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## Isaiah's Promise of the Restoration of Zion and Its Canonical Development

Gary E. Yates

*Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary*, [gyates@liberty.edu](mailto:gyates@liberty.edu)

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## **“Isaiah’s Promise of the Restoration of Zion and Its Canonical Development”**

Gary E. Yates, Ph.D.

### Introduction

For nearly three millennia, Isaiah’s prophecies of a peaceful kingdom centered in Zion have captured the human imagination and expressed the longings of the human heart.<sup>1</sup> These prophecies have also had a major influence in shaping the Christian vision of the kingdom reign of Jesus as Messiah and Lord.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this study is to examine the significance of Isaiah’s prophecies concerning the transformation of Zion from a canonical perspective. This study will set forth the meaning of Isaiah’s Zion prophecies in their historical context with sensitivity to the conventions of prophetic language and will then explore how the themes and images associated with Zion in Isaiah are developed with the progress of revelation in the New Testament.

### The Problems with Reading Prophetic Literature

Isaiah’s vision of Israel’s future hope reflects the basic themes and motifs associated with the restoration theology of the Old Testament prophets as a whole: 1) the return of Israel from exile; 2) the rise of an ideal Davidic ruler who would restore the dynasty; 3) the rebuilding of Jerusalem and its temple; and 4) the future blessing and prosperity of Israel that would lead the nations to submit to Israel’s God.<sup>3</sup> Though these elements are clear and prominent in the prophets, other factors contribute to ambiguity and uncertainty with regard to a proper understanding of the eschatological message of the prophets.<sup>4</sup> The prophets use poetic and highly figurative language in order to convey their message with maximum emotional appeal and to portray spiritual realities that are beyond the

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<sup>1</sup> For defense of the traditional view that eighth-century Isaiah is the author of the entire Isaianic corpus, see John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 1-39* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 17-28. For recognition of the literary unity of Isaiah from a more critical perspective, see Rolf Rendtorff, “The Book of Isaiah: A Complex Unity. Synchronic and Diachronic Reading in *New Visions of Isaiah* (ed. R. F. Melugin and M. A. Sweeney; JSOTSup 214; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1996), 32-49. Walter Brueggemann, “Unity and Dynamic in the Isaiah Tradition,” *JSOT* (1984): 89-107; Ronald Clements, “The Unity of the Book of Isaiah,” *Int* 36 (1982): 117-29.

<sup>2</sup> John Casian (d. 435) understood Jerusalem as having a fourfold sense in Scripture, referring: 1) historically to the city of the Jews; 2) allegorically to the church of Christ; 3) anagogically to the heavenly city of God; and 4) tropologically to the soul of man. See Richard M. Davidson, *Typology in Scripture: A study of hermeneutical topos structures* (Andrews University Seminary Doctoral Dissertation Series; Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1981), 25. For the history of Christian readings and interpretation of Isaiah, see Brevard S. Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004); and John F. A. Sawyer, *The Fifth Gospel: Isaiah in the History of Christianity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> See E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 77-90.

<sup>4</sup> See D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks: Rethinking the Language of Biblical Prophecy and Apocalyptic* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2002), 33-57.

experiences of their hearers and readers.<sup>5</sup> The majority of the prophets' preaching deals with the spiritual issues of their day, and predictive details about the distant future are often sketchy and unclear. Routledge comments, "The main concern of the OT is to emphasize the certainty of God's kingdom, rather than give a detailed description of it."<sup>6</sup> Sandy has also noted that the message of the Old Testament prophets has elements that are both "transparent" and "translucent." Old Testament prophecies are "transparent" in that they clearly point to the blessing of the righteous, the punishment of the wicked, and the ultimate realization of God's covenant promises. However, these prophecies are even more "translucent" in that they rarely elaborate on the specific timing and manner of fulfillment.<sup>7</sup> Sandy explains: "The nature of the language of prophecy means that it may be fulfilled with pinpoint accuracy or it may be fulfilled with similarity. It may be fulfilled immediately, or it may be fulfilled hundreds of years later."<sup>8</sup>

Two other factors complicate a Christian reading of the Old Testament prophets. First, with regard to their Old Testament context, the prophets spoke a message that was significantly shaped by the culture and thought patterns of their day. Waltke explains that the prophet's message is "God's word incarnate, adopted to the intellectual capacity of the people being addressed," and that as such, "takes its language and representations of the future from its context."<sup>9</sup> The prophet receives insight into the future, but this future is portrayed in ways that are appropriate and understandable to individuals living in the culture of ancient Israel and Judah. What the future ultimately holds, however, transcends the realities of the prophet's day.

Second, a Christian reading of the prophets requires a canonical perspective informed by "the Spirit-enabled conversation that takes place *within* and *between* the canonical books themselves."<sup>10</sup> While not imposing the New Testament upon the Old, canonical interpretation reflects an awareness of the need to understand how later revelation refines, clarifies, expands, and/or modifies the meaning of the original prophecy. Marshall explains that "texts that had a particular authentic meaning in their original setting may have a

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 58-74.

<sup>6</sup> Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2008), 279.

<sup>7</sup>Sandy (*Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*, 129-54) demonstrates the transparent and translucent nature of prophecy from prophecies that have already been fulfilled.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 154. In addition being translucent because of their metaphorical language, prophecies of the future can also be altered by the responses of individuals to those prophecies. For discussion of this feature of biblical prophecy, see Richard L. Pratt, Jr., "Historical Contingencies and Biblical Predictions," in *The Way of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Bruce K. Waltke* (ed. J. I. Packer and Sven K. Soderlund; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 180-203.

<sup>9</sup>Bruce K. Waltke with Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: an exegetical, canonical, and thematic approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 818. See also Peter Enns, *Inspiration and Incarnation: Evangelicals and the Problem of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005). Enns explains that the Bible "belonged in the ancient world that produced it. It was not an abstract otherworldly book dropped out of heaven. It was connected to and spoke to those ancient cultures" (p. 17). These cultural perspectives are "not extra elements we can discard to get to the real point, the timeless truths" (pp. 17-18).

<sup>10</sup> Kevin Vanhoozer, *The Drama of Doctrine: A Canonical-Linguistic Approach* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 331.

different authoritative meaning in a different setting.”<sup>11</sup> These canonical issues are particularly relevant to this study because of the degree to which the book of Isaiah has influenced the message of the New Testament.<sup>12</sup>

### Isaiah and the Future of Jerusalem

Webb has stated that Zion’s transformation “is the key to both the formal and thematic structure” of the book of Isaiah.<sup>13</sup> The Zion of Isaiah’s day has become a city of bloodshed, but God’s purging judgment will transform the city into a shining beacon of righteousness (1:21-26). The city under siege that is left like “a hut in a melon field” (1:8) will be restored so that it becomes Yahweh’s “majestic crown” and the “pride of the earth” (62:1-8). Because of divine grace, the unfaithful harlot (1:21) will become a pure and holy bride (62:4). Yahweh will take back Daughter Zion, the wife he sent away with a certificate of divorce, and the barren city will be so filled with inhabitants that her walls will not contain them (49:14-18; 50:1; 54:1-8; 62:5; 66:6-11). In a great reversal, Daughter Zion will be exalted as the great queen, Daughter Babylon, is stripped naked and taken away as a humiliated captive (47:1-15). Nations will stream to Zion to bring their tribute as they worship Yahweh and learn to live by his law (2:2-4; 60:1-3; 61:4-8). Central to Isaiah’s eschatological vision is the anticipation that Zion will become the central place on earth (“the highest of mountains”) and that the nations will live in peace and justice under Yahweh’s rule (2:1-4).

### Yahweh’s “Strange Work” of Judgment and Restoration

The transformation of Zion in the book of Isaiah is the culmination of Yahweh’s “strange work” on behalf of Zion (28:21; cf. 10:12). Yahweh must first fight against Zion by leading the nations that attack the city (29:1-4) but then in an instant, he will intervene on behalf of Zion and turn the invading armies into chaff (29:5-8). In the attack on Zion, Yahweh is like a lion roaring over its prey, but in preserving Jerusalem, he becomes like a mother bird hovering over her nest (31:4-5). Following Jerusalem’s time of judgment, the conquests and military exploits of Cyrus as Yahweh’s “messiah” will facilitate the rebuilding of Zion (44:28-45:8) and the return of the exiles (48:20-22; 49:14-26). In contrast to the stark realities of history, the restored Zion will forever be secure from enemy attack (33:20-24; 54:11-15; 60:18-25).<sup>14</sup> The portrayal of Israel’s restoration from Babylonian exile as a

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<sup>11</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 56.

<sup>12</sup> For an overview of the use of Isaiah in the NT, see Steve Moyise, ed., *Isaiah in the New Testament* (New York: T & T Clark, 2005).

<sup>13</sup> Barry Webb, “Zion in Transformation: a Literary Approach to Isaiah” in *The Bible in Three Dimensions: Essays in Celebration of Forty Years of Biblical Studies in the University of Sheffield* (JSOTSup 87; ed. D. J. A. Clines, S. Fowl, and S. E. Porter; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 65.

<sup>14</sup> The deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib and the Assyrians provides an immediate confirmation of Yahweh’s promise to ultimately protect and defend Zion from its enemies (cf. 28:16; 29:5-8; 30:19; 31:5-8; 33:5-6, 20-24; 35:10) and proves that Yahweh is capable of keeping the promise he has made

new or second exodus is a prominent motif in the second half of Isaiah.<sup>15</sup> In the same way that the first exodus climaxes with Yahweh's arrival at Sinai, the goal of the new exodus is the return to Zion, the rebuilding of the city, and Yahweh's enthronement there as king (44:26-28; 45:13; 51:9-11; 54:11-15; 60:1-9; 62:1-7).<sup>16</sup>

The purging of Jerusalem is necessary to restore Yahweh's design for Zion. The message of the book of Isaiah clearly reflects the influence of the "Zion tradition" celebrating Zion as the place of Yahweh's royal dwelling.<sup>17</sup> Paradoxically, the message of Isaiah both revises and affirms the tenets of the Zion tradition. Isaiah overturns the Zion tradition by stating that Yahweh will fight against Zion in order to bring judgment against Judah. Hayes states, "Isaiah radically changed the old Zion tradition by placing the onslaught and attacks of the enemies within the arena of God's activity and work."<sup>18</sup> However, the message of Isaiah also affirms the Zion tradition in promising the ultimate deliverance of Jerusalem from its enemies that will result in permanent blessing, peace, and security for the city.<sup>19</sup>

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to the city. The sustained Babylonian focus far beyond the time of the prophet Isaiah in chs. 40-66 is a unique feature of this prophetic corpus, but the important point conveyed by the unique structure of the book of Isaiah is that Yahweh's deliverance of Jerusalem from Assyria (chs. 1-38) proves that he is able to bring about the return from Babylonian exile promised in chs. 39-66.

<sup>15</sup> Note the exodus imagery in the following passages in Isa: 4:5-6; 10:26-27; 11:15-16; 31:5; 35:6-8; 43:1-2, 16-21; 44:27-28; 51:9-11; 52:10-12; 55:12-13. For the second exodus in Isaiah, see further Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), esp. 73-90, 140-82; Anthony R. Ceresko, 'The Rhetorical Strategy of the Fourth Servant Song (Isaiah 52:13-53:12): Poetry and the Exodus-New Exodus', *CBQ* 56 (1994): 42-55; Rikki E. Watts, 'Consolation or Confrontation: Isaiah 40-55 and the Delay of the New Exodus', *TynBul* 41 (1990): 31-53; Hans M. Barstad, *A Way in the Wilderness: The Second Exodus in the Message of 2 Isaiah* (JSSM 12; Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1989); Bernhard W. Anderson, 'Exodus and Covenant in Second Isaiah and Prophetic Tradition' in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Memory of G. Ernest Wright* (ed. Frank M. Cross et al; Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1976): 339-60; Dale Patrick, 'Epiphany Imagery in Second Isaiah: Potrayal of a New Exodus', *HAR* 8 (1984): 125-42.

<sup>16</sup> Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*, 81.

<sup>17</sup> The basic tenets of the Zion tradition include: 1) Zion is the height of Zaphon, the highest mountain as the dwelling place of God (Ps 48:3-4); 2) Zion is the source of the river(s) of paradise (Ps 46:5); 3) Zion is the locale of Yahweh's triumph over the waters of chaos (Ps 46:3); 4) Zion is the site of Yahweh's defeat of the enemy nations and rulers (Ps 46:7; 48:5-7; 76:4,6-7); and 5) Zion is the place to which the nations make pilgrimage to worship Yahweh (Isa 2:2-4= Mic 4:1-5). These motifs were originally identified by E. Rohland, "Die Bedeutung der Erwählungstraditionen Israel's für Eschatologie der alttestamentlichen Propheten," (unpublished D.Theol. dissertation, University of Heidelberg, 1956) and H. Wildeberger, "Die Völkerwallfahrt zum Zion. Jes. ii 1-5," *VT* 7 (1957): 62-81. For more recent discussion of the Zion traditions, see S. L. Klouda, "Zion," *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Wisdom, Poetry, and Writings*, 936-41; Jaap Dekker, *Zion's Rock-Solid Foundations: An Exegetical Study of the Zion Text in Isaiah 28:16* (OTS 54; Boston: Brill, 2007), 265-337; Thomas Renz, "The Use of the Zion Tradition in the Book of Ezekiel," in *Zion: The City of our God*, (ed. Richard S. Hess and Gordon J. Wenham; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 78-84; Ben C. Ollenburger, *Zion The City of the Great King: A Theological Symbol of the Jerusalem Cult* (JSOTSup 41; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987); J. J. M. Roberts, "Zion in the Theology of the Davidic-Solomonic Empire," in *Studies in the Period of David and Solomon* (ed. T. Ishida; Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1982): 93-108; J. D. Levenson, "Zion Traditions," *ABD* 6: 1098-1102; and J. H. Hayes, "The Tradition of Zion's Inviolability," *JBL* 82 (1963): 419-26.

