



Protestants  
in  
Encounter

STUDENT'S BOOK



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# **FACE2FACE**

# **PROTESTANTS IN ENCOUNTER**

STUDENT'S BOOK



EDUC8

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# INTRODUCTION

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## INTRODUCTION

# NAVIGATING THE BOOK

Terrorism, war, authoritarianism, poverty, natural disasters, violence... The world does not seem to be doing well. Young people today are growing up in a diverse world in which religion is all too often misused to condone violence. Indeed, religion and violence are often linked together. How can we make young people look beyond such forms of polarization and radicalization?

### **How does the book work?**

This textbook starts from a protestant perspective is divided into four chapters, also called deep modules. Specifically, it covers the following four topics:

1. Encounter with the other: dealing with diversity
2. Encounter with sacred texts: texts of violence
3. Encounter with the environment: social and ecological issues
4. When encounter becomes conflict: just war and just peace



Figure 1  
Video Clip

In the first module on our encounter with others, we examine the way in which Christians interact with others, with other believers and with non-believers. In other words, how can Christians cope with the existing diversity in our societies and what are potential stumbling blocks and positive features here?

The second module focuses on how to deal with Bible texts that seem to teach violence against others. How can we interpret and apply these texts in our own lives?

The third module shifts the attention to the relationship between the actions of Christians and the impact on the earth. What is the relationship between our visions of the future and the natural and social environment? How can we still hold on to the hope in a new heaven and earth without losing sight of what is happening in the world today?

The fourth and final module deals with violent conflicts on the scale of nations and social groups. How might you approach this issue as a Christian? What can we learn about this issue from Protestant thinkers? Which different views on this issue are there and what can we learn from Jesus about it?

### **Getting started**

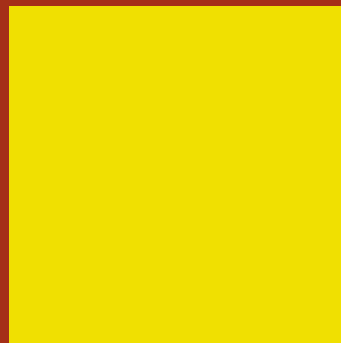
At the beginning of each deep module, you will see a video clip. In this video clip, you will see friends going on different adventures. Throughout the video clip, quiz questions are asked. After watching this video clip and answering the quiz questions, you will start working with the exercises in this textbook.

Good luck!



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ENCOUNTER WITH THE OTHER:  
DEALING WITH DIVERSITY

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## MODULE ONE

# DEALING WITH DIVERSITY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

**'JESUS AND THE  
MAN ATTACKED BY  
ROBBERS'  
(LUKE 10:25 -  
37):VIDEO CLIP**

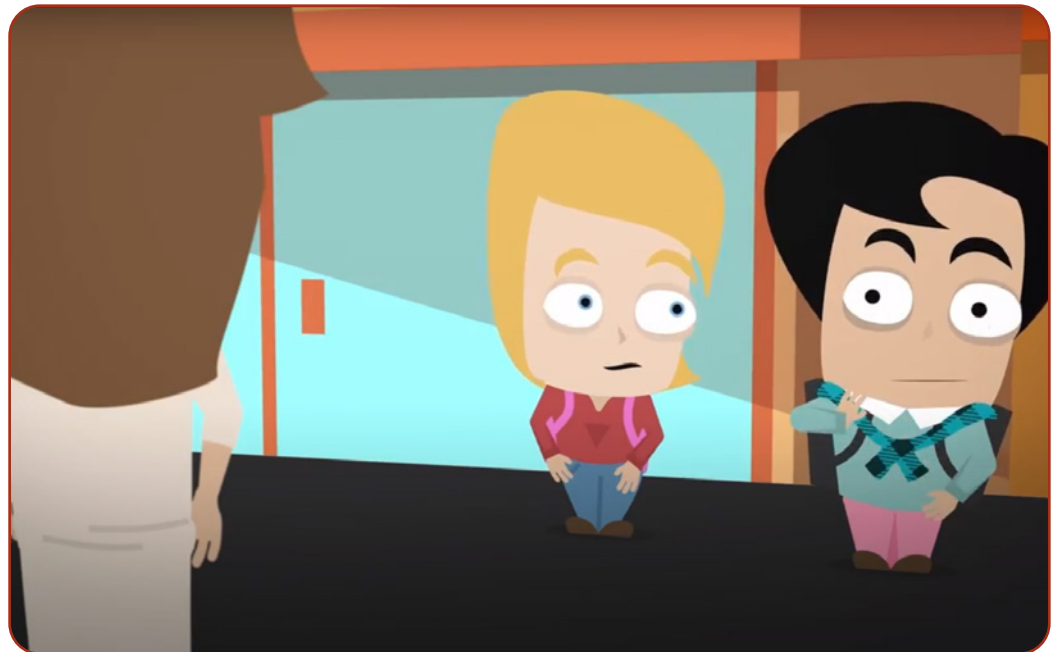


Figure 1.1  
The Video Clip

*The image of the video shows David and Sarah walking down the street. They just bought a new game. The day before, Sarah got very angry about the anti-racism movement. When they come across an anti-racism poster along the way, she gets angry again and pulls it off the wall. Out of nowhere, a mysterious figure appears behind them. He points them to a strange door. When they reach the door, the man has suddenly disappeared again. On the door there is a mysterious text: 'Looking for answers? Those who go through this door are surprised.' As they step through the door, they learn a lesson about a man who was ambushed by robbers.*

## 1.2 'JESUS AND THE MAN ATTACKED BY ROBBERS

The society we live in is complex. It consists of many different parts: countries, families, sports clubs, political movements and so on. This complex world is also full of dishonesty. As a result, many people are not happy with how there are treated in this world. There have been people and groups over the past century who have fought for equality and justice in society.

An example of this struggle is the protests that have occurred around the world in the last decade against racism and discrimination. Another example is the #metoo movement that fights against sexually abusive behavior. What these protests and movements have in common is that they fight against unequal treatment based on irrelevant differences between people. These differences, such as skin color, gender and origin, are part of what makes people unique and special. At the same time, as humans, we often differentiate between people based on these differences. This was happening also back in Jesus's day. This lesson deals with the Biblical story about a man who was attacked by robbers. Jesus tells this parable while talking to a spiritual leader in response to the question, "*Who is my neighbor?*".

### Exercise 1

Read the parable of the man who was attacked by robbers below. You may already know this story. Write below what you think Jesus wants to teach with it.



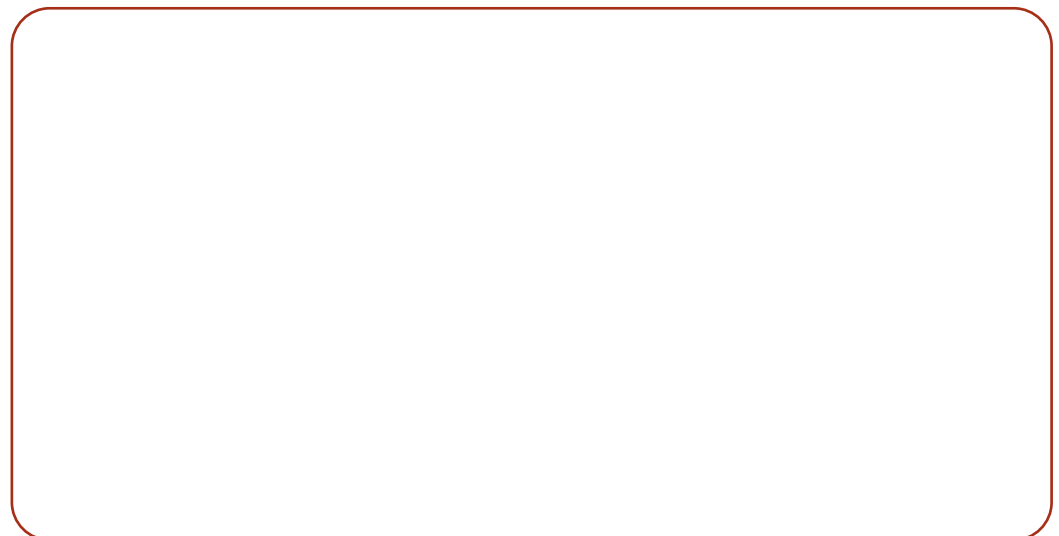
Figure 1.2  
Source: Peakpx

## Luke 10: 25-37

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind"; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' " "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" In reply Jesus said: "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.' "Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise."

### Exercise 2

The term 'neighbor' occurs several times in the Bible. How would you define this concept?



### Exercise 3

Look at the images below. For each picture, give two words properly describing the person in it. Or describe the situation you observe in a few words.



1.



2.



3.



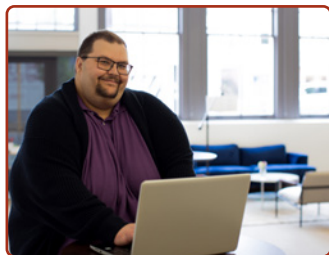
4.



5.



6.



7.



8.



11.



9.



10.

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## 1.3 THE WORLD OF THE BIBLE


The world Jesus lived in was, just as our world, very diverse. There were many countries, peoples and cities, each with their own customs, languages and traditions. At the time of Jesus, there were two groups living close together in present-day Israel: the **Jews** and the **Samaritans**. These two groups shared a complicated history that was often filled with tension or even violence.



Figure 1.3  
Map of Samaria  
and Judea in the  
1st century AD.

 **Jew** is a term used to describe the inhabitants of Judea and the areas surrounding it since the exile (6th century BC). The term also came to be used for a religious group, who saw themselves as a continuation of the people of God. Jerusalem was an important place for the Jews because the temple was located there.

 **Samaritans** were a people who lived in the area of Samaria. They also saw themselves as a continuation of the people of God but were different from the Jews in a few keyways. For them, it was not Jerusalem but Mount Gerizim that was the most important place of worship. In addition, they only recognized the first five books of the Jewish Bible (with some changes to them). On the map you can see where Judea and Samaria were.

 Besides these two groups, people in the New Testament are classified into many other **cultural** and **ethnic groups**. The most well-known peoples were the **Romans** and **Greeks**. A common term is '**gentile**'. Jews used this umbrella term to describe all non-Jews.



## Exercise 4

Which statements are incorrect:

- a. Jesus was a Jew who lived 2000 years ago.
- b. Jews and Samaritans got along well.
- c. Jews and Samaritans both claimed to be the people of God.
- d. Gentile is a term referring to the enemies of the Jews.
- e. Jesus spoke only to people of his own folk.



Figure 1.4  
Source: ©jeffjacobs1990 /  
Pixabay

# 1.4 THE WORLD OF THE STORY

The Bible contains several books that describe the life of Jesus. We call these books the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Each **Gospel** gives a testimony to the life of Jesus and takes its own perspective. In this lesson we are going to look at an event described in Luke's Gospel.



Did you know '*gospel*' comes from the Greek word 'euangelion'? This means 'good news' and refers to the good message Jesus Christ brought.

## 1.4.1 JESUS AND THE EXPERT IN THE LAW

To better understand the parable of the man who was attacked by robbers, we also need to know why Jesus told this story. In the preceding verses, an **expert in the law** asks Jesus a question. The text says that this expert in the law wanted to test Jesus. He asks Jesus what he must do to have eternal life. This question fits in well within the Jewish framework of belief in that it emphasizes what to do, not what to know or believe. The expert in the law may have tried to get Jesus in trouble with the question. With this question, he may have hoped that Jesus would give a 'wrong' answer to the question and possibly offend the religious leaders.



At the time, '*expert in the law*' referred to a person who was trained in Jewish religious rules and laws.



The **Jewish law** is a collection of rules describing how a person should live together with other people and with God. In the classical counting this law consisted of 613 rules: 248 commandments and 365 prohibitions.

### Exercise 5

After hearing the question of the expert in the law, what does Jesus do?

- Jesus quotes a text from the Old Testament.
- Jesus himself asks the expert in the law a question.
- Jesus gives an answer that has nothing to do with the question.
- Jesus does not respond to the expert in the law.
- Jesus gives a clear answer to the expert in the law.



## Exercise 6

What must the expert in the law do to receive eternal life?

- a. To Love God, exalt his neighbor, humble himself and follow Jesus.
- b. To love God with all his life and give away he his possessions to the poor.
- c. To love God with all his heart, strength and mind and his neighbor as himself.
- d. To love God, to treat all people the same and to always be faithful to God.

