

Biblical Theology of the Synoptics

The Coming of the Kingdom

Robert C. Newman

Biblical Theological Seminary



What is Biblical Theology?

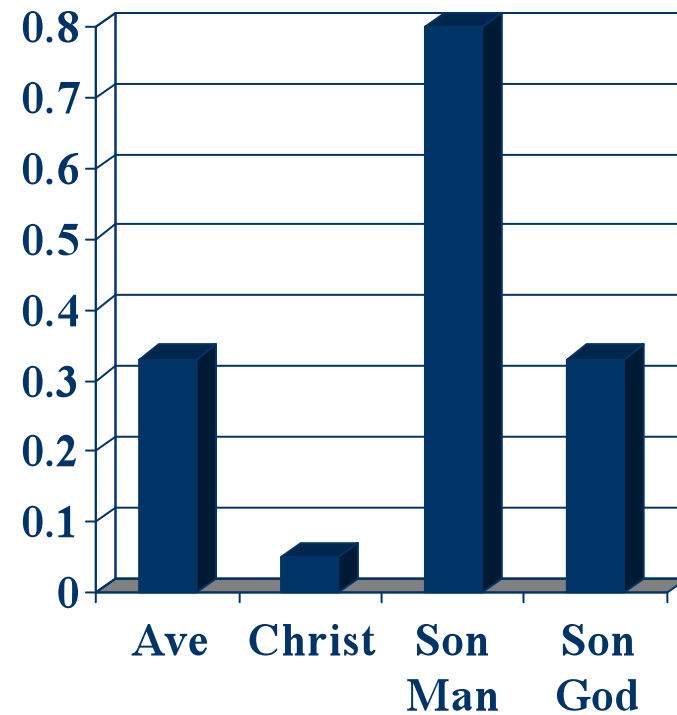
- ◆ Two rather different meanings...
- ◆ In contrast to un-biblical theology:
 - Theology in agreement with the Bible's teachings
 - That is, orthodox theology
- ◆ In contrast to systematic theology:
 - How a part (or all) of Scripture presents theology in its own terms rather than in the standard terms of theology.
 - For example, what terms, pictures, etc., are used by John, or Isaiah, or Paul?
- ◆ This second usage is our concern here, how the Synoptics present their message.

Unifying Themes in the Synoptics

- ◆ Terminology of Synoptics differs from rest of NT, even from John.
- ◆ These differences may give clues to the emphases of the Synoptics relative to the rest of the NT.
- ◆ Consider word statistics for the Synoptics compared with the NT as a whole.
- ◆ The Synoptics make up about 1/3 of the NT, so about .33 of the whole.

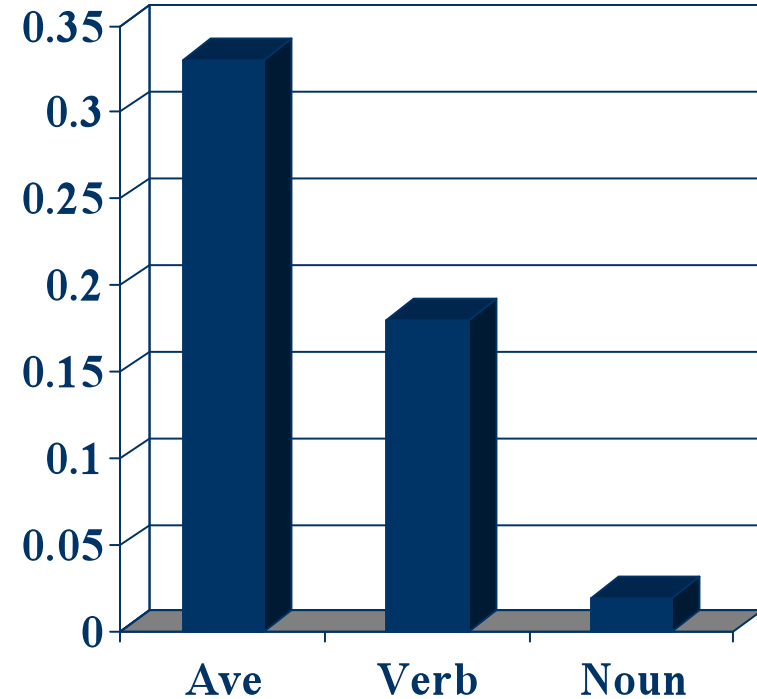
Christology

- ◆ Christ
 - $40/750 = .05$ (low!)
- ◆ Son of Man
 - $70/87 = .80$ (high!)
- ◆ Son of God
 - $26/79 = .33$ (average)