<sup>18</sup> Hayes, "The Tradition of Zion's Inviolability," 426.

<sup>19</sup> The deliverance of Jerusalem from the Assyrians in 701 B.C. appears to have led to a fixed belief in Zion's inviolability that Judah's later prophets had to counter even more strongly than the prophet Isaiah did

Isaiah's reversal of the tradition of Yahweh fighting on behalf of Zion was ultimately due to the loss of the religious ideals that were foundational to Zion theology. Judgment is necessary to restore God's original intentions for the city of Jerusalem. The Psalms reflect the idea that worshippers at Jerusalem were to form a community of faith that entrusted its security and well-being to Yahweh's protection (cf. Ps 27:5; 91:2; 121). The Zion tradition did not merely call for faith in Yahweh; it demanded exclusive trust in Yahweh alone for security and deliverance. Ollenburger notes that "within the language of the Jerusalem cult tradition there is a clear and consistent emphasis on 'trust' with Yahweh as its exclusive object."<sup>20</sup> In the Zion psalms, Yahweh defeats Zion's enemies apart from human intervention or assistance (Pss 46:7; 48:5-8; 76:7). The security that Yahweh provides is for the "poor" who humbly acknowledge Yahweh as their king and entrust their lives and destiny to him (Pss 9:10-11; 33:18-21; 86:1-2).<sup>21</sup> The proper recognition of Yahweh's sovereignty includes the conviction that any other source of security is futile and vain (Pss 20:7-8; 33:13-17; 44:5-9).

In accordance with this demand for exclusive trust in Yahweh, the prophet Isaiah repudiates the attempt on the part of Judah's leaders to find security in human resources and military might (cf. Isa 14:28-32; 30:1-5; 31:1-3).<sup>22</sup> The prophet also condemns Judah's leaders for fortifying Jerusalem's walls and water supply rather than looking to Yahweh for protection (Isa 22:8-11).<sup>23</sup> The deliverance of Jerusalem in 701 B.C. comes about when Hezekiah turns from his own efforts to fortify the city and prays for Yahweh to act on behalf of the city (Isa 37:1-4, 14-35).<sup>24</sup> Isaiah's preaching does not subvert Zion theology but in fact calls Israel back to an authentic faith consisting of quiet confidence and trust in Yahweh's promises to protect Zion (30:15).<sup>25</sup> Yahweh's promises of protection are the "cornerstone" of security for Zion's future, while the political alliances to which Judah's leaders are so committed are nothing more than "a covenant with death" that will lead to destruction (28:14-19). It is the one who trusts in Yahweh's promise that will "not be dismayed" (28:16).

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in his own preaching (cf. Jer 7:1-4; 8:11). See Jonathan P. Sisson, "Jeremiah and the Jerusalem Conception of Peace," *JBL* 105 (1986): 429-42.

<sup>20</sup> Ollenburger, *Zion the City of the Great King*, 86.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 86-87.

<sup>22</sup> For further development of this theme in Isaiah, see M. Daniel Carroll, R., "Impulses Toward Peace in a Country at War," in *War in the Bible and Terrorism in the Twenty-First Century* (ed. R. S. Hess and E. A. Martens; BBRSup 2; Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 66-71. Carroll is careful to note that exclusive trust in Yahweh does not necessarily mean that Judah was to do nothing more than wait for Yahweh to act in a miraculous way, but the text seems to read in that way, and Isaiah sets forth no clear political or military or alternative to what the leaders of Judah had tried.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 67-68.

<sup>24</sup> The faith of Hezekiah contrasts to the earlier unbelief of Ahaz who trusted in military alliance with Assyria rather than Yahweh's promises of protection during the Syro-Ephraimite crisis of 734-732 B.C. See J. W. Olley, "'Trust in the Lord': Hezekiah, Kings, and Isaiah," *TynBul* 50 (1999): 59-77. For further development of the Ahaz-Hezekiah parallels in the narrative sections of Isa 7-9 and 36-39, see Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading Isaiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 34-51.

<sup>25</sup> Isaiah's call for calm and quiet faith in 30:15 parallels the exhortation in Ps 46:11 for Israel to "be still" and know that Yahweh is God. Note the recurring use of the verb "to trust" (יִָבַח) in Isa (12:2; 14:30; 26:3, 4; 30:12; 31:1; 32:9, 10, 11, 17; 34:4, 5; 36:6, 7, 9, 15; 37:10; 42:17; 47:8, 10; 50:10; 59:4).

The Zion tradition also holds forth high standards of righteousness for the worshippers of Yahweh at Jerusalem. The wicked cannot enter the presence of a holy God (Pss 15; 24:3-6). “Righteousness” and “justice” serve as the foundation of Yahweh’s throne, and Yahweh’s blessing is reserved for those who “hate evil” (Ps 97:2, 10-12). A common ancient Near Eastern conception is that justice is to emanate from the royal capital.<sup>26</sup> The Sumerian hymn to Enlil asserts concerning the temple city of Nippur: “Oppression and slander are not in her midst . . . righteousness and justice dwell in her.”<sup>27</sup> Ancient Near Eastern kings had a universal responsibility to practice justice, and in Israel, the king’s concern for justice and the rights of the underprivileged was to be a reflection of Yahweh’s concern for the poor and afflicted (cf. Pss 10:14, 17-18; 72:2-4; 82:3; Prov 31:8-9).<sup>28</sup>

Isaiah’s message of judgment against Jerusalem is based upon the fact that Judah is no longer worthy to stand in the presence of Yahweh at Zion. The condition of Isaiah as a “man of unclean lips” is reflective of the entire nation’s corruption before Yahweh (6:1-5). The same pride that led Judah to trust in human resources for security and protection also produced an attitude of indifference toward maintaining justice in the land. The twin standards of “justice” and “righteousness” will become the basis of Yahweh’s judgment against Jerusalem so that the city will be purged of evil (1:25-26; 33:5-6; 62:1-2). The wicked responsible for the corruption of the city will be removed so that only those individuals whose lives conform to Yahweh’s standards will remain (1:27-28; 4:3-4; 29:19-21; 33:14-16). The ideal Davidic ruler will become Yahweh’s instrument for establishing and maintaining “justice and righteousness” in the land (9:7; 11:4-5; 32:1-8). The fulfillment of God’s intention for the Davidic king will make possible the realization of all that God designed for Zion. The ideal of Zion’s absolute security will become a reality (4:5-6; 33:20-24; 52:1-2; 54:15-17) because there will never again be the need for God to bring judgment against a disobedient Jerusalem.

#### The Problem of Fulfillment in Isaiah 40-66

Even within the book of Isaiah, ambiguities and problems emerge regarding how to properly understand the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies of Zion’s restoration. Isaiah 40-66 reflects two particular and related tensions concerning the fulfillment of the Zion promises. The first tension is that the book of Isaiah connects the restoration of Zion with the return from Babylonian exile, but the return from exile hardly fulfilled all that Yahweh had promised. As Routledge notes, post-exilic Israel came to realize that “the return was not as glorious as the people expected. It did not result in the establishment of God’s kingdom, and, from the way old sins quickly re-emerged, it was clear that the crisis of the

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<sup>26</sup> Moshe Weinfeld, “Zion and Jerusalem as Religious and Political Capital: Ideology and Utopia,” in *The Poet and the Historian: Essays in Literary and Historical Biblical Criticism* (HSS 26; Chico, Calif: Scholars, 1983), 99-100.

<sup>27</sup> For a full translation of this hymn, see *ANET*, 573-75.

<sup>28</sup> See Keith Whitelam, *The Just King: Monarchical Judicial Authority in Ancient Israel*, (JSOTSup 12; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1979), 17-37. Whitelam provides parallels from Mesopotamia (pp. 19-24), Syria-Palestine (pp. 24-25), and Egypt (pp. 26-28) in order to demonstrate the pervasiveness of this concept in the ancient Near East.

exile had not brought about the hoped-for inward renewal.”<sup>29</sup> What Isaiah portrays as a single event in fact contains elements that were immediately fulfilled with the return from exile but other distant elements that remain unfulfilled and are pushed into the distant future. The prophet’s vision of the future (or the vision of the series of prophets reflected in canonical Isaiah) does not clearly distinguish between the mountain ranges of near and far. Waltke observes, “The prophets represent their heralded events as occurring on the same historical horizon, but their occurrences may in fact prove to be separated by ages.”<sup>30</sup> The only other conclusions one could draw concerning the Zion promises in Isaiah are that the prophet was simply wrong in his projections about the future or that he merely portrayed the return from exile in highly idealized rhetoric, conclusions that are certainly compatible for those who approach the text without a faith-based hermeneutic but which are also incompatible with the canonical witness of the Scriptures as a whole.

The second related tension, which actually explains the reason for the delay in Israel’s complete restoration, is the tension between the unconditional and conditional aspects of Isaiah’s message. The unconditional aspects of Yahweh’s promises to Zion mean that they are certain as to their ultimate fulfillment, but the conditional components of the prophecy mean that the timing of the fulfillment is uncertain and open-ended. Adams notes that Isaiah 40 opens with the announcement that Israel’s punishment is over and that Yahweh is returning to Jerusalem with his people (40:1-11) but also that chapters 40-55 as a whole function as a call for Israel to reciprocate Yahweh’s act by turning back to him.<sup>31</sup> Employing speech-act theory, Adams demonstrates the performative function of Isaiah 40-55 in calling the exiles to “forsake sin, acknowledge and confess Yahweh as God alone, and embrace the role of his servant.”<sup>32</sup> The people must choose for themselves to remain in Babylon or to return with Yahweh to Jerusalem (44:22; 48:20; 52:1-2, 11-12).<sup>33</sup>

In the second half of Isaiah, the military conquests of Cyrus as Yahweh’s “messiah” set the stage for the rebuilding of Jerusalem (44:24-45:4). Daughter Zion is exalted at the same time that Daughter Babylon is humiliated and her impotent gods are exposed as frauds (46-47). Isaiah envisions the rebuilding of the “ancient ruins” of Jerusalem so that Zion

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<sup>29</sup> Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 267.

<sup>30</sup> Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 820. The prime example is how OT prophecies do not distinguish between the different aspects of the first and second comings of a Christ. Waltke (pp. 820-22) provides another interesting example of this phenomenon in Mic 4:9-5:6. The oracles in this section refer to events ranging from the Assyrian invasion of Judah to the return from the exile in Babylon and then forward to the coming of Messiah and presents these events as occurring one after the other. An oracle concerning Zion’s deliverance from Sennacherib in 701 B.C. in Micah 4:11-13 is followed by a prophecy of the birth of Messiah in 5:1-2. The rule of Messiah over Israel is juxtaposed to a reference to the Assyrian invasion in 5:3-4. These events separated by long epochs of time “are collapsed together” in Micah’s oracles “with no indication of the huge chronological gaps separating the heralded events.” The reason for this “collapsing” is that the prophet views the promised blessing as “near at hand.” For the prophet, the promised salvation “forms their horizon, and the future is an insignificant track between their days and the day of salvation and does not allow them to measure the duration.”

<sup>31</sup> Jim W. Adams, *The Performative Nature and Function of Isaiah 40-55* (Library of Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament Studies, 448; New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 87-119. Thanks to Dr. Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. for directing me to this source.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 100-03.



becomes a new Eden (51:3; cf. 58:12). The exiles are to “flee Babylon” so that they might participate in the second exodus in which Yahweh leads his people back to Zion in triumphal procession (48:20-22; 52:8-12). The return from Babylonian exile “inaugurates the messianic salvation” (cf. 49:5-8).<sup>34</sup>

However, the demand for human response to Yahweh’s salvific activity results in uncertainty regarding the ultimate completion of Zion’s transformation. The necessity of human cooperation means that the path to Zion’s renewal is fraught with obstacles. The opening verse in Isaiah 40 announces God’s intent to “console Jerusalem,” but the exiles lack the faith to receive the promises that seem too good to be true. The exiles believe that Yahweh is not aware of their plight and unconcerned with their vindication (40:27) and they persist in the spiritual blindness that had alienated them from God in the first place (42:18-25; cf. 43:22-28).<sup>35</sup> The prophet exhorts the people to “fear not” as they remember their special standing as Yahweh’s “servant” and to recognize that Yahweh as the creator of the world and controller of history is incomparably superior to the Babylonians and their gods (cf. 41:10, 13-14; 43:1, 5; 44:2, 8).

Zion is commissioned to announce the good news of deliverance, but even she argues that Yahweh has “abandoned” and “forgotten” her (49:14). Zion’s children argue that Yahweh’s divorce of their mother makes reconciliation impossible (50:1-3). The obedience and suffering of the individual Servant of Yahweh is necessary to overcome the blindness and unbelief of Israel as the national servant of Yahweh (cf. 42:6-7; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12).<sup>36</sup> Zion will become a place of salvation and security when the Servant transforms the children of Zion into Yahweh’s “servants” (54:16-17). The people are transformed so that they become like the Servant.<sup>37</sup> These true “servants” will then become the recipients of the blessings of salvation (cf. 61:6; 65:8-9; 65:13-15; 66:14) as they respond to Yahweh’s gracious invitation to partake in the new covenant banquet (55:1-5). The “servants” will become the obedient remnant who “seek Yahweh” and abandon their wicked lifestyles (55:6-7). They will promote justice by showing concern for the poor, the oppressed, and the hungry (56:1-3; 58:1-12; 61:8; 64:5). They will demonstrate their commitment to Yahweh by keeping Sabbath (56:8; 58:13-14) and turning from idol worship and its morally corrupt rituals (57:3-8; 65:3-4, 11-14; 66:3-4, 17-18).

