

# THE FATHERS ON THE FUTURE

A 2nd-Century Eschatology for the  
21st-Century Church

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## Go Deeper Excursus 11

### The Coming Kingdom in the Old Testament: Detailed Analysis of Key Passages

In the following lengthy excursus, I provide a comprehensive survey of passages from the major and minor prophets related to the expectation of the coming kingdom. A summary of this broad exposition appears in chapter 6 of *The Fathers on the Future*, “The Collage of the Coming Kingdom in the Old Testament.” The core of the language and imagery is found in the prophet Isaiah, and later prophets complement and supplement this core.

**Isaiah 2:1–4.** Already in the opening chapter of Isaiah, in which “Judah and Jerusalem” (Isa 1:1) are castigated for their wickedness, unfaithfulness, and injustice and warned of severe judgment (1:2–24), God flashes a glimpse of restoration after purification: “I will turn my hand against you; I will smelt away your dross as with lye and remove all your alloy. And I will restore your judges as at the first and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed by justice, and those in her who repent, by righteousness” (Isa 1:25–27). Key terms and images, which will be repeated and expanded, begin to emerge: God will “restore” (שוב) them (Isa 1:26); they will be a city of righteousness (צדק) and faithfulness (אמן) (1:26). Zion will be “redeemed by justice” (פדה) when they “repent” (שוב) (1:27). Thus, as the people of Zion return (שוב) to God in righteousness—and are purified—God returns (שוב) to them in restoration.

The subject of these vision and prophecies is explicitly limited to “Judah and Jerusalem.” In fact, prior to any presentation of poetic imagery, the title informs the reader, “The vision of Isaiah son of Amoz, which he saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem (על־יהודה וירושלם)” (Isa 1:1). The burden of proof, then, rests on an interpreter who wants to apply these prophecies to people other than those explicitly mentioned. Is it possible that “Judah” and “Jerusalem” are allegorical—symbols for, say, the church or all believers? Certainly, anything is linguistically possible, but Isaiah 1:1 and many of the introductions to the individual visions are intended to inform the reader what

the figurative visions are “concerning” or “about” (על) (Isa 1:1, 2:1, etc.), which must govern the scope and the referent of the prophet’s subsequent discourse.

The first major prophecy concerning the coming era of restoration in Isaiah 2:1–5 is itself couched in an extended context of destruction (Isa 1:2–31; 2:6–4:1). It thus shines its light of future hope in the midst of a threat of dark judgment. Again, Isaiah introduces this as a prophecy “concerning Judah and Jerusalem (על־יהודה וירושלם)” (Isa 2:1). The fulfillment of the prophecy is cast forward to “days to come (באחרית הימים)” (2:2). This phrase alone does not determine whether the prophecy points to a post-exilic fulfillment or a distant, eschatological era,<sup>1</sup> though Smith notes that the phrase is “filled with eschatological significance” and suggests that Isaiah is “talking about the last events in human history, when the kingdom of God would begin.”<sup>2</sup> Isaiah and his original audience would certainly have understood the phrase to cast the following description sometime into the future—a time beyond their present evil days, preceded by purification and restoration.

What will such “latter days” entail? Most strikingly, Jerusalem—where “the mountain of the Lord’s house” is situated (Isa 2:2), will enjoy a place of exalted preeminence in the world both politically and spiritually. Webb understands the “mountain of the Lord” as “a symbol of the coming kingdom of God, in which a purified and restored Zion is destined to play a crucial role.”<sup>3</sup> Though Jerusalem and therefore Judah will have a prominent place, “all the nations (כל־הגוים)” and “many peoples (עמים רבים)” will stream to it (Isa 2:2–3). So, from the start the scope of Isaiah’s prophecies of eschatological restoration include not only Judah and Jerusalem but all nations of the world—the gentiles. These will “go up” to the house of the Lord to learn God’s ways and to walk in his paths (2:3). That is, Israel’s God will be acknowledged and served by the whole world. Jerusalem, as the center of God’s universal rule, will be the source of instruction for all peoples. It is interesting that although the “house of the God of Jacob” is mentioned (2:3), the gentiles are not coming to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices but to receive instruction and hear the word of the Lord.

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<sup>1</sup> See Willem A. M. Beukin, *Jesaja 1–12*, Herders Theologischer Kommentar zum Alten Testament (Freiburg: Herders, 2003), 90.

<sup>2</sup> Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, The New American Commentary, vol 15A, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: B&H, 2007), 129, 129n23. Sweeney argues that the phrase באחרית הימים “refers merely to a time in the future, not to the eschatological end of time” (Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39 with an Introduction to Prophetic Literature*, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, vol. 16 [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996], 99). Such a minimalist approach that rules out an eschatological meaning is unwarranted by the text itself. The phrase simply casts the described events into an undetermined future well beyond that of the present audience, which could indicate an ultimate eschatological fulfillment (Gen 49:1; Num 24:14; Jer 48:47; Ezek 38:16; Hos 3:5; Dan 10:14). On the other hand, Oswalt suggests that, based on the context, “it cannot be said that this passage can only refer to the millennial age. In a more proximate sense it can relate to the Church age when the nations stream to Zion to learn the ways of her God through his incarnation in Christ. To be sure, we await Christ’s second coming for the complete fulfillment of this promise, but the partial fulfillment began at Pentecost” (John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986], 116–117). While this may be the case (especially in light of a ‘both/and’ approach to prophecy), Isaiah and his original audience would only have known that the events will take place sometime in the unknown future.

<sup>3</sup> Barry G. Webb, *The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles’ Wings*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1996), 45–46.

God himself will be the source of justice not only for Israel and Judah but for all the world (Isa 2:4). As a result, warfare will give way to peace and prosperity, symbolized by the famous words, “they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more” (Isa 2:4). That such a condition has never prevailed in the world needs no evidence.<sup>4</sup> That a spiritualizing of the promise to find its fulfillment among followers of Christ in the church age neglects the historical fact that Christians, riddled with strife and schism, have seldom been at peace even among themselves. Though the ideals of peace and harmony should nevertheless be sought in the present age by those who follow the God of Jacob, the ultimate fulfillment of this passage still awaits “days to come” (Isa 2:1).

**Isaiah 4:2–6.** The next snapshot of the days of restoration and renewal follows a description of judgments on Judah and Jerusalem (Isa 2–3), repeatedly using the phrase “in that day” (ביום ההוא) (2:11; 20; 3:7, 18) as a reference to the well-known period of judgment known as the “Day of the Lord.”<sup>5</sup> Yet just as the future judgment upon Israel is sure “in that day,” so also is the future restoration. Isaiah 4:2 says that at that time “the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious” and “the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel.” The “branch” (צמח) can refer to vegetation (Isa 61:11), in which case the referent would be a future flourishing of nature. But the term also has a messianic referent in Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15 and in Zechariah 3:8; 6:12. Chisholm takes the referent as “literal crops or vegetation,” noting that, “the prophets frequently included this theme in their visions of the future age.”<sup>6</sup> Smith notes that, “the two clauses in 4:2 refer to two parallel acts of God that will transform Zion. God will (a) cause his messianic Branch to spring forth, and also (b) bring marvelous fertility to the produce of the field.”<sup>7</sup>

This passage introduces the theme of the remnant—“the survivors of Israel”—who will constitute the seeds of the restoration of the nation that will flourish in the coming age. Yet these are not merely physical survivors; they are “called holy” and “recorded for life in Jerusalem” (Isa 4:3), because they had been cleansed “by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning” (4:4). That

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<sup>4</sup> It is common, even among early premillennialists, to apply this language figuratively to the church. Thus, quoting Isaiah 2:3–4, Justin Martyr writes, “That this prophecy, too, was verified you can readily believe, for twelve illiterate men, unskilled in the art of speaking, went out from Jerusalem into the world, and by the power of God they announced to the men of every nation that they were sent by Christ to teach everyone the word of God; and we, who once killed one another, [now] not only do not wage war against our enemies, but, in order to avoid lying or deceiving our examiners, we even meet death cheerfully, confessing Christ” (*1 Apol.* 39 [Falls]; cf. similar interpretation in Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.34.4). Yet applying such prophecy spiritually to the church does not necessarily mean the same author rejected a literal fulfillment in the future (see Irenaeus, *Epid.* 61).

<sup>5</sup> The Day of the Lord will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 15 and Go Deeper Excursus 22.

<sup>6</sup> See Robert B. Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 21. Passages he includes are Isa 30:23–24; 32:20; Jer 31:12; Ezek 34:26–29; and Amos 9:13–14.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 156. Even following Williamson’s translation, “On that day the vegetation of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious,” the passage itself points to the same kinds of conditions that will prevail during the future messianic age. See H. G. M. Williamson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 1–27*, vol. 1, *Commentary on Isaiah 1–5*, The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (New York: T&T Clark, 2006), 301.

is, the judgments of the coming Day of the Lord described already in Isaiah 1–3 give way to a repentant, purified, and ultimately, restored nation of saints. Imagery drawn from the pillar of fire and smoke in the Exodus (Exod 13:21–22) represents God’s enduring protection and presence in Zion. Whatever we make of the vivid symbolism of the “canopy” over “all the glory” (Isa 4:5), the significance of the cluster of images is clear: “The overshadowing fiery cloud of the divine presence, the bridal canopy, will be *shelter...shade...refuge...hiding-place*. The doubling of words is deliberate, conveying the idea of ‘every possible protection’”<sup>8</sup> As Gowan puts it, “It is thus the certain, never failing, all-sufficient, caring, and protecting presence of God ‘in that day’ which this text promises. Its central concern is the future existence of a holy people enjoying the presence of God in their midst.”<sup>9</sup>

**Isaiah 9:1–7.** This beautiful song of deliverance and restoration in the messianic age bursts out in joyous strains in the midst of a description of Israel in a desperate condition: “They will see only distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish, and they will be thrust into thick darkness” (Isa 8:22). With the opening lines of Isaiah 9, that darkness is driven out by glorious light: “But there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish” (Isa 9:1).<sup>10</sup> The “former time” (בַּעַת הָרִאשׁוֹן) of darkness is contrasted with the “latter” (הָאַחֲרֵי) time in which even the northern regions of Zebulun and Naphtali—“Galilee of the nations”—will be made glorious.<sup>11</sup> And if such distant regions—so susceptible to pollution by idolatry and invasion by foreign powers—will be transformed from darkness to light, how much more will Jerusalem, Judah, and the rest of the nation be purified and restored to glory!

In verse 2, “the actual poetic royal birth announcement begins,”<sup>12</sup> climaxing in an explicit reference to the birth and eternal reign of the Davidic king (Isa 9:6–7). In fact, it is the advent and reign of the one named “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (9:6) that the conditions described in 9:2–5 are realized. Those who had formerly stumbled in darkness (cf. 8:21–22) now see a “great light” (אֹר גָּדוֹל). The people who had formerly dwelt in darkness God will “multiply” (הִרְבִּית) and “increase” (הִגְדִּיל), resulting in jubilation and exultation (9:3). This runs parallel to the endless “increase” (לְמַרְבֵּה) of the coming king’s dominion and peace. The notion of “increase without end” (לְמַרְבֵּה...אֵין־קֵץ) implies a progressive expansion of

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<sup>8</sup> J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 20 (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1999), 69.

<sup>9</sup> Donald E. Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2000), 13.

<sup>10</sup> Though this is the first verse in the English translation, in the Hebrew Masoretic text, Isa 9:1 is actually Isa 8:23, highlighting the contrast between Israel’s darkness, gloom, and anguish in Isaiah’s day (8:22) with the future light, joy, and prosperity in the “latter time” (9:1).

<sup>11</sup> On the verb tenses used, Oswalt notes, “All these events are manifestly in the future from the prophet’s point of view, yet the verbs are all in the perfect tense. Apparently, these are prophetic perfects. . . . In the uncertainty of his own milieu he nonetheless can look at a future moment and describe its events with the certainty of completed actions” (Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 242–43).

<sup>12</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 238.

the Davidic king's domain and growth of the kingdom forever. The reign may begin on "the throne of David" in Jerusalem (9:7), but its "peace" (שלום) will eventually fill the whole earth.

With this reign, no more will Israel experience oppression from its enemies, who will be soundly defeated in battle (9:4–5). In fact, Isaiah secures the promised deliverance on the future timeline of this real world by recalling the literal historical deliverance "on the day of Midian" (cf. Judg 7:19–25; 8:10–21). Oswalt notes, "But is this prophetic dream of freedom just a dream? Or is there reason to believe that such a thing might be? With these few words Isaiah calls to mind historic events which would give credence to the eschatological hope."<sup>13</sup> This theme of warfare replaced by perfect peace echoes the language of swords and spears fashioned into plowshares and pruning hooks in Isaiah 2:4. And this Davidic king will rule his kingdom "with justice (משפט) and with righteousness (צדקה)" (9:7; cf. Isa 1:26).

By casting this vision of light, joy, peace, prosperity, justice, and righteousness into the "latter time" (9:1) and connecting it with the hoped-for Davidic king who will reign forever over all the earth (9:7; cf. 2 Sam 7:16), Isaiah seems to place the fulfillment of this prophecy in the future.<sup>14</sup> With this song of the Davidic king, then, the collage and cluster of images related to the coming kingdom include: (1) centrality of Zion as the source of instruction and peace throughout the world (Isa 2:1–4), and (2) the establishment of protection, provision, and the presence of God through the establishment of the "branch of the Lord" (4:2–6). This passage also points to the primary means and instrument by which this unending peace, justice, and righteousness is to be established: the ever-increasing dominion of the messianic king, the son of David, reigning throughout the earth (9:1–7).

**Isaiah 11:1–12:6.** Briley sums up the situation regarding the picture of the coming kingdom well: "Glimpses of hope appear in 2:1–4; 4:2–6; and more clearly in 9:1–7, even though the bulk of Isaiah 1–12 focuses on Judah's sin and the devastating consequences which must ensue. The messianic figure introduced in 9:6–7, however, whose reign is the key to a better future, emerges more clearly in 11:1–16. Because of the joy his rule will inspire, the entire unit is crowned with a hymn of praise in 12:1–6 to Yahweh for the salvation he alone can produce."<sup>15</sup>

The theme of a "remnant" (שאר) returning after exile is already introduced in 10:20–22, likely with a more immediate referent to those who will one day return from captivity.<sup>16</sup> Yet when the

<sup>13</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 244.

<sup>14</sup> Smith writes, "Such strong statements imply that Isaiah is talking about the final eschatological ruler.... These descriptive parameters, titles, time frame, and interlinking references to the Davidic promises rule out any attempt to identify this son with Ahaz, Hezekiah, or Josiah." (Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 242). Over a century ago, Gray noted "Many have held that the birth is historic, and that the poet refers in particular to the birth of Hezekiah; but this view is now generally and rightly abandoned" (George Buchanan Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah, I–XXXIX*, International Critical Commentary [New York: Scribner's, 1912], 165–166). Cf. Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 248: "It becomes clear that Isaiah has an eschatological figure in mind. This person will not be a king among kings in Israel. Rather, he will be the final king, the king to end all kings."

<sup>15</sup> Terry R. Briley, *Isaiah*, vol. 1, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College, 2000), 155.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 262.

“remnant” is mentioned again in Isaiah 11:11, the scope and scale of the return points to an ultimate restoration—“On that day the Lord will again raise his hand to recover the remnant (שאר) that is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.” The phrase “in that day” (ביום ההוא) in 11:10, 11; 12:1, 3 refers back to the lyrical description of conditions in Isaiah 11:1–9, which is certainly messianic.<sup>17</sup> Verses 1–5 present a vivid picture of the coming king “from the stump of Jesse,” David’s father (11:1), whom the Spirit of the Lord will endow with all the virtues necessary for a rule of perfect justice, righteousness, equity, faithfulness, and even retribution (11:1–5). These themes have already been established as part of the collage of images related to the coming kingdom in previous passages in Isaiah 2, 4, and 9. Here, as already suggested with reference to the “branch” in 4:2 and expressed directly in 9:6–7, the conditions of the coming kingdom are inextricably linked to the Davidic king (11:1–5). Gowan sum up well the picture of the shoot from the stump of Jesse in Isaiah 11: “His nature and work are thus no more than would be expected of the ideal king, and the message of the prophecy, in our way of putting it, is that the day is coming when God will see to it that his people have good government.”<sup>18</sup>

Motyer rightly identifies Edenic language in the description of the cosmic changes in the world at the time of the coming kingdom: “In verses 6–9 the Edenic element in Isaiah’s thought appears again (cf. 2:4). The dawning light of a new world was explained by the birth of the King in 9:1–7; here the rule of the King produces a new order.”<sup>19</sup> And Webb concurs: “The effect of his rule will be universal peace (6–9), an ideal described here in symbolic language which recalls the paradise of Eden. It is a picture of the whole creation put back into joint.”<sup>20</sup> Stylized poetic imagery presents the harmony of nature itself in famous terms:

The wolf shall live with the lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; the calf and the lion will feed together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. (11:6–9)

In keeping with our approach to the language and imagery of poetic prophecy, the imagery here is figurative, but the referents of the figures are found in a *real* messianic era in this world. Oswalt notes, “In this approach one concludes that an extended figure of speech is being used to make a single, overarching point, namely, that in the Messiah’s reign the fears associated with insecurity, danger, and evil will be removed, not only for the individual but for the world as well

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<sup>17</sup> Gray, *Isaiah I–XXXIX*, 213.

<sup>18</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 35.

<sup>19</sup> Motyer, *Isaiah*, 118.

<sup>20</sup> Webb, *Message of Isaiah*, 75.

(Rom. 8:19–21).<sup>21</sup> This approach does not rule out a more literal realization of these promises manifested in a restoration of the harmony of the created realm, as “there seems no reason to doubt that this is to be understood literally. The whole subject raises fascinating biological and ecological questions beyond the scope of this commentary to discuss. We know something of the effects of the fall on human beings and on plant life (Ge 3:17–19); and we cannot doubt that animal life, bound with the human race and the plants in the unity of a worldwide ecosystem, must have been affected also.”<sup>22</sup> Chisholm notes, “This startling vision may be purely figurative, with the predators symbolizing human oppressors and the prey their helpless victims (see vv. 4–5), but it is possible that it describes a literal change that mirrors the transformation in human society, where the categories ‘oppressor’ and ‘oppressed’ are eliminated.”<sup>23</sup>

After explaining that when Adam transgressed, “the sin in which man was concerned brought even upon” the animals, Theophilus of Antioch (second century) anticipated a great eschatological reversal: “When, therefore, man again shall have made his way back to his natural condition, and no longer does evil, those also shall be restored to their original gentleness” (*Autol.* 2.17 [ANF 2]). We catch glimpses here of Isaiah’s millennial imagery in Isaiah 11 and 65, which portrays a new harmony between man and beasts and even among beasts themselves.