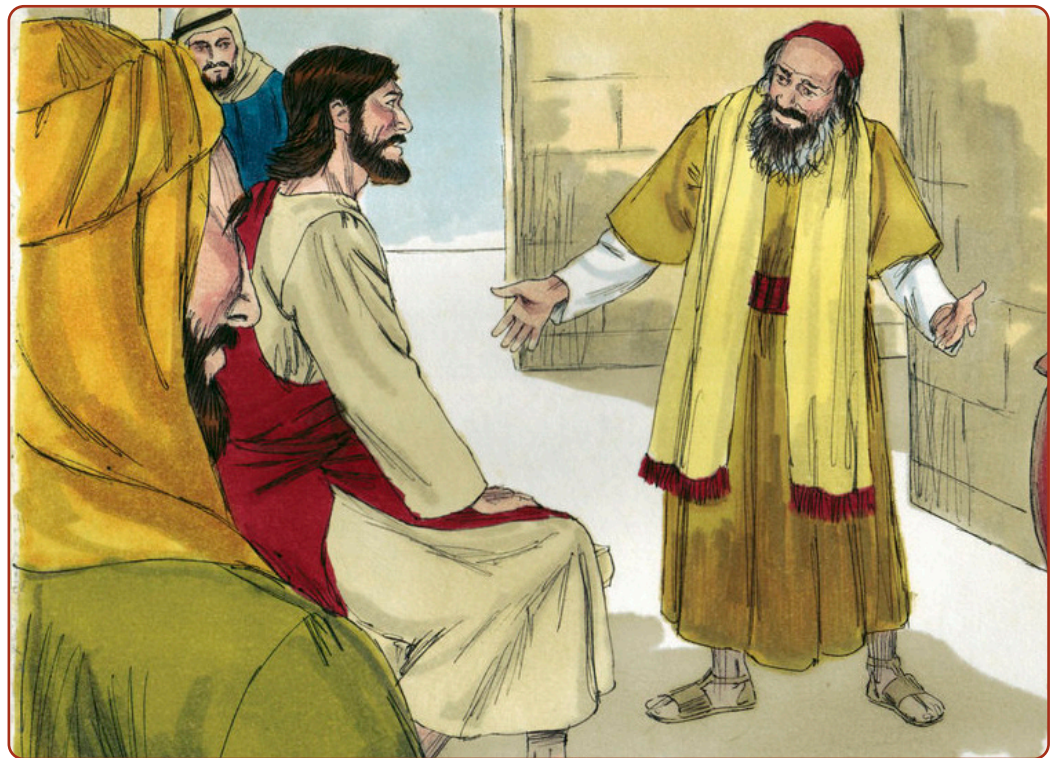


Figure 1.5  
Jesus and the expert in  
the law  
Source: Jim Padgett,  
courtesy of Sweet  
Publishing, Ft. Worth,  
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made. [https://commons.  
wikimedia.org/wiki/  
File:Gospel\\_of\\_Luke\\_  
Chapter\\_10-1\\_\(Bible\\_  
Illustrations\\_by\\_Sweet\\_  
Media\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gospel_of_Luke_Chapter_10-1_(Bible_Illustrations_by_Sweet_Media).jpg)

Instead of answering the man's question, Jesus lets him think for himself by asking him a question back. He must answer his own question on the basis of Jewish law. The expert in the law answers by quoting two texts. He quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 where it says, "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." The man also quotes Leviticus 19, verse 18: "Love your neighbor as yourself." The first text is part of the **Sh'ma Israel**, a prayer the Jews at that time would say twice a day. The second text is from a section of the Bible that deals with how the Israelites should treat each other. Jesus confirms the correctness of the answer given by the expert in the law. He urges the man to live out this prayer, for then he will have eternal life. The expert in the law tried to trap Jesus, but Jesus wouldn't allow himself to be tricked. Instead, he invites the expert in the law to formulate an answer to the question himself.

### 1.4.2 THE PARABLE

After Jesus made it clear to the expert in the law what to do to get eternal life, the man asks Jesus a second question. He asks him who exactly his neighbor is. The text says that he wanted to justify himself. This meant the expert in the law tried to portray himself as a better expert in and adherent of the law. Perhaps he hoped Jesus would allow him to answer again. But Jesus answers the question with a **parable**.




A **parable** is a short story in which a lesson is hidden. Jesus often used parables to illustrate a principle of the Kingdom of God. It is up to the listener to discover the meaning of the parable.

#### Exercise 7

Several characters appear in the parable. Indicate for each of the characters below their role in the story. Use the roles of hero, enemy, victim and helper.

Robbers	
Robbed man	
Priest and Levite	
Samaritan	
Innkeeper	

 **Priests** worked in the temple in Jerusalem. They conducted the sacrifices and performed other rituals central to Judaism at the time. All the priests were from the Levite tribe, one of the twelve tribes of Israel.

To understand what the parable means, we need to look at the story from two different viewpoints: from that of the Samaritan and that of the man who was attacked by robbers. Both perspectives help us understand what Jesus wanted to say with the parable.

The **Samaritan** and the man who was attacked by robbers are strangers to each other. While travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, the Samaritan found a wounded man along the road. This road is in the area of Judea, an area where the Samaritans did not live. Thus, the Samaritan knew that the wounded person was most likely a Jew. Despite the political and religious tensions between the Jewish and Samaritan people, he did not abandon the man but helped him. Not only does the Samaritan stop for the man on the side of the road, but he interrupts his own journey to take the man to an inn. He stays with him for a day at the inn and even pays for further care of the man.

The **man who was attacked by robbers** had been lying injured along the road for some time. He was passed twice by individuals from his own people. First a **priest** passed him on the other side of the road and then a **Levite** did the same. These two highly respected people from his own people just let him lie. They probably thought he might be dead and so they didn't want to touch him. That would make them unclean and unfit for temple work. Unexpectedly, someone comes to his aid: a Samaritan. It is not someone who follows the law 'correctly' who helps him, but someone who does not even belong to his own people.



Figure 1.6  
Painting *The Good Samaritan* by Joost Cornelisz, 1617.  
Source: (Amsterdam) via Wikimedia Commons: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The\\_Good\\_Samaritan\\_by\\_Joost\\_Cornelisz\\_Droochsloot\\_Centraal\\_Museum\\_2529.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:The_Good_Samaritan_by_Joost_Cornelisz_Droochsloot_Centraal_Museum_2529.jpg).

Jesus asks the expert in the law who was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by robbers - a Jew. With this question he made the expert in the law think deeply. After all, the text on brotherly love, quoted by the expert in the law himself, was in the time of Jesus often limited to only mean fellow Jews and other followers of the law. Samaritans were certainly not part of the group of people to love. Jesus' question leads to the radical conclusion that the man did not find a neighbor among his own people, but in the stranger from a despised group. Conversely, it also teaches you *how to be a neighbor* to someone you despise: **by offering help to those in need**. In other words, contempt can give way to surprise and respect.

### Exercise 8

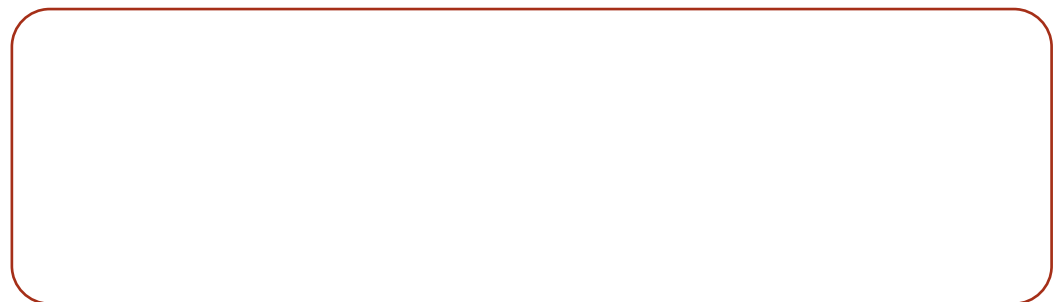
At the end, Jesus says to the expert in the law: *"Go and do likewise."* What exactly does Jesus tell the man to do? What does this lesson mean to you?



### Exercise 9

Go back to exercise 2. Look at the pictures again and give your gut answer to the following questions:

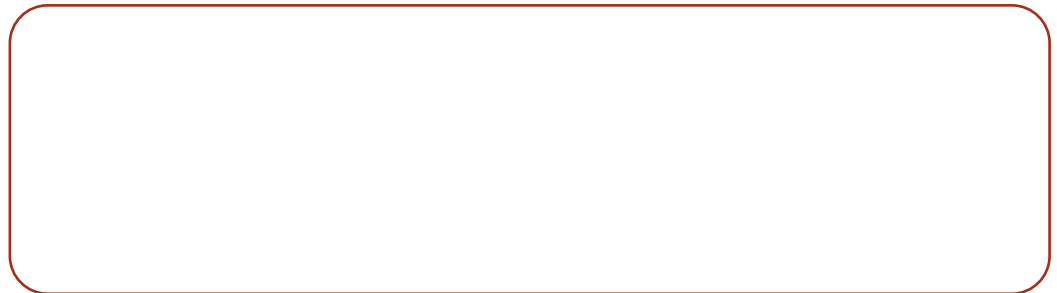
1. Which of these people has a big house?
2. Which of these people has rich parents?
3. Which of these people is happily married?
4. Which of these people did not finish high school?
5. Who of these people has ever been expelled from school?
6. Which of these people has stolen money from his boss?
7. Which of these people has been in prison?
8. Which of these people could have committed murder?



Of course, you cannot actually answer any of the questions in Exercise 9. After all, you cannot deduce the answer from the photos. When we try to do this, we **subconsciously differentiate** between people based on their *appearance*. We make such a distinction very quickly and usually unconsciously. The story of Jesus wants to ask us what consequences may arise from this distinction. The parable showed that the distinction between Samaritans and Jews did not mean that the Samaritan would not be willing to help. Jesus teaches that the differences we observe between people should not mean that we interact in different ways just because of these differences. Charity should not be limited to people who belong to your own group but should also extend to those **outside** of it.

### Exercise 10

Go back to your definition of neighbor (Exercise 2). Compare your definition with the lesson Jesus gave to the expert in the law.



## 1.5 GLOSSARY

In this glossary, you will find more information and an explanation of certain terms.

### **Gentile**

“Gentile” was an umbrella term used by the Jews to describe all non-Jews.

### **Gospel**

The writings of the New Testament in the Bible begin by narrating about the life of Jesus, about his words and deeds. This is reflected in the four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. These Gospels are written based on faith and serve to demonstrate faith in Jesus as the Messiah.

‘Gospel’ comes from old English ‘godspel’, which is based on the Latin translation of the Greek word ‘euangelion’. This means ‘good news’ and refers to the good message brought by Jesus Christ.

### **Greeks**

In the time of Jesus and the early church, “Greeks” referred to the inhabitants of Greece. Greece at that time was part of the Roman Empire. The culture of the Greeks spread throughout the Mediterranean Sea in the centuries before the birth of Jesus.

### **Jerusalem**

In the time of Jesus, Jerusalem was the capital of Palestine. Jerusalem had a temple and many synagogues where Jews came to worship and pray. Today, Jerusalem is still an important city for Jews around the world. Jerusalem is also an important city for Christians and Muslims. In Jerusalem, Jesus was condemned, crucified and buried. Christians also believe he was resurrected here. The apostles first began to tell the stories of Jesus in Jerusalem. According to the Islamic tradition, the Prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven from Jerusalem.

### **Jews**

The Jews are a people who believe in one God and had a temple in Jerusalem. Today the Jews live all over the world.

### **Judea**

Judea was at the time of the Jesus and his apostles a region south of Samaria. The city of Jerusalem was located in this region.

### **Parable**

A parable is a short story in which a lesson is hidden. Jesus often used parables to illustrate a principle of the Kingdom of God. It is up to the listener to discover the meaning of the parable.

### **Romans**

The Romans were a people who originally lived in Italy, mainly in Rome. Later when the Romans expanded their empire it also became a designation for persons who were citizens of the Roman Empire. At the time of Jesus’ life and of the apostles, the Romans ruled the area where Jesus lived.



## Samaria

In the first century, Samaria was both a city and a region north of Judea. This is the region where the people of the Samaritans got their name from.

## Samaritan

Samaritans were a people who lived in the area of Samaria and were different from the Jews in a number of ways. The Jews considered them unclean and their worship in Shechem illegitimate.

## Sh'ma Yisrael

The Shema Israel is a prayer that is recited twice a day by observant Jews and serves as a centerpiece of the morning and evening Jewish prayer services. The text of the prayer comes from Deuteronomy 6:4–9, 11:13–21, and Numbers 15:37–41.

## Temple of Jerusalem

When Jesus was alive, the temple of Jerusalem was the heart of Judaism: all devout Jews came here to pray and sacrifice. Only Jews were allowed to enter the temple. Jesus also came to Jerusalem regularly. The temple used to be Jerusalem's most important building.



Figure 2.6  
Source: PxFuel

# 1.6 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

## 1 EXT/INT CAR

Sarah and her dad are driving in a car. Sarah wears a shirt with a logo on it.

*Radio: Protests inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement are still impacting society all over the World. In New York hundreds of protesters went on the street again. In our country people are protesting today against discrimination and racism....*

Dad turns down the radio and the voice on the radio fades away.

*Dad: So, Sarah are you ready for the tournament?*

*Sarah: Yeah, we are definitely going to win.*

*Dad: I hope you will*

Father has to slow down because a road has been blocked due to a protest.

*Dad: Oh, I think we have to drive around this.*

*Sarah: oh, god we are going to be late! I don't want to miss the game!*

## 2 INT LIVING ROOM

Sarah stomps angrily into the living room.

*Sarah (angry): It is so unfair, that stupid protest made us late and now our team lost because I wasn't there. These protesters should really stop. All lives matter, yeah we get it.*

*Dad: Sarah calm down. I know you are upset but think about what you are saying...*

*Sarah: Well I mean what I said. It is unfair that I could not play because of them.*

Sarah walks out of the room.