In Isaiah 63:7-64:12, Israel laments Yahweh’s delay as Jerusalem remains in its ruined condition and asks, “How can you still hold back, Lord? How can you be silent and continue to humiliate us?” Yahweh’s response to the complaint states that the delay results from Israel’s continued sinfulness and warns of a final judgment that will separate the wicked from the righteous (65:1-66:4). Human response ultimately does not place the realization of Yahweh’s promises to Zion in jeopardy because Yahweh will finally act in a unilateral manner to bring about the response he desires from his people. Yahweh will heal his

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<sup>34</sup> Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 821.

<sup>35</sup> For development of this theme, see Adams, *The Performative Nature and Function of Isaiah 40-55*, 100-03; and Watts, “Consolation or Confrontation?,” 31-59.

<sup>36</sup> See Stephen G. Dempster, “The Servant of the Lord,” in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping unity in diversity* (ed. S. J. Hafemann and P. R. House; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 155-60.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

people so that they can respond to his promises of salvation (57:17-19). Oswalt writes, “He cannot wait for the people to be reconciled to him. Somehow he must reconcile himself to them.”<sup>38</sup> Even when there is still no righteousness among his people, Yahweh will act as the righteous warrior to repay Israel’s enemies and to initiate a new relationship with Israel through the pouring out of his Spirit upon them (57:16-21).

### Isaiah’s Zion Promises in Canonical Perspective

The question of how Isaiah’s prophecies concerning the restoration of Zion are fulfilled becomes even more complex when viewing these promises in light of the forward movement of salvation history and the progress of revelation in the whole canon of Scripture. While there is an immediate fulfillment associated with the return from exile and the post-exilic period, the New Testament announces that the Isaianic restoration is accomplished in the person and work of Jesus. However, continuing patterns of partial fulfillment emerge in the working out of the promises concerning Zion, and human unbelief continues to bring further divine judgment and to impede ultimate fulfillment of the promises of salvation. The New Testament also refines, modifies, and expands the promises concerning the restoration of Zion. These promises are fulfilled both figuratively and literally; they are fulfilled partially now and will be ultimately fulfilled in the eschaton; and they are fulfilled in a variety of ways in Jesus, the church, and God’s continued dealings with the people of Israel. There are surprising elements in the fulfillment that are only revealed or clarified by later events or revelation. This section of the paper will examine three aspects that particularly complicate a canonical perspective on the Zion prophecies in Isaiah—the recurring pattern of judgment and salvation in regard to the restoration of Zion and Israel, the problem of human belief and ongoing delay of the ultimate fulfillment of the prophetic promises, and the use of conventional, time-conditioned language and imagery in the Old Testament that is revised and modified by the New Testament.

#### The Recurring Pattern of Judgment and Salvation

The Old Testament prophets had a typological view of history in which God’s past actions informed their understanding of how God would act in the future.<sup>39</sup> In promising the restoration of Zion, the prophet Isaiah applied Israel’s past traditions to their future. The prophet joined Israel’s exodus and Zion traditions with their shared motif of Yahweh’s defeat of the sea (*Chaoskampf*) in portraying Zion’s future salvation. Yahweh would provide a new beginning for Israel by performing a second exodus even greater than the first (cf. Isa 11:10-16; 40:3-5, 10-11; 41:17-20; 42:15-16; 43:14-15; 57:7-12). Yahweh would defeat the enemies of Zion representative of the forces of chaos (Isa 17:12-14;

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<sup>38</sup> John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah Chapters 40-66* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1998), 490.

<sup>39</sup> See Francis Foulkes, “The Acts of God: A Study of the Basis of Typology in the Old Testament,” in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (ed. G. K. Beale; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994): 250.

24:21-23; 27:1; cf. Ps 46), and this triumph would enable Israel to pass through the sea as they did when leaving Egypt (Isa 51:9-11). Routledge explains, "The primordial battle that resulted in creation and the defeat of rebellious and chaotic elements will be repeated in the eschatological overthrow of evil and the promise of the arrival of a new creation."<sup>40</sup>

As already noted, the problem with Isaiah's prophecies concerning the restoration of Zion is that the fulfillment of these past patterns is only partially realized in Israel's return from its exile in Babylon. The incomplete fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies concerning Zion's restoration means that the past is not only pattern for the future but also that the past patterns might repeat themselves numerous times in the working out of the ultimate fulfillment. Thus, the fulfillment of a prophecy may involve a single event or a series of events where the same pattern of divine activity recurs in successive stages.

As Schreiner notes, despite the lack of ultimate fulfillment for Isaiah's Zion prophecies, "neither the Jews nor the early Christian movement argued that Isaiah was mistaken."<sup>41</sup> Partial fulfillment leads instead to the conclusion that fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies is still future. The post-exilic prophets echo Isaiah's message concerning the restoration of Zion. Like Isaiah in joining the near and the far, Zechariah promises that Yahweh will bless the people in their rebuilding of the temple and that one day Zion will know lasting peace as the nations come to worship (Zech 1:16-17; 6:9-15; 8:1-8, 21-23; 14:16-18). However, enemy nations will once again besiege Jerusalem before Yahweh's deliverance of the city ushers in the eschatological era of peace (Zech 12, 14). The prophet Haggai also combines near and far in his prophecies, promising the future glory of the second temple (Hag 2:7-9) and connecting Zerubbabel with the future worldwide dominion of the Davidic dynasty (Hag 2:20-23).

At the arrival of the New Testament era, there is still the prevailing belief among the Jews that the exile continued and that the prophetic promises of restoration were unrealized. N. T. Wright explains, "Babylon had taken the people into captivity; Babylon fell, and the people returned. But in Jesus' day many, if not most, Jews regarded the exile as still continuing. The people had returned in a geographical sense, but the great prophecies of restoration had not yet come true."<sup>42</sup> Because of this belief in the ongoing exile, the New

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<sup>40</sup> Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 129.

<sup>41</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008),

<sup>42</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*. Christian Origins and the Question of God, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 126. See also Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Christian Origins and the Question of God, 1; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 215-338. For other works providing a similar understanding of this idea of continuing exile, see T. R. Hatina, "Exile," *Dictionary of New Testament Backgrounds*, 348-51; Douglas S. McComiskey, "'Exile and the Purpose of Jesus' Parables (Mark 4:10-12; Matt 13:10-17; Luke 8:9-10)," *JETS* (51): 67-74; C. Marvin Pate, J. Scott Duvall, J. Daniel Hays, E. Randolph Richards, W. Dennis Thacker Jr., and Preben Vang, *The Story of Israel: A Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 2004), 105-284; Craig A. Evans, "Jesus and the Continuing Exile of Israel," in *Jesus and the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N. T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God* (ed. Carey C. Newman; Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1999). This idea of ongoing exile goes back to the OT and the early post-exilic period (cf. Ezra 9:8-9; Neh 9:36) and carries over through the Second Temple Period into the tannaitic and early amoraic periods (4QMMT, ll. 92-94, 100-108; 1 Macc 2:7-14; Bar 2:6-10; 3:6-8; Sir 36:8; Tob 14:5; *T. Mos* 10:1-10; *1 En* 85-90;

Testament writers assert that Isaiah's promises of Israel's restoration find their fulfillment in the person and work of Jesus. Wright observes, "Jesus made Isaiah 52:7-12 thematic for his Kingdom announcement. He lived within the controlling story according to which Israel's long and tangled relationship with her God, and with the gentile world, would reach a great climax through which the exile would be undone, so that Israel's sins would be forgiven at last, and the whole world would see the glory of God."<sup>43</sup> Passages highlighting the promise of Israel's deliverance or that identify Jesus as the Isaianic herald and servant appear at strategic places in the Gospels. Watts has persuasively argued that the Isaianic motif of exile-exodus provides the structural and conceptual framework for the Gospel of Mark.<sup>44</sup>

There is first the idea that the new exodus and deliverance from exile is taking place in and through Jesus. In Luke 1, the words of Mary, Zechariah, Simeon, and Anna all connect the work of Jesus with the hope of Israel's national deliverance (cf. Luke 1:54-55, 70-75; 2:28-32, 38).<sup>45</sup> The story of the magi coming to worship Jesus in response to seeing the star (Matt 2:1-2) appears to represent in some sense a typological fulfillment of the nations bringing tribute in response to the light that shines from the restored Zion in Isaiah 60 (cf. Isa 60:1-3, 6-7). Jesus comes to bring the light of salvation promised for the messianic era in Isaiah 9:1-2 (cf. Matt 4:12-17). All four Gospels apply Isaiah 40:3 announcing the coming of God and the imminent deliverance from exile to the preaching of John the Baptist (cf. Matt 3:1-3; Mark 1:2-4; Luke 3:4-6; John 1:23). John's mission then is to prepare the people for God's full work of restoration in the person of Jesus.<sup>46</sup> When John is later struggling with his doubts concerning Jesus' messianic identity, Jesus sends back the reply that his healings and miraculous works are the fulfillment of the eschatological blessings of Isaiah 35:5-6 (Isa 35:8-9) (cf. Matt 11:1-6).

In Luke-Acts, the ministry of Jesus begins with his proclamation in the synagogue concerning the fulfillment of Isaiah 61:1-2 (and 58:6), and the placement of this story reflects that this passage is programmatic for the ministry of Jesus as a whole. Secombe argues that this quotation from Isaiah 61 also serves "as a succinct summary of a number of different themes from the rest of Isaiah" that serve to define the mission of Jesus.<sup>47</sup> Jesus is empowered by the Spirit as "the Messiah-Servant-Anointed One of Isaiah" (cf. Isa 11:2; 42:1; 61:1; Luke 4:14, 18; 5:17; Acts 10:38).<sup>48</sup> Jesus both embodies and heralds the "good news" of deliverance and peace that Isaiah had promised (cf. Isa 40:9; Luke 2:10; 3:18;

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*T. Levi* 16-18; *Apoc Abr.* 15-29; *T. Jud.* 24:1-3; *Jub* 1:15-18, 24; *T. Naph.* 4:2-5; *T. Asher* 7; *T. Benj.* 9; 1 *Esdr* 8:73-74; 2 *Esdr* 9:7).

<sup>43</sup>N. T. Wright, "The Servant and Jesus: The Relevance of the Colloquy for the Current Quest for Jesus," in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins* (ed. W. H. Bellinger, Jr. and W. R. Farmer; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity Press International), 293.

<sup>44</sup> Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*.

<sup>45</sup> The words of Simeon particularly echo Isa 40:5; 49:6; 52:10; and 56:1b. See David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Luke," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 272.

<sup>46</sup> Craig Blomberg, ("Matthew," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 12-13) calls attention to how the Essene community viewed themselves as the fulfillment of the Isa 40:3 prophecy (cf. 1QS VIII, 12-16; IX, 19-20; and 4Q176 1-2, I, 4-9).

<sup>47</sup> David Seecombe, "Luke and Isaiah," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, 249-50.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, 250.

4:18; 6:20; 7:32), and this “good news” is the message of the coming of God’s kingdom rule (cf. Isa 52:7-10; Luke 4:43). The perspective of Luke is that the “good news” of Jesus and Isaiah is one and the same.<sup>49</sup>

Jesus combines the role of Isaianic messenger with that of Isaianic servant. The portrayal of the messenger in Isaiah 61 can be described as the book’s fifth servant song because of the striking parallels between this messenger and the Isaianic servant.<sup>50</sup> While there is continuing debate over the degree to which the historical Jesus identified himself as the servant or how explicit citations from Isaiah have influenced the New Testament writers,<sup>51</sup> it is beyond dispute that the New Testament writers identify Jesus as the Isaianic servant.

By Dempster’s count, there are 48 allusions or quotations to the fourth servant song alone and he writes that “this emphasis on the servant is surpassed only by the New Testament’s interest in the Son of Man in Daniel 7.”<sup>52</sup> At the baptism of Jesus, the words of divine approval from heaven, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased,” echo Isaiah 42:1, Genesis 22:2, and Psalm 2:7 in identifying Jesus as the servant and messianic son (cf. Matt 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22).<sup>53</sup> The healing ministry of Jesus is presented as the fulfillment of the promise in Isaiah 53:4 that the servant would bear the “infirmities” and “diseases” of his people (Matt 8:16-17). A crucial passage for the identification of Jesus as the Isaianic servant is Mark 10:45 (par Matt 20:28).<sup>54</sup> The mission of Jesus is “to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many,” and the benefit of the servant’s for the “many” is a prominent theme in the fourth servant song (cf. Isa 52:15; 53:11-12). Jesus also highlights his death for “many” in the Matthean and Markan accounts of the blessing of the cup at the Last Supper (cf. Matt 26:28; Mk 14:24). In John 12:32, Jesus declares that he will draw all men to himself when he is “lifted up” (ὕψωμαι), and the near context indicates that this lifting up is how Jesus will be “glorified” (δοξασθή / |) (Jn 12:23). The verbs “lifted up” and “glorified” appear together in reference to the servant in the LXX of Isaiah 52:14.<sup>55</sup> Making the connection to the Isaianic servant even more clear is the quotation of Isaiah 53:1 in John 12:38 with reference to Jewish unbelief in spite of the miracles that

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<sup>49</sup> For the influence of Isaiah on the NT usage of the nominal and verbal forms of euangelizomai, see Otto Betz, “Jesus and Isaiah 53,” in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, 74-82.

