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THE CONSISTENCY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD THROUGH ISRAEL'S
UNCONDITIONAL COVENANTS

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THE CONSISTENCY OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD THROUGH ISRAEL'S
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To my wife, Bora, and my children, Yoonchan and Yoonseong

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ABSTRACT

The Bible consistently presents one common theme: the kingdom of God. Biblical theology focuses on God's faithfulness, wisdom, and purpose in the process of redemption. The Old Testament expresses the firm belief that God will surely fulfill His covenants and reign forever. The Old Testament prophets believed that the Messiah would come for judgment and salvation. They consistently prophesied the birth and reign of the Messiah, which connects the Old and New Testaments.

There is a continuity between the Old and New Testaments. The promises made to Israel in the Old Testament will be fulfilled for Israel, not the church. Although God has never said that He has abandoned Israel, some scholars exclude Israel from His salvation plan. Since the study of Israel is an essential area of biblical theology, various interpretation methodologies address the issue of Israel. The present research explores the essential principles of the restoration of Israel and the significance of Israel's unconditional covenants. These covenants are the key ideas of the Bible and reveal the faithfulness of God's promises.

The faithfulness of God's promises is revealed by the consistent flow of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible is a record of God's work of salvation, revealing the creation of the world, the fall of man, and a long history of redemption. It concludes with the end of the world with judgment and complete salvation. The Bible includes the stories and covenants of God that He loves all people in the world and offers salvation beyond time, space, language, and culture. Every promise in the Bible begins in the Old Testament and is completed in the New Testament. This dissertation examines the consistency of the kingdom of God by addressing Israel's unconditional covenants and their fulfillment. Therefore, this research demonstrates how these covenants support God's kingdom in the Bible.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Background to the Current Study

The kingdom of God is one of the most crucial topics in Christian theology. The essence and time of God's kingdom is highly controversial. By understanding the kingdom of God based on His unconditional covenants with Israel, one can decipher its meaning. The kingdom of God is a continuum that began with the creation of the world and will continue to the end. The great significance of this study is that it provides an argument for the consistency of the kingdom of God in the Old and New Testaments without distinguishing it in both Testaments.

No logical separation exists between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and they are closely related in their sections on God's covenants with Israel. Among the themes of the Bible, God's covenant is the central idea in the Old Testament. The covenant is associated with choice, and one of the principal views in the Bible is that God has a special covenant relationship with the nation of Israel. Michael Rydelnik states, "This eternal covenant was not made just with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, but with all their descendants afterwards. As such, it marks the Jewish people as forever distinctively related to God."¹ Therefore, without a careful examination of God's covenants and choice, one will not correctly understand the context of the Bible and salvation history.

God's covenant program is an important topic many scholars have studied with great interest. There are several contrary views over how to interpret the four unconditional covenants, and their misinterpretation distorts the core ideas of the Bible. This dissertation examines the

¹ Michael Rydelnik, "The Jewish People: Evidence for the truth of Scripture," in *The People, the Land and the Future of Israel: Israel and the Jewish People in the Plan of God*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2014), 255.

four unconditional covenants God made with Israel and discusses how and why these promises must be fulfilled. God shows the Israelites His faithfulness through His covenants with them, and His faithfulness toward Israel is also confirmed in the New Testament. God does not break the promises He made to the Israelites, which can only be explained by the faithfulness of God.

Even though understanding the restoration of Israel is still a controversial issue, several scholars are partaking in this debate. Some theologians tend to interpret Israel differently in the New Testament and interfere with the ongoing interpretation of the Bible by depreciating the meaning of Israel in the New Testament. Others acknowledge the importance of Israel as God's chosen nation in the Old Testament. Many messages in the New Testament proclaim the restoration of Israel. This study dispels misconceptions about Israel and critically evaluates its biblical role in the millennial kingdom. Michael J. Vlach states, "The Father will restore the kingdom to Israel according to His timetable."² God has not forsaken Israel, and promises made to His people will be fulfilled in the future. Accordingly, any attempts to understand the true meaning of Israel will be a remarkable breakthrough.

The kingdom of God represents the kingdom ruled by the laws of God. His kingdom begins with the Garden of Eden and develops into a nation called Israel. In the Bible, Israel is the only nation that is governed by God, revealing the reality of His kingdom in the world. The sacrificial system and temple of Israel in the Old Testament foreshadow the early forms of a perfect kingdom of God. When Jesus Christ began His public life, He declared, "The kingdom of

² Michael J. Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever: A Biblical Theology of the Kingdom of God* (Silverton, OR: Lampion Press, 2017), 405.