## 3 INT

Sarah sits in front of a computer screen.

*Computer voice: So-called anti-racist groups are themselves racist and are out to destroy our European society. They are creating problems that don't exist. We as a country treat all foreigners very well and they don't have anything to complain about. This is a threat to our way of living and they should be stopped.*

Pop-up appears on the screen: "Anti-racism" protest escalates.

*Sarah mumbles to herself: Well, see there is the evidence. These groups are crazy.*

## 4 EXT SCHOOLYARD DAY

David and Sarah are walking down the schoolyard.

*David: Pff what a boring day again. I really need something fun.*

*Sarah: Yeah we do. Well, Let's go to the mall. I am going to buy that new game. We could try that later.*

*David: Sure. Hopefully, that will cheer us up.*

## 5 EXT STREET DAY

David and Sarah walk out of the game store with a new 'iChrist adventures' game. Then they see a poster hanging on a tree. Sarah walks towards it.

*Sarah: well will you look at this. They are now even polluting our trees...*

David and Sarah look at a poster hung on a wall. The Poster Reads Stop Racism in this country now. A man is approaching them in the background.

*Sarah (angrily): And it is such a garbage... Anti-Racism poster. Like they have so much to complain about...*

*David: Calm Down Sarah, it just a poster...*

While speaking Sarah tears the poster down from the wall.

*Sarah: These nasty people should stop. If one of them gets hit by a bus I will not help them. They always complain.*

*David: Uhm what?! I never expected you to say that. I thought Jesus said we should love our neighbours as ourselves. Come on that should include these activists, right?*

*Sarah: No. Jesus only thought that we should love those that will help us. Like in the story of the Samaritan: he is a stranger, but Jesus praises him because he helps a Jew.*

*Stranger: Mmh, is that what Jesus meant by the story?*

*David: Wow... Hello, what do you mean?*



*Stranger: Well, I heard you two talking,... and uhm... well.. I think maybe you should go and check whether she is right. See the door there? If you go through it, you may be surprised by what you discover.*

Stranger points with his finger at a door down the street. Sarah and David turn their head to the door. After the man is finished talking, Sarah and David turn around again. The man is gone.

*David: What? Uhm, where is he? Weird. Should we go and check the door?*

*Sarah and David walk to the door.*

## **6 INT INN ANCIENT ISRAEL DAY**

Sarah and David walk into an old Inn (1st century Israel). David and Sarah look surprised around them.

*Sarah: Where the hell are we? This doesn't look like any building from our town.*

*David: Yeah*

Sarah and David are still looking around. They notice a man gesturing them to come to him. The man has a bandage over his head and his arm is in a bandage too. They go to the man.

*Stranger: Hey, you two seem a bit lost. Join me at my table.*

David and Sarah join the man at the table.

*Stranger: Do you know who I am?*

*Sarah: No, we don't. We do not even know where or when we are.*

*Stranger: Well, I think you may well know me. Two weeks ago, I was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. A nice walk as I often have done. I was thinking of what to do that evening, when out of blue a band of robbers appeared on the road. They robbed me of everything I had. They even beat me up really hard. I was laying on the ground and could do a single think..*

*David: What!! That is terrible. Did someone call the police?*

*Stranger: Police? Uhm don't know what that is. Well, I was just laying there, and a priest walked by. I know he saw me, but instead of helping me he passed by on the other side the road. Later I heard footsteps again and a Levite was approaching me. I swear*

*that he also saw me and he immediately went to the other side of the road. I think I laid there for another 30 minutes until a Samaritan with a donkey neared me. He bandaged me and put me on his donkey and brought me to this inn. He paid for all the expenses for me to recover.*

*Sarah: Wow, I think I do know this story already. But this cannot be real. We were just talking about it.*

*Stranger: What were you saying?*

*David: Sarah said that you should only love the Samaritan as a neighbour because he helped you. But I do not think she understood the story correctly.*

*Stranger: Really? Well, let me ask you this. What do you think I would have done if I was walking down this road and I would find a man on the ground who looked like a Samaritan?*

*Sarah: Mmh help him of course.*

*Stranger: No, I probably would have walked past him just as the priest and the Levite did.*

*David: Why?*

*Stranger: Because I didn't trust any Samaritan. Why would I help them? They are ruining everything we stand for and believe in.*

*David: But your own people did not help you, and the Samaritan did!*

*Stranger: Yeah, you are right. I have been thinking about that constantly for two weeks. While my countrymen ignored me, he took care of me. How can I then speak so badly about Samaritans?*

Stranger looks at the setting sun. David and Sarah look perplexed. The stranger starts to get up.

*Stranger: Oh, it is getting late. I think we must go.*

David and Sarah also stand up. They walk to the door and step through it.

## **7 EXT STREET DAY**

David and Sarah step on to the street. The stranger is gone.

*David: That was really weird. What do you think he meant?*

*Sarah: Well, I think he wanted me to rethink the story.*

*What he said is precisely the way I am thinking about the anti-racist movement. I keep saying that they are ruining our country, similar to how he thought about the Samaritan. But in the end, it seemed he was quite mistaken about the Samaritan.*

*David: Yeah you might be right on that one*

*Sarah: I need to talk to my dad about it. Let us go to my house.*

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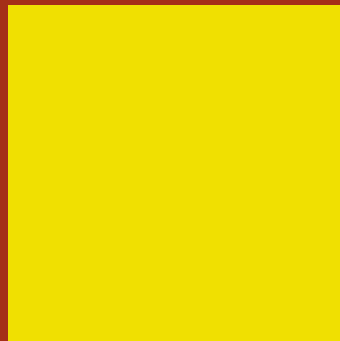
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ENCOUNTER WITH SACRED TEXTS:  
TEXTS OF VIOLENCE

## MODULE TWO

# TEXTS OF VIOLENCE

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

**'JESUS AND THE  
CLEANSING OF THE  
TEMPLE' (JOHN 2:13 -  
21):VIDEO CLIP**



Figure 2.1  
The Video Clip

*This scenario shows David and Sarah playing a video game. They are just starting a new chapter. This chapter of the game iChrist is about Jesus going to the temple and noticing the merchants and money changers there. The players must empty the temple court with a whip. David and Sarah discuss this chapter after completion. David indicates that he thinks this is a violent chapter and does not like it at all. Then there is a notification that Ahmed wants to join the group of David and Sarah have for this game. Sarah indicates that Ahmed is not welcome in the group because he is a Muslim and that just as in the story of Jesus cleaning the temple, he should not play a Christian game. Together with Sarah's father, the two teenagers explore what this story can really mean.*

## 2.2 JESUS AND THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE

The Bible is an important book for Christians. It is not a book with one story like Narnia. Nor is it a book full of poems, such as some of Shakespeare's works are. It also is not a book that contains only facts. No, it is a book that consists of many types of texts: stories about Jesus, letters from Paul, poetic texts in the Psalms and some texts that are strange to us such as Revelation. This diversity of biblical texts makes that the Bible raises a lot of questions about what they mean for us today.

This lesson concerns a story of Jesus that still raises many questions about how we should live. This story is contained in the Gospel of John (2:13-17). It tells how Jesus and his disciples go to the Temple in Jerusalem. There he finds sellers and moneychangers at work in the Temple court. He chases them away from the Temple court with a whip. Then he talks to the leaders of the Jews who are on the Temple court.

### Exercise 1

Read the story about Jesus on the Temple court below. Did you already know this story and what do you think it means? Write this down below.

### JOHN 2:13–21

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So, he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?"

## 2.3 THE WORLD OF THE BIBLE

Jesus lived 2000 years ago when life differed vastly from life today. You can probably imagine that people interacted differently without the internet. There are many more things that make our world completely different from theirs. We can say that they are not alike at all. Knowing what the world of Jesus looked like is important to understand a biblical text. Only then can the meaning of a text become clear for us today. We call the world of the bible the context. The exercises and texts that follow teach you more about the world of Jesus.

### Exercise 2

Imagine that there is a time machine at school. You are lucky and allowed to travel to the time of Jesus. What would you like to learn about the time when Jesus lived?



### 2.3.1 JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE

Jesus was born in **Bethlehem** at about the beginning of our era and lived in the area the Romans called "**Palestine**" (a region in the Middle East). One place Jesus visited a few times in his life was **Jerusalem**. Jerusalem was the capital of Palestine.

In the Old Testament it is described that David, the second king of the people of Israel, made Jerusalem his capital. Jerusalem has since that time remained an important place in the religious life of the inhabitants of the area. David's son, Solomon, built a **temple** for the God of Israel. A temple is a place where people worship gods. This Temple was the center of the religious life of the people of Israel.

The Bible books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and 2 Kings describe that the Babylonians destroyed the Temple because the people had not remained faithful to God and began to worship other gods. This destruction of the temple is dated to 586 BC. A part of the people of Israel was led into **exile**. Exile means that a large part of the people was forced to live in a different place, far away from where they had grown up. Eventually, the period of the Exile ended when the later rulers, the Persians, allowed the exiles to return and build a new temple.



Figure 2.2  
Map of Palestine in the  
First Century AD



The construction of this **Second Temple** is described in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. This Temple was less grand and impressive than the first Temple. Around the year 19 BC, Herod the Great started a major renovation of the Temple. This renovation aimed to restore the Temple to its former glory. The new Temple became so impressive that even the Romans considered it a special building. The period after the construction of the second temple is called "**second temple Judaism**". This is the period when Jesus wandered in Jerusalem and its surroundings.

The temple consisted of several courts and buildings. As you can see in figure 2.3 the main temple building was surrounded by a large court. On this court also non-Jews were welcome. Inside the main temple complex, there were the Courts of the Women and of the Priests that restricted access to only Jews and priests, respectively. On the Court of the Priest animals were slaughtered and sacrificed. The Holy place was the place where the priests did all their temple work.



Figure 2.3  
Photo of a Replica of  
the Temple of Herod in  
the Holyland Model of  
Jerusalem.  
Source: Wikimedia  
Commons: [https://  
als.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/  
Datei:19\\_Shrine\\_of\\_the\\_  
Book\\_005.jpg](https://als.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:19_Shrine_of_the_Book_005.jpg)

### Exercise 3

Enter the correct term on the lines. Use the text above to find the correct answers.

A place of worship  
and sacrifice

The temple at the time of Jesus'  
life

The temple built at the time of Ezra  
and Nehemiah

Forced to live in another country,  
because you are not allowed to live  
in your own country.

Name of the region where Jesus  
grew up.

Capital of Palestine

Empire that destroyed the temple  
in 586 BC.

The court around the Temple  
building where non-Jews were  
welcome.


## 2.4 THE WORLD OF THE STORY

The Bible contains many stories of Jesus. Some stories are very simple to understand, other are more difficult. The story of Jesus cleansing the temple is such a difficult story to understand. This story appears in all four Gospels. This lesson takes a deeper look at the story as John described it.



Did you know that the Gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke are remarkably similar in order and content? Because of this similarity, they are also called the Synoptic Gospels. 'Synoptic' comes from the Greek 'synoptikos' which means 'seen together'. The Gospel of John looks vastly different and contains several stories that you will not find in the other three Gospels.

John tells the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple court at the beginning of his ministry. The three other Gospels tell this story at the end of Jesus' life, just before he enters his last days. In this story, Jesus travels to the city of Jerusalem and visits the temple. When Jesus enters the Temple, he sees how animals are sold in the Temple for **sacrifices** and money is exchanged.



When you read a Bible text, you can ask the question: what do I notice about the text? The first thing to notice is that this text is a story. Something else that you can notice is that this story is about Jesus acting and also commenting on his act. This is striking because in most stories it is others who do things that Jesus tells us about.

When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money.



**Money changers** exchanged travelers' money to adequate coins to enable them to pay the temple tax.



This story most likely takes place in the **Court of the Gentiles**. This was a large court where non-Jews were also welcome. The market was probably in a corner of this court.

#### Exercise 4

At the beginning of the story, Jesus traveled to Jerusalem. According to the text, why did Jesus go to Jerusalem?

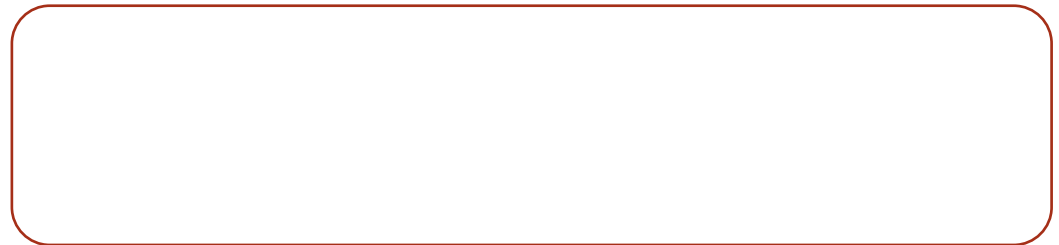
- A. To visit a friend
- B. To preach in Jerusalem
- C. To celebrate Passover
- D. To buy cattle, sheep and doves.