<sup>50</sup> Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. (“The Christological Fulfillment of Isaiah’s Servant Songs,” *Bib Sac* 163 [2006]: 401-2) notes the following parallels: both the messenger and the servant/messiah are empowered by the Spirit of God (61:1; 42:1), both encourage the downtrodden (61:2; 11:4); both proclaim the release of prisoners (61:1; 42:7; 49:9); both console those who mourn (61:2; 49:13; 50:4); and both share a combination of royal and prophetic features. Chisholm explains that the servant songs function together in the following manner: the first two focus on the servant’s commission to bring justice and only hint at his suffering (42, 49); the third and fourth develop the theme of the servant’s suffering (50, 52:13-53:12), and the fifth returns to the theme of justice (61) and “closes the thematic loop.”

<sup>51</sup> See Morna D. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* (London: SPCK, 1959), and “Did the Use of Isaiah 53 to Interpret His Mission Begin with Jesus?” in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, 88-103.

<sup>52</sup> Dempster, “The Servant of the Lord,” 165.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 166.

<sup>54</sup> For further discussion, see Rikki Watts, “Jesus’ Death, Isaiah 53, and Mark 10:45: A Crux Revisited,” in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, 125-51.

<sup>55</sup> Otto Betz, “Jesus and Isaiah 53,” in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 and Christian Origins*, 79-80.

Jesus had performed.<sup>56</sup> In Acts 8:26-35, Philip explicitly identifies the servant as Jesus in his witness to the Ethiopian eunuch.

Isaiah's story of Israel's restoration and the extension of salvation to the Gentiles is central to the theological message of Paul as well. Hays notes that Paul's letters contain 28 citations of Isaiah in large part because "Isaiah offers the clearest expression in the Old Testament of a universalistic, eschatological vision in which the restoration of Israel is accompanied by an ingathering of Gentiles to worship the Lord."<sup>57</sup> 2 Corinthians 2:14-7:2 provides an extended defense of Paul's apostleship that was under attack from his opponents at Corinth. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-6:2, Paul focuses on his ministry in the light of salvation history, specifically the fulfillment of the Isaianic promise of restoration through the sacrificial work of the servant. As Gignilliat explains, Paul's defense is that his apostleship "is a ministry of reconciliation firmly placed within God's eschatologically redemptive activity in Jesus."<sup>58</sup> Beale argues that the references to "new creation," the passing away of the "old," and the arrival of the "new" in 2 Corinthians 5:17 are likely allusions to the "new things" and "new creation" of Isaiah 43:18-19; 65:17; and 66:22.<sup>59</sup> Reconciliation is the rubric for God's saving activity in Isaiah, because God not only brings his people home but also restores his covenantal relationship with them.

The new creation and reconciliation in Isaiah is made possible through the vicarious suffering of the servant who becomes a "guilt/sin offering" for the people (53:10).<sup>60</sup> Paul understands Christ's atoning death for sin to be the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy concerning the suffering servant. Even without explicit quotations, the pattern of God's work of reconciliation through an innocent sufferer who brings the forgiveness of sins, as well as the other Isaianic references in this passage, make it impossible to miss the connection between Jesus and the Isaianic sufferer. Christ was "made sin" (2 Cor 5:21) in the same way that the servant was made a "sin/guilt offering" (Isa 53:10). As Gignilliat explains, Paul's understanding here is that the "'new creation' is the removal of the separation between God and sinful humanity by the death and resurrection of Christ thus inaugurating the true Israel, the church, into the presence of God."<sup>61</sup> Paul brings these ideas to a point of application with his quotation of Isaiah 49:8 in 2 Corinthians 6:2. The

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 80. Other likely allusions or references to the Isaianic servant in connection with Jesus and his death are found in Matthew 27:57-58 (Isa 53:9). Mark 14:65 (Isa 50:6); John 1:29 (Isa 53:7); and John 19:34 (Isa 53:3). Acts 3:13-20 and 4:27 highlight the theme of the suffering and death of God's servant Jesus. In exhorting Christian slaves to obey their masters, 1 Pet 2:21-25 interweaves four references to Isaiah 53 in setting forth Jesus as the model for righteous suffering (53:9; 53:7; 53:6; 53:5).

<sup>57</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1989), 162.

<sup>58</sup> Mark Gignilliat, *Paul and Isaiah's Servants: Paul's Theological Reading of Isaiah 40-66 in 2 Corinthians 5:14-6:10* (Library of New Testament Studies; New York: T & T Clark, 2007), 111.

<sup>59</sup> G. K. Beale, "The Old Testament Background of Reconciliation in 2 Corinthians 5-7 and Its Bearing on the Literary Problem of 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, 220-22.

<sup>60</sup> For this feature of 2 Cor 5:14-21, see Brian Vickers, *Jesus' Blood and Righteousness: Paul's Theology of Imputation* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway, 2006), 168-70.

<sup>61</sup> Gignilliat, *Paul and Isaiah's Servants*, 91.

Corinthians are to be reconciled to Paul (and to God) because they are living in the eschatological “now” of God’s salvific activity promised by Isaiah.<sup>62</sup>

Beale understands Paul to be identifying himself as the “servant of the Lord” through his references to Isaiah in this passage, but Gignilliat more accurately suggests that Paul numbers himself among the “servants” who are reconciled and restored to God through the work of the individual servant in Isaiah (cf. the reference to the “offspring” of the servant in Isa 53:10 and the consistently plural use of “servant” in Isaiah after ch. 53—54:17; 63:17; 65:8, 9, 13, 14, 15; 66:14). The Corinthians are wrong to view Paul’s weakness and suffering as an indication of inferior apostleship; rather, Paul’s ministry conforms to the cruciform suffering of Christ himself (cf. 2 Cor 6:3-10). Paul’s mission is to serve as one of the “servants” of the servant (2 Cor 6:3), which involves suffering for the accomplishment of God’s redemptive plan.

Paul’s understanding that his apostolic mission involved the proclamation of Isaiah’s message of restoration is also reflected in Romans. Wagner argues that “the larger ‘story’ of Isaiah 51-55 has exercised a profound influence on the very foundations of Paul’s theology as expressed in Romans.”<sup>63</sup> Paul and his fellow Christian missionaries are the Isaianic heralds proclaiming God’s work of salvation (cf. the quotation of Isa 52:7 in Rom 10:14). Paul’s conviction is that God has acted salvifically for Israel and the nations in the person of Jesus and that he and Isaiah are co-evangelists in proclaiming this message.<sup>64</sup> In harmony with Isaiah, Paul proclaims that God maintains his covenant commitment to restore Israel even when judging his people (Rom 9:27-29, using Isa 10:22-23 and 1:9), that God has brought Gentiles to himself in spite of Jewish unbelief (Rom 10:20-21, using Isa 65:1-2), and that God has sent the “root of Jesse” to rule over the nations so that the Gentiles will put their hope in him (Rom 15:21, using Isa 11:10).<sup>65</sup> The purpose of Paul’s vocation as frontier missionary is that Isaiah’s vision that all would “see” and “know” the work of God through his servant Jesus become a reality (Rom 15:21, using Isa 52:15).<sup>66</sup> Paul’s belief in the fulfillment of Isaiah’s promises of salvation is foundational to his mission.

### Unbelief and More Partial Fulfillment

Isaiah’s promises of the restoration of Zion are only partially fulfilled because of Israel’s unbelief, and these promises are reapplied to the ministry of Jesus in the New Testament. The pattern of deliverance repeats itself, but so does the response of unbelief to God’s

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<sup>62</sup> This would suggest a pesher-type interpretation of Isaiah 49:8. See Peter Ballia, “2 Corinthians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old*, 767-68.

<sup>63</sup> J. Ross Wagner, “The Heralds of Isaiah and the Mission of Paul: An investigation of Paul’s use of Isaiah 51-55 in Romans,” in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant*, 194. See the more developed presentation of this concept in *Heralds of the Good News: Isaiah and Paul in Concert in the Letter to the Romans* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003).

<sup>64</sup> Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 1-2.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>66</sup> Wagner, “The Heralds of Isaiah and the Mission of Paul,” 199-200. Wagner notes that the “concerning him” in Isa 52:15 refers to the suffering servant of 52:13-53:12.

promises of blessing and salvation. Just as Isaiah's promise of restoration is paradigmatic for the ministry of Jesus, the unbelief encountered by Isaiah is prophetic of the response to the message of Jesus and the preaching of the Christian gospel. In the New Testament, the statement that the purpose of Isaiah's ministry is to confirm and harden Israel in their unbelief in Isaiah 6:9-10 is applied to the response to the teaching of Jesus (Matt 13:14-15), his miracles (John 12:40), and Paul's preaching of the gospel (Acts 24:24-28). Jesus deliberately taught in parabolic form as a way of hiding the truth from those who refused to believe. Matthew 15:8-9 (par. Mark 7:6) quotes Isaiah 29:13 to explain that the people of Jesus' day are like those who refused to listen to Isaiah because they honor God with their "lips" rather than seeking him with their "hearts."<sup>67</sup>

In Isaiah, Yahweh's promises to protect and deliver Zion are a stumbling block for the nation as they choose to trust in themselves as their source of security; in the New Testament, Jesus has become the personal embodiment of God's promise over which the people stumble (note the references to Isa 8:14 and 28:16 in Matt 21:43-44 and Rom 9:33). Jerusalem, the place that was to become the center of God's kingdom in Isaiah's eschatological vision, actually becomes the center of unbelief and opposition to the message of Jesus (cf. Luke 13:34-35). Although God has reached out to Israel, they continue to be a "disobedient and stubborn people" (Rom 10:21). The rejection of Jesus parallels Israel's rejection of the servant in Isaiah 53, evidenced by the use of the question, "Lord who has believed our message?" by both John and Paul (cf. John 12:38; Rom 10:16).

Because of this unbelief, Jerusalem must undergo more judgment before experiencing its ultimate vindication and restoration. The cycle of judgment and salvation for Zion announced by the Old Testament prophets carries forward, and Jesus speaks and acts in the manner of an Old Testament prophet announcing the imminent destruction of Jerusalem. This judgment is directly attributed to the fact that Israel did not recognize that the coming of Jesus fulfilled the Isainic promise of the coming of God to bring eschatological restoration and salvation (cf. Luke 19:44 with Isa 52:7). The cleansing of the Temple at the close of Jesus' ministry is both symbolic act and prophetic announcement of the coming judgment. From Mark's account of the cleansing of the temple, Wright notes that Jesus' message closely parallels Jeremiah's Temple Sermon that announced the Babylonian invasion and destruction of Jerusalem.<sup>68</sup> After "watching" the illicit behavior of those who worship at the Jerusalem Temple, Yahweh concludes that the temple has become nothing more than "a den of robbers" (cf. Jer 7:11). When Jesus enters Jerusalem and "looks around" at the activities going on at the Temple (Mark 11:11), he arrives at the same conclusion (Mark 11:17).<sup>69</sup> Jesus also quotes Isaiah 56:7 and the failure of the temple to be a house of prayer for the nations as justification for his action against the temple. As Ciampa explains, the temple establishment is under a sentence of judgment because they

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<sup>67</sup> Thus, Isaiah not only prophesies the future restoration that Jesus would bring but also the unbelieving response of the nation of Israel to his preaching. See Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New: An Introduction* (New York: T & T Clark Int., 2001), 22-24.

<sup>68</sup> Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 413-28

<sup>69</sup> In Mark's Gospel, the Temple cleansing is "sandwiched" between another symbolic act—the cursing and withering of the fig tree (cf. Mark 11:12-14, 20-25). The fig tree imagery provides further linkage to the context of Jeremiah's sermon. In Jeremiah 8:13-14, Yahweh warns that his judgment on Judah will result in the removal of "grapes and figs" and the withering of their leaves.



fail to live up to Isaiah's "eschatological expectations" and thus Jerusalem and the temple must once again become the object of divine wrath.<sup>70</sup>

Jesus laments the coming destruction of Jerusalem and warns that the judgment will be swift and complete. Just as Micah announced that the temple mount would become a heap of ruins (cf. Mic 3:9-12), Jesus declares that the stones of the city and Temple would not be left standing (cf. Matt 24:2; Luke 19:43-44). Jerusalem will be left "desolate" (Matt 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35), abandoned by God in the same way as when Ezekiel observed the glory of Yahweh departing Jerusalem prior to the Babylonian invasion (Ezek 8-11). Niehaus writes, "As in the Old Testament, rejection of the Lord leads to temple and city abandonment."<sup>71</sup>

Just as unbelief and a failure to turn back to God led to the delay of the Isaianic promises of restoration in the post-exilic period, Israel's continued unbelief in response to the first coming of Jesus carries forward the delay of the full realization of God's promises of restoration. For the "times of refreshing" to come when God restores "all things," it is necessary for Israel to "repent" and to recognize the crucified and risen Jesus as their Messiah (Acts 3:19-21; cf. 2:38; 5:31; 8:22).<sup>72</sup> The Isaianic promise of restoration is only currently realized in incipient form in the church as the new Israel (cf. Gal 6:16; Phil 3:2-3). This initial restoration takes place in surprising ways or even in ways that largely go unrecognized. The kingdom of God has arrived in a clandestine manner that delays final judgment and the purging of the wicked from the righteous until the very end of time (Matt 13:24-30). Rather than the nations streaming to the holy mountain at Zion to worship and learn the ways of the Lord, Jesus assembles his disciples on the mountain in Jerusalem and sends them out to make disciples among the nations (Matt 28:20). The apostles are to preach the message of repentance and forgiveness to all peoples, "beginning at Jerusalem" and extending to "the ends of the earth" (Luke 24:47; Acts 1:8). Thus, the prophecy in Isaiah 2:1-5 concerning the streaming of the nations to Zion is presently fulfilled in incipient form but in reverse. The ingathering of diaspora Jews begins on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47, esp 2:5, 9-11), along with the fulfillment of Joel's promise concerning the pouring out of the Spirit (cf. Acts 17-21; Joel 2:28-32 [3:1-5 Heb]). James understands the fulfillment of the promise of Israel's restoration in the LXX of Amos 9:11-12 to legitimize the church's mission to Gentiles in Acts 15:16-18. The new covenant promised to Israel is put into effect by the death of Jesus, and the church currently lives under that covenant and enjoys its benefits (cf. Jer 31:31-34 and Matt 26:28 par.; 2 Cor 3-4; Heb 8:1-13; 10:15-18).