With regard to the language of Isaiah 11:6, Irenaeus of Lyons understands it to have both a literal, future interpretation as well as a spiritual, moral application for the church today, based on that future interpretation. He first assigns them a literal fulfillment in the time of the coming kingdom, then states:

I am quite aware that some persons endeavour to refer these words to the case of savage men, both of different nations and various habits, who come to believe, and when they have believed, act in harmony with the righteous. But although this is [true] now with regard to some men coming from various nations to the harmony of the faith, nevertheless in the resurrection of the just [the words shall also apply] to those animals mentioned. For God is rich in all things. And it is right that when the creation is restored, all the animals should obey and be in subjection to man, and revert to the food originally given by God (for they had been originally subjected in obedience to Adam), that is, the productions of the earth. But some other occasion, and not the present, is [to be sought] for showing that the lion shall [then] feed on straw. And this indicates the large size and rich quality of the fruits. For if that animal, the lion, feeds upon straw [at that period], of what a quality must the wheat itself be whose straw shall serve as suitable food for lions? (*Haer.* 5.33.4)<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 283.

<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey W. Grogan, “Isaiah,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Proverbs–Isaiah*, rev. ed., ed. Tremper Longman III, Garland David E., vol. 6 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 545.

<sup>23</sup> Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets*, 45.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. *Epid.* 61: “But concerning the concord and peace of the animals of different species, who [are] opposed by nature and enemies of one another, the elders say that it will truly be so at the advent of Christ, when He is going to

In this picture, we see young children being born at the time of the coming kingdom, indicated by reference to the “nursing child” and “weaned child” (Isa 11:8). At least in the minds of the original readers, they would have naturally understood the perfect reign of the perfect king in a perfect world to include an environment friendly toward the blessing of offspring. Ultimately, though, “the key to this transformed, renewed creation is *the knowledge of the Lord*.”<sup>25</sup>

The language and imagery of Isaiah 11:12–16 pictures both the regathering of God’s people from the four corners of the earth (11:12) as well as the spreading of the Messiah’s rule through unstoppable victory.<sup>26</sup> Though in its context it looks forward to a literal expansion of the coming messianic kingdom throughout the world, it may also be understood as having application spiritually to the present form of the kingdom, in which the advance of the gospel through the Church is a sign and type of the future kingdom. Isaiah 12:1–6, then, presents a song of praise and thanksgiving in response to the establishment of the future messianic kingdom.

**Isaiah 14:1–2; 16:4–5; 19:16–25.** The theme of restoration of the nation of Israel is again visited briefly in 14:1–2, “a vision of a new world in which co-operation has replaced animosity.”<sup>27</sup> The hermeneutical approach of reading these prophetic passages as “figures” rather than “photos” helps us navigate the puzzling—if not disturbing—image of Israel possessing the gentiles “as male and female slaves in the Lord’s land,” pictured as the spoils of victory: “They will take captive those who were their captors and rule over those who oppressed them” (14:2; cf. Isa 61:5–6). Smith indicates the general sense of the passage: “These promises about foreigners being servants should not be misunderstood as a sign of revenge or a form of oppressive Jewish nationalism. The text describes a reversal of roles for Israel, not an evil oppressive enslavement of innocent foreign people.”<sup>28</sup> Reading all the restoration passages together as pointing to a glorious future messianic age rules out a literal enslavement of foreigners in the Messiah’s kingdom. After all, the nations will come to Jerusalem for instruction (Isa 2:3); the Davidic king will rule with justice and righteousness (9:7), not only for Israel but for the nations as well (42:1); he will judge with equity (11:4). Rather, the message of Isaiah 14:2 is that “the tables will be turned.”<sup>29</sup>

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reign over all. For this makes known, in a figurative manner, [how] men of different races and dissimilar customs are gathered in one place in a peaceful concord by the name of Christ.”

<sup>25</sup> Motyer, *Isaiah*, 119.

<sup>26</sup> In Matthew 24:31 and Mark 13:27, Jesus refers back to this and related passages of summoning the dispersed of Israel back to the land at the end of the future “tribulation.” See Motyer, *Isaiah*, 120.

<sup>27</sup> Motyer, *Isaiah*, 132–133.

<sup>28</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 307.

<sup>29</sup> Gray, *Isaiah I–XXXIX*, 246. Oswalt writes, “The language in which this reversal is stated has been troublesome to many Christian commentators. They have seen the idea of reducing Gentiles to slaves as being an unworthy sentiment. Thus, older commentators (but also Young) have tended to spiritualize the passage, saying that it referred to the Church and its dominion over all the earth. More recent scholars generally dismiss it as an unfortunate expression of late Jewish nationalism. But it is not necessary to take either position. This language can be taken as a figurative expression of the prophet’s inspired conviction that the present relationship between Israel and the nations would not always obtain” (Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 313)



The picture of the restoration of Israel and its centrality—in fact, preeminence—in the politics of the nations is a theme already introduced in Isaiah 2:1–4; 4:2–6; 9:1–7 and 11:1–12:6. And though the prophecy of Isaiah 14:1–2 is just a snapshot of these themes, “later prophecies will expand on these eschatological hopes (45:14–17; 49:22–23; 60:1–8; 61:5–7; 66:20).”<sup>30</sup> Oswalt notes, “These few verses contain the message of chs. 40–66 in a nutshell. They leap across the intervening ideas and events and remind the reader again (as in 2:1–4 and 4:2–6) of God’s ultimate purpose of blessing.”<sup>31</sup>

Couched in the context of a prophecy concerning Moab, Isaiah 16:4–5 anticipates a time when oppression and destruction have ceased (16:4), specifically when “a throne shall be established in steadfast love in the tent of David, and on it shall sit in faithfulness a ruler who seeks justice and is swift to do what is right” (16:5). The hope-oriented imagery, Webb notes, “has a messianic ring to it, and what the Moabites do here anticipates what people of all nations will finally do, as foreseen in 2:2–4.”<sup>32</sup> The turn of fortunes between Israel and the nations, resulting in the rule of God extended beyond a restored Israel—even over erstwhile enemies of God and his people—is seen in the vivid language of the conversion of Egypt and their submission to the Lord (Isa 19:16–25). The phrase “on that day” (ביום ההוא), repeated six times in verses 16–25, push the ultimate realization of these conditions to the future kingdom (cf. Isa 2:2–4). Thus, with Isaiah 14:1–2; 16:3–4; and 19:16–25, we see language and imagery calling back to previous passages of restoration and redemption of Israel and reconciliation between Israel and the nations (and even between the nations and God). All these images are connected to a future messianic kingdom.

**Isaiah 25:6–9.** Though the imagery of the coming kingdom in Isaiah 25:6–9 begins “on this mountain” (בהר הזה), its scope expands rapidly to include blessing “for all people” (לכל־העמים) (25:6). The scale of the blessing itself expands from figurative language of abundant prosperity—“a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear” (25:6)—to the destruction of death itself (25:7–8). When God will “swallow up death forever,” then “the Lord God will wipe away the tears from all faces” (25:8). Brueggemann notes, “The poet speaks about nothing less than radical, complete transformation.”<sup>33</sup> Though not explicit in this particular passage, reading all the kingdom oracles<sup>34</sup> together make it likely that the prophecy implies not only the banishment of the causes of death (as in Isa 2:4, 11:6–9), but the reversal of the curse of death through bodily resurrection.<sup>35</sup> It is extremely tempting to see the

<sup>30</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, 307.

<sup>31</sup> Oswalt, *Isaiah 1–39*, 312.

<sup>32</sup> Webb, *Message of Isaiah*, 88.

<sup>33</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, Westminster Bible Companion, ed. Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 200.

<sup>34</sup> I have adopted (and likely adapted) the term “kingdom oracles” with reference to poetic descriptions of the coming kingdom from the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*: “The blending together of eschatological oracles of judgment and salvation oracles may well be designated ‘kingdom oracles,’ for the judgment serves to introduce earth’s final age of peace and prosperity” (Ryken, et al, eds., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery*, 669).

<sup>35</sup> Grogan, “Isaiah,” 628.

image of swallowing up death on “this mountain” as a reference to the death and resurrection of Christ—and it may have a secondary application to that saving event—but Paul himself in 1 Corinthians 15:54 applies the passage explicitly to the future resurrection of the body. In any case, in response to this salvation unparalleled in the history of redemption, the recipients of the blessing will burst out in jubilation (25:9).

This passage reasserts themes already introduced in previous kingdom oracles; but it also introduces something new—the ultimate banishing of death and sorrow itself. Yet the prophecy does not forsake the earthly. It does not exchange the kingdom in this world centered in Jerusalem for a heavenly, spiritual kingdom in the afterlife or a moral, ethical kingdom in one’s personal life or the life of the believing community. The restoration of Israel, blessing of the nations, and swallowing up of death are all understood as concurring during the same period. Sweeney writes, “Although the banquet is held for the nations, the defeat of death is clearly associated with the removal of the shame of YHWH’s people (v. 8). Consequently, the restoration of Israel is a central element to YHWH’s assumption of kingship in the world.”<sup>36</sup>

**Isaiah 26:1–27:13.** These images of the coming kingdom are part of a song that will be sung in the land of Judah in light of the deliverance, restoration, and banishment of death and sorrow described in Isaiah 25. The song calls for people to trust in the Lord because of his powerful judgments against the proud (26:1–6). It praises God for his righteousness judgments, which vindicates the righteous and ultimately consumes the wicked (26:7–11). The song then expresses confidence in God’s provision of peace, rescuing them from their oppressors, who have been brought low in destruction (26:12–14).

Then begins an image of restoration: “But you have increased (יִסַּד) the nation, O Lord; you have increased the nation; you are glorified; you have enlarged (קָרַר) all the borders of the land” (Isa 26:15). The idea of progressive growth of the nation, namely enlarging the borders, is a theme already introduced in Isaiah’s kingdom oracles (Isa 9:3, 7).<sup>37</sup> Whereas the concept of resurrection may have been only implied with the swallowing up of death in 25:8, Isaiah 26:19 makes it explicit.<sup>38</sup> Interestingly, Irenaeus assigns the resurrection of the dead described in Isaiah 26:19 as referring at least in part to Christ’s first coming, when he raised some people from the dead during his earthly ministry (*Haer.* 4.33.11). However, consistent with his both/and approach to such prophecies, he also uses Isaiah 26:19 in reference to the ultimate bodily resurrection when God will confer immortality upon the dead (*Haer.* 5.15.1; 5.34.1).

The song concludes with a call for people to hide for a short period in the inner-most parts of a home until God’s wrath against the inhabitants of the earth and against the writhing serpent, Leviathan, itself has passed by (26:20–27:1). The repetition of the phrase “on that day” (Isa 27:1, 2,

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<sup>36</sup> Sweeney, *Isaiah 1–39*, 337.

<sup>37</sup> Grogan, “Isaiah,” 635.

<sup>38</sup> Even if one reads this as a metaphor for national restoration in terms of resurrection, the fact remains that the author and audience had to have had some kind of concept of bodily resurrection to employ as a metaphor.

12, 13) hold chapters 26 and 27 together, suggesting the entire sustained oracle pertains to the ultimate coming messianic age brought about after a period of divine judgment and purification. If Israel, the vineyard of the Lord, clings to their God for protection, he will protect it (27:2–5). In fact, its restoration is guaranteed: “In days to come Jacob shall take root; Israel shall blossom and put forth shoots and fill the whole world with fruit” (27:6). The imagery of Paradise unleashed in the world in bounty and fruitfulness is suggested in the language of 27:2–3 and 27:6. Yet this astonishing restoration and resultant peace and prosperity will only come after their sin and guilt have been removed from them by judgment (27:7–11).

However, restoration and blessing will certainly come. After the judgment and desolation of the land, the Lord will summon the exiles from the four corners: “You will be gathered one by one, O people of Israel. And on that day a great trumpet will be blown, and those who were lost in the land of Assyria and those who were driven out to the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain at Jerusalem” (Isa 27:12–13).

**Isaiah 30:18–26.** Because the people of Israel are “rebellious” and “faithless” (Isa 30:9), rejecting God’s prophetic word (30:10–12), they will be justly judged (30:13–14). Though God promises that if they “return” (שוב) and “rest” (נחת) in him, they will be delivered (ישע); instead, they flee to find political protection from the Egyptians rather than from God (30:15–17; cf. 30:1–7). Yet in the midst of this inevitable rejection of God’s offer of deliverance, the prophecy inserts an oracle of ultimate restoration as an outworking of God’s “grace,” “mercy,” “justice,” and “blessing” (30:18)—key terms used frequently in Isaiah’s collage of language and images of the coming kingdom.

God then describes the people in Zion (עם בציון), inhabitants of Jerusalem (ישב בירושלם), as receiving his mercy when they finally call out to him (30:19). The restoration of God’s people is always conditioned on their return to him in faith; but even that return is brought about by God’s acts of grace and mercy, when God manifests himself to them not only in *negative* discipline but also in *positive* instruction, resulting in repentance (30:20–22).

The blessings that follow are similar to those already seen in previous kingdom oracles. The bounty of the earth will be “rich and plenteous” (דשן ושמן) and cattle will even the cattle will graze on the highest quality food (30:23–24). The figure suggests not only abundant fruitfulness, but—arguing from the lesser to the greater—if livestock roam so freely and eat so well, how much more will God’s people dwell securely, in peace, and enjoy the abundance of the land. Severe judgment will give way to flowing streams, presumably for ample irrigation (30:25), and the quality of life will be increased immeasurably beyond the times of darkness and gloom experienced by God’s people in judgment. This is symbolized by the image of the moon blazing like the sun and the sun shining seven times brighter (30:26). Gowan muses, “We can be thankful that this promise has never been literally fulfilled, since it would mean the end of all life on earth. . . . Light is undoubtedly

used in its symbolic sense here.... Perpetual light—not darkness—is in store for Israel, images of restoration and healing.”<sup>39</sup>

In his discussion of the coming kingdom, Irenaeus applies these promises of Isaiah 30:18–26 to the future messianic kingdom, after the resurrection of the just, when “the whole creation shall, according to God’s will, obtain a vast increase” (*Haer.* 5.34.2). These promises fit well with the layered collage of language and images portraying the coming messianic kingdom in the remainder of Isaiah.

**Isaiah 32:1–5, 15–18.** Following Israel’s repentance and the judgment of their enemies by a purifying fire (Isa 31:6–9), a new order will arise in Israel centered on a righteous king: “See, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes (שָׂרִים) will rule with justice” (32:1). Here we find a plurality of rulers (שָׂרִים) reigning along with a single future king (מֶלֶךְ). The promise of an *ideal* Davidic king has already been repeated in Isaiah’s kingdom oracles (Isa 9:6–9; 11:1–5, 10; 16:5), as has the notion of a plurality of rulers, apparently reigning under him (Isa 1:26). Irenaeus assigns the reign of the righteous king and the princes ruling with him in justice (Isa 32:1) to the time of the future kingdom, expecting a literal reign from Jerusalem (*Haer.* 5.34.4). These righteous, just rulers will provide protection and provision (Isa 32:2), and the present blindness, deafness, folly, and sin will be reversed (32:3–5). This indicates healing and health in every realm of life: spiritual, physical, personal, social, and political.

In the midst of a reminder of coming judgment resulting in desolation (Isa 32:6–14; 19–20), the oracle focuses on God’s promise of restoration (32:15–18). The finality of the judgment described in verse 14 would leave room for little hope had the oracle ended there: “For the palace will be forsaken, the populous city deserted; the hill and the watchtower will become dens forever, the joy of wild asses, a pasture for flocks.” This describes the ongoing condition of post-judgment Jerusalem, its expected destiny “forever” (עַד־עוֹלָם) unless God himself intervenes, which he does in verse 32:15: “until a spirit from on high is poured out on us, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.” The Spirit that will be given to the coming Davidic king (Isa 11:2) will also be given to the once-forsaken people of Israel (32:15). The result will be an increase of abundance and blessing. Not only this, but “justice” (מִשְׁפָּט) and “righteousness” (צְדָקָה) will abound, resulting in peace (שָׁלוֹם), rest (שָׁקֵט), and security (בְּטָח)” (32:16–17). Finally, God’s people will dwell securely in the land in a state of peace and tranquility (32:18).

**Isaiah 35:1–10.** Recalling language and imagery already employed in the kingdom oracles (see Isa 27:6; 30:23–24; 32:15), Isaiah describes a renewal of the natural world reminiscent of images of paradise in Eden (35:1–2). If the wilderness and desert burst forth in abundant fruitfulness like fertile Lebanon, Carmel, and Sharon, how much more will the rest of the world thrive with life. Yet

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<sup>39</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 116.

all these places will be glorified only because of the abiding presence of God’s glory (35:2). Brueggemann reminds us that “these verses explicate the theme already noted in 29:17; 30:23–25; 32:15.”<sup>40</sup> Isaiah 35:3–4 calls the reader to continued trust and confidence, even in the midst of trials and tribulations, because God “will come with vengeance...and save you.” Like the other kingdom oracles promising restoration, the means by which deliverance and blessing come to God’s people is through just judgment and purification—banishing wickedness but cleansing and restoring those who repent.

Recalling language of health and healing in 32:3–4, the present song looks forward to the day of deliverance when the blind, deaf, lame, and mute will be healed (35:5–6). Irenaeus of Lyons assigned the healing of the blind, deaf, a lame described in 35:3, 5–6 at least in part to Christ’s first coming, during his earthly ministry (*Haer.* 4.33.11). Justin Martyr, in his dispute with the Jewish unbeliever, Trypho, likewise refers it to Christ’s ministry; but he also casts its fullest realization into the future: “But He performed these deeds to convince His future followers, that if anyone, even though his body were in any way maimed, should be faithful to His teaching, He would raise him up at His second coming entirely sound, and make him free forever from death, corruption and pain” (*Dial.* 69 [Falls]). This double application is in keeping with a both/and approach to these kingdom oracles, allowing even for a partial realization of miraculous healing in answer to prayer even in the present age of the spiritual kingdom. Yet neither the healing ministry of Jesus nor answered prayer for healing in the church can be taken as the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah 32:5–6, which awaits the coming messianic reign.