God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15, *NIV*).³ The Bible is the history of the kingdom of God fulfilled through Jesus Christ, who saves humanity from sin.

One should have a clear understanding of the kingdom of God declared by Jesus. The Jews in Jesus’s day believed that it would only come in the future. However, what Jesus said in parables demonstrates that the kingdom of God has already come, is coming, and will come upon people. James R. Edwards adds, “Jesus exhibits his filial and messianic authority in declaring who is on the threshold of the kingdom of God, which is present not in the Torah but in himself.”⁴ It is the kingdom of God where the messianic authority should be manifested dynamically to God’s people.

The anticipation of the Messiah is closely related to the emergence of the Davidic dynasty with divine authority. The discovery of the Qumran documents was a landmark event for understanding the development of the messianic thought and contributed significantly to biblical study. The messianic ideas in the Qumran documents have been a subject of interest to many scholars since the beginning of the documents’ research. In the documents, various types of messianic figures can be found in relation to the eschatological context. The most representative messianic thought among them is the expectation of the royal Messiah and the priestly Messiah.

Before the Qumran documents were discovered, knowledge about Palestinian Judaism for the background of Jesus’s ministry was limited. Judaism could only be understood superficially through the works of the Jewish historian Josephus, making the Qumran documents

³ Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the *New International Version* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

⁴ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: Eerdmans; Apollos, 2002), 374.

significant because they were written by a sect of the time. The discovery of the documents paved the way for scholars to study the messianic idea related to the Davidic Covenant.

This dissertation examines the validity of the messianic thought of the Qumran community by introducing its formation and development. By analyzing the Qumran documents related to the Messiah, this research explores the Jewish origin of the expectation of the Messiah, which is at the heart of Christianity. Furthermore, this dissertation addresses the characteristics of the priestly Messiah and the emphasis of the temple by addressing the Teacher of Righteousness. Thus, this approach demonstrates the messianic ideas of the Second Temple period and their influence on the first-century AD Jewish culture, and it helps people gain an explicit understanding of Christianity.

This research analyzes the messianic prophecies from a biblical point of view and how they are expressed in the historical context. This approach demonstrates a clear picture of Jesus by exploring the Bible from a redemptive perspective. Accordingly, this study offers a holistic contribution towards the body of knowledge on the Bible by examining the theological significance of Israel's unconditional covenants, as they relate to the Davidic Covenant.

Christians face several challenges in the twenty-first century. As the times change, many people doubt the authenticity of the Bible. Biblical critics say the Bible is full of contradictory, unscientific, and fictional stories. In addition, due to religious pluralism, the church has lost some of its authority due to the idea that people can be saved in many other ways. The issue of consistency in the Bible is an important topic that this dissertation aims to investigate. As such, the purpose of the research is to explore the consistency of the kingdom of God in the Bible by studying the Old Testament's unconditional covenants and addressing how these elements develop into the core ideas of the New Testament. Therefore, this dissertation attempts to find

God's true heart and redemptive plan by connecting Israel's unconditional covenants to the New Testament.

Statement of Thesis

This dissertation emphasizes the unity of the Old and New Testaments. One crucial premise underlying this study is that the entire Bible is a book inspired by God. Donald G. Bloesch states, "The Bible in its unity with the Spirit guides us into all truth. The Bible reflects the truth of divine revelation; it bears the stamp of truthfulness."⁵ Finding common themes that penetrate the Old and New Testaments is an essential work in biblical interpretation. The Bible proclaims that God's kingdom will be eternal, and it is based on the faithfulness of His covenants that He will surely fulfill.

The promises of Israel's restoration in the New Testament are closely related to the covenants of the Old Testament. God, who establishes the covenants, is faithful, so He is sure to fulfill them. As God promised, blessings will flow through Israel to the Gentiles, many of whom will come and worship God. God has a plan for Israel and will restore the Gentiles through Israel, as promised in the Bible. Jesus is a real human being who finally fulfills the original role of human beings in Genesis, reflects the Creator's image, and creates a wise and enriched order in the world. The New Testament links Jesus to the Old Testament and confirms Jesus as the fulfillment of God's covenant promises.⁶

⁵ Donald G. Bloesch, *Holy Scripture: Revelation, Inspiration & Interpretation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 299.