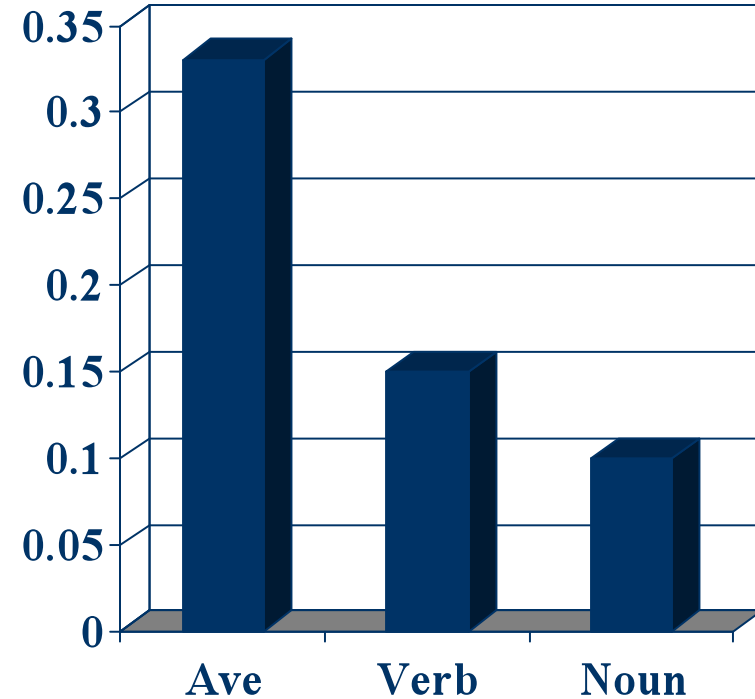
Love

- ◆ Agapao (verb)
 - $23/126 = .18$ (low)
- ◆ Agape (noun)
 - $2/107 = .02$ (very low!)



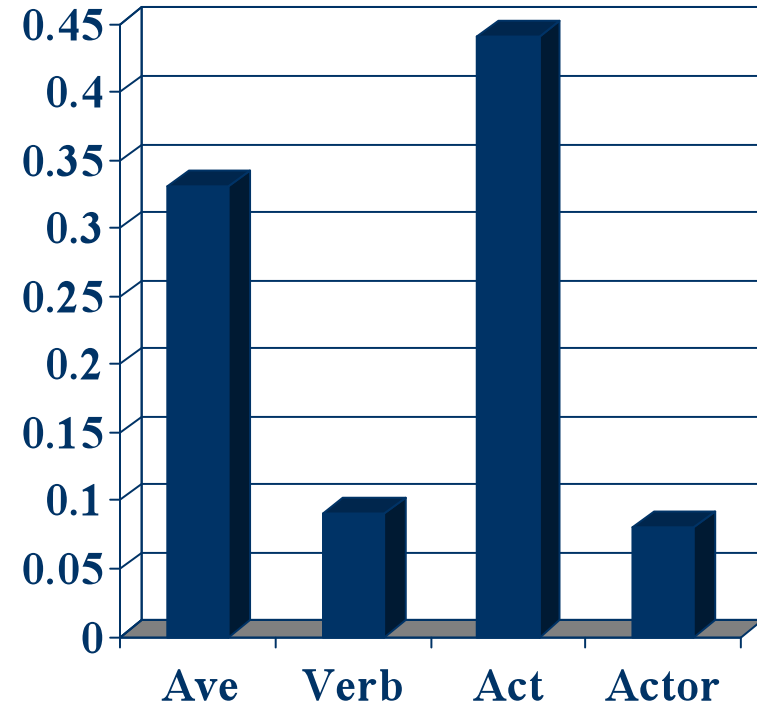
Faith

- ◆ Pisteuo (verb)
"believe"
 - $34/223 = .15$ (low)
- ◆ Pistis (noun) "faith"
 - $24/233 = .10$ (low)