The oracle continues to describe the miraculous terraforming of the physical creation: waters in the wilderness and desert, moreover, plenty of sustenance for all God’s creatures (Isa 35:6–7). Previously uninhabitable regions will be transformed into dwellings places for God’s people as they apparently spread out over the face of the earth, unafraid of dangers from wild beasts or other dangers (35:8–9). This imagery is consistent with the expectation that wild animals themselves will be tamed, perhaps even domesticated, and no longer pose a threat to humans (cf. Isa 11:6–9). At this time, too, God’s people—once scattered throughout the world—will return to Zion with unending jubilation (35:10; cf. 9:3; 11:11–12, 16; 12:6; 14:1; 25:9; 32:19). The song ends with a flourish of exuberant joy as the prophet foresees a time when even sadness will be banished: “They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (35:10; cf. Rev 21:4).

**Isaiah 40:1–5; 42:1–9.** After several chapters of historical narrative pertaining to the challenges faced by King Hezekiah (Isa 36:1–39:8), the book breaks into a song of comfort (Isa 40:1), turning the readers’ attention from the looming threats of judgment to hope of ultimate eschatological restoration.<sup>41</sup> Though she has suffered for her iniquity, those days of distress are ended (40:2). Isaiah 40:3–5 paints a vivid, figurative picture of an utter transformation of topography—the low

<sup>40</sup> Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1–39*, 275.

<sup>41</sup> Gary Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, The New American Commentary, vol. 15B (Nashville: B&H, 2009), 91.

being made high, the high made low—a perfecting of imperfection and an ordering of chaos (40:4). All this serves the purpose of making a straight path for the coming of the Lord, ushered into Jerusalem like a victorious king welcomed by his people (40:3). The universal scope of the reign of God is indicated in verse 5: “Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together.”

Not surprisingly, this leads to an outbreak of praise and proclamation of the glory of God and his greatness, strict in his judgment, but abundant in his mercy and restoration (40:9–41:29). In the midst of this, Isaiah introduces the concept of the servant: “But you, Israel, my servant, Jacob, whom I have chosen, the offspring of Abraham, my friend; you whom I took from the ends of the earth and called from its farthest corners, saying to you, ‘You are my servant; I have chosen you and not cast you off’” (Isa 41:8–9). This language anticipates an ultimate regathering of the people of Israel/Jacob, the “seed of Abraham” (זרע אברהם), calling them from the farthest reaches of the earth (cf. Matt 24:31; Mark 13:27).

Though Israel is corporately called the “servant” (עבד) in 41:8, the kingdom oracle of Isaiah 42 introduces another figure—an individual—called “the servant” (42:1). Though it may be tempting to conflate this individual “servant” with the corporate “servant,” a close exegesis of the “servant songs” does not allow this. However, there is a close association between the individual *messianic* servant and the *corporate* servant, as the individual servant mediates blessings to the nation of Israel, which in turn mediates blessings to the world.

The first “servant song” in 42:1–9 is described in terms similar to the Davidic king of Isaiah 9:6–7 and 11:1–9. Isaiah 42:1 says, “I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.” Isaiah 11:2 says, “The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him” and Isaiah 9:7 declares that the ruler will establish and uphold the throne of David “with justice and with righteousness.” In that future kingdom, God “shall judge between the nations and shall arbitrate for many peoples” (Isa 2:4). Similarly, the coming “servant” will “faithfully bring forth justice” not only in Jerusalem, but “in the earth” and “the coastlands,” where people wait for his teaching (Isa 42:3–4; cf. 2:3–4).

Then God speaks to the servant, who will mediate his rule throughout the world: “I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness; I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people (לברית עם), a light to the nations (לאור גוים)” (42:6). That this servant is appointed as “a covenant” for the people suggests that his rule embodies a new covenant arrangement, a notion reinforced by the words of verse 9: “See, the former things have come to pass, and new things (חדשות) I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.” Smith observes, “The terminology here suggests that this servant is the personification or embodiment of the covenant; thus, he becomes the vehicle through which the peoples of the earth will establish a covenant relationship with God.”<sup>42</sup> This “new covenant,” associated with a coming messianic figure, the restoration of the nation of Israel, and the illumination of the nations, will be further developed in Isaiah and other prophets. Additional effects of this servant’s righteous rule include

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<sup>42</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 168.

“to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness” (42:7), echoing similar healing and restoration promises as in Isa 9:2 and 35:5.

**Isaiah 43:1–44:8.** Returning to an address of corporate Jacob/Israel, God promises redemption and protection: even if they pass through water or fire, they will not be harmed, because they are precious in his eyes (43:1–4). Therefore, his people should have no fear (43:5). Because of his great love for Israel, God promises to bring the dispersed offspring (עַרְוָה) from all the places throughout the world where they had been scattered (43:5–7), from the very “end of the earth” (43:6; cf. 41:9; Mark 13:27). Though the people were spiritually blind and deaf (Isa 43:8; cf. 42:18–20), yet they are still God’s witnesses, his “servant” whom he chose (43:10). The Lord reminds Israel that he alone is God, their savior, and their deliverer, who will release them from their former captivity in a kind of second exodus (43:11–17).

Echoing language from 42:9, God emphasizes the newness of his work of redeeming Israel: “Do not remember the former things or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing (הַדָּשָׁה); now it springs forth; do you not perceive it?” (43:18–19). And the language in 43:19–20 referring to a road in the wilderness, waters in the desert, and taming wild animals recalls earlier imagery of the renewal of creation and removal of the curse of Genesis 3 (Isa 11:6–9; 35:6–7). This repetition of earlier language and imagery related to the coming kingdom reinforces the fact that the kingdom oracles are simply adding additional details that supplement earlier prophecies.

Though Israel has failed to honor God with the stipulations of their covenant of sacrifices, and rather wearied God with iniquities (Isa 43:22–24), God will forgive them: “I alone am the one who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins” (43:25). A contrast between their failure to offer sacrifices and God’s gracious forgiveness of their sins for his own sake may point in a subtle manner to a time when the sacrifices of old will have passed away and a new covenant takes its place.

Addressing Jacob and Israel again as “my servant...whom I have chosen,” the one “who made you, who formed you in the womb” (44:1–2; cf. 43:1, 10), the Lord also calls the nation “Jeshurun,” a name for Israel used elsewhere only in Deuteronomy 32:15; 33:5, 26. The use of the name makes it unmistakable that God is addressing corporate Israel, not the individual servant-Messiah. God calls Israel/Jacob/Jeshurun to courage because restoration and blessing are coming. He echoes imagery of physical transformation with water and streams irrigating dry ground—figures that could be taken either physically in reference to the land or spiritually in reference to the people (44:2–3), though the following phrase turns the language in a more spiritual direction as God promises to pour out the blessing of his Spirit on the “descendants” (עַרְוָה) or “offspring” (צִמְצִימֵי) of Israel, resulting in their springing up like a tamarisk or willow drawing water from a stream (44:3–4). In any case, the spiritual revival of the nation is connected to physical restoration and renewal throughout the kingdom oracles.

In Isaiah 44:6–7, the Lord proclaims his uniqueness among the so-called ‘gods’ in that he alone can announce “things to come.” God alone is the king and redeemer of Israel, and his very deity

depends on the keeping of these prophetic promises (44:8). In other words, were the oracles of restoration and blessing to fail, God’s trustworthiness and divinity would be in jeopardy. Smith aptly sums up the basic message of this Isaiah 43–44 this way: “At some point in the distant future God will do a new thing by transforming nature and his people through the work of his Spirit (43:18–21; 44:1–5).”<sup>43</sup>

**Isaiah 45:14–25.** After a lengthy oracle that seems to point primarily to the return from exile under Cyrus (44:21– 45:13; see especially 44:28; 45:1, 13), the language seems to reach beyond the first exile to the ultimate exile, of which the former is but an imperfect type of the latter. In that ultimate restoration, the wealth of Egypt, Cush, and the Sabeans along with their great men will humble themselves before Israel, acknowledging that Israel’s God alone is the one true God (44:14; cf. 14:2; 19:16–25; 61:5–6). After this ultimate deliverance by their Savior, who confounds idolaters, Israel will be saved “with everlasting salvation (תְּשׁוּעַת עוֹלָמִים)” and “shall not be put to shame or confounded ever again (עַד־עוֹלָמֵי עַד)” (45:17). This language seems to place this particular section of the song beyond the scope of the original return from exile.

The Lord reminds his readers that because he is the God who created all things and fashioned the earth for order rather than chaos (Isa 45:18), he alone is God. Thus, he alone is able to “speak truth” and “declare what is right” (45:19). The purpose of such a reassurance is to encourage the readers of the prophecy to trust in what he promises. In contrast, the idols of the nations are impotent, unable to save them and to tell them the future, as the God of Israel is able to do (45:20–21). Therefore, all the nations are called to turn to God for salvation (45:22). Ultimately, the salvation which Israel will experience as God’s covenant people will open the door for all people to be saved: “By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return: ‘To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear’” (45:23; cf. Rom 14:11; Phil 2:10–11). Because the Lord alone is the source of righteousness and strength (45:24); therefore, “in the Lord all the offspring (עַרְוָה) of Israel shall triumph and glory” (45:25). It is, of course, a stipulation of the new covenant described later in Jeremiah 31 that all Israel will know the Lord, from the least to the greatest (Jer 31:34), a concept similar to all the offspring of Israel enjoying vindication and glory in the Lord (Isa 45:25).

**Isaiah 48:6–11; Isaiah 49:1–26; 51:3, 11.** Isaiah continues the theme of God announcing “new things” (דְּשׁוּת) (48:6; cf. 42:9; 43:19)—things that had never been heard of before (48:6–8). Though Israel certainly deserves judgment for their treachery and rebellion against him (48:8), God restrains his wrath for his own name’s sake (48:9, 11). As a result, Israel will not be cut off. Their suffering is not for the purpose of utter destruction, but rather for refining and purification (48:10).

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<sup>43</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 221–222.



In chapter 49, the focus shifts from Israel and their restoration and blessing to the Gentiles: “you peoples from far away” (49:1). The inclusion of the nations in God’s plan of ultimate restoration is, of course, a common theme in the kingdom oracles (Isa 2:4; 42:6; 45:22). Yet in a puzzling turn, the speaker changes from God to a first-person singular: “The Lord called me before I was born; while I was in my mother’s womb He named me” (49:1). Who is speaking these words? He has a mouth “like a sharp sword” and God hid him away like a sharp arrow, as if awaiting the perfect moment to strike (49:2). God gave the speaker the title “servant” and the name “Israel” (49:3). Yet the speaker, servant-Israel, complains that his mission has failed, the purpose for which he was sent was in vain (49:4).

That this person is not corporate Israel/Jacob, is confirmed by 49:5–6, where the servant speaking is distinct from corporate Israel: “And now the Lord says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the Lord, and my God has become my strength—he says, ‘It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel.’” It may be tempting to conclude that the first-person singular belongs to the prophet Isaiah, but the mission involves not only proclamation but actual restoration of the remnant of Israel—a feat too lofty for any mere prophet. But the final lines of 49:6 shift attention from the prophet Isaiah as a potential candidate to the servant-Messiah himself: “I will give you as a light to the nations (cf. 42:6), that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.” And though this one will be “deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers” (49:7), kings and princes of the world will bow down before him (49:7). That this figure is the same as the one mentioned in 42:6 is clear by the identical language in 49:8—“I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people” (לברית עם). This same figure, also called “my servant” in 42:1, will have the Spirit upon him (as in 11:2), will bring justice to the nations, establish justice in the earth, open blind eyes, and release prisoners (42:1, 4, 6–7). Briley notes on Isaiah 49:5:

To this point Isaiah has presented a perplexing dual portrait of the servant. On the one hand, he has equated the servant with Israel, including all of Israel’s shortcomings. On the other hand, he has presented the servant as God’s faithful and capable means of accomplishing his purpose in 42:1ff. and 49:1–2. Is the contrast between Israel at present and Israel in the future? Does Isaiah distinguish between the nation as a whole and the righteous remnant? Verses 5–6 begin to reveal a solution to the paradox. God has appointed the servant in the womb with a purpose *on behalf of* the unresponsive nation. He is Israel, yet at the same time God calls him to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Briley, *Isaiah*, 2:187–188.

In the servant’s mission, further detailed in 49, he will “establish the land” of Israel, release captives (cf. 42:7), and provide for and protect them (cf. 42:5–6); God will then make a straight path for the exiles of Israel to return to their land (49:9–12). In the midst of these comforting prophecies of return to the land and restoration (49:13), God swears that he would never forget or forsake his people (49:14–15). The city of Jerusalem is, as it were, inscribed on his hands (49:16). All the misfortunes they had experienced at the hands of their enemies will be reversed as the city of Jerusalem is rebuilt and its population grows beyond measure (49:17–21). To those born in Jerusalem, God will also add those of his people who return from the nations (49:22–23). By judging even the most powerful tyrants (49:24–25), God will make good on his promise to save his people so, “all flesh shall know that I am the Lord your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob” (49:26).

Two additional verses are worth considering; though they add nothing substantially new to the consistent picture of the coming kingdom seen thus far in Isaiah, they do reaffirm some basic elements. Isaiah 51:3 says, “For the Lord will comfort Zion (cf. 40:1); he will comfort all her waste places and will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord (cf. 11:6–9; 35:6–7; 43:19–20); joy and gladness will be found in her (cf. 35:10), thanksgiving and the voice of song” (cf. 9:3). The imagery of Eden may be taken as mere metaphor, but in light of the grand arc of the narrative of the garden of Eden planted in this world, taken from this world (as humanity stands exiled from his blessing), and ultimately returning to this world, the language of Isaiah 51:3 takes on deep historical-redemptive significance. The desert wilderness around Jerusalem will be transformed like the garden of Eden as the process of *edenification* of the world—originally the responsibility of the first Adam—will ultimately be achieved through the ministry of the second Adam and his followers.

Then, Isaiah 51:11 repeats almost verbatim the promise of Isaiah 35:10: “So the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with rejoicing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” This connects the earlier kingdom oracles to the latter, confirming that Isaiah presents a consistent, coherent message of the restoration of Israel and the renewal of creation.

**Isaiah 52:6–13; Isaiah 54:1–17; 55:3.** This passage is not as famously quoted as the song of the suffering servant (Isa 52:13–53:12), for which it serves as a kind of preface. Yet the Christologically rich Isaiah 53 is itself nestled among passages that anticipate a glorious future for God’s people, mediated by the suffering but victorious servant (Isa 52:6–13; 54:1–17). Hardly anything new—except the song of the suffering servant—is added to the picture of restoration in a future messianic age. The imagery has become well known by this point in the development of Isaiah’s figurative presentation of the coming kingdom.

The passage is set in a context in which God calls the people of Jerusalem to put on strength, to awake from the dust, and to be loosed from its bondage (52:1–2). Though they have sunk low in hopeless despair, God will make himself known to Israel by fulfilling his promises to them for

restoration (52:3–5). They will know his name, and know that God himself was the one who had spoken such promises to them as they see them fulfilled “on that day” (ביום ההוא)—a reference in Isaiah to an unknown future time of restoration (52:6). At that time good news of “peace” (שלום) and “salvation” (ישועה) will be proclaimed, songs of joy will break forth because the ruins of Jerusalem have been redeemed (52:7–9). Through this restoration, God’s strong arm of salvation will be revealed—he has kept his repeated promises of deliverance (52:10). Drawing on the themes of exodus, Israel is promised a glorious return from captivity and exile—not a hasty flight as in the exodus from Egypt, but a kind of victorious parade led by God himself (52:11–12).

In this context of future deliverance of the nation of Israel and restoration of Jerusalem, the individual “servant” reappears: “See, my servant shall prosper; he shall be exalted and lifted up and shall be very high” (52:13). The parallels between the individual servant-messiah and the corporate servant, Israel, should be carefully noted, but not conflated. Upon close examination, the servant in Isaiah 52:13–53:12 is carefully distinguished from Israel. Yet as goes the nation—humiliation, suffering, and death at the hands of the wicked—so goes the servant-messiah; except in the case of the individual servant, his suffering and death was not for his own sins but for the sins of others (Isa 53:1–12). Who are the others?

Some have taken the whole of Isaiah 53:1–12 as the words of the kings of the earth mentioned in 52:14. However, the text says the kings “shall shut their mouths” because of the servant. It seems strange that following this statement of their inability to testify would be followed by an entire chapter of words. Rather, the first-person plural throughout 53:1–6 seems to be Isaiah speaking on behalf of the people of Israel. The text then leaves the first-person plural and shifts again to the third person (53:7–12)—presumably God himself speaking again, as indicated by the reference to “the righteous one, my servant (עבדי)” (53:11). Thus, when the speaker says in 53:8, “He was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression (מפשע) of my people (עמי),” the term “my people” refers to the people of Israel. And because the transgressions (מפשע) of the people of Israel are atoned for by the righteous servant (53:8), the plural speakers of 53:5 must also be the people of Israel: “But he was wounded for our transgressions (מפשענו), crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed.” That this suffering servant is also the Davidic, messianic king is suggested by the reference in 53:2 to his origins: “He grew up before him like a young plant (ינקה) and like a root (שרש) out of dry ground.”<sup>45</sup> This echoes the language from Isaiah 11:1—“A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots (שרשי)” and 11:10 says, “On that day the root (שרש) of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples.”

Yet the suffering of the individual servant-messiah gives way to his restoration to life (53:10, 12), which itself will give way to a corporate restoration of the nation of Israel (54:1–17). The desolate, empty cities will be repopulated with an increase in children (54:1–2). In fact, the descendants (זרע) will “possess nations” (54:3). Though God had temporarily cast off the people

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<sup>45</sup> Cf. Smith, *Isaiah 40-66*, 444.

of Israel like a spouse deserted (54:4–7), he will gather them again because of his everlasting love and compassion (54:7–8). The language of assurance and promise is extremely strong in foreshadowing language of the “new covenant” already suggested in earlier messianic passages (Isa 42:6; 49:8): “This is like the days of Noah to me: Just as I swore that the waters of Noah would never again go over the earth, so I have sworn that I will not be angry with you and will not rebuke you. For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you, and my covenant of peace (ברית שלומי) shall not be removed, says the Lord, who has compassion on you” (Isa 54:9–10). The promise of reconciliation between God and Israel as well as the nation’s restoration and blessing are as certain as God’s covenant with Noah, and in 55:3, God declares, “I will make with you an everlasting covenant (ברית עולם), my steadfast, sure love for David,” connecting the fulfillment of the everlasting covenant of peace with the establishment of the Davidic throne forever (2 Sam 7:12–13; Ps 132:11).

