the political-minded Herodians to kill Him (Mk 3:6; Mijndhardt 1982:359). When King Herod Antipas had killed John the Baptist (Mk 6:14-29), Jesus had said, according to Luke, when some of the Pharisees had told Him that Herod wanted to kill Him, "Go tell that fox, I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day will reach my goal" (Lk 13:31-32). The words, "Go tell that fox ..." is politically-speaking, significant (Ras 2024).

20. Jesus and the Fox

This “fox” statement is a very clear statement in the whole New Testament where Jesus, according to Luke (Ras 2024), had addressed a political leader, King Herod Antipas (Hoehner 1980 Vol 3:140), *in absentia* in public, *in hoc casu*, the ruling king of Galilee (Lk 3:1), appointed by Roman Caesar Augustus, in front of influential religious leaders. To say that King Herod Antipas is a “fox” (*NIV* says “fox” – 1979:95; Lk 13:32), certainly was a serious matter. The Greek phrase *poreuthentes eipate tē alōpeki tautē* (*NA* 1995:207), “Go, tell that fox ...”, is a very forceful metaphorical expression (Ras 2024).

According to Luke, Jesus had instructed the Pharisees, more precisely, commanded them, to go and tell Herod. The Greek aorist imperative active verb *eipate* emphasises this (Ras 2024). The “fox” is a metaphor of King Herod (Abbott-Smith 1977:23). In the South African context a fox is regarded as sly or cunning (Ras 2024); in Afrikaans, “*skelm*”, “*agterbaks*”. The Zulu Bible translation for fox is “*mpungushe*” (*IE* 2008:98), from “*impungushe*”, or “*ujakalase*” (Kotzé & Wela 1991:82; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Mpungose 2024). The Zulu phrase “*Hambani nithi kuleyo mpungushe*” (*IE* 2008:98; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mpungose 2024), is in line with the literal Greek phrase, means: “You (plural form) must go and tell that fox ...”

Even the Bible in isiXhosa use the same literal Greek translation: “*Yiyani nithi kuloo mpungutye*” (*IE* 1983 – Lk 13:32; Snyman 2024; Ras 2024). The Sotho Bible uses the phrase: “*Eyang, le bolelle phokojwe eo*”, “You must go and tell that fox” (*BEH* 1986 – Lk 13:32; Sehlogo 2024; Ras 2024). *Phokojwe* in Sesotho means “fox”. The Sotho speakers also use the term “*ujakalase*” for “*phokojwe*” (Sehlogo 2024) and the meaning attach to it is also something of a “cunningness” (Ras 2024; Craddock 1990:173-174; Bratcher 1982:240; Hendricksen 1984:708-709; Lenski 1946:757; Ellis 1991:190).

A more detailed meaning of “sly” would be: “having a cunning and deceitful nature” (*Oxford South African Concise Dictionary* 2016:1118). This is probably what Jesus had in mind when He had answered the Pharisees after they had told Him that King Herod Antipas wanted to kill Him (*cf.* Lenski 1946:757; Hendricksen 1984:708-709). While Jesus was on a spiritual mission, King Herod Antipas had a political agenda (Ras 2024).

By making a statement like this in public, Jesus would without a doubt been branded as a political opponent and an enemy of the king, and by implication, of the state (Roman Empire). Herod had decapitated John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus (Lk 1:35-45), because John had criticized the king because he had divorced his first wife to take Herodias, his brother’s wife for himself (Mk 6:17). On Herodias’s request, although he did not want to do that, Herod had ordered that John the Baptist must be beheaded to please his wife (Mk 6:14-28). In comparison

to the Gospel of Mark, Luke did not pay a lot of attention to the Baptist death and did not provide reasons why it was done (Lk 9:7-9; 13:13:31-35), although Luke had incorporated a lot of Mark's narratives into his own gospel narrative (Ras 2024; Du Plessis 1980:174-176).

Jesus, according to Luke, did not say, metaphorically-speaking, that King Herod was a donkey, a pig, or a dog (Ras 2024). He had used the image or metaphor of a fox (Ras 2024; Lk 13:32). A fox is also like a vulture; in Afrikaans, “*'n aasvoël'*” (Ras 2024), a scavenger (Fensham 1978:66). Opportunistic (Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024). In the context of Luke's discussion, it seems that Jesus was seeing Herod as a cunning “opportunistic scavenger” who cannot be trusted.

Just like a fox will search for opportunities and will betray others to achieve its goals, in a similar manner King Herod of Galilee could not be trusted because he would go behind one's back. In this case, he was dominated, not by his own beliefs, but by the desires of his wife who wanted the Baptist to be killed (Mk 6:19, 25, 27), although Mark had mentioned that Herod had liked John the Baptist (Mk 6:20). Herodias wanted the Baptist dead because he had criticized her and her husband because of their unacceptable marriage.

Jesus, however, according to Luke, had perceived King Herod as sly, without spine (Afrikaans: “*ruggraatloos*”), in other words, “as someone with a weak personality” (Ras 2024), more specifically, in the immediate Lukan textual context, as a murderer (Ras 2024). King Herod was “human-centred”, not like Jesus, who was “God-centred” (Ras 2024). While Herod's mind was focused on an earthly kingdom, Jesus was focused on God's imminent spiritual kingdom (Lk 13:24-30).