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<sup>70</sup> Roy E. Ciampa, "The History of Redemption," in *Central Themes in Biblical Theology: Mapping unity in diversity* (ed. S. J. Hafemann and P. R. House; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 291.

<sup>71</sup> Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 133.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid*, 297.

## The Problem of Conventional and Time-Conditioned Language

The prophets not only use God's saving acts of the past to describe how he will act in the future; they also describe the future kingdom using conventional language and imagery that were appropriate to the place and time in which they ministered. Thus, the portrayal of what God has planned for his people in the kingdom is shaped in many ways by Israel's history and experiences in the Old Testament. Routledge explains:

The OT points to the glorious future God has prepared for his people, using language and imagery appropriate to those who first announced and received the message. The world view of much of the OT focuses on the physical world, and so future hope is also portrayed in those terms. To describe the overflowing blessings of the coming age to a largely agricultural community, the prophets talk in terms of an abundant harvest. To give assurance to those who for the most of their lives have experienced oppression and injustice, they emphasize God's victory over attacking nations, and future freedom and security. To describe restoration, they talk about the reversal of the tragedies the people have suffered, such as the return of exiles and the future exaltation of Jerusalem. To describe the spiritual renewal of the nation, they again use familiar ideas, and talk about a purified and restored temple, about sacrifices offered sincerely and the meaningful celebration of festivals.<sup>73</sup>

This use of conventional language introduces several complications and tensions regarding the canonical development of the prophetic promises concerning the future. Using Sandy's terminology, there are both transparent and translucent aspects in the fulfillment of prophetic promises. When moving forward to the New Testament, there are very real tensions between literal versus figurative, physical versus spiritual, and partial versus complete (now and not yet) in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies. It is impossible to fully resolve these tensions, but the New Testament development of Isaiah's Zion prophecies suggests both literal and figurative fulfillments. The prophecies of Zion's restoration in Isaiah also contain a mixture of transparent and translucent components because Isaiah's view of Jerusalem's future is heavily influenced by ancient Near Eastern conceptions of royal and temple cities.

### *Jerusalem as the Royal Center of Israel's Kingdom*

The future anticipated for Zion in Isaiah conforms to the ancient Near Eastern ideal for a royal capital city. The promised Davidic ruler will reign over a kingdom of justice that will bring peace to the nations (cf. Isa 9:1-6; 11:2-6; 16:5; 32:1-20). As Blenkinsopp has stated, the kingdom of God centered in Jerusalem will become "a worldwide empire on which the sun never sets."<sup>74</sup> The city will be completely secure and free from the threat of military

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<sup>73</sup> Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 279-80.

<sup>74</sup> Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 19B; New York: Doubleday, 2003), 212.

attack (Isa 32:18; 33:20; 54:14-17; 60:18). This expectation conforms to the anticipation of a utopian kingdom of universal dominion and peace in the ancient Near East at large.<sup>75</sup>

The participation and involvement of foreign nations and peoples in this future kingdom is viewed in two somewhat contradictory ways in Isaiah. At one level, the nations take a subservient role to Israel and are stereotypically portrayed as vassal peoples. The nations have a place in God's future kingdom, but their primary role is to serve Israel. Foreigners will be responsible for the repatriation of the Jewish exiles and the rebuilding of their cities (cf. Isa 11:12; 14:1-2; 45:13-14; 49:22-23; 60:4; 66:20).<sup>76</sup> The nations will bring their taxes and tribute as an expression of their submission to the Davidic ruler (Isa 60:5-14, 16-17; 61:7; 66:12), and foreigners will serve by performing the menial tasks that contribute to Israel's wealth and bounty as a nation (Isa 61:5). Any nation refusing to submit to the Davidic ruler will be destroyed (Isa 60:12).

At this level, the vision of Isaiah portrays the nations in a manner consistent with the standard royal ideology of the ancient Near East. The psalmists similarly speak of the nations bringing their tribute to Jerusalem (cf. Pss 68:32-33; 76:12; 96:8). Keel's work includes a scene on a relief from Amarna where the southern and northern nations deliver their annual tribute to the Egyptian ruler Amenophis IV (ca. 1377-1358 B.C.). The gifts brought to the king include gold, weapons, chariots, horses, vessels, slaves (perhaps rebellious subjects), and tame animals for the king's zoo.<sup>77</sup> An inscription from the Egyptian queen Hatshepsut reads:

The myrrh of Punt has been brought to me . . . the luxurious marvels of  
this country were brought to my palace . . . .  
They have brought to me . . . cedar, juniper . . . all the good sweet woods  
Of God's-Land.<sup>78</sup>

This motif of vassal peoples bringing tribute is especially common in the Assyrian annals and inscriptions. The famous Black Obelisk pictures the Israelite king Jehu bowing before Shalmeneser and also shows Israelites bringing tribute to their Assyrian overlord. An inscription of Assurnasirpal reads:

The king who subdued them all . . . and received their tribute . . . when  
he ruled over all the lands . . .  
the gifts of the kings of the shore of the sea  
from Tyre, Sidon, Byblos, Arwad which dwells in the midst of the sea:  
silver, gold, bronze, garments . . . ivory  
I accepted and they embraced my feet.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (trans. Timothy J. Hallett; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 306. See also Weinfeld, "Zion and Jerusalem as Religious and Political Capital," 97-100.

<sup>76</sup> Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 56-66*, 214.

<sup>77</sup> See *The Symbolism of the Biblical World*, fig. 410 on p. 305 and the discussion on pp. 303-304.

<sup>78</sup> J. H. Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, vol 2 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1906), 116 no 285; cited by Weinfeld, "Zion and Jerusalem as Religious and Political Capital," 95.

Isaiah's vision of the nations bringing tribute is also shaped by the historical realities of the earlier Davidic-Solomonic empire when the nation-states surrounding Israel brought their tribute to the Israelite king (cf. 2 Sam 8:1-13; 10:1-19; 1 Kgs 4:20-28; 10:1-14, 23-25). Isaiah envisions the return of the glory days of the Davidic-Solomonic empire and the universal realization of what was only experienced on limited basis in the days of David and Solomon (cf. 2 Sam 8:2-6; 1 Chron 22:2; 2 Chron 30:25).

On a second level, Isaiah perhaps more than any other Old Testament prophet portrays the role of the nations in the future kingdom in a much more egalitarian manner and envisions that foreigners will fully participate in the future salvation that Yahweh will bring to earth. Foreigners will come to Zion, not just as subjects, but as worshippers of Yahweh who seek to learn and practice his law (Isa 2:2-4). One of the most expansive and incredible promises in all of the Old Testament prophetic literature is that Egypt, Israel's great enemy of the past, and Assyria, Israel's great enemy in the present during the days of Isaiah, will become with Israel the three peoples of Yahweh (Isa 19:18-25). Not only will the Egyptians and Assyrians come to worship in Jerusalem, there will even be an altar to Yahweh in the Egyptian city of Heliopolis that was once devoted to the worship of Re (Isa 19:19, 23). The role of the Servant of Yahweh in the second half of Isaiah is not merely to restore Israel but to be a "light" of blessing to the nations (Isa 49:6-7). Both Isaiah 56:3-8 and 66:18-21 envision Gentiles becoming "priests" and "Levites" and/or having an equal access to the presence of Yahweh that was not the case in the Old Testament economy.<sup>80</sup>

The message of Isaiah 40-66 thus reflects elements of both universalism and nationalism. Van Winkle writes that the "salvation of the nations does not preclude their submission to Israel."<sup>81</sup> The subjugation of the nations in Isaiah is more an expression of honor for Yahweh than of contempt for these foreign peoples (cf. Pss 47; 68; 72).<sup>82</sup> Even the image of licking dust from the feet (cf. Isa 49:23) is merely the standard greeting of a vassal for his lord rather than an indication of abject slavery and degradation.<sup>83</sup> Watts also explains that Isaiah's twin themes of inclusion and subjugation for the nations likely draw on Israel's ancient traditions.<sup>84</sup> On the positive side, those peoples who willingly recognize the greatness of Yahweh will enjoy inclusion and blessing like the mixed multitude in Egypt (Exod 12:38), Rahab (Josh 2:9-11; 4:24), or the Queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:2-13). On the

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<sup>79</sup> D. D. Luckenbill, *Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1926), 166 no. 479; cited by Weinfeld, "Zion and Jerusalem as Religious and Political Capital," 95.

<sup>80</sup> Contrast Ezek 44:6-9, which states that Gentiles will not be allowed to enter the future Temple. However, the description of these foreigners as "uncircumcised in heart and flesh" indicates that the prophet is referring to foreigners who have not turned to Yahweh and continue in their pagan ways. See Robert B. Chisholm, Jr. *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 284.

<sup>81</sup> Daniel van Winkle, "The Relationship of the Nations to Yahweh in Isaiah xl-lv," *VTS* 35 (1985): 457.

<sup>82</sup> Rikk E. Watts, "Echoes from the Past: Israel's Ancient Traditions and the Destiny of the Nations in Isaiah 40-55," *JOT* 28 (2004): 504.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 494-508

negative side, the nations who only submit out of compulsion are those reduced to servitude, like the Gibeonites at the time of the conquest (Josh 9).<sup>85</sup>

Isaiah's theme of Gentile inclusion becomes even more pronounced with the New Testament portrayal of Jews and Gentiles as equal-sharers in the blessings of salvation. While ministering primarily to the house of Israel, Jesus promised that Gentiles would share in his future kingdom and would take the place of unbelieving Jews (cf. Matt 8:11-12; Luke 13:22-30). When Jesus promises this ingathering of Gentiles to participate in the kingdom banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Matthew 8:11 and Luke 13:29, he appears to allude to passages from Isaiah (Isa 49:12; 59:12; cf. Ps 107:3) that refer in their original context to the return of Israel from the exile in Babylon.<sup>86</sup>

For the New Testament people of God, the ethnic distinctions between Jew and Gentile have been abolished (cf. Gal 3:28-29; Eph 2:14-15). Gentiles have been grafted along with Jews into the olive tree of salvation (Rom 11:13-24), so that Jew and Gentile together form the one people and one temple of God (cf. Eph 2:11-22; 1 Pet 2:4-10). While God's plan for the future includes the national restoration of Israel (Rom 11:25-27), the idea of Israel's domination over the nations is certainly minimized in the New Testament. The expanded revelation of the New Testament promises that there will be an equal sharing in the blessings of the future kingdom in a manner suggested but not fully developed in the prophetic vision of the book of Isaiah.<sup>87</sup> The eschatological hope of the New Testament is in line with the message of the Old Testament prophets but also modifies and moves beyond the empire model informing Isaiah's vision of the future in its stress on the equality of Jew and Gentile.

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<sup>85</sup> The fate of those nations that oppress Israel is absolute judgment and destruction (Isa 49:25-26), with Babylon as the prime example (cf. Isa 43:14; 46:1; 47:1-15; 48:14).

<sup>86</sup> Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2006), 243-44. The NT similarly reads other OT passages that refer to Israel's salvation as prophecies of Gentile salvation. Wright (p. 15) also calls attention to the use of Hos 1:10; 2:23 in Rom 9:24-25. In their OT context, these passages refer to Israel's restoration as his people after he has abandoned them in judgment, but Paul applies these verses to Gentiles becoming God's people. In Rom 10:24-25, Paul finds a reference to Gentile salvation in Isa 65:1-2. Paul takes the expressions "those not seeking me" and "those not asking of me" from the passage as referring to Gentiles, even though they originally described Israel's own rebellion against God. See J. Ross Wagner, "Moses and Isaiah in Concert: Paul's Reading of Isaiah and Deuteronomy in the Book of Romans," in *As Those Who Are Taught: The Interpretation of Isaiah from the LXX to the SBL* (ed. C. M. McGinnis and P. K. Tull; SBLSymS 27; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 93-95. G. K. Beale ("The Use of the Old Testament in Revelation," in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts?*, 271) sees an "intended inversion" of Dan 7:14 in Rev 5:9. Instead of the nations being subjected to Israel's rule, "these very nations rule together with the Messiah."