Isaiah 54:11–12 presents a glorious picture of the rebuilding of Jerusalem with precious stones, figures of the immense wealth and beauty Israel will experience in that future age. In reference to this imagery, Irenaeus of Lyons understood the establishment of the future city of Jerusalem and his glorious foundations (Isa 54:11–13) as occurring in the future earthly kingdom under the messiah at the time of the resurrection (*Haer.* 5.34.4). At that time, too, the nation of Israel will be established in righteousness, free from oppression and threat of any harm (54:13–17)—all language and imagery well established in the kingdom oracles throughout Isaiah.

**Isaiah 59:20—62:12.** As the book of Isaiah approaches its climax, a sprawling section describing the coming kingdom occupies three chapters. The great majority of the language and imagery is consistent with what has already been established through the kingdom oracles of Isaiah, which allows us to summarize the affirmations, and note any unique expressions. The promises of restoration actually begin in the end of Isaiah 59 with the promise that God himself “will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord” (59:20). In his coming to redeem Israel and turn them from their sin, he thus establishes a covenant (ברית): “This is my covenant with them, says the Lord: my spirit that is upon you and my words that I have put in your mouth shall not depart out of your mouth or out of the mouths of your children or out of the mouths of your children’s children, says the Lord, from now on and forever” (59:21). The connections between this imagery and what will be called the “new covenant” in Jeremiah 31:31 are confirmed by the New Testament reading of these passages.<sup>46</sup> Briley writes, “In a subtle way, this final verse [Isa 59:21] anticipates the great new covenant promises in Jeremiah

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<sup>46</sup> In Rom 11:26–27, Paul quotes the LXX of Isa 59:20–21 in reference to the future salvation of “all Israel”—“And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, ‘Out of Zion will come the Deliverer; he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.’ ‘And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins.’” He seems to begin with a quotation of Isa 59:20–21, but then ends the quotation with language that seems to come from Isa 27:6, 9 or Jer 31:33–34—or, perhaps, he is reading all of these texts together. In any case, Paul is drawing together the language and imagery of the New Covenant with the language of a future restoration of Israel at the coming of the redeemer (cf. also 2 Cor 3:3; Heb 8:10).

31:31ff. and Ezekiel 36:22ff. which Isaiah roots in the work of the servant (42:6; 49:8).<sup>47</sup> And Gowan notes, “As the new spirit makes it possible to walk in the statutes and ordinances of the Lord (in Ezekiel), and the new covenant writes the law of God on the heart (in Jeremiah), in Isa. 59:21 the effect of the gift of covenant and spirit is an internalizing of the divine word, expressed in terms of putting God’s word in their mouth forever.”<sup>48</sup>

What follows this promised establishment of a new kind of covenant of deliverance, restoration, and unending relationship with the people of Israel is a glorious summing up of all the promises of the coming kingdom already seen in Isaiah. The darkness of judgment will give way to the light of the glory of God (Isa 60:1); all nations will be drawn to the light, bringing their wealth; the exiles of Israel will be regathered (60:2–14). God will restore joy, prosperity, peace, righteousness, and praise to the nation (60:15–18). The picturesque figurative imagery of 60:19–20 captures the contrast between the present darkness and the future glory beautifully: “The sun shall no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night, but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down or your moon withdraw itself, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.” In keeping with the expectation of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:34, that all Israel and Judah will know the Lord, “from the least of them to the greatest,” resulting in the restoration to their land (Jer 31:38–40), Isaiah 60:21 affirms, “Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever. They are the shoot that I planted, the work of my hands, so that I might be glorified,” and the people will increase in great number (60:22).

Isaiah 61 also pulls together elements of previous messianic themes already established in Isaiah. In fact, Jesus himself quotes from the beginning of this passage and applies its words to himself (61:1–2; Luke 4:18–19). Yet the language also recalls the imagery from Isaiah 11:1–5 in connection with the shoot from the stump of Jesse, who will usher in a kingdom in which all creation will be in harmony (11:6–10), and the nation of Israel will be restored (11:11–16). In restoring the beauty and joy of Zion through the ministry of the coming anointed one (61:1), God himself will be glorified (61:3). With the rebuilding of the “ancient ruins” and “ruined cities” (61:4), God will bless Israel with both riches and everlasting joy (61:5–7). After just retribution, God will establish with Israel an “everlasting covenant (ברית עולם)” (61:8). The descendants (זרע) of Israel will be famously blessed among the nations of the earth (61:9), and righteousness, praise, and jubilation will fill the whole earth (61:10–11).

Chapter 62 continues the exultant flourish, noting the centrality of Jerusalem among the nations (62:1–2, 6–7) and its restored relationship with God (62:3–5). Israel will enjoy themselves the fruit of the land (62:8–9). They will be restored to their land from afar and established as a holy people redeemed of the Lord—established in a city reclaimed for his glory (62:10–12).

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<sup>47</sup> Briley, *Isaiah*, 2:268.

<sup>48</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 75.

**Isaiah 65:17–25.** Isaiah’s kingdom oracles reach their climax in Isaiah 65. Following a lengthy prophetic oracle of just judgment (65:1–7, 11–15) and salvation in the form of a restoration of a remnant—God’s “servant”—to the land of blessing (65:8–16). This condition of renewal and blessing in the land, in which “the former troubles are forgotten” (65:16), is called in this kingdom oracle, “new heavens and a new earth” (65:17). To understand the referent for this phrase, we must read it in its actual context: “For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating, for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy and its people as a delight” (65:17–18). It becomes clear that “the new heavens” and “new earth” refer to the same coming kingdom Isaiah has been describing throughout the book—the coming messianic age when Jerusalem will be restored, Israel regathered, and creation itself released from its corruption. This song is not looking beyond that messianic age to some heavenly reality or a world created out of nothing beyond this one, but to the age of the son of David, when the nation of Israel is restored, blessed in the land, and itself mediating blessing to the world. Goldingay notes:

The prophecy is not referring to the creation of a new planetary system or implying that Yhwh is going back to square one of the process of creation and repeating the event described in Genesis 1 in order to improve on the results.... Neither preceding material in the book of Isaiah nor other material in the Old Testament has suggested any reason for thinking in terms of the creation of a new cosmos.... New heavens and a new earth is an image for a transformation of the way life works out for the community.... To put it another way, the ‘new things’ of Isaiah 40–55 have become more radically new, as succeeding verses will indicate.<sup>49</sup>

The continued description of the new creation makes it clear that we are to understand this as the coming kingdom. As in previous kingdom oracles, God will remove from his people weeping and cries of distress (Isa 65:19; cf. 30:9; 35:10; 60:20). They will build their homes, plant their vineyards, and fear no foreigner invading their land, driving them from their homes, and taking the fruit of their labors (65:21–22; cf. 62:8–9). Their newborn children can expect to live long, healthy, blessed lives (65:20, 23; cf. Exod 23:26)—“they shall be offspring (עַרְוָה) blessed by the Lord and their descendants (צִמְצִימֵי) as well” (65:23; cf. 44:3–4). So intimate will their relationship be with the Lord that he will answer their prayers even before they ask (65:25). And as if to underscore the fact that this crowning oracle is not, in fact, introducing a concept different from the oracles of the coming kingdom displayed throughout the book, the song repeats language and imagery from Isaiah 11:6–7—“The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, but

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<sup>49</sup> John Goldingay, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 56–66*, International Critical Commentary, ed. G. I. Davies and C. M. Tuckett (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 467–468.

the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord” (65:24).

Drawing from similar imagery in Isaiah, Smith paints a picture of the “newness” of this new creation this way:

People from all nations will come to learn from God at Jerusalem, and war will end (2:2–4; 14:1–2; 19:18–25); the holy survivors of Israel will come to a newly created Jerusalem (4:2–6); there will be peace between the animals and people (11:6–9), praise of God and banqueting (25:1–26:6), the end of sorrows, a time of great prosperity, a new light (30:18–26), an outpouring of the Spirit and justice and peace (32:15–20), and the transformation of nature (35:1–10). This new world will involve the coming of the glory of the Lord to Mount Zion where he will rule and care for his people (40:5–11; 60:1–3). Additionally, this new world will mean the transformation of nature and many other new things (41:17–20; 43:16–21; 44:3–5; 48:9–11; 50:1–3), the salvation of people from all nations (45:18–25; 49:22–26; 60:3–11), the repopulation of Zion with people and joy (49:14–21; 51:9–11; 54:1–10), the appearance of God’s salvation when the heavens and earth vanish (51:4–6), the enthronement of God in Zion (52:1–10), the giving of a new everlasting covenant (55:3), the transformation of Zion into something glorious (60:15; 62:7), and the appearing of the Anointed One (61:1–3).<sup>50</sup>

One puzzling verse that presents not only translation problems but also interpretation problems is Isaiah 65:20. The Hebrew text reads:

לא־יִהְיֶה מִשָּׁם עוֹד עוֹל יָמִים  
 וְזָקֵן אֲשֶׁר לֹא־יִמְלֵא אֶת־יָמָיו  
 כִּי הִנֵּעַר בֶּן־מֵאָה שָׁנָה יָמוֹת  
 וְהַחוּטָא בֶן־מֵאָה שָׁנָה יִקְלַל

The first line of 65:20 reads, “There will not be from there [referring to Jerusalem] any longer a suckling child of days” (לא־יִהְיֶה מִשָּׁם עוֹד עוֹל יָמִים). Most translations supply some language between עוֹל and יָמִים to make sense of the genitival relationship between the two. The NASB has “an infant *who lives only a few days*” (cf. CSB, ESV, NET, NIV, NKJV, and most). The KJV renders is quite literally: “There shall be no more thence an infant of days” (cf. ASV, AKJV, OJB, YLT, and others). The Septuagint takes a much more paraphrastic approach: “Neither will there be any longer in that place an untimely death (οὐδ’ οὐ μὴ γένηται ἔτι ἐκεῖ ἄωρος).” The idea seems to be that infant mortality—so common in the ancient world that it would have been virtually impossible

<sup>50</sup> Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, 719–720.

to meet a family that had not been marked by it—would no longer occur. Infants simply would not die.

The second line moves to the other end of a human lifespan—the elderly. Literally, “And [there will not be] an old one who does not fill his days” (וּזְקֵן אִשׁוֹר לֹא־יִמְלֵא אֶת־יָמָיו). The verb phrase לֹא־יִהְיֶה from the first line governs both conditions—from the youngest to the oldest. The meaning of the second line is fairly straightforward: nobody will ever say of a person, “They died too young.” Yet the third and fourth lines suggest not only the absence (לֹא־יִהְיֶה) of the bad—untimely, even tragic, death—but a remarkably long lifespan.

The third line, if rendered literally, is: “For the youth at the age of a hundred years will die (כִּי הַנַּעַר בֶּן־מֵאָה שָׁנָה יָמוּת).” Though the Hebrew itself is not difficult to translate, it still poses interpretational challenges. Immediately the reader is struck by the implausibility of calling a hundred-year-old person “a youth” (הַנַּעַר); certainly, a centenarian would be in the category of an “old man” (זָקֵן). Then the reader should be puzzled by the fate of such a youthful old man: he will die (יָמוּת). How, though, is that an explanation (כִּי) for the fact that untimely death will be a thing of the past. Surely, dying at one hundred would not be considered untimely. So confusing is this line that the Septuagint translation says nothing about death: “For the child will be a hundred years old” (ἔσται γὰρ ὁ νέος ἑκατὸν ἐτῶν). It seems most likely the meaning is that a person who dies at a hundred years old will be thought to have died as a youth (so the CSB, CJB, NIV, and others). This implies an extremely long life expectancy. In the ancient near east, a נַעַר was “a male who is available for marriage and is not yet betrothed,”<sup>51</sup> that is, sometime between the age of fifteen and twenty. Isaiah’s words suggest that in the new creation, the נַעַר will be aptly applied to a person who is a century old; the duration of a life would therefore span hundreds of years. Just as death will be the exception, long life will be the rule.

The final line also faces some translation problems. Does the first word, הַחֹטֵא, refer to “the transgressor” or to “one who fails to reach”?<sup>52</sup> The difference is seen, on the one hand, in translations that render הַחֹטֵא as “the sinner,” as in the ESV (“and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed”) or the KJV (“but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed”). Similarly, the Septuagint takes this route: “and the sinner who dies a hundred years old will be accursed” (ὁ δὲ ἀποθνήσκων ἁμαρτωλὸς ἑκατὸν ἐτῶν, καὶ ἐπικατάρατος ἔσται). On the other hand, translations that consider הַחֹטֵא in its basic sense of “missing the mark” or “failing to reach” render it as the NIV (“the one who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed”) or the NRSV (“and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed”). Despite its awkwardness, it seems best to take the word in its most common usage—and its only usage in Isaiah (Isa 1:4; 29:21; 42:24; 43:27; 64:4) as “the transgressor.”<sup>53</sup> In light of this, a more literal rendering of the line would be “And the transgressor at a hundred years will be made accursed”

<sup>51</sup> Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994–2000), 707.

<sup>52</sup> See Koehler et al., *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 305–306.

<sup>53</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah 56–66*, 471.



(והחוטא בן-מאה שנה יקלל). In this case, the parallels between the third and fourth line produce the following general interpretation: the person who dies at a hundred years old will be regarded a mere youth—indicating the expectation of a long or even indefinite life; and that same person who dies at a hundred years old will be thought to have been accursed. That is, death will be so rare that it will be reserved only for those transgressors guilty of egregious sin worthy of a curse. Goldingay notes: “If someone dies at a hundred, he will be seen as a youth and his death assumed to be due to sin and to God’s curse.... A ‘sinner’ will be not any ordinary human being but someone who has offended in noteworthy ways; even this person will still live out a hundred years. The presupposition is that in general, however, people will live the kind of life-spans that people lived in Genesis before the flood.... Yet there is no suggestion that death will have been abolished, as 25:8 may imply.”<sup>54</sup>

In either case, though, the idea still seems to be that the only person who will die during the coming kingdom will be one who is a חוטא and, therefore, falls under the curse. That is, one of the distinct characteristics of the coming kingdom will be a remarkably long lifespan—not decades but centuries. This may be reinforced in the next stanza of the song, in which the people will “long enjoy the work of their hands” (65:22)—their building and their planting (Isa 65:21)—because “like the days of a tree shall the days of my people (ימי עמי) be” (Isa 65:22). Just as an olive tree may live indefinitely—for even thousands of years—the lives of God’s people, with the exception of those guilty of outright rebellion—will be prolonged for centuries, or even indefinitely. Smith’s suggestion that the reference to death of a sinner is merely hypothetical because “people will not live to be just 100 years old and people will not be under a curse in God’s newly created world,”<sup>55</sup> operates under the unnecessary burden of understanding the referent for the “new heavens and new earth” in Isaiah 65:17 as what is often called the “eternal state” after a millennial kingdom. This is a result of reading into Isaiah 65:17 a meaning of the phrase from Revelation 21:1 (see discussion of the new heavens and new earth in chapter 15).

In the early church, Justin Martyr applied this language of the “new heavens and new earth” in Isaiah 65:17 to the future millennial kingdom. He writes, “These are the words of Isaias concerning the millennium: ‘For there shall be a new heaven and a new earth, and the former shall not be remembered nor come into their heart, but they shall be glad and rejoice in these things, which I create. For, behold, I make Jerusalem a rejoicing, and My people a joy; and I shall rejoice over Jerusalem, and be glad over My people’” (*Dial.* 81 [Falls]). Similarly, Irenaeus ties the reference “for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be” (Isa 65:22) to the future resurrection, indicating the length of days given to the resurrected body by conferring immortality (*Haer.* 5.15.1). And he explicitly assigns the fulfillment of Isaiah 65:18 to the future kingdom (*Haer.* 5.34.4). He even warns, “If, however, any shall endeavour to allegorize [prophecies] of this kind,

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<sup>54</sup> Goldingay, *Isaiah* 56–66, 471.

<sup>55</sup> Smith, *Isaiah* 40–66, 722.

they shall not be found consistent with themselves in all points, and shall be confuted by the teaching of the very expressions [in question]” (*Haer.* 5.35.1).

**Jeremiah 3:14–18.** After a rather lurid metaphorical description of the unfaithfulness of Israel and Judah (Jer 3:1–11) and a call to repentance (3:12–13), the words of God through the prophet describe a future restoration (3:14–18). The vivid language and imagery are consistent with the captivating picture of the coming kingdom in the earlier book of Isaiah. Like Isaiah, the promise for restoration is contingent on their repentance (3:13; cf. Isa 55:7). If they “return” (שוב), the Lord will take them back to Zion (Jer 3:14; cf. Isa 35:10; 51:11). Their “shepherds” (רעים) will be after God’s own heart (Jer 3:15; cf. Isa 32:1). Such language evokes the idea of an ideal Davidic king (cf. 1 Sam 13:14). They will receive knowledge and understanding (Jer 3:15)—blessings associated with the coming of the Spirit in Isaiah 11:2. The nation will multiply and increase in the land (בארץ) (Jer 3:16; cf. Isa 26:15).

With this language of Jeremiah 3:13–15, nothing particularly new is introduced to the depiction of the coming kingdom that had not already been introduced in Isaiah. Yet in verse 16, the Lord says, “They shall no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the Lord.’ It shall not come to mind or be remembered or missed, nor shall another one be made.” In anticipation of the clear articulation in later chapters of the “new covenant” that is different from the covenant God made when he took them out of Egypt (Jer 31:31–32), and in light of suggestions in Isaiah of such a new covenant (Isa 42:6; 49:8; 54:10; 55:3; 59:21; 61:8), it is reasonable to assume that Jeremiah’s oracles set forth a picture of a coming kingdom that will lack not only the ark of the (old) covenant, but also the holy of holies, and with that, perhaps even the temple itself (and its sacrifices). Thus, reference to the lack of the ark of the covenant may serve as a synecdoche for the whole sacrificial system, which also suggests the changing of the entire old covenant. This is consistent with the fact that none of the Isaianic kingdom oracles placed any emphasis on a restoration of a temple in which sacrifices would occur; in fact, such a situation is not even mentioned.

After dismissing the idea of a restored ark of the covenant, the oracle continues to paint a fairly standard picture of the coming kingdom. Jerusalem will be the throne of the Lord, in which all nations gather (Jer 3:17; cf. Isa 2:2, 4; 9:1; 11:10; 42:1, 6; 49:6; 55:5; 63:3, 5, 11). Both Judah and Israel—the kingdoms long divided—will be reunified, having returned from exile, in fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that their descendants would possess the land (Jer 3:18; cf. Isa 11:12).