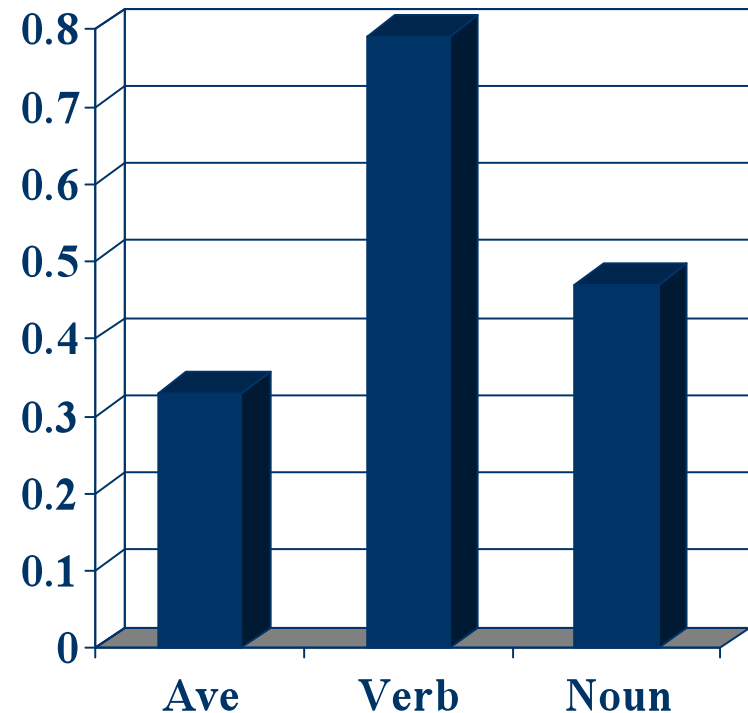
Salvation

- ◆ Sozo (verb) "save"
 - $4/42 = .09$ (low)
- ◆ Soteria (act) "salvation"
 - $45/103 = .44$ (high)
- ◆ Soter (actor) "savior"
 - $2/24 = .08$ (low)



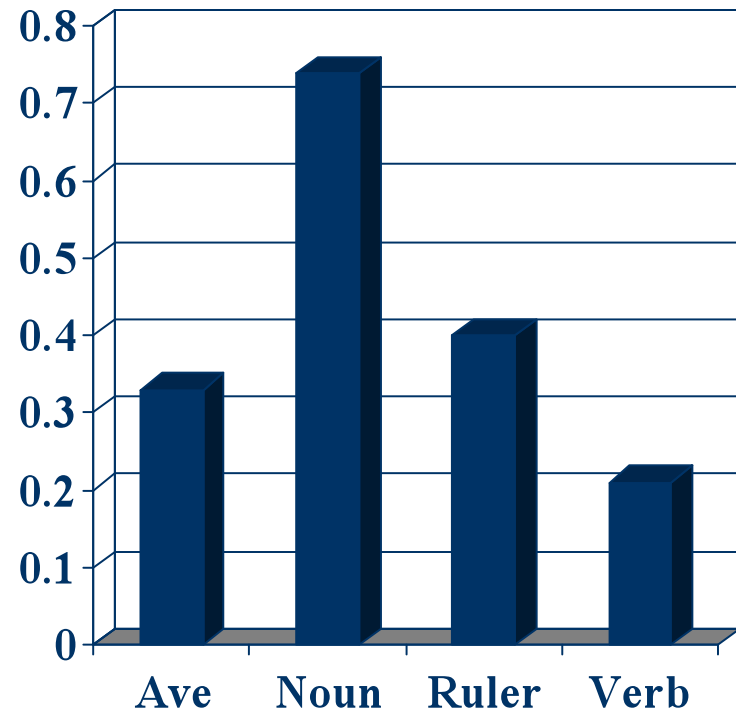
Forgiveness

- ◆ Aphiemi (verb)
"forgive"
 - $114/144 = .79$ (high!)
- ◆ Aphasis (noun)
"forgiveness"
 - $8/17 = .47$ (high)



Kingdom

- ◆ Basileia (noun) "kingdom"
 - $119/160 = .74$ (high!)
- ◆ Basileus (ruler) "king"
 - $44/110 = .4$ (high)
- ◆ Basileuo (verb) "rule/reign"
 - $4/19 = .21$ (low)



Summary on Word Frequency

- ◆ Some Distinctive Terms in Synoptics:
 - Son of Man
 - Forgive
 - Kingdom
- ◆ Herman Ridderbos captures something of this in the title of his biblical theology of the synoptics, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, which we will here sketch.