⁶ J. D. Hays, "Prophecy and Eschatology in Christian Theology," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, eds. Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 603.

The ministry of Jesus Christ was an important event in the kingdom of God because the role of Christ clarifies God's original intentions and accelerates the progress of history towards the consummation of God's kingdom. Jesus's proclamation of the kingdom of God energized and reinforced God's will, plan, and rule. God the Father fulfills the New Covenant through His Son, Jesus Christ. God grants Jesus universal sovereignty. Jesus clearly embodies God-given sovereignty to the outside world. He received the kingdom from God the Father and will reign with His Father in the end.

The covenants God made with Israel must be understood as an organic, gradual, and unified history of God's fulfillment within His whole salvation plan. God's choice for Israel is not a salvation plan for Israel alone, as He made a covenant with her to save all nations, which reveals the absolute sovereignty of God in the world. Israel has been forsaken temporarily because of her disobedience and unrighteousness, but God will not abandon Israel forever but will fulfill her mission in His salvation plan.

Research Questions

With regard to Israel's salvation, the fundamental problem is that the everlasting covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants has not yet been fulfilled in physical Israel. Therefore, the following research questions must be addressed to clarify the purpose of this study:

1. What is the common flow that runs through the Old and New Testaments?
2. What is the connection between the kingdom of God and His unconditional covenants?
3. What are the characteristics of the four unconditional covenants?
4. The Israelites rejected Jesus Christ. Has God forsaken them forever?

5. God makes many promises to Israel in the Bible. Are these prophecies and promises still in effect?
6. What does the Bible say about Israel and the end times? Can the Israelites repent and be saved?
7. How do the Old Testament covenants relate to God's reign in the millennial kingdom?

The restoration of Israel raises numerous questions for Christians today among the various theological camps. However, the Old Testament has many promises regarding the restoration of Israel, and the New Testament reaffirms this issue and consistently states that Israel will continue to play a pivotal role in God's salvation plan. The present dissertation seeks answers to these questions and explores the core ideas of the Bible that are common to both the Old and New Testaments.

Understanding Judaism is an inevitable process for those who want to study the New Testament deeply. Christianity is closely related to Judaism, and Jews wrote most of the books in the New Testament, as Ferdinand C. Baur notes, "Christianity arose on Jewish soil, and it is connected with Judaism far more closely and directly than with Paganism."⁷ His statement suggests that many New Testament teachings essential to Christian life, such as sin, salvation, and grace, have their roots in the Old Testament.

This dissertation demonstrates the organic relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament, focusing on the covenantal themes throughout the Bible. In the course of doing this, the study aims to establish the right eschatology and to confirm God's faithfulness through the study of the true restoration of Israel. God began a relationship with Israel by choosing Israel as His kingdom and establishing His covenants. Israel was banished from the

⁷ Ferdinand C. Baur, *The Church History of the First Three Centuries*, vol. 1, 3rd ed., Theological Translation Fund Library, ed. Allan Menzies (London; Edinburgh: Williams and Norgate, 1878), 17.

Promised Land due to her disobedience, but God's unconditional covenants with Israel have not been broken.

Procedures

Many other parts of the New Testament are related to the Old Testament. The New Testament contains numerous positive messages about Israel's restoration based on her old covenants. This research first discusses the historical aspects and specific characteristics of dispensationalism. A lively debate is ongoing within the theological seminary, but this theme may be unfamiliar to laypeople. Dispensationalists understand the Bible based on a consistently literal interpretation and acknowledge the unique characteristics of Israel separate from the church in God's plan. This research clarifies what dispensationalism is and what process it has undergone before examining various theologians' views on eschatology and analyzing them synthetically. In doing so, this study considers how kingdom saints can live in the present age with hope for the future.

Second, Exploring the meaning of the kingdom of God in the Bible confirms its importance in Israel's history. God's reign began with creation, which can be considered to be eschatological in that God began creation with a focus on the kingdom of God where He rules as King. This research thus demonstrates that God's reign and presence are revealed in the history of Israel as well as all areas of creation and history. Accordingly, exploring the role of the temple from various angles will reveal the meaning and significance of the kingdom of God.