**Jeremiah 4:27; 5:10; 16:14–15.** Following language of post-judgment desolation by an invading army (4:13–26), a ray of hope shines in the darkness: “Thus says the Lord: The whole land shall be a desolation, yet I will not make a full end” (4:27). Similarly, in 5:10 the Lord declares, “Go up through her vine rows and destroy, but do not make a full end.” With these words, God reveals that he has a plan to preserve Israel despite their almost total destruction. And after warning repeatedly of coming judgment by famine and sword (11:22; 14:12–18; 15:2; 16:4), because of

Israel's unfaithfulness and idolatry, the Lord says, "Therefore I will hurl you out of this land into a land that neither you nor your ancestors have known, and there you shall serve other gods day and night, for I will show you no favor" (16:13). However, before employing even more images of capture and judgment (16:16–21), the Lord injects a powerful promise of restoration: "Therefore, the days are surely coming, says the Lord, when it shall no longer be said, 'As the Lord lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt,' but 'As the Lord lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them.' For I will bring them back to their own land that I gave to their ancestors" (Jer 16:14–15). This language of restoration—and especially the imagery of a second, even greater exodus—will dominate the prophecies of Jeremiah, as the language of restoration had been repeated in Isaiah (Isa 11:11, 16; 27:13).

**Jeremiah 23:3–8.** Follow a pronouncement of "woe" to wicked shepherds (רעים) for destroying and scattering his sheep—the people of Israel—instead of attending to them faithfully, the Lord promises to gather (אקבץ) the remnant (שארית) "out of all the lands where I have driven them." He will bring them back (שוב) to their own place and there they will "be fruitful and multiply (פרו ורבו)" (Jer 23:3). The coupling פרו ורבו is the same as the Imago Dei mandate originally given to humanity in Genesis 1:28, and is reiterated after the flood in 9:1, 7. The command is next extended specifically to Jacob when God renames him Israel (Gen 35:10): "God said to him, 'I am God Almighty: be fruitful and multiply (פרו ורבו); a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall spring from you. The land (הארץ) that I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will give to you, and I will give the land to your offspring (זרע) after you'" (Gen 35:11–12). And the command פרו ורבו is part of the blessings pronounced upon Israel if they keep his statutes and ordinances (Lev 26:9). So, when the Lord promises in Jeremiah 23:3 that the regathered remnant will be "fruitful and multiply," the language has strong connotations not only of the benefits of the covenant with Abraham (Gen 35:11–12) but also the more universal covenant with Noah (Gen 9:1, 7) and ultimately with Adam (1:28). In light of the overarching story of creation-fall-redemption, it appears that God intends the fulfillment of the original Imago Dei mission to be accomplished through the restoration of his people in the land. The process of earthly reclamation and renewal begins with the restoration of Israel, but it certainly does not end there. In addition to the restoration in the land, God's future redemption of Israel includes raising up good shepherds (רעים) who will lead them faithfully (Jer 23:4; cf. Isa 32:1; Jer 3:15).

Jeremiah 23:5–6 make clear the means by which the restoration will be mediated to Israel: "The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch (צמח), and he shall reign as king and deal wisely and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'" The use of צמח in connection with the coming kingdom is already suggested in Isaiah 4:2, but here the term is directly identified with the king (מלך), under whose reign Israel and Judah will again be united as one nation. The terms used to describe the

reign of the Davidic Branch echo language used in Isaiah for that coming king (Isa 9:6; 16:5; 42:1, 3, 4; 52:13).

That the regathering and restoration to the land are linked to the work of the coming Branch of David is seen in the parallel phrase “days are coming” (ימים באים) in Jeremiah 23:5 and 7 and “in his days” (בימיו) in 23:6. The future regathering is cast in terms of a second, superior Exodus: “Therefore the days are surely coming, says the Lord, when it shall no longer be said, ‘As the Lord lives who brought the people of Israel up out of the land of Egypt,’ but ‘As the Lord lives who brought out and led the offspring of the house of Israel out of the land of the north and out of all the lands where he had driven them.’ Then they shall live in their own land” (Jer 23:7–8). Not surprisingly, Irenaeus of Lyons assigns the fulfillment of this regathering of Israel from the nations and their restoration in the land “which He gave to their fathers” to the future coming kingdom (*Haer.* 5.34.1).<sup>56</sup>

**Jeremiah 30:1–31:26.** Jeremiah associates the contents of the following oracle (Jer 31:1–2) with a certain but undetermined future with the phrase “days are coming” (ימים באים) (30:3). At that time, Israel and Judah will be regathered, reunited, and restored to the land (30:3; cf. 23:6–8). Though they will definitely experience an unprecedented day of the Lord—“a time of distress (צרה) for Jacob” (30:4–7), “yet he shall be rescued from it” (30:7). Thus, a time of tribulation will give way to restoration.

God promises that “in that day” Israel’s foreign oppressors will be broken and “they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up (קום) for them” (Jer 30:8–9). It is certainly not absurd to take this promise as literally referring to David himself and to understand “raise up” (קום) as a reference to his future resurrection in the coming kingdom, as the term is used for resurrection in Isaiah 26:19. However, the term קום can be used for establishing somebody in a position (Deut 18:18) or for accomplishing something (1 Sam 3:12). Thus, the reference to serving “David their king (דוד מלכם)” may be messianic, using “David” as a figure for the Davidic ruler. Chisholm refers to this figure as, “the second coming of David, as it were.”<sup>57</sup>

The Lord then reiterates standard promises related to the coming kingdom: salvation of Israel’s offspring from captivity and return to quiet and ease, despite the discipline they had endured in foreign lands (Jer 30:10–11). Though they suffered what was—left to themselves—an incurable wound for their sins (30:12–15), God will intervene to heal their wounds himself (30:16–17). The result will be restoration of Israel’s fortune, rebuilding their city, and growth of the population (30:18–20). The Lord again refers to a “prince” (אדיר) and “ruler” (משל) who will come from among them: “I will bring him near, and he shall approach me, for who would otherwise dare to approach (קרב) me?” (Jer 30:21).<sup>58</sup> The referent is undoubtedly to the Davidic king (30:9; cf. 5).

<sup>56</sup> See comments on this passage in the discussion of Ezek 28:25–26 below.

<sup>57</sup> Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets*, 44.

<sup>58</sup> The equivalent Aramaic term קרב is used in Daniel 7:13 in the vision of the ‘Son of Man’ who “came (מטה) to the Ancient One” and “was presented (קרב) before him,” and the imagery is similar.

Then Jeremiah employs a phrase that indicates the renewed relationship he will have with his people in the coming kingdom: “And you shall be my people, and I will be your God” (Jer 30:22). This language mirrors that used in connection with God’s redemption of Israel in the exodus from Egypt (Exod 6:7; cf. Jer 7:23; 11:4) and the relationship of covenant blessing they would enjoy through obedience (Lev 26:12). This is fitting, as the future regathering of Israel and Judah and their restoration under the Davidic king is seen in terms of a second exodus; and their obedience will be assured through the empowering work of the New Covenant (Jer 31:31–34). The language will also be employed by Ezekiel to describe God’s relationship with Israel during the coming kingdom (Ezek 36:28).

Though God will certainly send forth his wrath in judgment (Jer 30:23–24), he will nevertheless reestablish his relationship with his people as their God (Jer 31:1). The survivors of the coming judgment will find grace and continued faithfulness (31:2–3). Israel will be restored and rebuilt; they will enjoy the fruit of the land with joyful song (31:4–7). The Lord promises to regather the remnant of Israel (31:7)—a great company of those who have repented—from the farthest parts of the earth (31:8–12). They will return to a land abundant with food and drink, like a watered garden (31:12), and they will rejoice and celebrate in their prosperity (31:13–14). Probably because verse 10 addresses “the nations,” Irenaeus cites Jeremiah 31:10–14 to assert that the restoration promises of the Old Testament were, “not announced to the prophets and the fathers alone (*non solum*), but to the Churches united to these from the nations” (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.34.3). That is, in the time of the resurrection—the future messianic kingdom—these things will be fulfilled for both Israel and the nations. Though they had been forced into sorrowful exile in judgment, upon their repentance they will return from the land of their enemies, and the Lord will bless them once again (31:15–25). Verse 26 marks the end of this particular oracle begun in 30:1.

**Jeremiah 31:27–40.** The classic “new covenant” passage (Jer 31:31–34) has a context—the regathering and restoration of the nation of Israel in keeping with the collage of images already well established in Isaiah’s kingdom oracles. In fact, except for using the term “new covenant” in reference to Isaiah’s “everlasting covenant” (Isa 55:3; 61:8; cf. Jer 32:40; 50:5) and “covenant of peace” (Isa 54:10), Jeremiah 30:1–31:40 mostly repackages older Isaianic images of the coming kingdom.<sup>59</sup>

Because the previous oracle concluded with Jeremiah 31:26, verse 27 starts a new prophecy with the phrase “behold, the days are coming (הנה ימים באים).” Both Israel and Judah will be, as it were, replanted, pictured with the image of God sowing seed of humans and animals (31:27). In

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<sup>59</sup> Brueggemann presents an important warning about this passage, especially to Christian readers: “It has frequently been preempted by Christians in a supersessionist fashion, as though Jews belong to the old covenant now nullified and Christians are the sole heirs of the new covenant.... Such a supersessionist reading in fact asserts the rejection rather than the reconstruction of Israel, a point not on the horizon of these oracles” (Walter A. Brueggemann, *To Build, To Plant: A Commentary on Jeremiah 26–52*, International Theological Commentary [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991], 291).

the past, God had disciplined his people with destruction, but in the coming days he will rebuild and replant them (31:28). This restoration will be characterized by perfect justice, in which people will be responsible for their own sins, and nobody will suffer harm for the sins of others (31:29–30).

In Jeremiah 31:31, the Lord calls this coming restoration in those days “a new covenant (ברית חדשה)” specifically with the “house of Israel and the house of Judah”—the same people who will be regathered and replanted earlier in this same oracle (31:27) and in the previous (30:3). That the details of the “new covenant” relate specifically to Israel and Judah is reinforced by the fact that God contrasts it with the covenant made with their ancestors during the exodus: “It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord” (Jer 31:32). This new covenant will be superior to that old covenant in that God’s law (תורה) will be within them, written on their hearts (על־לבם אכתבנו) (31:33). This is language used to describe the truly righteous—those who will inherit the land forever—as David declared in Psalm 37:29–31, “The righteous shall inherit the land and live in it forever. The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom, and their tongues speak justice. The law of their God is in their hearts (תורת אלהיו בלבם); their steps do not slip” (cf. Ps 40:8; Rom 2:15).

This new covenant is tied to Jeremiah’s preceding oracle of the coming kingdom with the promise, “I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33; cf. 30:22). The restored nation will be characterized by universal saving knowledge of the Lord—from the least to the greatest (31:34). For the first time in its history, all Israel will be righteous, having a heart submissive to his law. The phrase “know the Lord (דעו את־יהוה)” and especially universal knowledge of the Lord has already been identified as a mark of the coming kingdom (Isa 11:9; 29:21). This saving knowledge of the Lord, the basis for an intimate relationship, will be wrought by forgiveness of sin: “For I will forgive their iniquity (סלחת לעוננו) and remember their sin no more (לא אזכר־עוד)” (Jer 31:34). The pardoning of sin is not unique to the restoration of the nation in the new covenant. Moses entreated the Lord, “Pardon our iniquity and our sin (לחטאתנו וסלחת לעוננו), and take us for your inheritance” (Exod 34:9). This is in keeping with God’s self-revelation, who is “merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin (נשא עון ופשע) (וחטאה)” (Exod 34:6–7). And in Psalm 25:7 David says, “Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions (הטאות נעורי ופשעי אל־תזכר); according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!” Thus, forgiveness of sin is not itself unique to the new covenant described in Jeremiah 31 any more than knowing the Lord or having the law in one’s heart is unheard of in the old covenant. Not the fact of forgiveness and knowledge of the Lord, but the scope and scale of the forgiveness is the hallmark of the new covenant. For the first time in its covenantal history, all Israel—from the least to the greatest—will know the Lord. All the people of Israel will be righteous from a sincere heart, and they will experience forgiveness and restoration.

That is, they will be made fit for blessing in the land, not by an external conformity to law, but by an internal regeneration of the Spirit and genuine relationship with their God.

That the context of the ultimate fulfillment of this new covenant with Israel and Judah is the future restoration of the nation is confirmed in the closing verses of the oracle. The Lord swears that if the fixed order of the heavens and earth ceased, only then would “the offspring (זרע) of Israel” cease to be a nation before him (Jer 31:35–36); and only if a person could measure the heights of the heavens or explore the depths of the earth would he “reject the offspring (זרע) of Israel” for all their sin (31:37). The intended referent of זרע is not a single individual—e.g., the Messiah alone as the זרע of Abraham (cf. Gal 3:16). Not only does the context refer the promises to the people (Jer 31:34), but the Lord also calls the זרע “a nation (גוי)” (31:36) and refers to “all” the offspring of Israel (כל־זרע ישראל), referring to “all that they have done (כל־אשר עשו).”<sup>60</sup> In keeping with the overarching context of the restoration of Israel, the oracle ends with detailed descriptions of the geographical boundaries of the rebuilt city of Jerusalem (Jer 31:38–40). From the moment of its ultimate reestablishment, “it shall never again be uprooted or overthrown (לא־לעולם ינתש ולא־יהרס עוד לעולם)”—language that can only refer to an eschatological restoration.

**Jeremiah 32:36–44.** In another oracle concerning the city of Jerusalem (Jer 32:36), the Lord repeats his promise to gather his people from the nations where they had been scattered; they will return and be established securely (32:37). In that condition of restoration and rest, the Lord says: “They shall be my people, and I will be their God” (32:38). Then, recalling imagery from the new covenant language in 31:31–34, he declares, “I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for all time, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make an everlasting covenant with them, never to draw back from doing good to them, and I will put the fear of me in their hearts, so that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing good to them, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul” (Jer 32:39–41). Despite the fact that great disaster had come upon Israel, the Lord will bring upon them all the good things he had promised and restore their fortunes (32:42–44).

**Jeremiah 33:1–26.** In a subsequent oracle (Jer 33:1), the Lord promises that even though the city of Jerusalem is destroyed because of their evil (33:2–5), he will later restore it with “abundance of prosperity and security” (33:6–7). Echoing language of forgiveness from the new covenant imagery (31:31–34), the Lord promises, “I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me” (33:8). The city of Jerusalem will be so glorious that all the nations will hear of their prosperity and fear the Lord (33:9). The once desolate city of Jerusalem, and other cities of Judah, will be filled with jubilation as their fortunes are restored (33:10–13). In this context we have the first instance of a possible reference among the kingdom oracles to sacrifices and a temple: “the voices of those who sing as they bring

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<sup>60</sup> A corporate identification with the individual זרע does not relieve these exegetical difficulties.

thank offerings to the house of the Lord (מבאים תודה בית יהוה) (33:11). Some may see this as evidence that the restoration envisioned in this oracle is not the ultimate eschatological renewal but, rather, the historical return from exile after the Babylonian captivity. Others see this as evidence that the eschatological rebuilding of the house of the Lord in Jerusalem will also involve offering sacrifices (cf. discussion on Zech 14:20–21). Some may take the language as referring to the ultimate eschatological fulfillment in the coming messianic kingdom but understand the language as symbolic.

Even in a future messianic age without a temple for offering animal sacrifices, the language of Jeremiah 33:11 can be understood rather literally. The phrase מבאים תודה בית יהוה literally means “bringing thanksgiving,” which can certainly refer to a thanksgiving sacrifice, but may also refer to songs of thanksgiving.<sup>61</sup> This latter sense is seen in other restoration passages similar to Jeremiah 33:11—“And will make her wilderness like Eden, her desert like the garden of the Lord; joy and gladness will be found in her, thanksgiving (תודה) and the voice of song” (Isa 51:3). And the earlier kingdom oracle in Jeremiah 30:18–19 has: “Thus says the Lord: I am going to restore the fortunes of the tents of Jacob and have compassion on his dwellings; the city shall be rebuilt upon its mound and the citadel set on its rightful site. Out of them shall come thanksgiving (תודה) and the sound of merrymakers.” Even if one understands תודה as referring to more than merely songs of thanksgiving (or even thanksgiving gifts), these need not be animal sacrifices. Along with an animal sacrifice for thanksgiving, Leviticus 7:12 says, “You shall offer with the thank offering unleavened cakes mixed with oil, unleavened wafers spread with oil, and cakes of choice flour well soaked in oil.” In other words, animal sacrifices were not the only kinds of offerings that could be associated with תודה, and if in a future age animal sacrifices became obsolete, other kinds of gifts and offerings of thanksgiving could take their place.

The term “house of the Lord (בית יהוה)” is most naturally understood in the days of Jeremiah as the temple (Exod 23:19; 34:26; Deut 23:18; 1 Sam 1:7; 1 Kgs 6:1, etc.). Though the “house of the Lord” may imply a place in which sacrifices are offered, this is not a necessary implication. In a future messianic age, during which people will even forget the ark of the covenant (Jer 3:16), it is not unreasonable that a dwelling place for God in Jerusalem—that is, the palace of the messianic king—would be a real, physical place but without sacrifices of the old covenant. This would especially be true if the Davidic king is Jesus Christ, the incarnate God-man, in which case the king’s palace would be the literal “house of the Lord.” Such a physical palace-temple would not only be the source of instruction and just judgment from the righteous king (cf. Isa 2:2, 4), moreover, it would be the place to which offerings are brought—tribute and gifts for the king of kings (Isa 66:20).