The Kingdom in the Synoptics

- ◆ 'Kingdom of heaven' occurs 31x
 - All in Matthew
- ◆ 'Kingdom of God' occurs 49x
 - Only 4 in Matthew, rest in Mark or Luke
- ◆ 'Kingdom' also occurs frequently by itself, where context indicates God's kingdom is in view.

The Kingdom Characterized

- ◆ **Theocratic** – rule by God
- ◆ **Dynamic** – rule, not just territory
- ◆ **Messianic** – God rules thru His Messiah
- ◆ **Future** – eschatological kingdom (not yet)
- ◆ **Present** – but also begins at Jesus' 1st coming (already)

The Kingdom as Present

- ◆ Satan is already overcome.
- ◆ Jesus' miraculous power already displayed.
- ◆ The Good News already proclaimed.
- ◆ Jesus' followers already possess the kingdom.
- ◆ Jesus the Messiah is already here.

The Kingdom as Provisional

- ◆ The time of the Evil One continues.
- ◆ Jesus' miracles are merely signs.
- ◆ Jesus speaks in parables.
- ◆ Judgment is delayed.
- ◆ During this delay:
 - Kingdom at work thru Jesus & followers
 - They labor to seek that which is lost.

The Kingdom as Provisional

- ◆ Synoptic Christology has 2 focal points:
 - Son of Man
 - Emphasizes Jesus' kingship; the eschatological kingdom
 - Servant of the Lord
 - Emphasizes Jesus' obedience & suffering; the kingdom as not yet
- ◆ What is relation between Jesus' kingdom & the cross?
 - Only minor outworking of kingdom before cross
 - Cross postpones last judgment

The Gospel of the Kingdom

- ◆ Salvation
 - Remission of sins
 - Antithesis of (rabbinic doctrine of) reward
 - God as Father
- ◆ Commandments
 - What constitutes righteousness
 - All other values lesser than kingdom
 - Our good works mark presence of kingdom

The Kingdom & the Church

- ◆ Kingdom – God's work of salvation
- ◆ Church – God's people
- ◆ Lord's supper
 - Looks back to Jesus' death
 - Looks forward to consummated kingdom
 - Provisional in nature
 - Pictures sacrifice which inaugurates kingdom

The Future Consummation

- ◆ Liberals claim Jesus taught a 1st century return
 - This involves selective use of data
- ◆ Actually 2 themes in Jesus' predictions
 - Passion statements – Isaiah's Suffering Servant
 - Parousia statements – Daniel's Son of Man
 - Disciples don't understand until after resurrection

The Future Consummation

- ◆ End of the Age becomes the goal for the interadvent period.
 - Great task precedes Jesus' return
 - No hint of timespan involved
- ◆ Disciples to discern the times.
 - 2nd coming to be sudden.
 - But signs not excluded.

Jesus' Olivet Discourse

- ◆ Beginning of sorrows
- ◆ Great tribulation
- ◆ Fall of Jerusalem
- ◆ Parousia/Second Coming

Jesus' Time-Limit Statements

- ◆ "this generation shall not pass away until all these things have happened" Matt 24:34
- ◆ "some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" Matt 16:28

Jesus' Time-Limit Statements

- ◆ Ridderbos (I think) is weak here; his view:
 - 'This generation' – certainty without any time indication
 - 'Some standing here' – resurrection
- ◆ My take on these:
 - 'This generation' – will wind up quickly when crucial signs occur
 - 'Some standing here' – transfiguration & eschatological visions of apostles

Synoptic Eschatology

- ◆ Don't be deceived by false messiahs.
- ◆ Signs are:
 - Beginning of sorrows
 - Abomination of desolation
 - Great tribulation
 - Cosmic catastrophes
- ◆ Both Jewish & universal elements
- ◆ Some living at Jesus' time will see him as Son of Man.
- ◆ Don't give up praying.
- ◆ Be watchful.
- ◆ Don't forget the great task!

The End

Is Already!
and Not Yet!