

IN DIE SKRIFLIG IN LUCE VERBI

Volume 47 No. 2

Cosmology from the perspective of the New Testament and some related documents

Cosmology is one of the predominant research areas of the contemporary world. During a conference held at the Potchefstroom Campus of the North-West University in August 2012, the relation between theology and cosmology was investigated from the perspective of the New Testament and some related documents. Papers were presented and thoroughly discussed. Presenters were requested to rework their papers in the light of the discussion and to prepare them to be published as articles in *In Luce Verbi*. This issue of the journal features a number of these articles.

John Fitzgerald presents two articles. His first article is intended as an introduction to the theme. He discusses three general areas of theological interest stemming from the modern scientific study of cosmology: contemporary theology and ethics; cosmology and world religions; and ancient cosmologies. In his second article Fitzgerald investigates the cosmologies of the Ancient Mediterranean World. He argues that these cosmologies were either religious in nature or constituted a reaction to a religiously conceived understanding of the universe. He emphasises prominent cosmological topics, including the genesis or the relationship of the divine to the cosmos, the genesis of the cosmos, and the origin of humans within the cosmos.

Michael Wolter describes how the term *cosmos* has been used by the New Testament authors. He identifies two main usages, namely as an anthropological term to describe mankind in its entirety and as an ecclesiological term to describe 'the others', that is the non-believers or the people outside the church.

Cilliers Breytenbach discusses the creation and revelation of God's children, referring to the liberation of their enslaved bodies. He focuses his investigation on Romans 8:18–30. He indicates that the argument of Romans 7:7–17 forms the presupposition for the understanding of Romans 8:18–30. He illustrates that Paul's line of thought moves from the future transformation of the believers to the transformation of the creation.

The major question of how cosmic reality is perceived in 1 John is addressed by Jan van der Watt. He identifies the elements of John's cosmological vision as it becomes apparent in his letters. He analyses apocalyptic elements that form part of the Johannine view of reality.

The Cosmology in the book of Revelation is discussed by Gert Jordaan. He argues that cosmology of this book mainly involves God's restored reign over the created universe. Throughout the book the universe is depicted according to its constituent parts, namely heaven, sea and earth. Although this threefold description seems to stem from the ancient Jewish and mythological three-storied cosmological view of 'up-above', 'here-below' and 'down-under', the author proves with several arguments that this correspondence is only superficial. He also shows that the last chapters of Revelation reveal that in the *eschaton* heaven, sea and earth will all form part of the new creation, so that God's reign will be restored and acknowledged above all doubt throughout the cosmos.

Gert Steyn investigates Philo's *De Vita Mosis* to establish how Philo's understanding of the universe, and particularly its four basic elements as taught by the Greek philosophers, influenced his description of the God of Israel's world. He poses the question whether Philo's approach is closer to what one might call 'theological cosmology' or rather closer to 'cosmological theology'. He concludes that Philo is not writing cosmology per se in his *De Vita Mosis*, but that he is rather writing a *cosmological theology*. Philo utilises the cosmological picture of the Greco-Hellenistic world in order to present the powerful nature and qualities of Israel's God.

May this edition of *In Luce Verbi* enhance the academic discourse on the intersections between theology and cosmology.

Guest Editor

Francois P. Viljoen

Faculty of Theology, North-West University, South Africa

Read online:



Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

Author: Francois P. Viljoen

Affiliation: Faculty of Theology, North-West University, South Africa

Email: viljoen.francois@nwu.ac.za

How to cite this article: Viljoen, F.P., 2013, 'Cosmology from the perspective of the New Testament and some related documents', *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi* 47(2), Art. #1781, 1 page. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/ids.v47i2.1781>

Copyright: © 2013. The Authors. Licensee: AOSIS OpenJournals. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.