As in previous kingdom oracles, no restoration of the nation of Israel and the land will be possible apart from the Davidic king. The Lord repeats language almost identical to that of Jeremiah 23:5–6, noting that the promises to Israel and Judah will be fulfilled through the “Branch”

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<sup>61</sup> Koehler et al., *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 1695–1696.



of David who will reign in justice and righteousness, and whose name will be “the Lord our righteousness” (33:15–16). Yet just as the Lord will fulfill his promise that “David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel” (33:17), so also “the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence to offer burnt offerings (מעלה עולה), to make grain offerings, and to make sacrifices for all time” (33:18). Here those who do not foresee a literal temple with literal animal sacrifices during the messianic age face a major hurdle. If the Davidic king’s reign is literal and future, it can be argued, then so must be the Levitical priest’s sacrifices. Alternatively, if the priest’s sacrifices are symbolic and spiritual, so must be the king’s reign. While “grain offerings” and general “sacrifices” do not require literal animal sacrifices, the עולה, or “burnt offering” would. Such offerings first appear after the flood of Noah, when he “built an altar to the Lord and took of every clean animal and of every clean bird and offered burnt offerings (עלת) on the altar” (Gen 8:20). The Lord told Abraham to offer Isaac as such an עולה (Gen 22:2–3). And the burnt offering became a standard part of the entire sacrificial system (Exod 20:24; Lev 1:3, etc.). Psalm 50:8 paints the picture of a God who already has all he needs, requiring no burnt offerings but only sacrifices of thanksgiving and praise. Perhaps the expectation for the coming messianic age, then, was an actual reestablishment of sacrifices by a Levitical priesthood. Though, perhaps, the Levites refer to those of the restored nation of Israel who serve as teachers for the nations, fulfilling their ministry of offering in the house of the Lord. Jeremiah 33:18 says there will also be a man in God’s presence who is able to offer such sacrifices; however, if the need for such animal sacrifices is not present, they will not be offered. Some have understood both promises to the house of David and the Levites to be fulfilled in one person: the messianic king-priest, in which case the sacrifices would be understood as strictly spiritual.

In any case, the Lord guarantees that neither his covenant with David nor his covenant with Levi will be broken, so that a descendant of David will always endure as well as a descendant of Levi (Jer 33:19–22). This may be a key to solving the dilemma, and it represents my own position on the matter. The promise is not directly related to the messianic age per se, but to the fact that the lines of descendants and lineage will never cease in the time between the exile and the ultimate fulfillment, guaranteeing that there will one day be a descendant of David to sit on the eternal throne (and descendants of the rest of Israel to fulfill the restoration of the nation). This seems to be confirmed by the conclusion of the oracle. In response to those who falsely claim that God had rejected the two families and thus no longer regards them as a nation (33:23–24), the Lord replies: “Only if I had not established my covenant with day and night and the ordinances of heaven and earth would I reject the offspring of Jacob and of my servant David and not choose any of his descendants as rulers over the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For I will restore their fortunes and will have mercy upon them” (33:25–26).

**Jeremiah 46:27–28; 50:4–5, 19–20.** Though God warns of coming judgment on Egypt—a coming day of the Lord (46:10),<sup>62</sup> he reveals other plans for Israel. Quoting Jeremiah 30:10–11 almost verbatim, the Lord promises that even though he will justly discipline Israel, he will ultimately rescue them from their land of captivity and return them to quiet and ease (46:27–28).

Two verses in chapter 50 rephrase promises concerning the coming kingdom already articulated earlier. The Lord promises a reunification of the people of Israel and the people of Judah upon their repentance (Jer 50:4). They will make their way back to Zion and will “join themselves to the Lord by an everlasting covenant that will never be forgotten” (50:5). Finally, in verses 19–20, the Lord promises to restore Israel to his own land (50:19). In imagery that calls back to the language of the new covenant (Jer 31:33–34), the Lord proclaims, “The iniquity of Israel shall be sought, and there shall be none, and the sins of Judah, and none shall be found, for I will pardon the remnant that I have spared” (50:20).

**Ezekiel 11:17–20; 16:59–63.** In Ezekiel 11, language and imagery from the kingdom oracles of Isaiah and Jeremiah reappear and are repackaged. The Lord promises to gather Israel from the peoples and nations to which they had been scattered, he will give them “the land of Israel ( אדמת (ישראל),” which will be cleansed of its former abominations (11:17–18). Then, recasting language reminiscent of the “new covenant” in Jeremiah 31:31–34, Ezekiel’s prophecy says, “I will give them one heart and put a new spirit within them; I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, so that they may follow my statutes and keep my ordinances and obey them. Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God” (Ezek 11:19–20). The language of “one heart” and a “new spirit” that enables the restored nation to keep God’s commands from the heart is similar to Jeremiah language: “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts” (Jer 31:33). In both passages, the result is the same: “I will be their God, and they shall be my people” (Jer 31:33; Ezek 11:20). And in both passages the context is the restoration of the people of Israel to the land.

The next kingdom oracle uses the phrase, already seen in Isaiah and Jeremiah, of an “everlasting covenant” with reference to the restoration of the nation of Israel (see Isa 55:3; 61:8; Jer 23:40; 50:5). Though Israel is guilty of breaking their covenant with him (Ezek 16:59)—presumably the Mosaic covenant—he promises, “I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant” (16:60). This is likely a reference to the foundation of the Abrahamic covenant that established Israel as a people, which will then become the basis for keeping his covenant in the future—the new, everlasting covenant. This will lead them to shame for their past sins and repentance, when God fulfills his covenant with them (16:61–63). The meaning of the phrase ולא מבריתך is “and not from your covenant” or “not because of a covenant with you,” and it could refer to the old covenant (which they had

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<sup>62</sup> See chapter 15 in *The Fathers on the Future* and Go Deeper Excursus 22 for fuller discussions on the Day of the Lord concept in the Old Testament.

broken, Ezek 16:59; cf. Jer 31:31–32), which is then contrasted with בריתי אתך (“my covenant with you”), the everlasting covenant that brings restoration (Ezek 16:60, 62; cf. Jer 31:31, 33).

**Ezekiel 20:33–44.** Though Israel had suffered the wrath of God for their wickedness (Ezek 20:1–33), he will nevertheless “be king over” Israel (20:33). He will bring them out of the nations where they had been scattered “with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out” (20:34). This passage connects the process of bringing Israel to repentance and calling them back to the land with a future period of cleansing judgment—a theme we have seen several times already in the kingdom oracles (Ezek 20:34–38; cf. Isa 4:4; 26:16; Jer 30:7). The result of this eschatological purification through judgment will be a nation restored to the land.

The focus then shifts to the “holy mountain” (בהר־קדשי), where “all the house of Israel, all of them, shall serve me in the land” (Ezek 20:40). He will receive from them their contributions (תרומתיכם), choicest of their gifts (ראשית משאותיכם), and sacred things (קדשיכם). The text noticeably avoids any explicit language of sacrifices per se. In fact, they themselves will be “a pleasing odor” when God brings them out from among the nations into the land of Israel, which he had sworn to their ancestors (20:41–42). In this passage the Lord emphasizes that the basis for their restoration is not their own worthiness; in spite of their loathsome deeds and evil ways, he will restore his relationship with them for the sake of his own reputation (20:43–44). Gowan writes concerning the vision of restoration in Ezekiel 20:

Given the tone of the first part of Ezekiel 20, with its emphasis on Israel’s rebelliousness, it is not surprising that the wilderness traditions concerning judgment (e.g., the golden calf, Korah’s rebellion) are projected into the future wilderness experience, which is described as a time of purging (20:35–38). But for the people as a whole, only the act of grace—which is the new gift of the land—will produce the ultimate result of wholesale repentance (20:40–44). Jerusalem is not missing from Ezekiel’s ideal future (“on my holy mountain,” 20:40), but is de-emphasized in favor of possession of the land as the key to Israel’s future life.<sup>63</sup>

**Ezekiel 28:25–26.** In this brief prophecy of the coming kingdom, the Lord promises again to regather the house of Israel, from among the peoples which they were scattered, in order to exhibit his holiness among the nations (Ezek 28:25). He will restore them to their own land, the land promised to Jacob. Reflecting imagery from previous kingdom oracles, the Lord promises that the restored nation will build houses, plant vineyards, and dwell securely in the land after judging the nations who had mistreated them (Ezek 28:26; cf. Isa 65:21; Jer 31:5). Nothing particularly new is introduced in this prophecy that has not already been affirmed repeatedly in previous prophecies of the coming kingdom.

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<sup>63</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 26.

Irenaeus quotes this passage in Ezekiel and applies it to the coming kingdom of the Messiah, which will be concurrent with the future resurrection of the just (*resurrectione justorum futurum*) (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.34.1). He explains that the salvation of Abraham’s seed has both a present spiritual fulfillment in the church as well as a future, literal fulfillment in the coming kingdom. He writes:

Now I have shown a short time ago [cf. 5.32.2] that the church is the seed of Abraham; and for this reason, that we may know that He who in the New Testament ‘raises up from the stones children unto Abraham’ (*ex lapidibus suscitans* [present active participle] *filios Abrahae*) is He who will gather (*colliget* [third person plural future active indicative]), according to the Old Testament, those that shall be saved (*salvabuntur*) from all the nations (*ex omnibus gentibus*), Jeremiah says: “Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord lives, who led the children of Israel from the north, and from every region where they had been driven; He will restore them to their own land which He gave to their fathers.” (*Haer.* 5.34.1)

In this passage, Irenaeus may be applying the promise of the salvation of the seed of Abraham both spiritually to the church in the present time as well as physically to those that “shall be saved” from among the nations. The passage he cites in Jeremiah refers to the gathering of the children of Israel from *among* the nations, literally *ex omnibus gentibus*. This company of Israel—Abraham’s physical seed—is called “those that shall be saved (*salvabuntur*),” which is the same term used in 5.30.2, where he mentions that “Dan” is left out of the tribes of Israel that are “saved” (*salvantur*) in the future tribulation. This confirms that Irenaeus envisioned a future, literal fulfillment of the restoration of the actual sons of Abraham, despite that fact that the church—the spiritual seed of Abraham—experiences a spiritual fulfillment of these promises. For Irenaeus, fulfillment of these prophecies was not *either* present and spiritual *or* future and physical. Rather, they applied to both.

**Ezekiel 34:11–31.** In a parabolic prophecy, the Lord castigates the “shepherds” of Israel, which is a metaphor for the rulers, for not only neglecting the sheep, the people of Israel, but for harming them. Because of their utter dereliction of duties, the sheep were scattered over the face of the earth (Ezek 34:1–6). Therefore, the Lord declares woe against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for their sins (34:7–10).

Then, the Lord encourages Israel by promising to step in and take the place of the wicked shepherds of Israel. He will search for them and sort them out (34:11). Drawing on Day of the Lord imagery, the Lord promises that “on a day of clouds and thick darkness” (34:12; cf. Joel 2:2), he will rescue them from afar and bring them back to their land to feed and nourish them (34:13–14). Thus, God himself will be their shepherd, to comfort, protect, feed, nourish, and strengthen (34:15–16).

Not only will shepherds be held accountable for how they mistreated or neglected the sheep, but the wicked sheep, rams, and goats will also be scrutinized and judged for their wicked behavior toward the innocent sheep. That is, the wicked people of Israel who had harmed the righteous will be judged by the Lord (34:17–22). Then, in the midst of this promise of just judgment, deliverance, and restoration, the Lord promises to establish over Israel “one shepherd, my servant David” (34:23)—that is, the Messiah, son of David (Ezek 34:24; cf. Isa 9:7; Jer 23:5; 30:9).

Ezekiel calls the time when the Davidic king is ruling and the nation has been restored “a covenant of peace,” and at that time, all wild animals will be banished from the land—that is, harmony of creation will be restored (34:25). The land will be blessed with showers of blessing, trees and crops will increase their yield, all Israel will dwell securely, and they will never go hungry again (34:26–29). Approximating earlier language of the intimate relationship Israel will have with the Lord in the future, the Lord promises, “They shall know that I, the Lord their God, am with them and that they, the house of Israel, are my people” (34:30–31; cf. Jer 24:7; 31:33; 32:38; Ezek 11:20; 14:11).

**Ezekiel 36:8–15, 22–38.** In another prophecy of restoration, the Lord addresses the “mountains of Israel” anthropomorphically, promising that they will produce a fruitful bounty and that Israel will “soon come home” (Ezek 36:8). The population of both humans and animals will increase upon the hills, towns will be rebuilt and inhabited, and even the wilderness will be transformed and populated (36:9–11). The people of Israel will come to the mountains of Israel, possess them as their inheritance, and the former disgrace the people once experienced among the nations will be reversed (36:12–15). In applying Ezekiel 36:12 to Christians, Justin Martyr argues that those who are called “Israel” includes Christians because of their union with Christ. Thus, not only ethnic Jews but also Jewish and Gentile Christians in one body will also inherit the land (*Dial.* 123). However, understanding a present, spiritual interpretation of Israel as applying to the church does not itself negate the expectation of a future, literal fulfillment of the prophecy. It is quite possible Justin saw the future fulfillment of this passage in reference to the future coming kingdom, as did Irenaeus of Lyons after him.

The prophecy continues with the Lord lamenting the fact that when Israel was justly judged for their sin, exiled from the land of promise, and scattered among the nations, the people profaned his holy name (36:16–21). The nations among which they had been scattered challenged the goodness of God himself: “These are the people of the Lord, yet they had to go out of his land” (Ezek 36:20). For the sake of this holy name, the Lord would have to act on behalf of Israel. In the rest of the oracle, the Lord makes it clear that the coming restoration is not for their sake, and it was certainly not because they earned it or deserved it that he was going to restore them. Rather, it is for the sake of his holy name and reputation, a display of his holiness (36:22–23). The promise involves retrieving the people from the nations and restoring them to their own land. In language drawn almost verbatim from Ezekiel 11:17–20, which itself relies on earlier images from Isaiah and Jeremiah, the Lord promises to cleanse them of their sins (Ezek 36:25), put a new spirit within

them, replacing their heart hard hearts with soft hearts and thus causing them to follow his laws (36:26–27). They will dwell in the land promised to their ancestors in an intimate covenant relationship, with abundant grain, fruit trees, and other life-sustaining crops, so they will never suffer famine (36:28–30). So abundant will be the provision that all Israel will be ashamed for their past iniquities, convinced that God is acting not for their sake but for his own (36:31–32).

At the time of their cleansing from sin, the cities will be rebuilt, and the desolate lands will be tilled and become so fruitful that those who see it will declare, “This land that was desolate has become like the garden of Eden, and the waste and desolate and ruined towns are now inhabited and fortified” (36:33–35). Even without explicitly mentioning the Edenic conditions of the restored and renewed land, the imagery of reversing the chaos of judgment to order through construction and cultivation was already obvious in the passage. Also, the bounty of the earth and the increase through planting and growing as well as the multiplication of the people “like sheep” (36:37–38) all point back to the original purpose of humanity in fulfilling their *Imago Dei* mission to be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and to tend the garden (Gen 1:26–27; 2:15). Thus, we see hints at the concept of a progressive *edenification* of creation starting in Jerusalem and the holy land and extending outward—so obvious that eventually the surrounding nations notice the Lord’s handiwork. That these things will certainly come to pass in the future is made clear with the Lord’s words of promise: “I, the Lord, have spoken, and I will do it” (Ezek 36:36).

Gowan sees in Ezekiel 36:22–38 a “comprehensive picture of the ideal future,” a pattern that includes almost everything the Old Testament affirms about the coming restoration: “For God to make things right, a threefold transformation of the world as it now is will be required. God must transform the human person; give a new heart and new spirit (Ezek 36:25–27). God must transform human society; restore Israel to the promised land, rebuild cities, and make Israel’s new status a witness to the nations (36:24, 28, 33–36). And God must transform nature itself, to make the produce of the land abundant and to banish hunger forever (36:30, 35).”<sup>64</sup>

**Ezekiel 37:12–28.** In the famous vision of the valley of dry bones, Ezekiel uses the resurrection of skeletal remains as an illustration of the future restoration of the nation of Israel. The Lord shows Ezekiel a valley of dry bones and tell him to prophesy to the bones that the Lord will restore their bodies and their breath so they will live again (37:1–6). Ezekiel obediently prophesies to the bones in the vision, and their physical bodies are restored, though they are not yet animated with breath. As Ezekiel prophesies again, breath from the four winds comes upon them, and they stand to their feet like a vast army (37:7–10).

The Lord then interprets the resurrection of the dry bones as “the whole house of Israel” (37:11). Even though the people in Ezekiel’s day felt as good as dead and without hope, the Lord promises, “Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people, and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am

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<sup>64</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 2.

the Lord when I open your graves and bring you up from your graves, O my people. I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord” (Ezek 37:12–14). Though the vision seems to refer primarily to the restoration of Israel as a nation, Irenaeus of Lyons applies the prophecy of resurrection in Ezekiel 37:12–14 to the future resurrection in the coming kingdom (*Haer.* 5.15.1; 5.34.1). Later revelation does tell us that the ultimate restoration of Israel would occur after the return of Christ, which will also correspond with the resurrection of the dead of all ages, so Irenaeus’s connection here is not without justification. It is possible that the prophecy has a double intention—the vision of a resurrection of individual bodies represents the spiritual resurrection of the nation of Israel; yet for all Israel ultimately to be restored and all the patriarchs and righteous Israelites to enjoy the blessings of the promised land, they will need to be resurrected.

Finally, through an object lesson of the unification of two sticks (Ezek 37:15–18), the Lord promises that he will one day reunite Israel and Judah “that they may be one in my hand” (37:19). That is, God will restore both the outcasts of the northern kingdom of Israel and southern kingdom of Judah “to their own land,” uniting them forever as one kingdom under one king (37:20–22). They will be cleansed from all their sins and delivered from their evils—never again to defile themselves with any sort of transgressions; then, says the Lord, “Then they shall be my people, and I will be their God (37:23).

Having briefly mentioned the “one king” who will reign over a united Israel and Judah (37:22), the Lord specifies that this future king will be God’s servant, David—that is, the Davidic king and heir of the Davidic promises (37:24). He will reign forever over the nation, which will increase with children for generations to come (37:25). This new condition will be a “covenant of peace” and “an everlasting covenant” (37:26). God’s sanctuary will be among them forever, establishing an intimate relationship between God and his people (37:27–28).

**Ezekiel 39:25–29.** After the prophecy against Gog and details of that eschatological battle (Ezek 38:1–39:24), and before the grand but enigmatic vision of the new temple (Ezek 40–48),<sup>65</sup> a brief summary of the restoration of Israel appears in Ezekiel 39:25–29. All the language and imagery in that section conforms to what has already been declared repeatedly not only in Ezekiel but also in Isaiah and Jeremiah. The fortunes of Jacob will be restored for the sake of the Lord’s holy reputation (39:25). They will dwell securely in the land when the Lord brings all of them back from the nations where they were scattered (39:26–28). The Lord will reveal himself again to Israel after a period of hiding his face from them, at which time he will pour out his Spirit upon the house of Israel (39:29; cf. Isa 32:15).