When you are reading a Bible text, it is advisable to look at what is written before or after the text. In the story that precedes the cleansing of the Temple in the Gospel of John, Jesus turned water into wine at a wedding. This wedding took place in **Cana**, a place in the **Galilean** region where Jesus grew up. After the wedding, Jesus went to **Capernaum** and a few days later when the Passover feast was approaching, Jesus left for Jerusalem. When Jesus arrived, he went to the Temple and found traders and moneychangers there.

So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."

### Exercise 5

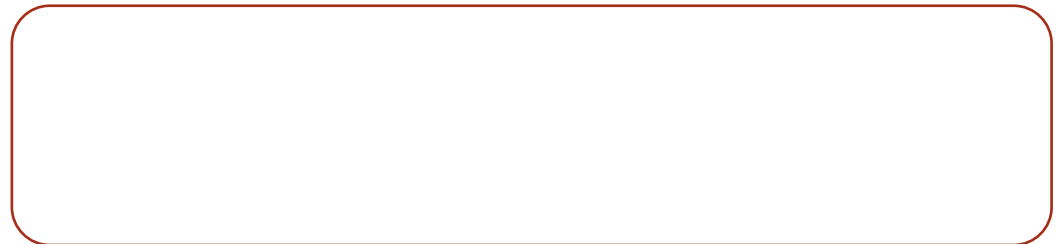
How did Jesus respond to what he saw in the Temple? How would you describe his actions? What do you think of this response?




The biblical text does not state that Jesus got angry. Yet, Jesus is often described as angry when people talk about this story. Although it is not stated, the text can be interpreted like this. There seems to be legitimate reason for Jesus to become angry, namely the presence of merchants and moneychangers in the Temple. It is important to look at what is actually written in the Bible. Sometimes we read a text and see things that are not actually in the text. For instance, there are other ways to describe Jesus' actions. Jesus could also be described as being sad about the situation in the Temple court. Reading a Bible text to understand what it says is called **interpretation**.


### Exercise 6

What other descriptions of the reaction of Jesus can you think of other than angry and sad?




Jesus makes a whip to chase traders and moneychangers out of the temple. You could imagine Jesus as someone whipping around forcefully with the whip. As you read this, you may be startled by what Jesus does. In the world today, it is hard to imagine anyone doing this in a temple.


 The Bible text says that Jesus overturned the tables of the moneychangers. Jesus also has a whip in his hands. Yet it **does not say** exactly how Jesus expelled the merchants from the Temple. It is unclear at first glance whether Jesus used physical violence against humans and animals.

 If you compare this story with the same story in the other three Gospels, it is striking that these three do **not** mention a whip. These accounts thus seem less violent than the narrative in John.

### Exercise 7

Jesus calls the Temple his father's house. Who is Jesus referring to? Why would he do this?

 The disciples of Jesus remembered a verse from the Old Testament. This text is from **Psalms 69 verse 10**. In this Psalm, a person is talking who is in a period of suffering due to following God. He lists several difficulties he is experiencing and calls on God to punish his enemies. After Psalm 110, this Psalm is the most quoted Psalm in the New Testament.

 The disciples respond with a Bible text that says something about Jesus' actions. The students want to understand why Jesus cleared the Temple court.

The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?”

After Jesus sent the merchants and moneychangers from the Temple court, the leaders of the Jews went to Jesus. Jesus was asked what sign proves he was allowed to do what he did. Asking for a sign meant that the leaders wanted to know by what authority he had acted. Jesus had to show that he had a good reason and was allowed to drive the merchants and moneychangers out of the Temple. Jesus responded to this question by making a statement about the Temple. He claimed that if they demolish it, he could rebuild the Temple in three days. This is a striking response because it is impossible for his listeners to demolish the Temple so that Jesus can demonstrate his authority.



In the Gospel of John, “the Jews” usually refers to the leaders of the Jews. These are the leaders of the Temple in this case.



When Jesus was alive, many people were expecting a different and **renewed Temple**. Still, the suggestion of Jesus to destroy the temple sounded offensive or even blasphemous to them. The rebuilding of the Temple started by Herod the Great and was still ongoing during the life of Jesus. Construction started in 19 BC and was not finished until AD 64.

### Exercise 8

Think about what Jesus’ reaction is doing to you. Write down some words that come to mind. What do these words say about how you look at the story.

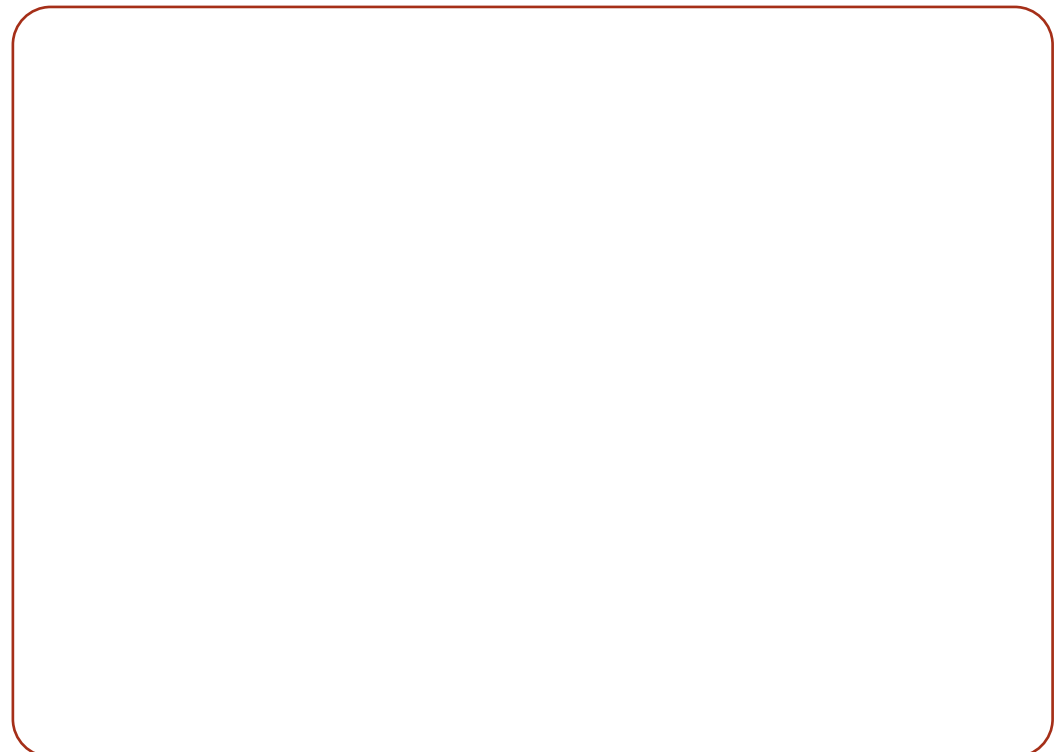
We have just covered the familiar part of this story. Jesus talks at the end of this section about breaking down the Temple and rebuilding it in three days. What does this have to do with expelling the merchants and moneychangers? To answer this, you need to read further in the story. At the end of the story, everything would become clear to the disciples.

But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

John tells in the text what Jesus meant by breaking down and rebuilding the Temple. According to John, Jesus referred to his own body when he referenced to the temple. The temple in Jerusalem was an important place where God's presence dwelt. Jesus is depicted as a person who disrupted the temple ministry. A possible interpretation is that he wanted to draw **attention to the future**. John showed throughout the scene and questions that he saw Jesus as the new true temple that replaces the old temple. What this means is that the **presence of God** has been moved from the original temple to Jesus. Jesus became the new way of getting closer to God, without the need for the rituals of the old temple. In his response to the leaders Jesus spoke about his own death, because then he showed who he really was. The disciples eventually understood this all when Jesus died on the cross and rose again on Easter.

### Exercise 9

Why does Jesus not want the Temple court to be a marketplace?





## Exercise 10

What do you think of this story? Do you think Jesus was violent?

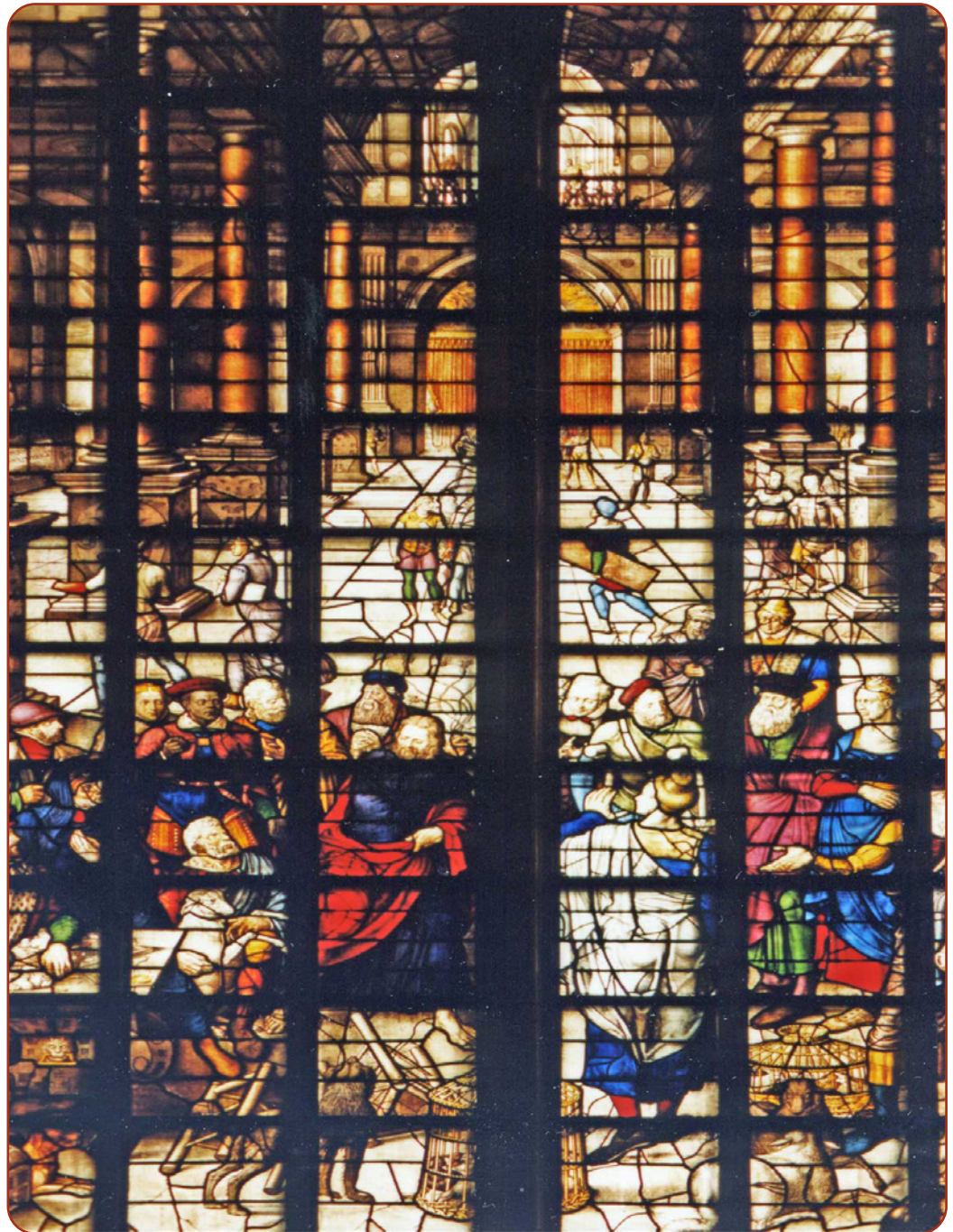


Figure 2.4  
Depiction of Jesus  
Cleansing the Temple  
as Stained Glass in the  
St. Janskerk in Gouda,  
Netherlands.  
Source: Gouvenaar via  
Wikimedia Commons:  
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File:Tempelreiniging.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Tempelreiniging.jpg)

## 2.4 GLOSSARY

In this glossary, you will find more information and an explanation of certain terms.

### **Cana**

In ancient times, Cana was a small village in Galilee. Galilee was a Jewish region in what was then Palestine (a region of the Middle East). According to the New Testament, Jesus was present at a wedding in Cana, where he turned water into wine.

### **Capernaum**

In ancient times, Capernaum was a small village in Galilee. Galilee was a Jewish region in what was then Palestine (a region of the Middle East). According to the New Testament, Jesus lived in Capernaum. He taught in the synagogue of Capernaum.

### **Exile**

Exile means that a large part of a people group is forced to live in a different place, far away from where they grew up. In Jewish tradition, the term typically refers to the period in which the Jewish people lived in Babylonia (traditionally from 597 to 538 BC).

### **Galilee**

At the time of Jesus, Galilee was a Jewish region in what was then Palestine. This area was slightly smaller than Belgium today. Jesus spent most of his life in the region of Galilee.

### **Herod the Great**

Herod the Great was a vassal king under the Romans who ruled over the region of Judea from 37 BC to 4 BC. Herod the Great did not have the favor of the people. By starting a renovation of the Temple in 19 BC, he hoped to gain some popularity and leave a legacy.

### **Holy**

Holy is a concept that indicates purity and the separate status of God and everything that belongs to the divine (sacred). Holiness was an important concept in Judaism. The most important building of the Temple whole complex was called 'The Holy Place'.