Third, covenant is an important word encompassing the entire Old Testament, and it organically connects the Old Testament with the New Testament. An important concept of God in the Old Testament is that He is the King, Ruler, and Creator of the world. The Old Testament repeatedly emphasizes the relationship between God and His people, which is called the

covenant relationship. The God of the Old and New Testaments works in the same way. Through the four unconditional covenants, one can better understand the New Testament and know that the sovereignty and reign of God are the core ideas woven throughout the Bible.

Fourth, exploring God's unconditional covenants with Israel reveals the consistent flow of the Bible, highlighting their connection to the kingdom of God. This dissertation investigates pertinent passages throughout the Bible regarding God's promise to Israel. The Old Testament contains many prophecies and promises of the restoration of Israel, and the New Testament also reaffirms the restoration of Israel. Examining the meaning of the Gentiles and Israel will be helpful in grasping the true meaning of Israel's restoration. This dissertation first addresses the kingdom of God and then the four unconditional covenants to support the theme. These four pillars support the single roof of God's overarching plan, the kingdom of God.

Finally, this dissertation compares the opinions of various scholars and builds the framework of the thesis based on the results. Moreover, this study analyzes the data presented by various scholars in relation to the research purpose. It then evaluates whether their biblical understanding is objective and logical. Through citation and comparative analysis of various scholars' opinions, the basis of crucial topics in this dissertation is further consolidated.

Key Terms and Concepts

The Understanding of Dispensationalism

Dispensationalism is a key concept to understand God's kingdom and His four unconditional covenants. God promised Abraham that He would make him a great nation and that the world would be blessed through his descendants. Dispensationalists believe that God's promises to Abraham in Genesis will be fulfilled literally. They also believe that God's covenant with David will never be broken and must be achieved. The future temple recorded in Ezekiel

will be accomplished on earth as recorded. The period in which these promises are fulfilled is the millennial kingdom. The kingdom was prophesied in the Old Testament centered on the nation of Israel. According to Ryrie, a dispensation can be defined as “a distinguishable economy in the outworking of God’s purpose.”⁸ God reveals His providential plan in various ways in every dispensation to form His kingdom, which the second coming of Jesus will complete.

Some theologians, such as Bowman and Gerstner, have severely criticized dispensationalism because it interprets the Bible too literally and raises hermeneutical problems.⁹ They regard it as a major heresy and anti-rational doctrine obsessed with literary interpretation. Charles C. Ryrie counters these criticisms and confusion by providing a fair and realistic assessment of dispensationalism.¹⁰ He dispels the concern that dispensationalism teaches dangerous doctrine, emphasizing instead that dispensationalists are conservative and evangelical Christians.¹¹ Dispensationalists consistently speak of God’s planned kingdom centered on sovereignty. Despite Satan’s constant interruption, God has worked to build a kingdom and will eventually complete it.

Dispensationalism can be classified into classical dispensationalism, revised dispensationalism, and progressive dispensationalism. In the nineteenth century, John Nelson Darby was the first to organize an early form of dispensationalism systematically. C. I. Scofield popularized dispensationalism by writing the Scofield Reference Bible in 1909. Furthermore, L. S. Chafer wrote a systematic theology based on dispensationalism and founded the Dallas

⁸ Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, rev. and exp. ed. (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1995), 28.

⁹ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 12.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15–8.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 10.

Theological Seminary. These three individuals are representative figures of classical dispensationalism.

Classical dispensationalists thoroughly distinguish Israel from the church, and they regard the distinct destiny of the earthly people as Israel and the heavenly people as the church to continue even in the eternal world. They understand the millennial kingdom as a period of the literal fulfillment of God's promises to Israel in the Old Testament, including Christ's reign on earth as the king of Israel. Also, they support the pretribulation rapture view. Here, the tribulation is a period of suffering due to Israel's iniquity, and the church is unrelated to the prophecies of Israel. The rapture of the church will occur before a seven-year tribulation period, which is the period of fulfillment of the New Covenant. After the tribulation, Jesus Christ will come again and build the millennial kingdom.

Revised dispensationalism is the flow of dispensationalism that appeared after classical dispensationalism, championed by scholars such as Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord, and Dwight Pentecost. The name "revised dispensationalism" arose because these scholars publicly expressed their views as they participated in publishing the revised *Scofield Bible* in 1967.¹² To draw comparisons with the recent trend of progressive dispensationalism, people call both classical and revised dispensationalism traditional dispensationalism. Ryrie suggests three essential elements for dispensationalism: 1) Israel and the church should be distinguished; 2) this distinction is the result of the consistent application of the literal interpretation of the Bible; and 3) the glory of God is the ultimate purpose of revelation presented throughout the Bible.¹³

¹² Donald G. Bloesch, *The Last Things: Resurrection, Judgment, Glory* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 96.