<sup>87</sup> There were disparate streams of thought in Second Temple Judaism concerning the inclusion of Gentiles in the eschatological blessings. See the discussion on "Gentiles and the eschatological temple" in Steven M. Bryan, *Jesus and Israel's Traditions of Judgment* (NTS 117; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2002), 199-206. Isaiah's idea of Gentile involvement in the eschatological Temple is reflected in *T. Benj.* 9.2; *Sib. Or.* 3.616-34; 715-20; *1 En.* 90.32-3. However, other passages suggest that Gentiles would not be included or welcomed into the future Temple. See *Pss. Sol.* 17.22-31; 4QFlor. 1.3-4.

### *Jerusalem as a Temple City*

Isaiah's Zion prophecies are also colored by ancient Near Eastern conceptions of Jerusalem as a religious center and temple city. The temple plays a major role in Isaiah's portrayal of the future age of salvation. Middlemas states concerning the book of Isaiah, "The blessings of the new age result in the reconstruction of the sanctuary and the resumption of normative ritual practices therein."<sup>88</sup> The peoples of the nations will stream to Zion to learn the law of Yahweh (Isa 2:1-4) and will not be denied entrance into his presence because of their ethnicity (Isa 56:6-7). The tribute of the nations will support the continuation of the temple rites and services. Animals brought from distant lands will joyously leap upon the altar to present themselves as sacrifices (Isa 60:7), and timber brought by the peoples of the nations will beautify the sanctuary in Zion (Isa 60:13). The feasts will once again be celebrated in the temple courts, and the promise that Israel will never again be plundered by its enemies means that these ceremonies will continue perpetually (Isa 62:8-9).

Temples had powerful symbolic significance in the religious consciousness of the ancient Near East. Weinfeld explains that the temple city in the ancient Near East was the "universal center to which nations stream from all the ends of the earth, bringing with them offerings and gifts and prostrating themselves and offering prayers to the great god in the sanctuary."<sup>89</sup> The temple was a microcosm of heaven and earth, and the temple as the earthly dwelling place of the deity was patterned after the heavenly temple.<sup>90</sup>

In line with Isaiah's message, the book of Ezekiel (chs. 40-48) closes with an extended vision that portrays the future temple in vivid and specific detail (cf. Hag 2:7-8; Zech 8:1-8; 14:9-21). The extended description of this temple suggests the building of a literal, eschatological temple. Hess writes that this promised temple "was not fulfilled by the construction of the second temple, whether we consider the one constructed immediately after the return from exile or the one that Herod the Great began building and that was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. Herod built a temple that could perhaps be compared to the one in Ezekiel in terms of its splendor but hardly in terms of its purity."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Jill Middlemas, "Divine Reversal and the *Role of the Temple in Trito-Isaiah*," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel* (ed. John Day; Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 422; New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 171.

<sup>89</sup> Weinfeld, "Zion and Jerusalem as Religious and Political Capital," 104-105.

<sup>90</sup> For temple symbolism in the ancient Near East, see Jeffrey J. Niehaus, *Ancient Near Eastern Themes in Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), 83-137; John H. Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2006), 113-34; G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A biblical theology of the dwelling place of God* (NSBT; Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 2004), 29-80; John M. Lundquist, "What is a Temple: A Preliminary Typology," in *Quest for the Kingdom of God: Studies in Honor of George E. Mendenhall* (Winona Lake, Ind: Eisenbrauns, 1983), 205-19; Richard Clifford, *The Cosmic Mountain in Canaan and the Old Testament* (HSM 4; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972); and R. E. Clements, *God and Temple* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965)

<sup>91</sup> Richard S. Hess, "The Future Written in the Past: The Old Testament and the Millennium," in *Case for Historic Premillennialism* (ed. C. L. Blomberg and S. W. Chung; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 34. Commenting specifically on Ezekiel 40-48, Hess builds a strong case for a literal fulfillment of this passage. The description of the temple in Ezek 40-43 is quite detailed and calls to mind other passages in the OT that

The Old Testament visions of the future temple also appear to reflect the incarnational nature of prophetic language in that God's revelation about the future is couched in the concepts of the prophet's world, specifically the ancient Near Eastern conceptions of temple and sacred space. Chisholm explains:

Ezekiel's vision is contextualized for his sixth-century B.C. audience. He describes the reconciliation of God and his people in terms that would be meaningful to this audience. They would naturally conceive of such reconciliation as involving the rebuilding of the temple, the reinstatement of the sacrificial system, the renewal of the Davidic dynasty, and the return and reunification of the twelve exiled tribes. Since the fulfillment of the vision transcends these culturally conditioned boundaries, we should probably view it as idealized to some extent and look for an essential, rather than an exact fulfillment of many of its features.<sup>92</sup>

This understanding of the prophets' portrayal of the future temple also appears to remove the need for attempts to explain the reinstatement of the Old Testament sacrificial system in the kingdom age (cf. Isa 60:7; Ezek 40:38-43; 42:13-14).<sup>93</sup>

The vision of the new temple in Isaiah and the Old Testament prophets anticipates much more than simply a new and improved version of a physical structure like that of Solomon's temple.<sup>94</sup> The opening and closing of Ezekiel's vision in 40:2 and 48:35 indicate that God's presence will cover all of Jerusalem and not just the holy of holies in the temple. Similarly,

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describe the construction of an actual sanctuary (cf. Exod 25-40; 1 Kgs 6-8; 2 Chron 2-7). Since these other passages deal with real buildings, we would expect the same in Ezek 40-43. The book of Ezekiel is built around Ezekiel's 3 visions of God, and the vision of 40-48 provides the mirror image of the vision found in Ezek 8-11. In Ezek 8-11, the glory of the Lord departs Jerusalem because of the sin and idolatry of the people. The prophet Ezekiel, who was in Babylon, clearly wishes to convey that he saw a vision of the real temple in its last days before its destruction by the Babylonians. If this first vision is realistic, then it seems most likely that the vision of the new temple and the glory of the Lord returning to Jerusalem (Ezek 43:1-9) should be read in the same way. Various specifics of temple architecture found only in Ezek 40ff are found in the Persian-period temple on Mount Gerazim, in Josephus' description of the second temple, in the area of the Herodian temple mount, and in the future temple envisioned in various writings of the DSS. Throughout the Second Temple period, there was an understanding among the Samaritans, mainstream Jews, and the Qumran community that the Ezekiel prophecy referred to an actual physical temple. For a more symbolic and figurative reading of the vision in Ezek 40-48, see Daniel I. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 494-612.

<sup>92</sup> Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets*, 285-86.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 286. The arguments for reinstatement of the sacrificial system are problematic for two reasons. First, a return to animal sacrifice in the kingdom era would represent a strange salvation-historical regression that seems to diminish the perfection and finality of Christ's sacrifice for sin (cf. Heb 9:11-15, 23-28; 10:5-14). Marshall (*Beyond the Bible*, 59) comments: "The material sacrifices . . . are understood as temporary pointers to the death of Jesus. They provide categories for understanding it, but in doing so they render themselves obsolete." Second, arguments for reinstatement of sacrifices also appear to make the OT symbolism of temple, sacred space, and purity intrinsic to the relationship between God and humanity, when in fact these concepts are cultural constructs that have become obsolete in the progression of God's dealings with humanity. *Contra* Jerry M. Hullinger, "The Problem of Animal Sacrifices in Ezekiel 40-48," *Bib Sac* 152 (1995): 279-89 (though Hullinger's view presents what appears to be the strongest argument for why animal sacrifices might be needed in the millennium).

<sup>94</sup> See Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 81-167. Beale's discussion traces the idea of the expanding purpose of temples in the literature of Second Temple Judaism as a whole.

Jeremiah 3:16-18 states that there will be no ark of the covenant in the future Jerusalem and that all of the city will become Yahweh's throne. The city itself becomes the temple, and the presence of God extends beyond any type of sacred building. Isaiah promises that the cloud and smoke of Yahweh's presence will cover "all of Mount Zion" (Isa 4:5-6). In a very real sense, the Old Testament promise of the extension of the divine presence to all the peoples of the earth transcends anything associated with the temple as an architectural structure. As Beale observes, the promise that the temple will become a "house of prayer" for the nations (Isa 56:7) presents a "universal purpose" that "will make the localized temple obsolete."<sup>95</sup> In the "new heavens and new earth" of Isaiah 65-66, only the entire creation will be able to fully house God's saving presence as he openly dwells among the righteous (Isa 66:2, 12-14, 20-23; cf. 57:15).<sup>96</sup> More than a new temple, Isaiah is anticipating a new Eden where God's presence extends throughout the earth (Isa 51:3-8). The presence of Yahweh will be so direct and pervasive that there will no longer be a need for the sun and moon to provide light (Isa 60:19-20).

The eschatological hope of the Old Testament prophets is then temple but more than temple, and the dissociation of the presence of God from a physical structure becomes even more pronounced in the New Testament. Isaiah's Zion and temple prophecies are transparent in that they point to the presence of God with his people and the perpetual worship of Yahweh by all peoples, but translucent in that subsequent New Testament fulfillments transcend the original prophetic vision in key ways. Rowland explains that for the New Testament writers, "the Temple had become superfluous as a locus of the divine presence, even if it continued to offer the language by which that divine presence in the world could be articulated."<sup>97</sup> McConville concurs: "There is no basis in a Christian reading of the Old Testament for a continuing idea of 'sacred space.' The idea of some necessary, special significance of a place leans more toward Canaan than biblical theology."<sup>98</sup>

The prophet's vision of a new Jerusalem and temple is transcended first and foremost by the incarnation of Jesus Christ, who brings heaven to earth in a far greater way than the dwelling of a deity in an architectural structure. Jesus is "God with us" (Matt 1:23) and is thus the "one greater than the temple" (Matt 12:8). The Transfiguration accounts found in all of the Synoptic Gospels reveal that the glory of God is now associated with the person of Jesus apart from the edifice of the temple (cf. Matt 17:1-3; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36). With his authority to provide direct and immediate forgiveness of sins (cf. Matt 9:2-5; Mark 2:5-9; Luke 5:20-23; 7:47-49), Jesus supersedes and ultimately renders obsolete the sacrificial system associated with the temple and the Old Testament economy. At the Last Supper, Jesus pointed to the bread and wine symbolic of his death "as more acceptable to God than regular sacrifice" (Matt 26:26-28; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19-20).<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 134-38.

<sup>97</sup> Christopher Rowland, "The Temple in the New Testament," in *Temple and Worship in Biblical Israel* (ed. John Day; Library of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament Studies 422; New York: T & T Clark, 2005), 481.

<sup>98</sup> Gordon McConville, "Jerusalem in the Old Testament," in *Jerusalem Past and Present in the Purposes of God* (ed. P. W. L. Walker; Cambridge: Tyndale House, 1992), 50.

<sup>99</sup> B. Chilton, P. W. Comfort, M. O. Wise, "Temple," in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, 1177.



The idea of Jesus as the replacement of the temple runs throughout the New Testament and is especially pronounced in the Gospels of Mark and John.<sup>100</sup> In Mark, the motif of Jesus' replacement of the temple provides an ironic twist to the account of Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus is condemned to death in part because of the false accusations that he had threatened to destroy the temple (Mark 14:57-58). Though the accusation was false, the reference to the building of a new temple in "three days" demonstrates that Jesus' resurrection would in fact bring about the symbolic destruction of the temple (cf. Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:34). When Jesus is on the cross, passersby mock him for his warning that the temple would be destroyed at the very time he is fulfilling this prophecy (Mark 15:29-30). The rending of the temple veil from top to bottom (Mark 15:38) is the heavenly pronouncement that access to God via the temple and its sacrificial rituals is no longer in effect. In fact, one should likely view the inclusio provided by the "rending" (sc̄i, zw) of the heavens at the baptism of Jesus in Mark 1:10 and this "rending" of the temple veil at his death as a statement of how the incarnation of Jesus brought about the obsolescence of the ancient Near Eastern constructs of temple and sacred space as the vehicle of God communicating his presence to and among his people.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus' cleansing of the temple and the accompanying statements concerning the rebuilding of the temple in connection with the "three days" of his resurrection are placed at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. This teaching appears in close proximity to the statements in John 1 that the glory of God "tabernacles" in the person of Jesus (John 1:14, 18), and that Jesus is now the intermediary between heaven and earth (John 1:50-51). Jesus informs the Samaritan woman that true worship no longer centers around the temple sites of Jerusalem and Gerazim and must be offered to God in spirit and in truth (John 4:20-24). When Jesus invites the thirsty to come to him and to drink on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:37-39), he is identifying himself as the source of the "streams of living waters" that the prophets Ezekiel and Zechariah promised would flow out of the new Zion and temple (cf. Ezek 47:1-12; Zech 14:1-8). What was promised concerning Zion in the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christ in the New Testament.

Isaiah's temple prophecies are also transcended by the experience of the unmediated presence of God by the Christian community through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. The church has now become the "living temple" of God, and the service and godly lives of believers takes the place of the temple cult (cf. Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 3:16; 6:19-20; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pet 2:4-9; Rev 1:6; 5:10).<sup>101</sup> Using tabernacle typology, the writer of Hebrews explains that believers have this access to God because Christ has entered into the heavenly sanctuary with his blood as the perfect sacrifice for sin (Heb 9:23-28; 10:1-22). Rowland explains, "The cross becomes the moment when unmediated access to God becomes a possibility."<sup>102</sup> Christ provides a connection to the divine presence that enables believers to follow him into the Holy of Holies (Heb 10:19-22), to presently enjoy the

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<sup>100</sup> For fuller development of this motif, see Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 169-200

<sup>101</sup> Beale (*The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 318, n. 17) notes the similarity between the NT assertions that the church is the temple of God and the conception of the Qumran community that they constituted the true spiritual temple of God because of the apostasy of Jerusalem (cf. 1QS 5.5-6; 8.4, 10; 9:3-6; 11:7ff; CD 3.19-4.6; 4QFlor 1.2-9).