### **Interpretation**

Interpretation is the act or process of explaining or understanding the meaning of something. When you read the Bible, interpretation occurs when you try to understand what the text means.

### **Jerusalem**

In the time of Jesus, Jerusalem was the capital of Palestine. Jerusalem had not only a temple but also synagogues: this is where the Jews came to pray. Even today, Jerusalem remains an important city for Jews all over the world.

Jerusalem is also an important city for Christians and Muslims. In Jerusalem, Jesus was condemned, crucified, and buried. Christians also believe that he was resurrected here. The apostles began to tell the stories of Jesus in Jerusalem. According to the Islamic tradition, the Prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven from Jerusalem.

## **Middle East**

Jesus lived in the Middle East. That is why Christianity has its origin in this region. The term 'Middle East' refers to the countries of Southwest Asia and some parts of North Africa, such as Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, and so on.

## **Passover**

Passover is a Jewish festival that commemorates the end of slavery in Egypt and the journey out of Egypt as narrated in the book Exodus. It is a celebration that commemorates the liberation of the Jewish people from slavery. It is celebrated on the 14th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar and lasts seven or eight days.

## **Palestine**

In the time of Jesus, Palestine was a region in the Middle East. After Herod the Great became vassal ruler of this area, it was enlarged. As a result, Jesus lived in Palestine, because Bethlehem, Nazareth and Galilea all lie in Palestine.

## **Second Temple**

The second Temple is the name for the Temple of Jerusalem built at the end of the Exile. It was continuously remodeled from 19 BC to about 64 AD. In 70 AD, the Romans destroyed this Temple. Only one wall of the Temple remained: the western one. This wall / place is now known as the Wailing Wall.

## **Temple**

A temple is a building devoted to the worship of a god or multiple gods. Temples have been built throughout the whole world by different societies for a wide variety of different religions.

## **Temple of Jerusalem**

When Jesus lived, the Temple of Jerusalem was the heart of the Jewish religion: all devout Jews came here to pray and sacrifice. Only Jews were allowed to enter the Temple. Jesus also came here regularly. The Temple used to be the most important building in Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the capital / center of Palestine.

## 2.5 TRANSCRIPT OF THE VIDEO

### 1 INT LIVING ROOM DAY

Sarah is playing a video game with David on the computer. We see them playing with controllers in their hands.

David: *Ha, this time Ill beat you!*

Sarah: *Never! God is always on my side, you can't beat me!*

### 2 INT SCHOOL DAY

We see the title of the game appearing.

iChrist's adventures chapter 6 - The Cleansing of the Temple

We see a 2D 8bit video game with a Character representing Jesus in a temple filled with people: sellers of cattle, sheep and doves, Coin exchangers... (small texts in image)

In voice over we hear the computer speaking.

Computer: *When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem... In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So, he made a whip out of cords, ...*

We see an 8-bit Christ with a whip entering a temple.

Sarah: *ah one of my favorite chapters!*

David: *Pff, I dont know, this one is a bit violent for Jesus, I think.*

Sarah: *no, it's just cleansing the temple!*

We see a count down 3...2...1... Cleanse!

### 3 INT LIVING ROOM DAY

We see Sarah and David heavily using the controllers, tapping buttons and pulling on the cords a bit.

Computer (off): *He drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the moneychangers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!"*

### 4 IN-SCREEN VIDEOGAME

We see iChrist 8bit version with a text in image 'get out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!'

Computer: *His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"*

We see some followers of Jesus with a text 'Zeal for your house will consume me' and then some Jews with 'What signs can you show us to prove you authority to do this all?'

Then we see title screen with 'End of Chapter 6' Then we see 2 scores counting up: Guest loses to Sarah 4360 to 11575pts.

### 5 INT LIVING ROOM DAY

David: *Ah I'm so bad at this game... and I don't like to be so aggressive towards others...*

Sarah: *You're not bad, just a noob but you have great potential! You just need to practise a bit more.*

David: *Don't you think this chapter is a bit violent? I mean, thought Jesus was a peaceful person.*

Sarah: *Well I think Jesus is just disgusted with the people who do not, belong in the temple... So that's why is acting like that.*

Suddenly the computer gives an alert. Sarah walks to the computer.

### 6 IN-SCREEN COMPUTER

We see a notification:

Ahmed want to join your group 'iChrist's Adventures'

Sarah: *What is this? Once again, Ahmed wants to join our community online about iChrist's Adventures.*

David: *Uhm, Oh? What's the problem I told him about this game, he is a classmate.*

Sarah: *Yeah, I know, but he is a Muslim, he shouldn't be playing our Christian game. Maybe I need to teach him a lesson.*

### 7 INT LIVING ROOM DAY

David: *Why not?*

Sarah: *It's just like the chapter we just played. The sellers that don't belong in the temple is just like other believers. They shouldnt play our Christian game, either!*

Sarah's father Adam enters the room

Adam: *What makes you say that, Sarah?*

Sarah: *Ah Father! Well Jesus taught us that we should clear Gods place of false believers. Ahmed is a Muslim so he wouldn't belong in the temple either, so why would we accept him in our online community?*

Adam: *but the story doesn't say if the sellers in the temple were of another religion.*

Sarah: *uhm... yeah...that's true but why would Jesus be angry then? I think Jesus wants to emphasise his disgust with the people who don't belong there. That is why he throws them out of the temple.*



## **8. INT LIVING ROOM DAY**

We see the 3 characters around the computer pointing at the screen.

*Adam: Was he really angry? Maybe he was just upset by what he saw. I'm sure the sellers would not been thrown out if they were there to pray.*

*David: uhm... I don't get that...*

## **9. IN-SCREEN COMPUTER**

We see some of the details of the temple in 2D that show people praying.

*Adam: The temple was an important place, where Jews in that period went for rituals, such as animal sacrifices. Why do you think Jesus went to the temple?*

*Sarah: Well, he also says it is his father house. So maybe he wanted to be there to pray to his father.*

## **10 IN-SCREEN COMPUTER**

We see the crowd again with the text "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?"

*Adam: What does the crowd think of the action of Jesus later on?*

*Sarah: They are wondering why he is doing this.*

## **11 INT LIVING ROOM DAY**

David points at the screen.

*David adds: And questioning Jesus's right to do that. So they condemn what Jesus did.*

*Sarah (confused): Yeah, I guess that's right ... so maybe the crowd didn't mind those sellers.*

*Adam: indeed, and just maybe Jesus was also acting because he had another reason. We can't be sure.*

*Sarah: Yeah, I that could be the case. Maybe he was talking about that the temple was primarily a place for prayer and worship. Prayer was important for Him, that is why he gave us the Lord's prayer... Maybe I need re-think how I look at that story.*

*David: Yeah, you should. I think a game is not the same as a temple*

*Adam: Now. Why don't you try to talk to Ahmed and see why he likes this game? And there is definitely no need to teach him a lesson.*

*Sarah: Yeah, that may be a good idea! Thanks, Dad!*

## **12 IN-SCREEN COMPUTER**

We see a text 'Message to Ahmed sent'.

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2.2 Map of Palestine is an adapted version of: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:First\\_century\\_judaea\\_province.gif](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:First_century_judaea_province.gif), released under CC BY-SA 2.5

2.3 Photo of the model of the Temple of Herod is from Wikipedia Commons and is in public domain.

### 2.4 The world of the story

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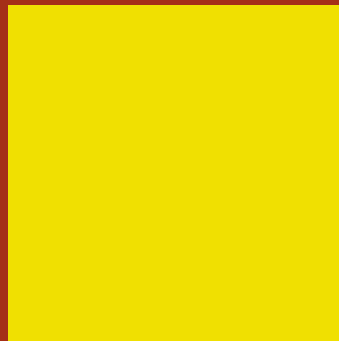
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# 3

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ENCOUNTER WITH THE ENVIRONMENT:  
SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

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## MODULE THREE

# SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL ISSUES

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

**'THE NOW AND THE LATER: HOPE THAT BECOMES REALITY' (REVELATIONS 21:1-22:5): VIDEO**



Figure 3.1  
Scene from the video

*Sarah and David are waiting in line for lunch at school. Sarah shows her new smartphone to David. When they arrive at the counter Sarah gets angry, because from that moment on only vegetarian is served. Eva pushes Sarah over and says during an altercation that Sarah is worried about the wrong things. After the school day, Sarah makes it clear to David that she is not worried about the current world, because eventually there will be a new one. A little later, they follow Eva to a building where Eva comes every day. In the building they find Eva, a woman and a child. They enter into a conversation with Eva. By looking into the eyes of a child, Sarah learns an important lesson about life.*



## 3.2 . THE NOW AND THE LATER: HOPE THAT BECOMES REALITY

“The world is not perfect” is a statement you probably agree with. When we look at our world, we will observe inequality, poverty, disease and climate change. These things have no place in a perfect world. Can our world ever be perfect? The opinions on this question are very divided. Behind this question lies a longing for a better world. A world in which inequality, poverty, disease and climate change no longer play a role. This longing for a better world can also be found in the Bible. The Jews in exile, for example, longed for a time when God would restore everything. In the last book of the Bible, a person named John has visions of a new heaven and a new earth. These desires for a new and better world not only play a major role in Christianity, but also in the lives of all other people. In this lesson we will discuss more deeply these desires. First, we will take a closer look at the vision of John.

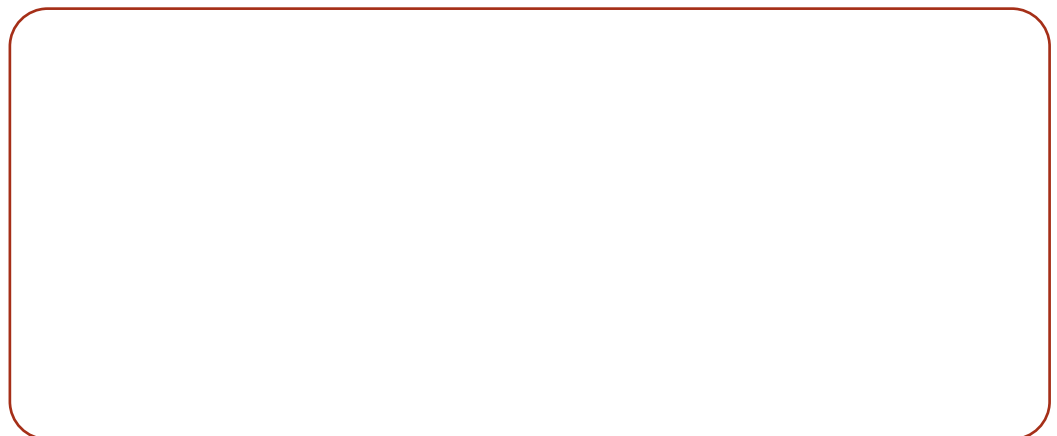
### Exercise 1

What does your ideal world look like?



### Exercise 2

Read the text about the new heaven and the new earth on the next page. Maybe you already know this text. Write what you think it means.



## Revelation of John 21:1-22:5 (partly)

Then I saw “a new heaven and a new earth,” for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Look! God’s dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ‘He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death’ or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

He who was seated on the throne said, “I am making everything new!” Then he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” He said to me: “It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.” - ... - It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. - ... - I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. - ... - The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.

Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever.

## 3.3 THE WORLD OF THE BIBLE

The longing for a perfect world is of all times. In the Bible there is also a longing for a time that things would get better. At the beginning of the Bible, in the book of Genesis, there is also a story of a 'perfect' world.



Genesis is the first book of the Bible. Genesis is a Greek word that means 'origin'. Genesis contains two **origin stories** that describe how God is the origin of creation.



In the second **origin story** (Genesis 2-3) details that God made the **garden of Eden** and created humans to live in this garden. In the middle of the garden were two special trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The humans were not allowed to eat from the fruit of the last tree but ate from it after being seduced by a talking snake.

The garden of Eden is described as a beautiful oasis that was full of living creatures. Many Christians see the garden as an **'ideal' place**. An important part of the garden of Eden is that the humans were there together with God. The loss of this ideal place is the starting point for the story of humankind and God described in the Bible. The Garden of Eden plays an important role in thinking about living with God in both Judaism and Christianity.


### Exercise 3

What makes the garden of Eden an ideal place?

- A. The garden of Eden was a beautiful oasis.
- B. In the garden of Eden, God lived together with people.
- C. In the garden of Eden animals could talk.
- D. The garden of Eden was made by God.

## 3.4 THE WORLD OF THE STORY

The '**Revelation of John**' is a strange book of the Bible. According to the book itself, it was written by a certain John, while he was imprisoned on the island of Patmos (Greece). The book contains a lot of visions and a number of letters. The genre of the book is called **apocalyptic literature**.

 **Apocalyptic literature** are texts in which, through visions or secrets or images are revealed to people. Other examples of apocalyptic texts in the Bible can be found at the end of the book of Daniel and in the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 24.

Reading a Bible text is not always easy. To make the reading and understanding easier, you can ask questions. In lesson on 'the text of violence' already some questions you can ask about a Bible text while studying this text were mentioned. What you also can do is to look at what kind of text you are reading (genre). Besides that, it is important to understand **what is written before or after a Bible text**. In Revelation 21:1-22:5 you can observe that this text is at the end of the book. The book describes all kinds of events in a battle between God and the adversary, Satan. In this battle, humans play an important role. This battle ends in chapter 20 with the destruction of Satan. The next chapter describes a new time of hope and peace. Revelations 21:1-22:5 is the last vision described in the book. At the end of chapter 22, a final message is given to the reader.