¹³ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 212.

Interpreting the prophecies in the Bible literally reveals that the promises made to Israel must be fulfilled literally.

On the one hand, classical dispensationalists strictly distinguish between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, although revised dispensationalists also distinguish between the two kingdoms, they express the view that the kingdom of God includes heaven. They abandon the view that an eternal distinction exists between heavenly and earthly peoples, and they organize the dualism more structurally. For revised dispensationalists, Israel and the church represent two groups, but they are only structurally different.

Progressive dispensationalism is a relatively recent trend that emerged after revised dispensationalism. Representative scholars of progressive dispensationalism include Robert L. Saucy, Craig Blaising, and Darrel Bock. Saucy wrote the book *The Church in God's Program* in 1972, which marked its beginning. *Progressive Dispensationalism*, written by Blaising and Bock in 1993, played a decisive role in establishing its view.

Traditional dispensationalists define dispensation as what is characterized by distinct ages in which God's specific purpose is realized. By contrast, progressive dispensationalists argue a progressive development between periods over time. They understand the inherent seed within a dispensation for the next age, and it advances through each period toward the final eschatological purpose of the future: the eternal kingdom.

Progressive dispensationalism first appeared in the Dispensational Study Group, which was linked to the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society on November 20, 1986.¹⁴ A group of dispensationalists continued to work through this study group to establish a common academic basis for non-dispensationalists and evangelical scholars. Thus, they formed

¹⁴ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 161.

progressive dispensationalism based on premillennialism and distinguished it from traditional dispensationalism. Progressive dispensationalism has many similarities to the idea of George E. Ladd, who is a covenant theologian and who supports premillennialism.¹⁵

The New Testament does not transcend or transform prophecies in the Old Testament. One must reject the spiritualization of physical promises and the typological interpretation, which ignores the precise meaning of the Bible. Historical-grammatical hermeneutics can be referred to as a normative interpretation in that the text is understood according to the generally accepted rules of language in the usual meaning of each word. All the details of the Old Testament should be interpreted as the intention of the original authors, and the New Testament does not conflict with or modify the Old Testament prophecies.

Dispensationalists argue that the consistent application of literal interpretation results in a strict separation between Israel and the church, which is confirmed by New Testament study. Today's church is not a new Israel, and Israel has a separate future plan. The New Testament makes a clear distinction between Israel as a nation and the church: "Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God" (1 Cor 10:32). This passage states that people belong to one of three categories: "Israel," "Gentiles," and "church." The term "Israel" continues to be used in the New Testament for Abraham's physical descendants, and it is distinct from the Gentiles and the church.¹⁶

The dualistic idea that separates Israel from the church is the central essence of traditional dispensationalism; however, the views of Eric Sauer and recent progressive dispensationalists

¹⁵ George E. Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1959), 117–8.

¹⁶ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 126.

suggest a different idea. Regarding the separation between Israel and the church, Eric Sauer takes a different position than traditional dispensationalists who limit the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy to Israel in the millennial kingdom. He has a more flexible view of Israel, asserting that God's holistic salvation plan has been partially and gradually realized through biblical history and will ultimately be fulfilled when Jesus returns.¹⁷

Progressive dispensationalists have a different view of Israel and the church than classical and revised dispensationalists. Although they distinguish between Israel and the church in recognition of a separate future plan for Israel, this distinction is a functional division in the fulfillment of prophecy. Progressive dispensationalism confirms that the church has not replaced Israel, but argues that Israel has been incorporated into the church as the new Israel.¹⁸ Dichotomous thinking, which was regarded as the essence of dispensationalism, has been gradually blurred from classical dispensationalism to progressive dispensationalism.¹⁹

A crucial point in dispensationalism is the view of the church. The nature of the church is an important element that distinguishes between dispensationalism and other doctrinal views. The ecclesiology of dispensationalism has always been controversial, and its influence cannot be overlooked. In the understanding of the church, dispensationalists distinguish the church from Israel and focus on the discontinuity between them.