**Daniel 2:44–45.** While the majority of Nebuchadnezzar’s apocalyptic dream of the statue in Daniel 2 rehearses the succession of empires since Babylon and their oppression of (or at least

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<sup>65</sup> For a discussion of the vision of Ezekiel’s temple in 40–48, see *The Fathers on the Future*, chapter 14.

control over) Israel, the climax of the dream relates to the establishment of a future kingdom in this world that will put an end to all previous kingdoms. In his interpretation of the dream, Daniel recounts that final scene: “As you looked on, a stone was cut out, not by human hands, and it struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay and broke them in pieces. Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were all broken in pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors, and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth” (Dan 2:34–35).

The interpretation is found in verses 44–45: “And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom (מלכו) that shall never be destroyed (לעלמין לא תתחבל), nor shall this kingdom be left to another people. It shall crush all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever (תקום לעלמין), just as you saw that a stone was cut from the mountain not by hands and that it crushed the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold.” The prophecy that the future kingdom “will never be destroyed” (לעלמין לא תתחבל) is the same in Daniel 7:14—“His kingship is one that shall never be destroyed (מלכותה די-לא תתחבל).”

Irenaeus applies the events described here not to the progress and victory of the church in this age but to the future kingdom that will appear at the time of the resurrection: “If therefore the great God showed future things by Daniel, and confirmed them by His Son; and if Christ is the stone which is cut out without hands, who shall destroy temporal kingdoms, and introduce an eternal one, which is the resurrection of the just” (*Haer.* 5.26.2). Many today interpret the kingdom, established at the destruction of the statue, as the church’s spiritual kingdom—a view of both amillennial and postmillennial interpreters. However, Tanner makes the following counter-arguments against the view “that the kingdom spoken of in Dan 2:44 was established at Christ’s first coming (and any equation of this kingdom with the church)” and concludes, “Although there is a sense in which the kingdom is *now*, i.e., during this church age, it seems that Scripture puts the emphasis on the *formal* establishment of the kingdom that will come about at our Lord’s return in glory. It is this latter idea of the kingdom that Dan 2:44 speaks about—that formal inauguration of the kingdom at Christ’s return.”<sup>66</sup>

**Daniel 7:13–14, 26–27.** Whereas the four successive empires from Babylon to Rome were symbolized in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar by a statue (Dan 2), the same series of empires are symbolized in Daniel’s vision in chapter 7 by four beasts. In the history of the fourth beast, “terrifying and dreadful” (7:7) with ten horns (7:8), a little horn appears among them, with human eyes and a mouth “speaking arrogantly” (7:8). When the Ancient One takes his throne and begins to exercise judgment (7:9–10), the beast of the little horn is slain (7:11–12). Then, in its place, “one like a human being” (literally, “like a son of man”) comes on the clouds of heaven: “And he came

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<sup>66</sup> J. Paul Tanner, *Daniel*, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary, ed. H. Wayne House and William D. Barrick (Bellingham, WA: Lexham, 2020), 206.



to the Ancient One and was presented before him” (7:13).<sup>67</sup> The image is similar to that of Jeremiah 30:21, where the Lord referred to a “prince” (אדיר) and “ruler” (משל) who will come from among the people of Israel at the time of the future restoration of the nation: “I will bring him near, and he shall approach me, for who would otherwise dare to approach (קרב) me?” (Jer 30:21). The equivalent Aramaic term קרב is used in Daniel 7:13 in the vision of the “son of man” who “came (מטה) to the Ancient One” and “was presented (קרב) before him.” Thus, the referent in Daniel’s vision in 7:13–14 is the same as the referent in Jeremiah 30:21—the Davidic king (30:9; cf. 5).

This is confirmed by the language and imagery of Daniel 7:14, which would no doubt bring to mind imagery of the coming kingdom from earlier prophets: “To him was given dominion and glory and kingship, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.” The language also recalls a major theme of the original Imago Dei mission, as Baldwin notes: “The original goal ‘have dominion’ (Gen. 1:28) is fulfilled in the one like a son of man who is given a kingdom that shall not be destroyed.”<sup>68</sup> Reference to rule over many peoples and nations reflects language from Isaiah 2:4; 11:10; 60:12. And “glory” is repeatedly associated with the coming messianic age (Isa 4:5; 60:19; Jer 33:9, etc.). Thus, it is no surprise that, “Judaism in the first century CE and later interpreted Daniel 7.13 messianically. While Jewish interpreters developed no title and no unified messianic conception from this passage, they did generally regard the ‘one like a son of man’ as the Messiah.”<sup>69</sup>

In the interpretation of this portion of the vision (Dan 7:27), the individual who looked “like a human being (כבר אנוש)”, (the “Son of Man”), is explained not as an individual but as a plurality—“The kingship and dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the holy ones of the Most High (לעם קדישי עליונים); their kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them” (cf. Dan 7:18). Thus, the “Son of Man” symbol in the vision is interpreted as a corporate body of rulers who will reign over the coming kingdom.<sup>70</sup> Casey notes, “In the foundational source, Dan. 7.13, כבר אנוש, ‘one like a son of man’, is a pure symbol of the Saints of the Most High.”<sup>71</sup> Gowan also takes the same position

<sup>67</sup> For a history of interpretation on the identity of the Son of Man see Mogens Müller, *The Expression ‘Son of Man’ and the Development of Christology: A History of Interpretation* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>68</sup> Joyce G. Baldwin, *Daniel: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries, vol. 23 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1978), 166.

<sup>69</sup> Delbert Burkett, *The Son of Man Debate: A History and Evaluation* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 122–123.

<sup>70</sup> While the first clause is clearly plural—לעם קדישי עליונים—some manuscripts switch to the singular in the second clause—מלכותה (“his kingdom”)—which is the reading of the MT. However, some Aramaic manuscripts read מלכותיה (“their kingdom”), as does the second-century Greek translation by Theodotion. In any case, the interpretation certainly views the vision of the Son of Man as having a corporate fulfillment to some degree.

<sup>71</sup> Maurice Casey, *The Solution to the ‘Son of Man’ Problem* (New York: T&T Clark, 2009), 114. Though correct in principle—the “Son of Man” symbol is interpreted corporately in Dan 7:18, 27—denying the possibility that the Son of Man includes both an individual messianic figure and his co-regents neglects the already-established understanding that the messiah will reign with a plurality rulers (Isa 32:1). And Casey’s narrowing of the referent of “Saints of the

that an individual identification of the Son of Man is excluded by the corporate interpretation: “As beastly figures represent the pagan nations, then, a human figure represents the people of God.”<sup>72</sup> This corporate interpretation in the prophecy of Daniel itself must not be ignored. However, in light of the revelation of Jesus as the Son of Man, and the incorporation of the church as the body of Christ, it is best to avoid a false choice that forces us to interpret the passage either as an individual Messiah or as a corporate body of saints.<sup>73</sup> Rather, the imagery can accommodate both.<sup>74</sup> In any case, the language and imagery of Daniel 7 with regard to the coming kingdom, though brief and compact, is consistent with the picture of the coming kingdom in previous prophets. This is why, understandably, Irenaeus regards the coming of the Son of Man on the clouds in Daniel 7:13–14 as a reference to Christ’s second coming to establish his kingdom (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.20.11; 4.33.2).

**Daniel 9.** The prophecy of the “seventy weeks” has been described as “possibly . . . the most difficult passage to interpret in all the Old Testament.”<sup>75</sup> For our purposes in surveying passages regarding the coming kingdom, we can mostly avoid the most difficult problems related to the commencement and conclusion of the period of the “seventy weeks” and how they fit with post-exilic history and the advent of the Messiah. At this point, a brief overview of the passage and its relationship to earlier language and imagery of the coming kingdom is sufficient.<sup>76</sup>

While reading the book of Jeremiah, the prophet Daniel learned that seventy years of exile must be accomplished before the people could return to Jerusalem (Dan 9:1–2). In response, Daniel began praying and fasting to God for his people (9:3–19). The Lord then sent his angel, Gabriel, to Daniel with a message that involved a new set of “seventies” — “Seventy weeks are decreed for your people and your holy city: to finish the transgression, to put an end to sin, and to atone for iniquity,

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Most High” to just “a description of the people of Israel” does not allow for the later revelation of union with Christ in the corporate body of the church.

<sup>72</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 38–39.

<sup>73</sup> Tanner falls into this either/or trap when he rejects the “collective or personification view” in favor of the “messianic view,” when these two views can be held together Christologically and ecclesiologically, it naturally avoids neglecting important assertions in Dan 7:18, 27 that indisputably interpret the Son of Man corporately. See Tanner, *Daniel*, 433–443.

<sup>74</sup> Orelli notes, “The antithesis to the earthly powers requires that this divine kingdom, now entering into visibility, should have its visible Head. And this can be no other than the long-expected *Messiah* appearing at the right time. . . . Certainly this ruler must also have a people exercising dominion in conjunction with him. In the application of the vision to present historical circumstances (vii. 18, 22, 27) only the people is spoken of, *i.e.* the saints who have remained faithful will receive dominion; for the approaching ruler is their own, the Head given them by heaven, in whom they are concentrated, and to whom they stand in reciprocal relation” (Conrad von Orelli, *The Old Testament Prophecy of the Consummation of God’s Kingdom, Traced in Its Historical Development*, trans. J. S. Banks [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1892], 459–60). Ridderbos suggests the “Son of Man” in the vision is a literal individual, while the plural “saints of the Most High” in 7:18 is not an interpretation of the symbol of the Son of Man but an additional number who have a share in the reign (Ridderbos, *Coming of the Kingdom*, 7).

<sup>75</sup> Tanner, *Daniel*, 543.

<sup>76</sup> This issue will be revisited in chapter 17 of *The Fathers on the Future* in a discussion of the future tribulation period as conceived by Irenaeus.

to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal both vision and prophet, and to anoint a most holy place” (9:24). All these elements point to a period when transgression and sin are finally and utterly abolished, when real righteousness is established forever and all visions and prophecies fulfilled, as Baldwin notes: “We are being told about the final triumph of God’s kingdom and the end of human history.”<sup>77</sup>

From the perspective of second-temple Judaism, these things can only have been partially fulfilled. They must await a future full realization. And from the perspective of Christianity, sin and transgression were “atoned for” in a spiritual sense, but to “finish” and “put an end” to them in this world awaits the second coming of Christ, as does the ushering in of everlasting righteousness. Thus, the idea that the ultimate conclusion of the seventy weeks (of years) awaits a future period became popular among early Christian readers like Irenaeus of Lyons and Hippolytus of Rome.<sup>78</sup>

After surveying the Jewish understanding of the seventy weeks in the second temple period, Dean Ulrich concludes:

Second Temple literature demonstrates how early Judaism read the seventy sevens typologically. The Antiochene crisis and Maccabean deliverance were instances of humanity’s proclivity toward evil and God’s preservation of his redemptive plan that includes his people’s inheritance. As instances, the Antiochene crisis and Maccabean deliverance could represent and foreshadow other such moments in history. Josephus, for example, considered Rome’s destruction of the Jerusalem temple a recapitulation of Antiochus IV’s desecration of the temple.... God’s Word, especially the apocalyptic sections, has typological depth that can address new but similar situations. The Antiochene crisis was not the end of redemptive history. The prophecy of the seventy sevens may have the Antiochene crisis as its primary focus, but redemptive history has seen other challenges to God’s plan. Because the same spirit of rebellion influences the human actors in each of these instances of hostility, what God says about evil and its solution on one occasion can paradigmatically apply to another.

Therefore, it may be proposed that Jesus, Matthew, Mark, and Hippolytus were not reading Daniel’s seventy sevens in an unprecedented way. Rather, they were following the typological example of the OT and early Judaism. The prophecy of the seventy sevens assures God’s people at any time that evildoers have limits and that God’s people will inherit the earth. God has been establishing and will establish his kingdom on earth.<sup>79</sup>

I do not rule out *a priori* the possibility that the prophecy of the seventy weeks had an initial fulfillment (or partial fulfillments) at the time of Antiochus IV, the coming of Christ, the

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<sup>77</sup> Baldwin, *Daniel*, 188.

<sup>78</sup> For a brief history of the interpretation of the seventy weeks, see Baldwin, *Daniel*, 191–197.

<sup>79</sup> Dean R. Ulrich “How Early Judaism Read Daniel 9:24–27,” *OTE* 27.3 (2014): 1079–80.

destruction of the temple in the first century, and/or a future fulfilment at the time of a coming antichrist figure prior to the return of Christ.<sup>80</sup> However, such a partial fulfillment does not conform to the ultimacy of the language of Daniel 9:24.

**Hosea 1:10–11; 2:14–23; 3:4–5.** Immediately after a scathing pronouncement that Israel will be judged severely for their sin (Hos 1:2–5), that he will show no pity on them nor forgive them (1:6)—though Judah will be shown mercy (1:7)—he says, “You are not my people, and I am not your God” (1:9). Yet this horrifying declaration is suddenly reversed with a promise of restoration in keeping with the language and imagery of the major prophets. In that restoration, the number of the people of Israel will be greatly increased, unable to be numbered, and “in the place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ it shall be said to them, ‘Children of the living God’” (Hos 1:10). The people of Israel and Judah will be reunited under one head (דוד)—likely a reference to the one king, the Messiah.

In chapter 2, God further describes Israel’s future restoration after their punishment (Hos 2:1–13). In their wilderness of exile, God will “speak tenderly” to Israel (2:14), and she will respond to the Lord as they did in the first exodus from Egypt (2:15). Their estranged relationship will be restored in righteousness and justice, and Israel will “know the Lord” (2:16–17, 19–20). In that restoration, God will establish a covenant that will include peace among the wild animals and a banishment of all warfare (2:18). The land will be bountiful in its grain, wine, and oil (2:21; cf. Jer 31:12), and as God says, “You are my people,” Israel will say, “You are my God” (2:22). This language reflect the picture of restoration in the coming kingdom already well established in the major prophets.

Finally, Hosea 3:4–5 prophesies that Israelites will remain “without king or prince, without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim” (3:4); yet afterward, “the Israelites shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their king; they shall come in awe to the Lord and to his goodness in the latter days (באחרית הימים)” (3:5; cf. Jer 30:9). This passage predicts a long period of exile followed by restoration in the coming messianic age. It is not clear whether the initial statement that Israel will be “without sacrifice or pillar, without ephod or teraphim” indicates that in the restoration these things related to the priesthood and sacrificial system will occur in a rebuilt temple, when the Davidic king rules. The affirmation of restoration in 3:5 does not indicate that positively.

**Joel 2:18–3:1, 20.** Joel is well known for its extended treatment of the Day of the Lord theme and its vivid imagery related to that judgment. However, arising from the fire and smoke of the Day of the Lord, we see an extended section related to restoration (2:18–3:1) as well as a final promise near the very end of the book that “Judah shall be inhabited forever and Jerusalem to all generations” (Joel 3:20). On the heels of a description of the day of judgment, the Lord calls his

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<sup>80</sup> See discussion in Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets*, 313–317.

people to repentance: if they will turn to him with their whole hearts, even at the very brink of disaster, he will turn his wrath away from them and turn it against their gathering enemies (2:12–14). The plea for God’s people to repent includes the blowing of a trumpet to call a sacred assembly—old and young, bride, groom, and ministering priest—all are invited to cry out to God for mercy (2:15–17).

Verse 18 begins an account of the results of a sincere repentance and turning to God. In response to their cries for salvation, the Lord “became jealous for his land (לְאֶרֶץ) and had pity on his people (עַמּוֹ)” (2:18). In response, the Lord promises to send “grain, wine, and oil” to satisfy their hunger and thirst, and they will no more be a mockery among the nations (2:19; cf. Jer 31:12; Hos 2:21). Grain, wine, and oil were associated with the blessing on the people for covenant faithfulness (Deut 7:13; 11:14); and they were therefore also associated with sacrifices and tithes for the priesthood (Lev 23:13; Deut 18:4). As part of their deliverance from their enemies, the Lord will drive away the army that had gathered to destroy them (Joel 2:20).

The Lord’s blessing will reach to the “soil” (הָאֲדָמָה) as well as the grazing animals, who will experience lush, green pastures and trees that produce abundant fruit (2:21–22). Zion is called to rejoice because of the blessing of rain that will result in over-abundance of grain, wine, and oil (2:23–24). Their years of calamity will be reversed when the Lord dwells in their midst and they are blessed with plenty (2:25).

The restoration will also include unparalleled spiritual blessings. The Lord will pour out his spirit “on all flesh” so “your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female slaves, in those days I will pour out my spirit” (Joel 2:28–29). The Lord warns of signs in heaven and on earth: blood, fire, columns of smoke, the sun darkening, and the moon turning blood red—classic imagery associated with the coming day of the Lord. These things will happen “before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes” (2:30–31). Gowan observes, “It is a time in which an entire community will enjoy direct access to God, and if the verses that follow are to be associated with these, Joel connects this anthropological change with great cosmic disturbances—‘portents in the heavens and on earth’—and makes the community in Mount Zion the center of his interest (2:32).”<sup>81</sup>

It is not entirely clear whether the prophecy is now “rewinding” and explaining the day of the Lord judgments that will lead to the repentance of Israel and their resulting salvation (cf. 2:1–11), or if these events of 2:30–32 are meant to follow the time of restoration described in 2:18–29. The former explanation makes sense of the entire passage—the Lord is reminding them of the signs that will precede the “great and terrible day of the Lord” (2:31); then “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved, for in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls” (2:32). This, then, would correspond to the repentance and salvation that comes to Israel as a result of the future day of the Lord (cf. 2:11–18).

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<sup>81</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 75.

The chronological indicators that begin Joel 3:1–2 [4:1–2 in the MT], make it clear that the Day of the Lord will involve both judgment upon the nations as well as blessing upon Israel: “For then, in those days and at that time (בַּיָּמִים הַהֵמָּה וּבַעַת הַהִיא), when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat, and I will enter into judgment with them there, on account of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations.” Here Judah and Israel are restored and judgment is poured out on their enemies in keeping with the kingdom oracles of the other major and minor prophets.

