Summary of Course C.9-2: Biblical Themes

This course (consisting of 112 thematic texts, pp. BT1 to BT179) constitutes the in-depth biblical continuation of the series. Whereas the course *Elements of the Philosophy of Religion* (C.8.3) explores the general and comparative philosophy of religion, C.9-2 focuses specifically on the key apocalyptic, pneumatological and cosmological themes of the Old and New Testaments.

1. Apocalyptic Hermeneutics and Sacred History

The course takes as its starting point the principle that the Bible must be read through the lens of an apocalyptic hermeneutic: the uncovering or revelation (*apokalypsis*) of the invisible, occult and divine reality concealed behind the visible surface (the outward appearance) of events.

History on a grand and a small scale: Sacred history encompasses not only great empires (such as the four world empires in Daniel's night visions), but equally the everyday history of families on a smaller scale (as in the Book of Tobit).

Prophecy and mantic practice: Prophecy and the ability to see into hidden realities are based on the axiom of inspiration: only those who are themselves inspired by the divine Spirit can discern God's revelations and test the spirits.

2. The Concept of God, the Divine Council and Cosmic Powers

The biblical concept of God is characterized by a transcendent, omnipresent and omniscient Creator who exercises responsible sovereignty over the cosmos (including *Psalm 139* and *Wisdom 11–18*).

God's Divine Council: God does not govern the universe as an inert, solitary being, but makes use of a divine council of angels and sons of God (*elohim* or *numina*), to whom he delegates a considerable degree of autonomy.

The Elements of This World (*stoicheia tou kosmou*): Paul uses this term to refer to the cosmic spirits, dominions, principalities and angelic powers that govern secular world systems and earthly authorities. These powers display a "harmony of opposites", encompassing both good and evil.

Satan as the Prince of This World: Satan acts as the accuser and tempter who claims dominion over the unscrupulous kingdoms of the earth and drives humanity towards apostasy.

3. Anthropology, Cosmology and the Realm of the Dead (Sheol)

The biblical understanding of humanity is rooted in creation from the dust of the earth, brought to life by the divine breath of life (*ruah*).

The three-tier structure: The cosmological order comprises three levels: the heavenly realms, the inhabited earth (the "land of the living") and the subterranean realm of the dead (*Sheol* or *Hades*).

Existence in Sheol: Those who become alienated from God and the Decalogue enter Sheol after biological death. There, the dead lead a lifeless existence as powerless shades (*rephaim*), cut off from God's life-giving power. Sheol is characterized as an insatiable bloodsucker (*aluka*).

The soul-body: In addition to the biological body, human beings possess a subtle, non-material soul-body. Angels and apparitional spirits can temporarily materialise this soul-body.

4. Ethics, the Decalogue, Flesh versus Spirit, and Covenants

The Decalogue as a Cosmic and Ethical Order

The Ten Commandments (the Decalogue) constitute the absolute cosmic and ethical norm governing human conduct. Violation of the Decalogue (through such acts as idolatry, sacrilege, murder, sexual immorality and usury) inevitably leads to the backlash of the curse and destruction in Sheol.

Flesh (sarx) versus Spirit (pneuma)

Following *Genesis 6:3*, Paul places the fundamental opposition between the following at the center of his teaching:

The Flesh: A purely biological existence, or an existence alienated from God and the Decalogue, surrendered to impulses, magic, hatred and idolatry.

The Spirit: The divine, supernatural life-giving power that produces the fruits of love, peace, patience and eternal life.

Freedom and Generational Transmission (toledot)

Radical freedom: Human beings possess the freedom to choose between life (Spirit) and death (Flesh), yet remain subject to the inescapable law of sowing and reaping.

Toledot (progeny): The transmission of moral, psychological and spiritual characteristics—including the continuing effects of original sin and the blessing passed down through the family line—takes place through the *toledot* (genealogical history).

Universal covenants: In addition to the particular Mosaic covenant, the Bible recognizes the Noahic covenant with "all flesh" (sealed by the rainbow) and the Everlasting Covenant with all the inhabitants of the earth, to which the conscience of the Gentiles bears witness (*Isaiah 24; Romans 2*).

5. Christology: Benefactor, Suffering Servant and Risen Lord

Jesus fulfils and transcends the various Old Testament typologies:

The Son of Man: The exalted human figure in *Daniel 7*, to whom the Ancient of Days grants all authority and the judgment of the world.

The Servant of the Lord (*Ebed Yahweh*): The suffering and glorified servant of *Isaiah 53*, who takes upon himself the sins of the multitude and brings healing through his wounds.

Healer and Exorcist: Jesus heals the sick by first forgiving their sins and breaks satanic fascination and bondage without resorting to magical means or Beelzebul.

The Sign of Jonah and the Harrowing of Hell: Jesus' *exodos* (departure) encompasses his death on the cross, his three-day stay in the heart of the earth and his descent into Sheol (*1 Peter 3:18–20*), where he proclaims the Good News of liberation to the spirits held in bondage.

Exaltation to Kurios: Through his resurrection, Jesus enters the heavenly sanctuary as the glorified *Kurios* (Lord), subjecting all angels, dominions, powers and forces to himself.

6. Pneumatology, Pentecost and the Holy Trinity

The Restoration of Babel

The confusion of languages at Babel—the pagan "gate of the gods", where human pride was scattered—finds its divine restoration in the miracle of

tongues at Pentecost. Through the outpourings of the Spirit in Jerusalem and in Caesarea (at the house of the Gentile Cornelius), God pours out his Spirit upon “all flesh”, without partiality.

Inspired Speech and Charismata

The Holy Spirit acts as the Advocate (*Paraclete*), guiding believers into all truth, reminding them of Jesus’ words and granting them irresistible speech and wisdom in situations of persecution.

The Holy Trinity

The Johannine ministry reveals the intimate interaction within the Holy Trinity: the Son speaks and acts in complete obedience to the Father, while the Holy Spirit is sent by the Son from the Father to complete and strengthen the work of redemption in the hearts of believers.

Comparison with Course C.8.3

Whereas C.8.3, *Elements of the Philosophy of Religion*, analyzed ancient and archaic forms of religion (such as animism, ancestor worship, fetishism and pagan magic) from a phenomenological perspective, C.9-2, *Biblical Themes*, shows how Scripture acknowledges, purifies and elevates these pagan categories within the unique biblical history of salvation and the theology of the Trinity.