The details of God's covenants have not yet been fulfilled, and the future reign of Christ on earth will accomplish them in His relationship with Israel. This argument is a distinctive

¹⁷ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 135.

¹⁸ David Criswell, "The Times of the Gentiles," in *Dispensationalism Tomorrow & Beyond: A Theological Collection in Honor of Charles C. Ryrie*, ed. Christopher Cone (Ft. Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2008), 258.

¹⁹ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 163.

feature of the dispensational view of the church, and God’s salvation relationship with humankind is centered on the covenant relationship with Israel. The division of God’s redemptive relations between Israel and the church implies that Israel as a nation is related to God by unconditional covenants and that the church, the body of Christ, is associated with God by a completely different principle.

According to dispensationalists, the New Testament presupposes a clear contrast between Israel and the church. Paul’s prayer for Israel in Romans 10 has an apparent reference to Israel as a nation separated from the church.²⁰ Ryrie argues, “the dispensationalist believes that God has two distinct purposes—one for Israel and one for the church.”²¹ The term “Israel” continues to be used for the physical descendants of Abraham after the church was formed, making it clear that it is not identified with the church.²²

Dispensationalism and covenant theology focus on the relationship between Israel and the church. Dispensationalists view Israel and the church as two eternally separate entities. The church is the mysterious body of Jesus Christ and is a unique group of the Jews and the Gentiles, distinguished from Israel. The sharp contrast between dispensationalists and covenant theologians is over the issue of who fulfills the Old Testament covenants. According to dispensationalists, the object of the Old Testament covenants is primarily Israel, the nation itself, and is irrelevant to the New Testament church. Dispensationalists believe that the Abrahamic Covenant will be fulfilled literally for national Israel, not for the church. Ryrie maintains that it is

²⁰ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, “The Role of Israel in Dispensational Theology,” in *Dispensationalism Tomorrow & Beyond: A Theological Collection in Honor of Charles C. Ryrie*, ed. Christopher Cone (Ft. Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2008), 120.

²¹ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 85.

²² *Ibid.*, 127.

evident that Christians are called the spiritual seed of Abraham, but nowhere does the New Testament say they are heirs of the national promises given to Abraham's physical descendants.²³ However, based on the Abrahamic Covenant, the Gentile nations can receive blessings through the covenant made with Israel.

Based on the covenant with David, dispensationalists accept the promise between the throne and the kingdom, which is limited to Israel. They do not apply Israel to the church, and they argue that all the promises made to David have not already been fulfilled in the church by Christ.²⁴ God's promises will be fully fulfilled at the second coming of Jesus, with the restoration of Israel in her land and the throne of David being reoccupied.

A Critique of Dispensationalism

The message about the restoration of Israel in the Bible has posed many questions to scholars.²⁵ In particular, there has been much controversy between dispensationalism and replacement theology regarding how to interpret the meaning of the word "Israel." Adherents of dispensationalism believe that God's promises with Israel are still valid and will be fulfilled. By contrast, replacement theologians argue that Israel's disobedience invalidates God's covenants with Israel. Covenant theology refers to a theological system that systematically forms all the

²³ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 138.

²⁴ Paul P. Enns, "Charles C. Ryrie," in *Handbook of Evangelical Theologians*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 370.

²⁵ Michael J. Vlach adds, "A survey of church history reveals mixed and conflicting views toward Israel and the land. Jesus and the apostles taught a salvation and restoration of Israel. The early church of the Patristic Era was mixed on this issue at times promoting both future significance for Israel and a replacement view in which the church took over Israel's place. The Middle Ages was dominated by a strong replacement view. The Reformation initially affirmed replacement theology but the second generation swung the door wide open to belief in significance for the nation Israel. The nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed widespread belief in a future restoration of Israel—a belief that continues today." See Michael J. Vlach, "Israel in Church History," in *The People, the Land and the Future of Israel: Israel and the Jewish People in the Plan of God*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2014), 209.

ideas of the Bible based on the concept of a covenant. Because the redemption of Jesus Christ on the cross applies to all ages, the Old Covenant and the New Covenant are the same for God's people. Thus, Israel and the Gentiles are both spiritual Israel without distinction.

The question remains as to whether the prophecies and promises to national Israel will still be valid and achieved. Replacement theologians argue that the disobedience of Israel abolishes the covenants God made with her: "Israel has been done away with in God's plan for history and thus superseded by the Church."²⁶ Concerning literal Israel, there is no further fulfillment in the future, and as a result, the Jews will not be restored to a prominent position in the millennium.²⁷ The church in the New Testament has replaced Israel, so the word "Israel" must be interpreted spiritually.