<sup>102</sup> Rowland, "The Temple in the New Testament," 477.

“heavenly Jerusalem” (Heb 12:22-24), and to anticipate by faith the heavenly city that awaits them at the end of their earthly pilgrimage (Heb 11:13-16). Rowland further explains, “What is above, in heaven, is what is to come and is what will be revealed in the end time; but what is to come is now already revealed . . . and to which the recipients of the Letter to the Hebrews have access.”<sup>103</sup>

Isaiah’s vision of the new temple is ultimately transcended by the New Testament promise of the fullness of God’s presence that is to be experienced in the eschatological age. The portrayal of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21-22 anticipates an even greater reality than Isaiah’s vision of a restored Zion. Beale observes that John’s vision of the new heaven and earth in Revelation 21 is completely dominated by the garden-like city of Jerusalem that is in the shape of a temple (21:1-3, 10-22:3).<sup>104</sup> There are no “forests, rivers, mountains, streams, valleys, and the many other features of a fertile worldwide new creation,” but instead there is only “an arboreal city temple.”<sup>105</sup> This vision suggests that the presence of God that was restricted to the confines of the temple in the Old Testament now fills the entire earth.<sup>106</sup> There will be no temple in the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:22), because any such structure will have outlived its purpose when there is the unfiltered experience of God’s glorious “face” as he rules from his throne (Rev 22:4-5). The New Jerusalem will be a new Eden where humanity once again has the unlimited access to God that was lost in the fall (Rev 22:1-3; cf. Gen 3:8-10, 23-24). The temple symbolism of the Bible ultimately points to “a huge worldwide sanctuary in which God’s presence would dwell in every part of the cosmos.”<sup>107</sup>

Even with the marginalization of temple in the New Testament, the detailed and specific portrayals of the eschatological temple in the Old Testament prophets (particularly Ezekiel 40-48) argue for a literal, future temple in the intermediate kingdom described in Revelation 20. When considering what this millennial kingdom will look like, there are two major difficulties. First, the Old Testament prophets themselves do not distinguish between the millennial and eternal kingdoms. Routledge writes:

The belief in a preliminary messianic kingdom was common in first-century Judaism, but it is not found in the OT. There is no suggestion of a two-phase

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 23. See also L. Overstreet, “The Temple of God in the Book of Revelation,” *Bib Sac* 166 (2009); 446-62. Overstreet (pp. 461-462) notes how the square dimensions of the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:16) correspond to the square dimensions of the Holy of Holies in the OT tabernacle and temple (cf. Exod 26-27).

<sup>105</sup> Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 23.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 48. In moving from OT to NT, it is important to note the ways that Revelation presents the New Jerusalem as the fulfillment of the vision in Ezek 40-48. Moyise (*The Old Testament in the New*, 120-21) notes the following parallels between the larger contexts of Rev 19-22 and Ezek 37-48: 1) the revival of the dry bones and the reunited kingdom (Ezek 37:10, 21) and the first resurrection and the reigning of the saints (Rev 20:4-5); 2) the Gog and Magog battle (Ezek 38; Rev 20:8); 3) the gorging of the birds (Ezek 39:4; Rev 19:21); 4) Ezekiel and John being taken to a high mountain (Ezek 40:2; Rev 21:10); 5) the measuring of temple and city (Ezek 40:5; Rev 21:15); 5) the filling of temple and city with the glory of God (Ezek 43:2; Rev 21:23); and the river of life flowing from the city (Ezek 47:12; Rev 22:2). Moyise concludes, “Thus, John’s use of Ezekiel consists of both striking similarities and remarkable differences.”

salvation. According to the OT writers, God will establish his kingdom, and that kingdom will last for ever. The kingdom is described in earthly terms, and elements within it may seem to fall short of the eternal state described in the NT, but there is no sense that this a temporary earthly kingdom that will be replaced by an eternal, heavenly one.<sup>108</sup>

The distinction between the earthly kingdom and the eternal, New Jerusalem only emerges in Revelation 20-22. Wallace explains: “The idea of a time-fixed earthly kingdom is not taught until Rev 20. Reading the Bible chronologically reveals that the millennial kingdom is not clearly distinguished from the eternal state until the last book of the Bible.”<sup>109</sup>

The second problem is that even while Revelation 20 teaches an intermediate kingdom prior to the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21-22, there are few details or specifics regarding what this kingdom will be like in these passages or elsewhere in the New Testament. The best place for such details then becomes the Old Testament prophets, and Robert Saucy appears to provide a good rule of thumb regarding how to read the kingdom promises found in the Old Testament prophets: “The lack of detail about the Old Testament prophecies in the New Testament does not necessarily mean they are invalid or superseded. To the contrary, the situation of the early church suggests that we should consider the prophecies valid unless there is explicit teaching to the contrary.”<sup>110</sup>

The straightforward reading of the Old Testament prophetic promises suggested by Saucy fits both with the original intent of the prophecies and with eschatological expectations in Second Temple Judaism. The lack of New Testament descriptions of the earthly kingdom is most likely due to the fact that the picture of this kingdom painted in the Old Testament prophets remains largely intact. Despite the limited amount of explicit New Testament discussion, there is evidence that Jesus and the New Testament writers are still looking forward to the fulfillment of the kingdom promises for Israel found in the Old Testament and anticipate a kingdom that is essentially the same as what is found in the Old Testament prophets. In passages like Luke 13:19-20 and 22:14-23 (par.), Jesus portrays the future kingdom as an eschatological banquet, like what is found in Isaiah 25:6-8. Bock notes that the imagery in these passages “is still very Israelite in character, with a meal present that has sacrificial elements attached to it.”<sup>111</sup> In Luke 22:30 (cf. Matt 19:28), the eleven will not only enjoy a place with Jesus at the banquet table but they will also sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. The clear implication is that Israel remains as a national entity

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<sup>108</sup> Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 279.

<sup>109</sup> Daniel B. Wallace, “New Testament Eschatology in the Light of Progressive Revelation: Special Focus on the Coming Kingdom,” <http://bible.org/article/new-testament-eschatology-light-progressive-revelation>. Accessed October 31, 2009. Wallace refers to the intermingling of the earthly kingdom and the eternal state in passages like Isa 65:17-25, which refers to the continuing presence of death in the future kingdom. However, any attempt to precisely distinguish between earthly/eternal aspects of OT kingdom texts would seem to be hermeneutically suspect. Such apparent intermingling may more the result of the prophets describing the future kingdom with idealized language and figurative imagery.

<sup>110</sup> Robert L. Saucy, *The Case for Progressive Dispensationalism: The Interface Between Dispensational and Non-Dispensational Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 34-35. Thanks to my student Elke Speliopoulos for providing this quotation.

<sup>111</sup> Bock, “Evidence from Acts,” 186.

and has a future connected to the eschatological kingdom.<sup>112</sup> The city of Jerusalem will be “trampled until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled” (Luke 21:44), indicating that the second coming of Christ will bring about the reversal of Jerusalem’s judgment and the glorious restoration of the city envisioned by Isaiah.

Three New Testament passages are especially crucial when considering the possibility of an eschatological temple in Jerusalem—Matthew 24:15 (par. Mark 13:14); 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 and Revelation 11:1-14. When Jesus connects the “abomination of desolation” with the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24, it reflects that he still sees a future referent for Daniel’s prophecies concerning the desecration of Jerusalem and the temple (cf. Dan 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). However, Jesus telescopes events associated with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. with end-time events surrounding his second coming, and it is not clear if this desecration occurs in the near or distant future (or possibly both).<sup>113</sup>

Matthew 24 particularly seems to refer to a still future desecration of Jerusalem when read in light of Paul’s statements in 2 Thessalonians 2:3-4 that a “man of lawlessness” will take his seat in the temple and demand to be worshipped as God as prelude to the day of the Lord. Paul clearly draws upon Daniel 9:27 and 11:36-37 in describing the man of sin and his defiant actions toward God.<sup>114</sup> Based on Pauline usage elsewhere (cf. 1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21), Beale interprets “temple” (ναο, j) here as figurative and sees the passage as referring to the influence of the future Antichrist in leading a worldwide apostasy within the church.<sup>115</sup> However, the connections of 2 Thessalonians 2 to Daniel and Matthew 24 suggest otherwise. Martin argues that “the scope of the lawless one’s actions seems much broader than just the church. He will press a claim of absolute preeminence over all people and all gods. Such breadth of influence implies political and/or military might, not just religious megalomania.”<sup>116</sup> Paul likely envisions an event like the desecration of the temple by Antiochus.<sup>117</sup> Viewing the temple as a symbolic referent to the church also lessens the likelihood of this passage describing an event that could be recognized as a clear indicator of the imminence of the Day of the Lord.<sup>118</sup>

At the same time, the arrogation of power by the man of sin is the focus of this passage, not the temple itself. The reference to the temple may simply be a typology based on previous

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Jesus appears to engage in a form of typological patterning discussed elsewhere in this paper. Jesus draws a correspondence between Antiochus’ desecration of Jerusalem in 168 B.C. and the future desecration of the city and then blends together the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (near) with the catastrophic events leading to his second coming (far). For the presence of near and far events in the Olivet Discourse (Matt 24; Mark 13), see Schreiner, *New Testament Theology*, 803-13; and D. A. Carson, “Matthew,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* (ed. F. E. Gaebelin; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), 8: 488-95.

<sup>114</sup> For the specific details, see Jeffrey A. D. Weima, “1-2 Thessalonians,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 887.

<sup>115</sup> G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 269-92.

<sup>116</sup> D. Michael Martin, *1, 2 Thessalonians* (NAC 33; Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995), 236.

<sup>117</sup> Martin (ibid., 237) also notes how that Gaius Caesar (Caligula) claimed deity for himself and attempted to have his image set up in the holy of holies in 40 A.D. only a few years before Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

events. The temple in view, even if literal, is not necessarily the restored temple promised in Isaiah and the prophets. Martin comments: "All that is necessary for Paul's purpose in this passage is that the man of lawlessness express his presumption of preeminence through some sort of clear demonstration for all to see and understand and that this event must occur before the second coming."<sup>119</sup>

The possibility of an end-time or tribulational temple is also suggested by a futurist reading of John's vision of the temple and the two witnesses in Revelation 11:1-15.<sup>120</sup> The interpretive issues connected with this difficult passage are beyond the focus of this paper, but the trampling of the outer court of the temple accords with Jesus' warning concerning the Gentile trampling of Jerusalem in Luke 21:24. The persecution of the two witnesses (whether individuals or representative of a believing remnant) in the city of Jerusalem (11:8) in connection with the rule of Antichrist (Rev 13) also fits with Paul's teachings on the actions of the lawless one in 2 Thessalonians 2. In light of the fact that the term "temple" consistently refers to a spiritual temple versus a physical building in the book of Revelation (Rev 3:13; 7:15; 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5-6, 8; 16:1, 17; cf. 21:22), the more generally accepted view is that the temple here is symbolic of the believing remnant. Osborne writes, "Since the imagery throughout the book is of a heavenly temple, it is difficult to conceive how this would refer to a literal temple on earth."<sup>121</sup> This believing remnant (whether the church, a Jewish remnant, or tribulation saints) is likely portrayed as the earthly embodiment of the heavenly temple undergoing persecution as its outer court is trampled.<sup>122</sup>

Despite this persecution, the temple belongs to God and is under his ultimate spiritual protection. Regardless of whether the temple is literal or figurative, this passage presents the city of Jerusalem as playing a significant role in end time events in a manner consistent with the focus on Jerusalem in the Old Testament prophets. The two witnesses (whether literal or symbolic) are put to death in Jerusalem (Rev 11:8). The reference to Jerusalem as the "great city" in 11:8 also connects Jerusalem to the city of Babylon that serves as center of the reign and influence of the Antichrist (the beast) in Revelation 13 (cf. Rev 14:8; 16:19; 17:18; 18:10; 16, 18, 19, 21). Though one could view all of this passage as figurative and symbolic, Revelation 11 seems to provide another image of oppressive persecution directed against the city of Jerusalem by a tyrannical ruler in the end times. The evidence of an actual temple is less compelling, and even if the temple in this passage is literal, it may or may not be connected to the kingdom temple promised in Isaiah and Ezekiel.

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<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> For such a reading, see John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 175-77.

<sup>121</sup> Osborne, *Revelation*, 410.

<sup>122</sup> See the discussion in Osborne (*Revelation*, 408-9) and Beale (*Book of Revelation*, 557-60) for a listing of other views and options.