Besides looking at the context of a Bible text, you should also inspect what **exactly is in a Bible text**. For example, you can take a closer look at sentences and specific words. You can likewise think about which parts of the text stand out to you. Additionally, you can determine which points of view seem logical or illogical to you. These questions help you better understand the content of a text.

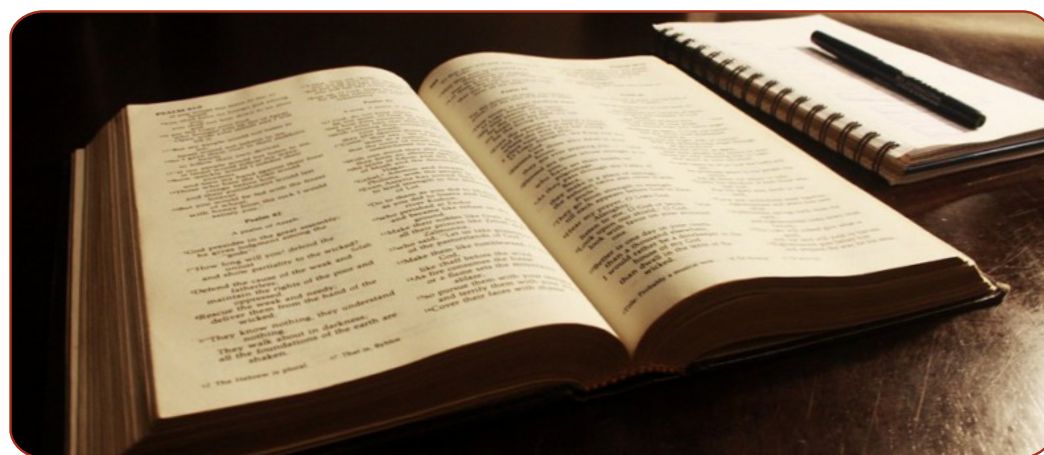


Figure 3.2.  
Source: ©AgnieszkaMonk  
/ Pixabay

#### Exercise 4

Read the excerpt from the Bible text below. What do you notice? Which words stand out to you? What do you find strange? What attracts your attention?

#### **Revelations 21:1-7**

Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' u or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'" He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life.

#### Exercise 5

The garden of Eden is seen as an ideal, but lost place. The new heaven and new earth, as described here, can also be seen as an ideal place. Thus, in Revelation 21 an ideal world is presented. Describe in your own words what this world looks like.

## Exercise 6

Read the following statements. With which statements do you agree?

1. Achieving the ideal world is something that people have to try.
2. To reach the perfect world, we may use violence.
3. To achieve an ideal world, tackling climate change is actually not important.
4. People cannot really contribute to achieving the ideal world.
5. It is my job to make people think the same as me, then the ideal world will get closer by itself.

## Ideal images

Although the world is not perfect, most people would like the world to become increasingly more perfect. Many people can imagine such a perfect world. An image of what a perfect world looks like is an **ideal image**. Ideal images are important, because they give a glimpse of a world we would like to live in. These images can **motivate** people to try to realize this ideal. The image in Revelation 21 is an ideal image that describes what a world would look like without problems. In this image there is eternal peace, no more war and pain, and everyone is happy. In addition, people are allowed to live forever in the presence of God.

It is not only Christians who have an ideal image, there are many different ways of thinking and worldviews that sketch an image of an ideal world. Table 1 shows a number of ideologies and what kind of ideal image belongs to this **ideology**.


 An **ideology** is a collection of ideas that someone has about the world and people, and what society should look like. An ideology is the basis from which different people imagine a perfect world and make choices in life.



Figure 3.3  
Source: ©allyartist /  
Pixabay

	<b>Ideal image</b>	<b>Action</b>
<b>Capitalism</b>	A society in which the ways of producing goods are shared by the inhabitants of a country. Everyone is equal, so there is no more injustice and poverty.	Forming companies that compete with each other Communication between people about supply and demand. Power lies in the best supply.
<b>Marxism</b>	A society in which the ways of producing goods are shared by the inhabitants of a country. Everyone is equal, so there is no more injustice and poverty.	The revolt of the oppressed people against the rulers can herald this.
<b>Globalism</b>	A society in which countries no longer exist, all relationships are equal, and everyone is freely committed to society. This commitment comes about through free agreements between people and groups of people. These structures mean that inequality, discrimination and poverty no longer exist.	Removing travel restrictions and making it easier to trade. Increase the contact between different countries and cultures.
<b>Ecologism</b>	Man's life is connected to and part of nature. What we do as humans must be part of nature. This way of life reduces climate change and makes the earth livable for everyone, without poverty.	Reducing CO2 emissions and environmental pollution. Attention to all life on earth. Living in line with what nature offers us.
<b>Buddhism</b>	The absence of suffering in all aspects of life. By not suffering, everyone is intensely happy and there is no more injustice, war and sorrow.	Following the path of eight steps in which one searches for correctness in insight, thoughts, speech, actions, way of livelihood, effort, meditation, and concentration.
<b>Technologism</b>	A high-tech world in which rules and agreements serve the prosperity of all inhabitants. Because of the technological possibilities, climate change, inequality, poverty and disease no longer exist.	The application of technology in the world and in people's lives.

Table 1. Ideal image and actions of ideologies



### Exercise 7

Compare the different ideal images. What do you notice? What are the similarities and differences?



### Exercise 8

An important question is whether we are able to reach the ideal world. What is the role we play in achieving an ideal world? Table 1 also contains some actions which followers of an ideology have in mind to reach their ideal world. Compare the different ideologies in what they try to do to reach their ideal image. What do you notice? What are the similarities and differences?






In our world, we are currently dealing with climate change, social inequality, disease and so many things other you could mention. The **tensions** we experience as a result of these problems are caused by the fact that they directly affect our own lives. Table 1 shows a number of ideal images which give people hope. This hope comes from the **solutions** that according to these ideologies may contribute to a better world. For many people it is nice to have such an ideal image, because it offers comfort and a purpose in life. Nevertheless, the ways in which a specific ideal image is pursued can also be **negative** for the world. Examples are the exploitation that may arise due to capitalism, the privacy problems that can accompany technological progress and the violence necessary to reach the communist ideal. All these problems do not have to do with the ideal image these ideologies have, but with what they ultimately do to achieve their goal. The **actions** of these groups can thus also have a **negative impact** on the earth and humankind.

### Exercise 9

What do you do to reach your ideal world?



Presenting an ideal world makes it possible to contrast the ideal world with our contemporary world. This can help to better understand the problems of our contemporary world. It is therefore not a problem at all to have an ideal image. The same goes for the ideal images Christians have of the new heaven and the new earth. In this instance, many Christians usually have an ideal image in which God will make everything right in the end. However, this image does not mean that Christians have to wait quietly for God to bring about this ideal situation. From the start of his public life on earth, Jesus also talked about an ideal image: **The Kingdom of God.**

 **The kingdom** of God is the reign of God over the world and his creation. Jesus showed in his life and teaching what this means. The kingdom of God actually includes all kinds of aspects of the new heaven and earth already in our present world.

God uses people, like the apostle Paul, in his kingdom. Moreover, Christians today believe that God uses them and that they **are allowed to contribute** to the kingdom of God. By doing this, Christians contribute to a better world.

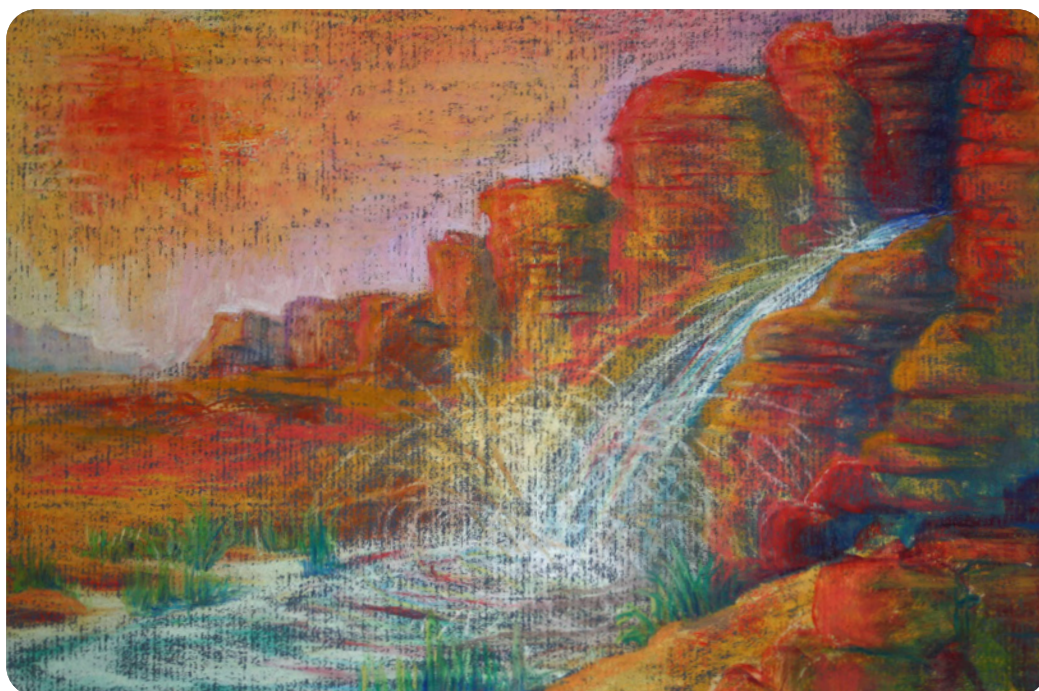


Figure 3.4  
Drawing Hope for  
the Future by Knight  
Likeness  
Source: Flickr

## 3.5 GLOSSARY

In this glossary you will find more information and clarification on certain terms.

### **Context**

The context of a text is the environment that determines what a text means. This can be what kind of book a piece of Bible text is part of. In addition, it can be about what is written before or after a Bible text. Finally, context also refers to the historical and cultural world of the author of the Bible text.

### **Earth**

Earth is the planet on which humankind lives. In the Bible, earth stands in contrasts to heaven, because earth is the dwelling place of man and heaven is the dwelling place of God.

### **Garden of Eden**

The garden of Eden is a garden that according to Genesis 2 was created by God. The first people, according to one of the two origin story of Genesis, Adam and Eve, originally lived in the garden. After a big mistake they were evicted out of the garden by God and the garden was closed to humankind.

### **Genesis**

Genesis is the first book of the Bible and describes, among others, in two stories the creation of humankind.

### **Genre**

A genre is categorization of texts that have a similar structure and style. Different texts differ in form, length and certain word usage. Genres are often flexible, so a text can fall into several genres. Different genres can be distinguished in modern and ancient texts. Examples of modern genres are thriller, horror and biography. Examples of ancient genres are tragedy, epistles and comedy.

### **Heaven**

The word heaven refers to the place where God dwells. Many people see heaven as the place where people go after their death. This is not what is meant by heaven in the Bible. Heaven stands in contrasts to earth, because heaven is the place of God and earth is the place of man.

### **Ideal image**

An ideal image is an image that someone has of something that is perfect. An ideal image can be about how according to a person the world would be perfect.

### **Ideology**

An ideology is a collection of ideas that someone has about the world, people and what society should look like. An ideology is the basis from which different people imagine a perfect world and make choices in life.

## **Jerusalem**

In the time of Jesus, Jerusalem was the capital of Palestine. Jerusalem had a temple and many synagogues where Jews came to worship and pray. Today, Jerusalem is still an important city for Jews around the world. Jerusalem is also an important city for Christians and Muslims. In Jerusalem, Jesus was condemned, crucified and buried. Christians also believe he was resurrected here. The apostles first began to tell stories of Jesus in Jerusalem. According to the Islamic tradition, the Prophet Mohammed ascended to heaven from Jerusalem.

## **New heaven and new earth**

The 'New Heaven and New Earth' is about a vision from the Revelation of John. In this vision, John saw how the world ends and a new earth comes. At the same time, he also saw a new heaven from which a new Jerusalem descended on the new earth.

## **Revelation**

A revelation is a way in which God reveals something about Himself to people.

## **Revelation of John**

The Revelation of John is the title of the last book of the Bible. According to the book itself, a certain John received visions from Jesus when he was imprisoned on the island of Patmos.

## **Satan**

Satan is a Hebrew word that means 'opponent'. In the western world, it has become a proper name for the devil. The devil is a figure who is evil in the form of a personality.

## **Vision**

A vision is a secret or image revealed to a person. Other people cannot perceive this revelation. The experiences of John in the book of Revelation are often described as visions.

## 3.6 TRANSCRIPT

### 1 INT STREET

Eva is walking down a street and going into an abandoned building. Sarah is watching from the other side of the street. Eva does not notice Sarah.

### 2 INT CANTEEN

Sarah and David are standing in line in the canteen of the school. Sarah is holding a phone in her hand and is showing it to David. Behind them Eva is visibly looking at them.