The Latin New Testament speaks of Herod as *uulpi illi*, “that fox” (NTL 1982:180-181). In Afrikaans: “*Daai / Daardie jakkals*”. The Greek demonstrative *tautē* is strengthened through the definite article *tē* (English: “the” / Afrikaans: “*die*”) in the phrase *tē alōpeki tautē*. The Greek word order is emphatic: “the fox that”, meaning, “that fox”. The Afrikaans expression: “*Daardie jakkals*” is more forceful because it specifically points in this context to King Herod.

The Greek phrase *tē alōpeki tautē* (Lk 13:32) is very expressionistic and has a definite derogatory undertone (Ras 2024). One gets the impression that at that time of Jesus' journey to Jerusalem, Jesus was simply “fed-up” for King Herod and his death threats. Jesus is presented in the text as a fearless traveller, “like a modern day 007 secret agent, a man on a mission” (Ras 2024; Mhlongo 2024). God had sent Him, and no one, not even King Herod, appointed by the Roman Caesar, could deter Him from fulfilling that mission (Ras 2024).

In the Lukan travel narrative, Jesus had answered the Pharisees, telling them

that they must go and tell King Herod that He has a job to do, and that He will continue to do what He is busy doing until He reaches Jerusalem. In other words, Jesus will not be distracted by the death threats of an earthly king, because He (Jesus), is on His way to Jerusalem, on a *missio Dei*, a Godly mission, God's mission (Ras 2024).

Interesting now is that Jesus, according to Luke, in this context (Lk 13:31-33), had said that Jerusalem's house (the temple – Lk 13:35) will be abandoned (GNB 1980:98; Lk 13:34-35), but He did not say at any stage that He or His followers will destroy it. Luke had used the Greek words, *ho oikos humōn*, “your house”, which, in the immediate (Lk 13:31, 34-35) and remote (Lk 19:41-44; 21:5-6, 20) textual context refers to the temple of the Pharisees in Jerusalem.

21. Conclusion

Jesus is not portrayed in the New Testament and in Luke as Someone whose mission it was to overthrow earthly governments or the rulers of His day. He was not involved in any earthly politics or any religious party. He did not call upon His followers, for example, to fight the Roman Empire, the Jewish leaders, the temple authorities, or to threaten or kill the Pharisees or the Herodians. There were no direct calls made by Jesus or any New Testament author directly or indirectly to any believer to take up arms against any government, between the period when He was upon the earth, and His Second Coming (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Isidiho 2024).

Luke mentioned that people came to tell Jesus that the Roman appointed governor, Pontius Pilate, had killed Galileans while they were offering sacrifices to God (Lk 13:1-3). If Jesus was a political activist, a freedom fighter or terrorist, He could have seized this golden opportunity to incite people to take up arms against Roman governor Pilate and his colonial and imperialist government (with Emperor Caesar as head), but He did not (Ras 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024). Instead, He had called upon everyone to repent (Lk 13:3; Ras 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Snyman 2024), which means, in praxis, to turn to God, and make right with Him (Ras 2024).

A systematic textual reading of the Bible (Ras 2022:70-71; Ras, Ras & Zondi 2017:107-108) clearly indicates that Jesus or His followers were not involved in any form of earthly politics, political activism, or freedom fighting activities, whether political, economic, cultural or religious. He came to do God's will (Ras 2024; Snyman 2024; Mhlongo 2024). He had a theological (Godly) mission, to save the world from their sins (Jn 3:16), and He was determined and obedient to death to do that (Ras 2024; Mashiyane 2024; Snyman 2024). Jesus' remark about the Fox, King Herod Antipas of Galilee, must be seen in the context of what Herod did when he had taken his brother's wife (Mk 6:16-18) and later had killed John the Baptist when his wife asked him to do so (Ras 2024; Mk 6:14-

28).

Jesus, according to Luke, did not threaten to kill Herod or to overthrow His regime, but He only had made a metaphorically political side remark, saying that the king, to use Jesus' metaphor in a stylistic repetitive manner, was an *alōpeki*, a *mpungushe*, an *ujakalase*, a *phokojwe*, a fox, and that He (Jesus) will continue with His journey to do good until He reaches Jerusalem to fulfil His mission, that is, God's mission (Ras 2024; Mpungose 2024; Mhlongo 2024; Sehlogo 2024).

The *missio Jesu* was the *Missio Dei* (cf. Ras 2019:133). The mission of Jesus was the mission of God, and because of this mission, His remark about the Fox was *sui generis*, unique (Ras 2024). Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, in obedience to His Father's will (Lk 22:42), and everything He did, in words and in deeds, was to fulfil this (His) mission (Lk 24:46) and to expand the kingdom of God (Lk 4:43). His kingdom was spiritual, and as such, He never was involved in the establishment of any earthly kingdom through political means (Ras 2024; Isidiho 2024; Sehlogo 2024; Mhlongo-Ras 2024; Mpungose 2024; Mhlongo 2024).

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Authors' Declaration

The authorS declare that there is no financial gain or personal relationship(s) that inappropriately influenced them in the writing of this article.

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