## The Question of Israel's Future

Both the New Testament emphasis on the equality of Jew and Gentile and its marginalization of temple raises the larger issue of the possibility of a completely figurative or spiritual fulfillment of the promise of Israel's national restoration, including the land and kingdom promises for Israel found in the Old Testament prophets. If there is "neither Jew nor Gentile" in Christ (Gal 3:28), then how do the specific promises to Israel remain in effect? Does not the marginalization of the temple also minimize the importance of Jerusalem itself? N. T. Wright argues that the promises concerning the city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel have been both fulfilled and relativized in Christ and the Spirit.<sup>123</sup> Commenting on the contrast between the earthly and heavenly Jerusalem in Galatians 4:21-26, Wright argues that the earthly city of Jerusalem was only "an advance metaphor" of the heavenly reality. The statement that the church is "the temple of the living God" in 1 Corinthians 3:16 "confirms this Pauline understanding that the earthly Jerusalem was no longer of any significance."<sup>124</sup> In that Christ is the new temple and that his death and resurrection bring about Israel's real restoration and return from exile, any attempt to carry over the Old Testament promises concerning Jerusalem, the land, or the temple for a present or future fulfillment diminishes what Christ accomplished and suggests that Christ's work "is once again 'incomplete.'"<sup>125</sup>

Paul's teaching in Romans 9-11, the most definitive passage on the future of Israel in the New Testament, seems to contradict Wright's position. In this passage, Paul explains both the "now" and "not yet" aspects of Israel's restoration. The present unbelief of Israel does not abrogate God's covenant promises to Israel but does result in Israel's restoration being carried out in two stages. At present, God is saving a remnant of Jews who like Paul become a part of the predominantly Gentile church through faith in Christ (Rom 11:1-2, 5-6). The present hardening of Israel is only temporary "until the full number of Gentiles has come in," and then God will graft Israel back into the olive tree so that "all Israel will be saved" (Rom 11:25-26). Seifrid comments, "The final act in the drama of redemption is not the formation of a church that consists largely of Gentiles, but the creation of salvation for the people of Israel."<sup>126</sup>

Wright argues that "all Israel" in Romans 11:26 refers to the Jews and Gentiles being now saved (vv. 5-6, 11-12) who form the people of God and that Paul has thus redefined the term "Israel."<sup>127</sup> There are instances where Paul applies the names or titles of Israel to the church (cf. Phil 3:3; Gal 6:16), and such usage would be consistent with his olive tree illustration in this chapter stressing the organic unity of the people of God (cf. Rom 4:13-18).<sup>128</sup> However, this meaning does not fit with the consistent use of Israel to refer to national, ethnic Israel (Paul's "brethren" and "kinsmen according to the flesh") throughout

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<sup>123</sup> Tom Wright, "Jerusalem in the New Testament," in *Jerusalem Past Present and Future*, 61-62.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 62-63.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, 65-66.

<sup>126</sup> Mark A. Seifrid, "Romans," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 673.

<sup>127</sup> See N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991), 246-51.

<sup>128</sup> Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (NICNT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 721.

Romans 9-11 and particularly in the immediately preceding reference to the “hardening of Israel” in verse 25.<sup>129</sup> Witherington observes, “Paul gives no hints or qualifiers to lead the listener to think that Israel means something different here in v. 26 than it meant in v. 25.”<sup>130</sup> Moo also argues that Paul using the term “Israel” to refer to the predominantly Gentile church is incompatible with the “polemical purpose” of Romans 11 where Paul is warning Gentile believers not to “boast over the branches” and believe that they have completely usurped Israel’s place in God’s economy (11:17-24). Moo writes, “For Paul in this context to call the church ‘Israel’ would be to fuel the fire of Gentiles’ arrogance by giving them grounds to brag that ‘we are the true Israel.’”<sup>131</sup>

Another view is that the salvation of “all Israel” in verse 26 refers simply to individual Jews like Paul who are part of the elect (11:5-6). Paul uses the term “Israel” to refer to both national Israel and the elect remnant in 9:6 when he clarifies that the true people of God has always consisted only of the believing remnant (cf. 9:7-8). However, if “all Israel” in 11:26 simply refers to the present believing remnant, it would be a redundantly self-evident statement in light of his overall discussion in chapter 11.<sup>132</sup> Wagner notes in Romans 11 that there are two distinct groups who make up “all Israel”—the “elect” remnant in 11:6 and the “rest” of Israel (11:7) that is hardened in unbelief.<sup>133</sup> Paul’s explanation of how Israel will be saved does not just focus on the inclusion of currently believing Jews but also on the transformation of the corporate unbelief of the “rest.” The root “hardened” describes corporate Israel and provides an inclusio for Paul’s discussion of Israel’s present unbelief (verbal  $\rho\omega\rho\omega$  in v. 7, and nominal  $\rho\omega\rho\omega\sigma\iota\gamma$  in v. 25).<sup>134</sup> However, their present “transgression” will be turned into “fullness” (v. 12) and their current “rejection” into “acceptance” (v. 15). These branches that have been “broken off” will be regrafted into their own olive tree (vv. 19-24). The term “fullness” ( $\pi\lambda\eta\rho\omega\mu\alpha$ ) as used by Paul with reference to Israel in verse 12 and the Gentiles in verse 25 provides confirmation that verse 26 is looking forward to a restoration of national or corporate Israel. If the “fullness” of the Gentiles in verse 25 refers to the Gentiles who have and will be saved, then the “fullness” of “all Israel” in verse 26 also involves “the adding of the now-unbelieving Jews to the believing ones to make a full complement.”<sup>135</sup> Thus, if “all Israel” is

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., 721-22.

<sup>130</sup> Ben J. Witherington, *The Problem with Evangelical Theology: Testing the Exegetical Foundations of Calvinism, Dispensationalism, and Wesleyanism*, (Waco, Tex.: Baylor University, 2005), 161.

<sup>131</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 722.

<sup>132</sup> Witherington, *The Problem with Evangelical Theology*, 162, comments on v. 26: “Paul already knew of many saved Jewish Christians, and it is hardly likely that he has them in view here. Rather, he says this “all Israel” group will be saved after the full numbers of Gentiles have come in.”

<sup>133</sup> Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 277-80.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>135</sup> Witherington, *The Problem with Evangelical Theology*, 155. The force of the  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \sigma\upsilon\tau\omega\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma$  introducing 11:26 figures into the debate over the meaning of this verse.  $\sigma\upsilon\tau\omega\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma$  by itself normally has the meaning of “so” or “in this manner,” suggesting that v. 25 or Paul’s discussion in vv. 11-25 explains how “all Israel” will be saved. The combination of  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \sigma\upsilon\tau\omega\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma$  can also have a temporal nuance (cf. NT examples in Acts 7:8; 20:11; 1 Cor 14:25; and 1 Thess 4:16-17) and would then be referring to something that happens subsequent to vv. 11-25. The temporal reading clearly presents v. 26 as pointing to a future event. Reading  $\sigma\upsilon\tau\omega\upsilon\tau\omega\varsigma$  to indicate manner here, Wright (*The Climax of the Covenant*, 249-50) argues that the “fullness of the Gentiles” coming to salvation in v. 25b explains how “all Israel” is saved. Beside the problem of the meaning assigned to “Israel” that has already been discussed, Wright’s view is to be rejected because the hardening of

taken as a reference to all of Israel's elect believers, then it must include those Jews who will turn to the Lord as part of this national conversion in the end times.<sup>136</sup>

While Romans 11:26 promises a national turning of Israel to the Lord for salvation, "all Israel" does not mean that every Jew without exception will be saved. As Witherington notes, the term "all Israel" is a corporate term for the nation (cf. 1 Sam 7:5, 25; 1 Kgs 12:1; 2 Chron 12:1; Dan 9:11; *Jub* 50:9; *Test Lev* 17:5; *M. Sanhedrin* 10:1).<sup>137</sup> The timing of this salvation of Israel would appear to be the second coming of Christ. The references to the future resurrection "from the dead" (v. 15) and the entrance of "the fullness of the Gentiles" (v. 25) point to the eschaton. As Moo explains, "the current partial hardening of Israel will be reversed when all the elect Gentiles have been saved; and it is unlikely that Paul would think salvation would be closed to Gentiles before the end."<sup>138</sup> The use of the future tense for the verbs "will be grafted in v. 24 and "will be saved" in v. 26 also points in the direction of an eschatological fulfillment. Paul bases his confidence of Israel's future restoration in a combined quotation of Isaiah 59:20-21 and 27:9.<sup>139</sup> The original reference to the coming of the Redeemer in Isaiah 59:20 speaks of Yahweh coming to deliver his people from exile, but here most likely refers to the second coming of Christ.<sup>140</sup>

Paul affirms the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises to Israel, but in a very real sense has also modified the Isaianic drama of salvation. Whereas Isaiah prophesies of the restoration of Israel being the catalyst for the extension of God's salvation to the Gentiles, Paul states that it is the "hardening" of Israel that leads to the salvation of the Gentiles. Additionally, it is the salvation of the Gentiles and their inclusion into the olive tree originating with Abraham that prompts Israel out of jealousy to return to God. In Paul's scheme, the fullness of the Gentiles comes prior to the fullness of Israel. Moo writes:

Some OT and Jewish texts predict that Gentiles will join the worship of the Lord in the last day; and some of them suggest that it is the Lord's glory revealed in a rejuvenated and regathered Israel that will stimulate Jewish interest. But wholly novel was the idea that the inauguration of the eschatological age would involve

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Israel and the bringing in of the fullness of the Gentiles in v. 25b is a summary of Paul's explanation in vv. 11-24 of the entire process of how God will transform current Jewish unbelief. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 719-20; and Witherington, *The Problem with Evangelical Theology*, 160-62. In support of the view that 11:26 refers to a future salvation of Israel, Wagner (*Heralds of the Good News*, 279-80, n. 195) reads οὐ[ τω] in connection with the κατω. j and sees it as pointing forward to Paul's OT citations as the basis of his confidence in Israel's final redemption (cf. the conjoining οὐ[ τω] and κατω. j in a similar manner in Luke 24:44 and Phil 3:17). Thomas Schreiner (*New Testament Theology*, 859) also notes, "Even if the phrase denotes manner, temporal ideas are woven into the context."

<sup>136</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 724, n. 59.

<sup>137</sup> Witherington, *The Problem with Evangelical Theology*, 162. See also Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 722-23.

<sup>138</sup> Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 724.

<sup>139</sup> These texts share a reference to "Jacob" and a thematic emphasis on the removal of Israel's sinfulness. See Wagner, *Heralds of the Good News*, 280-83.

<sup>140</sup> Note the use of the verb ρ`υ,ομαι ("to rescue/deliver") in 1 Thess 1:10 with reference to Jesus' second coming. See Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 728, n. 75. In stating that the redeemer comes "from Zion," Paul differs from the MT ("to Zion"), the LXX ("on behalf of Zion"), and any other extant reading of Isaiah 59:20 and appears to visualize Jesus as coming from the heavenly Zion (cf. Gal 4:26 and Heb 12:22-24) to accomplish the promised restoration.



setting aside the majority of Jews while Gentiles streamed in to enjoy the blessings of salvation and that only when that stream had been exhausted would Israel as a whole experience these blessings.<sup>141</sup>

Blaising has rightly noted that the theological importance of the restoration of national, ethnic Israel is the issue of God's faithfulness to his word and his covenant promises (cf. Exod 34:6-7; Num 23:19; Mal 3:7-10).<sup>142</sup> It is significant that emphasis on God's covenant faithfulness frames Paul's discussion of the future of Israel in Romans 9-11. In chapter 9, Paul begins by providing the reminder that the covenants essential to the outworking of God's plan of salvation history belong to Israel (9:4). After affirming that God will save "all Israel" in 11:25, Paul asserts in verse 29 that the "gifts and calling of God are irrevocable."<sup>143</sup> Paul's confidence in Israel's salvation is founded upon the "covenant" referred to in Isaiah 59:20-21, in which God promises to remove Israel's sin and to make a "covenant" with his people. This covenant involves God permanently placing his Spirit and word within his people. God acts unconditionally to save his people and acts unilaterally to overcome their sinful disobedience. In the working out of the Isaianic drama of salvation, Israel's disobedience and unbelief has stood in the way of the fulfillment of God's promise; the promise here is that the drama will reach its consummation when God sovereignly acts to overcome Israel's unbelief and provides the enablement for Israel to obey and follow him. Without this act of divine salvation, the pattern of sin, disobedience, and delay of the promised restoration could never be realized.

### Conclusion

Payne has commented on the "willingness to live with tension" as an important element in forming one's understanding of eschatology.<sup>144</sup> Study of the canonical development of Isaiah's vision for Zion confirms the accuracy of this observation. The New Testament reflects the pervasive influence of Isaiah's promises concerning Zion in ways that both affirm and modify the prophet's original message. Despite some surprising developments in the outworking of salvation history, the New Testament writers remain committed to the particularity of God's plan of using Israel to bring about the salvation and blessing of the nations. The message of the New Testament is that the Isaianic and Christian gospels are one and the same, and the Christian hope centers on the anticipation of the ultimate fulfillment of Isaiah's promises in the final act of the drama of salvation history.

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 716-17. Moo (p. 684) references this motif in the following passages: *Pss. Sol.* 17:26-46, esp. 30-31; *Isa* 2:2-3a; 56:6-7; 60:1-7; *Tob* 13:11-13; 14:6-7; *T. Zeb* 9:8; *T. Benj.* 9:2; *Sib.Or.* 3.767-95).

<sup>142</sup> Craig Blaising, "The Future of Israel as a Theological Question," *JETS* 44 (2001): 439-40.

<sup>143</sup> Along with 11:29, the rhetorical question stressing the impossibility of God rejecting Israel in 11:1 provides an *inclusio* around the final stage of his argument in chapter 11 dealing with the present rejection and future acceptance of Israel.

<sup>144</sup> Don J. Payne, "The Theological Method of Premillennialism," in *A Case for Historic Premillennialism*, 97.