*Sarah: Cool isn't it? Look at what I can do with it.*

Sarah takes a picture of an object with the phone. Afterward, they step forward to the counter.

*David: Wow, that is awesome! You're so lucky. My parents said since my phone is not broken, I do not need a new one.*

*Sarah: That's a shame!*

Sarah and David look at the menu above the counter. Sarah becomes turns angry.

*Sarah: Hey, what kind of nonsense is this.*

*David: What's wrong*

Sarah says with a raised voice: Well, this vegan nonsense served here today. I don't like it and I want to have real good food.

*Eva: What the hell Sarah. Why do you have to be such a brat?*

*Sarah: Shut up miss snoop.*

*Eva: I have to snoop. You are such an uncaring person. You always complain about trivial things, while not paying attention to things you should really care about. Look at how the world we are living in becomes more and more dirty and uninhabitable. Do you want to live in a hellish world?*

*David: That was really not necessary.*

*Miss...: Kids, kids ....*

*Eva: It is obvious she doesn't care. Look how she paraded with a new phone, while children suffer and even die elsewhere so she can have one.*

*Sarah: Shut up*

Mister shouts: Girls, Girls that's enough. Or there will be consequences.

### 3 INT Street

Sarah and David are walking down the same street.

*David: Pff, what a long day. Why were you so angry with Eva?*

*Sarah: Well, I think she makes a big deal out of nothing. The Bible tells us this world will one day be replaced by something better, so why not enjoy what we have now.*

Sarah sees Eva walking down the street and going into an abandoned building.

*Sarah says with a smile on her face: Look, there she is! I am wondering what miss Perfect is doing there every day. Let's follow her.*

*David: Uhm Sarah, is that a good idea?*

Sarah runs to the building and David reluctantly follows her. They enter the building Eva went into.

### 4 INT ROOM

Sarah and David are in a room. There they find Sarah, a woman, and a child. Eva turns around to look at them.

*Eva whispers: Hey, what you... uhm, how did ... Did you follow me?*

*Sarah: Uhm, yeah, I was...*

*Eva: You should not have come here.*

*Sarah whispers: Why not?*

*You would not care anyway. Just stop bothering us and leave us be?*

*Sarah: Uhm what? I don't bother anyone. It is you who bothered me this morning. So, just tell me what is going on here?*

*Eva: I come here every day to help this people. This is Malacia and her mother.*

Eva points to the woman and the child.

*Eva: They do not have many things to do since her mother cannot find a decent job sadly. We meet at this place to have some fun and I help Malacia learn our language. She struggles at school and I try to help her. I know her from school.*

*Sarah: Oh, okay but should others like the government not help them? And what does this have to do with me?*

*Eva is annoyed and says: You really do not understand the real world. That is what I meant this morning when I said you don't care about really important issues.*

*Sarah raises her voice: What is your problem?*

*Eva: Shh...*

*David: Well, she does have a point. You just said you do not care for this world, since you believe it will be replaced by a new one someday*

*Sarah: Yeah, the Bible tells us there will be a time that a New Heaven and a New Earth will appear and that there will be a New Jerusalem where mankind will live in peace and harmony together with God in their midst.*

*Eva: Yeah, I know that passage, but what has that to do with these people? Or what about eating meat? Or buying a new phone every year? Do you know what these things can lead to? Come take a moment to look in the eyes of Malacia.*

Eva leads Sarah to Malacia. Sarah looks Malacia in the eye. The shot zooms into Malacia's eyes. The shot changes to the girl and the parents standing on a farm field, while the plants around them the plants are turning from green to brown and eventually the goats around them die. Next, we see the little girl and her family in a mine while holding an axe. Then her father walks away and falls dead to ground. Then we see a map where a line is drawn from Democratic Republic of Congo to China. In the next frame, we see new phones being boxed. The last frame is of Sarah looking at her new phone. The images are repeated several times and speeded up.

Finally, the image zooms out back through the eyes into the shot of Sarah looking at the girl.

## **6 INT ROOM**

*Sarah: Uhm, what happened? Uhm, what does this mean?*

*Eva: It means that it does not matter that there will be a new world. Your behavior right now influences the lives of others. Eating meat, for instance, leads to more CO2 emissions, which leads to rising temperatures, which can lead to droughts and thus people leaving their dried out farms to work in violent mines so that metals for phones can be delved. And when they want to leave those mines, they can get shot, just like how Malacia's father was killed.*

*Sarah: Oh, I did not know that. Is Bible wrong then? What has this to do with me again?Eva: I did not say the Bible is wrong.*

*Believing and having hope in a new and better world does not mean that you should not care about the present world we live in. It is just that you still can be aware of the problems in our world.*

*Sarah: Maybe you are right. Sorry, I reacted so harshly to you this morning. I am just... I'm just wondering what to do now.*

*Eva: You could read again what Jesus says. He says to love our neighbor as ourselves, thus maybe we should also think of the lives of others and of the earth when we making decisions and doing things.*

*Sarah: Yeah, just like the story of the Good Samaritan I have been thinking of lately. I am going to look in the bible again tonight.*

## **7 INT ROOM**

We see Sarah giving clothes and toys to Malacia



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### **Origin of images**

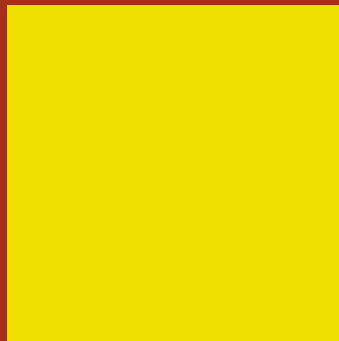
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# 4

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WHEN ENCOUNTER  
BECOMES CONFLICT: JUST  
WAR AND JUST PEACE

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## MODULE FOUR

# JUST WAR AND JUST PEACE

### 1. “BETWEEN PEACE AND VIOLENCE” (LUKE 6:27-35; REVELATION 19:26-32): VIDEO



Figure 4.1  
Scene from the video

*David, Sarah and Anna are watching TV together. On the TV, we see tanks driving down a road. A reporter explains that troops from one country have crossed the border into their neighboring country. According to the president of this country, the neighboring nation violates the rights of its citizens. Contrary to this, the prime minister of this neighboring country claims that his president intends to only expand his power. Sarah, David, and Anna talk about whether or not their own government ought to help the invaded country. They also discuss whether Christians can approve of a war. In the midst of their discussion, the reporter on the TV interrupts them and helps them to think more deeply about these issues.*

## 4.1 BETWEEN PEACE AND VIOLENCE

A TV screen shows tanks and army trucks slowly entering a village. A man with a gun suddenly jumps out of one of the trucks. As he runs down a side street, the screen changes and you are now looking from the man's eyes. It is now possible to control him using a controller. There is no doubt about the objective: "kill the enemies" that appear. Then, as a door opens, a woman with a child appears. Is there a need to shoot?

The above scenario could have appeared in a video game. It is a war situation in which you, the player, are actively involved by achieving the game's goals. But a woman and child are already visible in the game. Surely, they can never be the enemy? What if the game offered the option to shoot the woman and child?

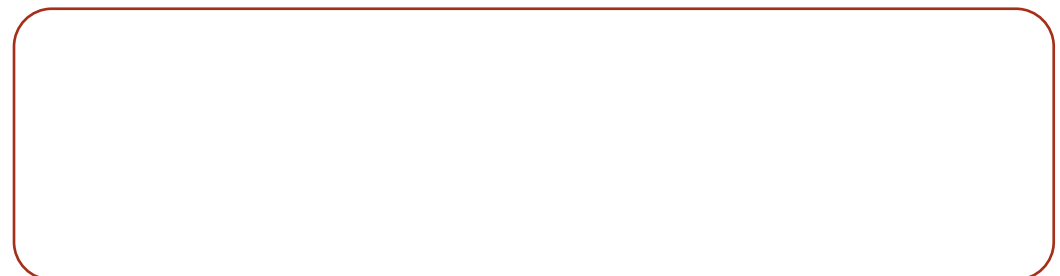
This example may be innocent, because nobody really dies in the end. Yet in reality, wars continue to take place in which innocent civilians are often killed. Thus, in these places there is no peace, but often a gruesome battle takes place. Is it possible to wage war without killing innocent civilians? Or is war always something we should avoid?

These questions may not seem relevant to you. Yet these questions are very important in today's world. What would you do if your own government called you to join the army and fight in another country? And how do you view people fleeing war or mandatory military service in their country?

According to some Christians, war should always be avoided. Others argue that war can actually be used to bring about peace. In this lesson, we will focus on examining the use of violence on a larger scale. This larger scale consists of violence committed by nations, people groups, or other social groups. How can we, as Christians, reflect more deeply on this topic?

### Exercise 1

Read the texts about loving your enemies and a rider on a white horse on the next page. You may already know these texts. Write down what you think it means.



**Luke 6:27-3**

But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.

**Revelation of John 19:11-16, 19**

I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and wages war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. Coming out of his mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS. ...

Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and his army.



Figure 4.2  
Depiction of the slap on the cheek, 1984.  
Source: Jim Padgett, courtesy of Sweet Publishing, Ft. Worth, TX, and Gospel Light, Ventura, CA via Wikimedia Commons. This file is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license. No change has been made. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gospel\\_of\\_Luke\\_Chapter\\_6-15\\_\(Bible\\_Illustrations\\_by\\_Sweet\\_Media\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gospel_of_Luke_Chapter_6-15_(Bible_Illustrations_by_Sweet_Media).jpg)

## 4.2 THE WORLD OF THE BIBLE

The book of Revelation of John is the last book of the New Testament and is named after its author, John. This John claims to have received a revelation from Jesus.



The book of Revelation contains a lot of **imagery** that can be difficult to understand. Examining a book in its entirety can sometimes help to clarify what a specific passage means and make some words or arguments become easier to understand.

The book begins with a series of letters addressed to seven churches in Asia Minor. In the next section, an image of heaven is described, in which a **sealed scroll** is visible. Only a sacrificed lamb, who appears on the scene, can break the seals of this scroll.



The **lamb** is usually interpreted as Jesus. This is one of the many ways in which Jesus is depicted in the imagery of this book.

The book concludes with the image of a new heaven and a new earth. In this image, God dwells among humans. In addition, there are no more wars since there is an eternal peace. The previous chapters, on the other hand, describe the story of a **battle**. At the start of this battle, Jesus condemns the world for its injustices. The next three chapters describe a scene in which bowls are emptied on the earth and then various events occur that serve as punishment. In chapter 18, judgment is passed on an image of evil, Babylon. Finally, in chapter 19, a **rider on a white horse** appears and goes to war.

### Exercise 2

Who is the rider on a white horse in Revelation 19:11-19?

- A. King David
- B. Prophet Elijah
- C. Jesus
- D. Archangel Gabriel



## 4.3 THE WORLD OF TEXT

Luke 6:27-32 depicts Jesus instructing his followers **to love their enemies**. The text can be found in a section called “the sermon on the plains”. In this section, Jesus is teaching his disciples about how to live. Revelation 19:11-16, 19 describes a picture of a rider on a white horse leading an **army** and going to war.



The rider on a white horse is often interpreted as an image of Jesus.

### Exercise 3

In both Bible passages, a relationship is made between the person of Jesus and violence. What strikes you about this?

Wars have been waged throughout human history. Examples of wars include the Roman conquests, the American civil War, Napoleonic Wars and the two World Wars. Wars have also been described in the Bible, such as the Babylonian conquest of Judah.



**Wars** are conflicts between two or more social groups (for example, countries, ethnic groups, religious groups, etc.), during which all sides use weapons to achieve their goals. Not all armed conflicts are always specifically described as a war. Minor conflicts within social groups can also result in **armed violence**, but they are not considered as wars.

Figure 4.3

Armed soldiers  
Source: Official Navy  
Page from United  
States of America LAC  
Amanda McErlich/U.S.  
Navy via Wikipedia  
(Public Domain) [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New\\_Zealand\\_disruptive\\_pattern\\_material#/media/File:Flickr\\_-\\_Official\\_U.S.\\_Navy\\_Imagery\\_-\\_New\\_Zealand\\_Army\\_soldiers\\_from\\_Alpha\\_Company\\_clear\\_buildings\\_as\\_part\\_of\\_the\\_Military\\_Operations\\_Urban\\_Training.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Zealand_disruptive_pattern_material#/media/File:Flickr_-_Official_U.S._Navy_Imagery_-_New_Zealand_Army_soldiers_from_Alpha_Company_clear_buildings_as_part_of_the_Military_Operations_Urban_Training.jpg).



## Exercise 4

Read the statements below.

1. According to Jesus, you cannot not use violence to defend yourself, but you may use it to defend others.
2. When it is necessary, Christians may fight in wars to make the world a better place.
3. Loving your enemies means never using violence.
4. Following Jesus means taking up your cross. Thus, you can be a victim of violence, but never a perpetrator of violence.

Which statements do you agree with? Explain why, using at least the two biblical texts.

How can you as a Christian deal with war and other armed conflicts? One way to respond to this question is to reject war completely. This position is called 'pacifism'.



**Pacifism** is the rejection of war and violence and as a result, the refusal to use weapons to achieve one's goals. In addition, pacifists strive for peace without using weapons.