**Amos 9:11–15; Obadiah 17–21.** Language and imagery of the Day of the Lord theme fills page after page of Amos’s dreadful prophecy. However, in the dark background of the imminent, inevitable, and seemingly irreversible destruction of Israel, Amos 9:11–15 stands as a bright ray of hope at the conclusion of the book that reflects much of the restoration language already seen in the other major and minor prophets: restoration of the Davidic kingdom, miraculous abundance in vineyards and gardens, and rebuilding the cities of Israel, never to be uprooted again. Nel notes that the “closing verses of the book (9:11–15) transfer one to a totally different world.... One wakes up in what seems like a fairyland. The hills drip with must and the mountains flow with sweet wine. Agricultural activities depict and overabundance. In fact, Yahweh is at work. He is restoring the fallen booth of David and repairing its breaches (9:11). The sword of destruction which dangled over Israel’s head in the preceding chapters is replaced by a trowel. He is changing the lot of his people (9:14) and is planting them in the land he gives them, never again to be uprooted (9:15).”<sup>82</sup> Gowan notes, “Amos indulges in a kind of hyperbole much loved by the rabbis in later times (9:13–14). The days are coming when the harvest will be so large that the work will not be finished before the next planting time.”<sup>83</sup>

Even the tiny, single-chapter book of Obadiah, which focuses primarily on Edom’s judgment as well as the Day of the Lord upon the nations (Obad 15) concludes its message of woe with glorious language and imagery of ultimate restoration. Some on Mount Zion will escape the destruction of the day of the Lord, and “the house of Jacob” will be like purifying fire against Edom (Obad 17–18). What had once belonged to the enemies of Israel will be returned to the people to whom it had been promised (Obad 19–20): “Those who have been saved shall go up to Mount Zion to rule Mount Esau, and the kingdom shall be the Lord’s” (Obad 21).

**Micah 4:1–8.** Micah prophesied concerning “Samaria and Jerusalem”—the capitals of Israel in the north and Judah in the south—in the same generation as Isaiah (Mic 1:1), setting forth the Lord’s case against his people for breaking the covenant and warning of just judgment coming for

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<sup>82</sup> W. A. G. Nel, “Amos 9:11–15—An Unconditional Prophecy of Salvation during the Period of the Exile,” *Old Testament Essays* 2 (1984): 83–84. Partly because of the shocking transition from total destruction to glorious restoration, Nel did not believe Amos 9:11–15 was written by Amos himself (93).

<sup>83</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 102.

their sins (Mic 1:2–3:12). The result of this judgment is described in bleak terms: “Zion shall be plowed as a field; Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins, and the mountain of the temple a wooded height” (Mic 3:12). In stunning contrast, though, Micah 4:1 begins with a song of hope reflecting almost the exact language of Isaiah 2:2–4 in its opening lines (cf. Mic 4:1–3; Isa 2:2–4).<sup>84</sup> (See discussion on Isaiah 2:1–4 above for explanations of the imagery in Mic 4:1–3.)

At Micah 4:4–8, the passages diverge, but Micah still echoes familiar language and imagery from other kingdom oracles in major and minor prophets. The promise that every person will “sit under their own vines and under their own fig trees” parallels Zechariah 3:10.<sup>85</sup> That they will have such peace that “no one shall make them afraid” echoes language from Jeremiah 30:10; 46:27; Ezekiel 34:28; and Zephaniah 3:13. That Israel will “walk in the name of the Lord” forever will be repeated in Zephaniah 10:12.

Through Micah, God promises to assemble the lame (cf. Isa 35:6; Jer 31:8; Zeph 3:19) and gather those who had been driven away and afflicted (cf. Isa 11:12); and from that remnant he will make a strong nation and reign over them in Mount Zion forever (Mic 4:6–7; cf. Isa 24:23; Obad 21)—the former dominion will be re-established in Jerusalem (Mic 4:8).

**Micah 5:2–6.** The picture of a future restoration emerges again, this time directly associated with the coming descendant of David. The famous messianic prophecy in Micah 5:2 identifies “one who is to rule in Israel” (להיות מושל בישראל)—“whose origin is from of old, from ancient days” (5:2). The final line may hint at a divine origin, or it could refer to the ancient line of David; thus, the coming of this ruler will be a fulfillment of the ancient Davidic promises. In any case, drawing from imagery of the nation of Israel writhing and groaning like a woman in labor because of their exile (4:10), Micah 5:3 says the people will be given up to exile until the labor gives way to the rebirth of the remnant of Israel: “Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has brought forth; then the rest of his kindred shall return to the people of Israel.” Gowan notes, “The reference to Bethlehem assures us that the subject is the son of David, that he is a ruler who will feed his flock... and that his rule will be associated with the restoration of his people, as in Ezekiel 34 and 37.”<sup>86</sup> The third person masculine suffix in “the rest of his brothers (יתר אחיו)” likely refers to the ruler born in Bethlehem—the Messiah. The remnant of Israel will be in exile until a future time when the woman—Israel in travail—gives birth, either to the remnant itself or to a company somehow related to that remnant (Mic 5:3).

In any case, the overall picture is clear: a ruler will ultimately re-establish Israel and gather the remnant. Verse 4 says that this future ruler will feed his flock in the Lord’s strength and majesty,

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<sup>84</sup> Besides the inclusion or exclusion of some adjectives, the most noticeable difference between Isa 2:2–4 and Mic 4:1–3 is the transposition of “nations” (גוים) and “peoples” (עמים) in the parallel lines in Mic 4:1–2, 3.

<sup>85</sup> The language is also used in 1 Macc 14:12, among other imagery that suggests a kind of partial realization of the blessings of peace and security anticipated in the major and minor prophets—though that stability is short-lived even in 1 Maccabees itself (cf. 1 Macc 14–16).

<sup>86</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 36.

and Israel will live securely as the king of peace himself “shall be great to the ends of the earth” (5:4–5). Even if Israel is invaded from the north, the rulers over the land will rescue Israel, guaranteeing deliverance (5:5–6). This hypothetical scenario illustrates the righteous might wielded not only by the Davidic ruler but by the plurality of shepherds and rulers who will reign over Israel at the time (cf. Isa 32:1; Dan 7:27).

**Zephaniah 2:7, 9; Zephaniah 3:9–20.** In an oracle primarily related to the Day of the Lord, the Lord promises that a remnant of the house of Judah will remain (2:7), and they will ultimately plunder and possess the enemies of Israel (2:9). Despite these brief sparks of hope, most of Zephaniah rehearses the coming judgments on Jerusalem and the nations for their obstinate sin and rebellion, employing vivid Day of the Lord imagery (2:10–3:8).

However, the book concludes with astonishing images of hope and restoration. After the day of the Lord judgments, the Lord will purify the speech of the peoples (עַמִּים) so they will call on the Lord and serve him (3:9), bringing an offering to the Lord from afar (3:10). Whether this refers to the people of Israel or to the nations as well is not clear, though עַמִּים usually refers to many peoples—i.e., nations—rather than the single nation of Israel, which is usually indicated by the singular עַם. In any case, the nation of Israel will be cleansed of its pride and delivered from its corrupt, haughty rulers, replaced by a remnant of Israel who are “humble and lowly,” who will be completely righteous, live in peace, and never be afraid (3:11–13; cf. Jer 30:10; 46:27; Ezek 34:28; and Matt 5:3–10).

At that time, Israel will rejoice because God himself will be in their midst ruling as king (Zeph 3:14–15). Because of the peace and security finally experienced under God’s rule, the weak will be strengthened (3:16; cf. Isa 35:3), the lame will be saved (Zeph 3:19; cf. Isa 35:6; Jer 31:8). Outcasts will be gathered and will no longer suffer reproach or shame throughout the world (Zeph 3:17–19). As Israel’s fortunes are restored and they are gathered together once again, the fame of Israel will spread over all the earth (3:20). In short, the experience of desolation, rejection, and judgment because of their sins will be entirely reversed as they are restored to the land under the rule of their king, the Lord God of Israel. Gowan writes, “The reversal of fortune, God’s promise to make right all that has gone wrong with this world and human life, the essence of OT eschatology, is well represented in this short collection of assurances and promises focused on Zion. God’s people will be gathered, unfortunate individuals (lame and outcast) will have shame turned into praise, and there will be no more cause to fear evil, for God will cast out their enemies.”<sup>87</sup>

**Zechariah 2:4–12; 8:1–23.** The priest-prophet Zechariah prophesied after the partial return of exiles from Babylon in the sixth century BC. The specific historical context relates to the program of rebuilding the second temple in Jerusalem. The genre primarily includes symbolic apocalyptic

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<sup>87</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 15.



visions like those of Daniel. Five scenes of restoration similar to earlier major and minor prophets contribute to the Old Testament picture of the coming kingdom.

In the vision of the man with the measuring line, the angel promises that the same Jerusalem that had languished during exile will overflow with a growing population of both people and animals (2:4), for God will protect them and dwell among them (2:5). Though this could have application to the ultimate eschatological restoration, in context it probably refers to the protection and presence of God among his people in their restoration to the land after the Babylonian exile. This is confirmed by the urgent call to return from the lands of captivity (2:6–8). The nations to which God’s people had been exiled would themselves suffer calamity and defeat (2:9). Even the rousing language in verses 10–12 likely find their fulfillment in the immediate historical context of return from exile.

This passage contains a distinction between the Lord (יהוה) who is sent (and is speaking) and the Lord (יהוה) who sends the speaker. The Christological implications are intriguing; but the passage need not refer to the incarnate son of God coming as Messiah in an ultimate fulfillment of these things, since a case can be made that in the Old Testament a distinction is made between יהוה as the Angel of the Lord/Word of the Lord and יהוה as the one who sends that personal manifestation of the presence of God. In that case, the figurative language of Zechariah 2:1–13 would be fulfilled in the post-exilic second-temple period.

The same can be said of the language of regathering, restoration, rebuilding, and blessing in Zechariah 8:1–8. Though it could have application to a far-future, eschatological kingdom, it most naturally reads as an image of what would result from a complete return to Zion by the exiles. In fact, it can be said that the historical return after the exile did reflect the language of this prophecy, understanding, of course, that the imagery uses figures of speech. Yet even if the immediate application of the passage is found in the generation of Zechariah—“in these days (בִּימֵי הָאֵלֶּה)” (8:15)—some of the more hyperbolic or exalted descriptions of restoration may be seen as dependent upon a fully obedient response described in 8:16–19. That is, Zechariah presents a restoration that will be fulfilled his days, yet that restoration would give way to maximal blessing if Judah returns with their hearts as well.

On the glorious vision of Zion in Zechariah 8, Gowan writes, “The good life that Zechariah projects for the inhabitants of Jerusalem is a mixture of the material and the spiritual. Peace, prosperity, and security are dominant themes, but this is no secular city. What makes it all possible is God, who carries out his purpose (8:2, 6, 11, 13b-15), and the source of the good life in Zion is the presence of Yahweh in its midst.”<sup>88</sup>

**Zechariah 9:9–10:12.** Unlike the promises in Zechariah 2 and 8 that could refer primarily to the post-exilic period and secondarily apply to an ultimate, eschatological fulfillment, the prophecy of Zechariah 9–10 draws on language and imagery more naturally associated with the coming

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<sup>88</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology of the Old Testament*, 6.

messianic kingdom. It begins with the announcement of the coming of the “king” (מֶלֶךְ), who comes with humility and righteousness, riding on a donkey (9:9). After defeating all his enemies, the extent of his kingdom of peace will be “from sea to sea” and “to the ends of the earth” (9:10; cf. Isa 9:7; 11:1–5; 52:10).

In this context of the coming messianic king, the Lord makes this promise: “As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you (בְּדָם־בְּרִיתְךָ), I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit. Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double” (Zech 9:11–12). The phrase “blood of the covenant with you” could refer back to the covenant the Lord made with Abraham (Gen 15:7–20) or to the covenant the Lord made through Moses (Exod 24:8). The latter is less likely, because the context is one of restoration under the future king despite the unfaithfulness of Israel, and this restoration is connected rather to the new covenant as opposed to the old (Jer 31:31–34). Another possibility is that this is a cryptic reference to the blood of the new covenant of the Messiah himself, which would fit Zechariah’s context of the messianic king and the imagery of the new covenant restoration. At the Passover, Christ said, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood (τοῦτο τὸ ποτήριον ἡ καινὴ διαθήκη ἐν τῷ αἵματί μου τὸ ὑπέρ)” (Luke 22:20; cf. Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24). Hebrews even calls it the “blood of the eternal covenant (διαθήκης αἰωνίου)” (Heb 13:20). In Isaiah 55:3, the Lord promises Israel, “I will make with you an everlasting covenant (LXX, διαθήκην αἰώνιον), my steadfast, sure love for David.”

The remainder of Zechariah 9 flashes images of God waging war against his enemies, but his people will not only be restored to double honor, they will be mediators of his judgment (Zech 9:12–17; cf. Isa 61:7). Along with the restoration, the Lord will provide plenty of grain and wine (9:17) as well as rain to water the fields (10:1). Though the Lord will punish the deceptive diviners and wicked leaders (10:2–3), he will care for his flock and execute judgment through them (10:3–5). Both Judah and Joseph—reunited—will be saved from the nations to which they had been scattered and return to the land with jubilation, so they and their children will “walk in his name” (10:6–12; cf. Mic 4:5).

**Zechariah 12:10–13:3.** Following a passage with strong Christological implications, the Lord promises to one day pour out a “spirit of compassion and supplication on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem” with the result that, literally, “they will look on me whom they have pierced” (הִבִּיטוּ אֵלַי אֶת אֲשֶׁר־דָּקְרוּ) (Zech 12:10). The result will be mourning and weeping bitterly for him, like the loss of an only child (12:10). This mourning will result in mourning throughout all the family of Judah and Levi (12:11–14). As a result of this repentance, “On that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity” (Zech 13:1; cf. Jer 33:8). The land will be cleansed of its idolatry and false prophets (Zech 13:2–3).

The repentance that comes when people regard (בִּבֶט) the one whom they pierced is applied to the second coming of Christ in Revelation 1:7—“Look! He is coming with the clouds; every eye

will see him, even those who pierced him, and all the tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.” Jesus, too, appears to apply the scene from Zechariah 12:10–14, along with an allusion to Daniel 7:13 to the future coming of the Son of Man in glory: “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see ‘the Son of Man’ coming on the clouds of heaven’ with power and great glory” (Matt 24:39).

From a canonical-theological perspective, then, this connection of these passages to the future return of Christ as judge and king in the New Testament does not allow us to see the fulfilment of the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10–13:3 in the return of the exiles during the second temple period. Thus, its figurative language points forward to the restoration of Israel and Judah in connection with their repentance and the coming of the Davidic king to rule.

***Zechariah 14:5–21.*** Following a great battle of judgment and a theophany in which the Lord stands on the Mount of Olives (14:4), creating a valley to form that allows the remnant to escape, “the Lord my God will come with all his holy ones with him” (14:5). This will be accompanied by astonishing, miraculous climatic and cosmic changes (14:6–7), followed by “living waters” that “flow out from Jerusalem” to the east and the west (14:8).

Verse 10 describes Jerusalem rising above all the surrounding regions, which will become like a plain, echoing imagery of Isaiah 2:1. Terblanche notes that Zechariah, “deems the transformation of the known natural order vital for the fulfilment of these expectations. Since he has also applied other texts in a similar manner, he presents a telescoped form of Ezekiel 47:1–12 in Zechariah 14:8.”<sup>89</sup> Such a connection to Ezekiel 47, then, might endorse a more literal reading of Ezekiel’s temple imagery in Ezekiel 40–48, and *if* the future temple is literal, *then* its sacrifices would also be literal. That is, contrary to the de-emphasis on temple and sacrifices in the kingdom oracles in Isaiah and Jeremiah, the concluding chapters of Ezekiel would present a vivid, detailed expectation of just such a temple and sacrifices. However, one may also take the vision of the temple in Ezekiel as the best possible restoration under the old covenant, had Israel fully repented and actually followed the instructions for the rebuilding of the temple in Ezekiel 40–48, while Zechariah’s image transcends the imagery in the new covenant context. Terblanche points out some important differences between the vision of Ezekiel and that of Zechariah that may point in this direction:

In Ezekiel the waters flow eastwards towards the Dead Sea since the effects of the renewed presence of Yahweh are related to the land of Israel. In Zechariah the waters flow in two directions: One half of the waters flows towards the eastern sea and the other half towards the western sea... They are the borders of the inhabited world. The blessings which will flow from manifestation of Yahweh’s kingship will be universal.... This suits the author’s message of universal salvation...

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<sup>89</sup> M. D. Terblanche, “An Abundance of Living Waters: The Intertextual Relationship between Zechariah 14:8 and Ezekiel 47:1–12,” *Old Testament Essays* 17.1 (2004): 128.

Ezekiel sees the water coming out from under the threshold of the temple. Zechariah 14:8, on the other hand, states that the living water will flow from the city.... The author of Zechariah 14:1–15 did not simply imitate Ezekiel 47:1–12, but adopted it for his own needs...

In contrast to Ezekiel 47:1 no mention is made of the temple in Zechariah 14:8.<sup>90</sup>

Yet, the idea that Zechariah has completely forsaken the idea of a restored temple is dampened by the explicit mention of animal sacrifices in 14:21. This may lead to the conclusion that Zechariah is not describing a new covenant restoration that outdoes the old covenant expectation in Ezekiel, but simply presents a “telescoped form” of the imagery, assuming his readers were familiar with the vision of Ezekiel 47:1–12.<sup>91</sup> This has led many premillennialists to understand some kind of sacrificial system to be established during an intermediate millennial period, which will eventually give way to an eternal new creation without such temporary sacrifices.

Gowan summarizes the basic characteristics of Old Testament eschatology in four points, which I abbreviate here: 1) “Old Testament eschatology is a worldly hope. The OT does not scorn, ignore, or abandon the kind of life which human beings experience in this world in favor of speculation concerning some other, better place or form of existence, to be hoped for after death or achieved before death through meditation and spiritual exercises.” 2) “Old Testament eschatology understands the future to be completely in the hands of God.... The basis for hope in the OT is not faith in human progress, but the assurance of a coming divine intervention that will introduce a new thing that people have failed and will fail to accomplish.” 3) “Old Testament eschatology emphasizes human society more than personal salvation... Certainly the OT does not ignore the redemption of individuals, but it puts its strongest emphasis on the truth that full human life is life in community.” 4) “Old Testament eschatology is a comprehensive hope. The OT neither focuses on an improved social structure inhabited by the same kind of people who created the mess we are now in; nor does it promise that personal salvation will somehow make social problems go away; neither does it imagine that a healthy human society can exist without a wholesome interaction with the natural world.”<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Terblanche, “An Abundance of Living Waters,” 126.

<sup>91</sup> Terblanche, “An Abundance of Living Waters,” 127.

<sup>92</sup> Gowan, *Eschatology in the Old Testament*, 122–23.