It is also possible for Christians to embrace war as a means to achieve religious ends. A very prominent position in history is that of 'holy war'.



**Holy war** is the waging of war to achieve a religious goal. Usually, a divine obligation is also given as a reason. The Crusades are an example of a series of 'holy wars'.

For many European Christians nowadays, the use of the term 'holy war' is difficult to imagine. Yet some reactions in our society are consistent with this way of thinking. An example of such a reaction is when people talk about waging "war" to defend the "Christian world" in response to terrorist attacks.

Most Christians today who approve the use of war in some way will not defend the concept of holy war. Instead, these Christians usually speak of waging a just war.

 The **just war tradition** holds that under certain conditions one can wage war and qualify it as just. In order for a war to be considered just, the following conditions must be met:

- *With a just reason:* The motive behind the war must be just. Just reasons include protecting citizens and nations from unjustified attacks or restoring human rights when they have been violated.
- *With the right intent:* A war should only serve to obtain a better and more just peace than existed before the war.
- *As a last resort:* All other means of achieving a peaceful solution must have been explored. There must no longer be any other way to reach a peaceful solution without violence. A peaceful solution is always preferable.
- *With a probability of success:* It must be very likely that the intended objective will be achieved by waging war. Wars without a probability of success are never just.
- *Be Proportionate:* The force to be used must be proportionate to the evil to combat. The evil done by the war must never be more than the evil being combated.
- *Under right and competent authority:* War can only be declared and waged by a legitimate authority. Legitimate authorities are governments recognized as having political and social authority as well as representing the interests and welfare of their citizens.



Figure 4.4  
UN Peacekeepers send out with the mission to prevent a possible violent conflict and protect civilians, 2016.  
Source: US Embassy in Ghana via Wikimedia Commons: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peacekeeping#/media/File:Ghana\\_IntPeaceCorps\\_2016-05-29\\_B002a.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peacekeeping#/media/File:Ghana_IntPeaceCorps_2016-05-29_B002a.jpg).

Revelation 19:26-32 describes an image of Jesus fighting for humanity. This image indicates that fighting is a part of the **story of Jesus**. This text can be used as an argument by just war advocates that war can sometimes be necessary to establish peace. Pacifists reject this idea. They often refer to Luke 6:27-31 to argue that Jesus **teaches** pacifism.



## Exercise 5

Compare the concepts of “pacifism,” “just war,” and “holy war. How do the three concepts differ and how are they similar?

Adherents of both pacifism and just war do ultimately work toward the same goal. Indeed, both positions strive for just peace.


 In the Bible, the word **peace** does not only mean the absence of strife, but it can also be used to refer to the well-being of a person or society. In fact, the Hebrew word “shalom” means, besides peace, completeness. Peace can thus also be described as the situation in which everyone can completely live in peace and with a sense of security. A peace that exists in combination with justice and fairness is also called **just peace**.



Figure 4.5.  
Different symbols for  
peace  
Source: Pixabay

## Exercise 6

What would just peace look like in today's world?

## Exercise 7

What can you do to ensure peace?

Throughout history, Christians have thought about wars, armed conflicts, and peace. Several Protestant thinkers have developed their views on this issue. The ideas of four of these thinkers are briefly explained below.



### Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Dietrich Bonhoeffer said that the primary goal of the Christian life is **to follow Jesus at all costs**. It is not without risk for a person to follow Jesus, and one must also be prepared to experience the consequences of doing so. This person thus accepts oppression and violence while not resisting it violently. According to Bonhoeffer, resisting with violence can actually cause more **harm** than good. It was also his opinion that Christians should not participate in war as the Christian community should not take part in politics.

Figure 4.6  
Dietrich Bonhoeffer  
Source: Bettina  
Rott via Wikimedia  
Commons: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dietrich\\_Bonhoeffer\\_\(um\\_1938\).jpg?uselang=de](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Dietrich_Bonhoeffer_(um_1938).jpg?uselang=de)

## Daniel Bell

Daniel Bell defends waging war for just reasons. He writes that true justice in war situations can only be achieved through **Christian discipleship**. Discipleship means following Jesus. To Christians, a just war should not be a political question, but instead a question of **fairness and morality**. Thus, the goal for a Christian is not to follow a set of rules that determine whether a war is just, but rather to honor God through how they live. This can only be accomplished by being virtues. Bell describes **virtues** as beliefs and habits that enable people to behave consistently. In doing so, we are striving to achieve a higher purpose than our own self-interests.



## Walter Wink

Walter Wink advocated **active nonviolence**. As Christians, we must not be passive toward injustice or violence, but resist violence in a nonviolent way. Indeed, according to Wink, Jesus revealed a nonviolent God to humanity. Wink describes the life of Jesus as that of actively resisting violence. Active nonviolence means a constant resistance to violence by responding with nonviolent alternatives. For Wink, Luke 6 a crucial text because it shows that Jesus expects from his followers a **radically different response** than the use of violence.

Slapping someone on the right cheek is often done with the palm of the hand. In the Jesus' time, this was intended to humiliate a person and so a "violent" counterreaction was expected. Jesus calls to turn the **other cheek** and not to lower oneself to the level of a violent counterreaction.

## Reinhold Niebuhr

Reinhold Niebuhr was a theologian who initially developed pacifist ideas. Later on, he rejected these ideas because he felt that pacifists strive toward a situation that will never work in reality. He argues that people possess **freedom**. As a result, they often do **wrong** things, which we call sin. According to Niebuhr, this situation makes it **impossible** to develop a pacifist society. Christians sometimes have to abandon the ideal of the Kingdom of God because of human freedom and sin. This means that the use of violence is sometimes necessary to **fulfill** Jesus' demand of bringing peace and justice.

Figure 4.7  
Walter Wink  
Source: Fellowship  
of Reconciliation via  
Wikimedia Commons:  
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter\\_Wink#/media/File:Walter-wink.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Wink#/media/File:Walter-wink.jpg).

## Exercise 8

Which thinker appeals to you the most and which does not? Why? Try to use the two Bible texts from this lesson in your answer.

This lesson is about whether Christians may consider war as an acceptable or objectionable means. Another issue is whether or not you, as a Christian, may participate in wars and other armed conflicts. As you can see, the opinions are divided on this issue. This is a particularly difficult question to answer. On the one hand, there is the **harsh reality** in which war and violence take place. On the other hand, we are also **invited know** a God who reveals Jesus to be *warm and loving*. At the same time, this God in the Bible is working to bring just peace, although at times it seems to happen in a rough way.



Through his life, Jesus tells us that the most important lesson is to **love our neighbor and even our enemies**. Christians should live by this principle and let it guide their lives. Especially when discussing conflict and violence.

## Exercise 9

Jesus thus tells to love one's enemies. What does this mean to you? How do you apply this in your own life?

## 4.5 GLOSSARY

In this glossary, you will find more information and an explanation of certain terms.

### **Disciple**

A disciple is a follower of Jesus.

### **Enemy**

An enemy is a term used to indicate that an individual or a group is the opponent against whom someone is fighting.

### **Evil**

Evil is a term that describes what people perceive as be negative and wrong.

### **Just**

Just means that something is right or fair.

### **Just War**

A just war is a war that aims to establish peace and meets several preconditions. In order to start a war, the following preconditions need to be met: (1) have a just cause; (2) have the right intention; (3) use war as a last resort; (4) the war needs to have a high probability of success; (5) be proportionate to combatted evil; (6) be started by a proper and competent authority.

### **Pacifism**

Pacifism is the rejection of war and violence to achieve one's goals. Pacifists thus seek peace without the use of armed struggle.

### **Peace**

Peace is a term used to describe both the absence of conflict and the well-being of a person or society.

### **Revelation**

A revelation is a way in which God makes something about Himself known to people.

### **War**

War is an armed conflict between social groups, such as countries, people groups or religious groups.

## 4.6 TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO

### 1 INT ROOM

Sarah, David and Anna are sitting in front of a TV. The TV screen shows tanks driving on a road.

Voice over: Troops have crossed the border to intervene in the conflict that has been stirring up the country.

*David: Wow, what is going on there...*

We see a man is talking on the TV screen.

Voice over continues: Their president said in a speech earlier today that the neighboring country has been violating international law and human rights.

The prime minister of that country responded angrily in return. She said that lies are being spread about a domestic conflict and that they are just as much under attack by this lying president.

We focus on the Sarah, David and Anna talking. Sarah looks sad, Anna looks angry.

*Sarah: That is very terrible news.*

*Anna: Yeah, it is. I believe that our government should take action and help this invaded country even though it is far away! We must protect and help those in need.*

*Sarah: Yes, we need to help those in need, but in this situation that means partaking in a war.*

*David: Yeah, why do you immediately say that we have to get involved in this war?*

*Anna: Well, this president wants to invade another country, on top of that he has repeatedly used violence against his own people. It is nonsense that he wants to go to war to rescue people in another country. He just wants to take over their land! It is our duty to help those in need.*

*Sarah: Yeah, but even if this invasion is wrong, Jesus tells us to love our neighbors and that we should not strike back when we are beaten but turn the other cheek. Why should we then take up arms and go to war?*

*Anna: Yeah, I know, but we cannot sit still and let this happen.*

*David: Well, don't you think Jesus is opposed to all wars?*

*Anna: Yeah, that may look like it, but God also commanded several times to go to war in the Old Testament. Does this not mean that war is sometimes a part of God's will?*

*Sarah: I don't know if I agree with you.*

The frame focuses on the TV. A news presenter on the TV screen turns his head and looks directly at the teens.

*Presenter: Uhm, hey hello over here, I noticed you are talking about a difficult topic. I think you three may need some help. I have some questions that may assist you in thinking about this. You want to hear them, or not?*

We focus on Sarah, David and Anna talking

*David: Is he talking to us?*

*Sarah: Uhm, yes, how...., this is very weird, but why not?*

*Anna: Yeah, it is weird, but let's do it.*

We focus on the TV.

*Presenter: Okay, Some Christians do not want to be part of any war. How are people who do not want to take part in any war called?*

We focus on Sarah, David and Anna talking

*David: Uhm, is it not pacifist.*

*Sarah: Indeed, it is.*

*Anna: Yeah, but they are on the wrong side.*

*Sarah: Why? Aren't they listening to Jesus? He was also a pacifist, wasn't he?*

*David: Yeah, as Sarah already said he told us to turn the other cheek.*

*Anna: Yes, he did, but it is more complicated. For instance, he did not reject soldiers as bad people.*

We focus on the TV.

*Presenter: The correct answer is indeed a pacifist. Not all Christians are pacifists. Some Christians can also believe in what is called just war theory. Do you know what 'just war is?'*

We focus on Sarah, David and Anna talking

*David: Uh well I do not know.*

*Anna: It is the idea that if a country has a just cause and fights in a just manner with the goal to bring peace, then a war can be called just.*

David: But isn't war always violent and therefore bad? I remember talking to your father about using violence.

Sarah: You are right, it is. Jesus himself showed this to us in his own example. He never used violence but forgave those who were violent towards him. Instead of fighting, we should humble ourselves and be merciful to others too.

We focus on the TV.

Presenter: Yes, you explained it correctly, these are the essentials of just war theory. What do you think of the following statement: Jesus is depicted as a warrior in the Bible.

We focus on Sarah, David and Anna talking

Sarah: That is definitely not true, I cannot imagine Jesus being depicted as a warrior.

David nods his head.

David: Yeah, neither can I.

Anna: But it is true. Jesus is depicted as a warrior in the Book of Revelation.

David looks surprised.

David: What? I thought Jesus was a pacifist.

Anna: No, he is not. Since Jesus is depicted as taking up arms, then it may be fine for us to do that in certain circumstances as well.

Sarah: Which circumstances? Where do we draw the line? I think we cannot do that fairly. So, we should not take risks and not go to war at all.

David: I was thinking something similar. An image of Jesus as warrior doesn't necessarily justify war.

Anna: Yeah, but Jesus also praises the peacemakers. Maybe war can be used as a final means to bring peace as well, don't you think?

Sarah: Mm, that could be true. I am still not sure.

We focus on the TV.

Presenter: Oh, the connection is getting bad.... Let us return to the core question. Should we help in this war?

We focus on Sarah, David and Anna talking

Anna: MM, it is more complicated than I thought, but I still think that as Christians we may approve some armed conflicts. To protect those in need and to prevent further violence is a just cause. Thus, in this case, yes.

Sarah: I still do not know. War or other armed conflicts lead to too much suffering. That can never be described as good. However, the Allies helped liberate Europe in World War II. On the other hand, Jesus seems to be telling us not to take up arms.

David: Well, I believe we cannot say that as Christians, we should always help others even by fighting in an armed conflict. Maybe we should do other things instead you know to alleviate the suffering or to help stop the violence.

We focus on the TV.

Presenter: Yes, what you are saying is all valuable. It is not simple indeed. There are a lot of other questions that you have to think about while talking about this topic. Let's agree that we reached no agreement. But that should not keep us from further thinking and talking about this topic.

We focus on Sarah, David and Anna talking

David: Yeah, maybe we should accept our different opinions for now.

Sarah: Yeah, but do we agree that following Jesus means bringing hope in difficult situations, including potential wars.

Anna: Yeah, I agree with that.



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