Replacement theologians deny the connection between God's covenants with Israel in the Old Testament and Israel in the New Testament. They maintain that the fulfillment of all these prophecies is not related to ethnic Israel but to spiritual Israel, the church. However, there is an apparent connection between the Old Testament and the New Testament, and the New Testament has a clear promise that Israel will be restored in the future. God's promise to Israel is still valid in the New Testament. Vlach argues, "The fact that God does reaffirm a salvation and restoration of Israel in the NT gives even more reason to believe in a future for Israel."²⁸ The belief that the covenants and promises of God are nullified in the New Testament is a distortion of the message of the whole Bible.

²⁶ Michael Stallard, "Is Dispensationalism Hurting American Political Policies in the Middle East?," in *Dispensationalism Tomorrow & Beyond: A Theological Collection in Honor of Charles C. Ryrie*, ed. Christopher Cone (Ft. Worth, TX: Tyndale Seminary Press, 2008), 463.

²⁷ Fruchtenbaum, "The Role of Israel in Dispensational Theology," 129.

²⁸ Michael J. Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?: A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2014), 182.

The Word of God prophesies that the restoration of Israel will fulfill the promise of salvation in the last days. However, this poses many questions to Christians today because there is much debate on whether Israel should be interpreted as a national Israel or the church, people who believe in Jesus Christ. Adherents of replacement theology interpret that Israel's disobedience abolishes God's covenants with her in the Old Testament. They argue that the New Testament church replaces the promises in the Old Testament:

“Supersessionism, therefore, appears to be based on two core beliefs: (1) the nation Israel has somehow completed or forfeited its status as the people of God and will never again possess a unique role or function apart from the church, and (2) the church is now the true Israel that has permanently replaced or superseded national Israel as the people of God.”²⁹

Replacement theologians further state that Israel is absorbed into the church, and the land for Israel is spiritually interpreted; moreover, the Israeli invasion of Palestine, based on Zionism, is causing a great resentment towards Israel. Despite the various political and theological controversies, dispensationalists firmly argue that the promise of God to Israel will be fulfilled.³⁰

Vlach rejects the view of replacement theology that Israel has no future hope in God's plan. He describes the roles of Israel in His salvation plan, calling the view of replacement theology unjust. The Abrahamic Covenant and the Davidic Covenant will be fulfilled literally

²⁹ Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?*, 12.

³⁰ Barry E. Horner explains about the foundation of Zionism: “When David became king over all Israel, “The king and his men marched to Jerusalem against the Jebusites [Canaanites] who inhabited the land. ... Yet David did capture the stronghold of Zion, the city of David” (2 Sam 5:6–7). More specifically, it was a citadel on the southeastern hill within Jerusalem, being most suitable for fortified defense against enemies. Here David's palace was also built. Supremely it was “the City of the LORD, Zion of the Holy One of Israel” (Isa 60:14). Later the title Zion incorporated the adjoining temple region (Ps 20:2), then Jerusalem overall (Isa 10:12). This Zion then became acknowledged as the capital of the land of Israel (Isa 66:8; Joel 2:18, 21; Zech 2:10–12). Even after the War of Independence in 1948, for 19 years Arab Jordan did not allow Jews from Israel to have access to the Old City of Jerusalem.” See Barry E. Horner, *Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must be Challenged* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2007), 106.

and unconditionally for the nation of Israel, not for the church.³¹ Vlach conveys his thoughts by trying to reduce two confusing biblical issues, namely dispensationalism and replacement theology. He describes how the two opposing theological views have undergone changes in the flow of church history:

While there are many issues to consider when it comes to the Israel-church issue, I believe the Bible teaches that the nation Israel has a future. God will save and restore Israel for His glory and His electing purposes (Rom 11:28–29, 33–36). Thus, supersessionism is not a biblical doctrine. The great spiritual blessings poured out on believing Jews and Gentiles in the church today are consistent with, and not contrary to, God's future purposes to bring glory to Himself by saving and restoring the nation Israel.³²

He opposes the spiritual interpretation of Israel in the New Testament. Israel, the descendants of Abraham, is distinct from the church.

The Bible is a book written by many writers about God's revelation and redemption through the ages. It has a unique structure and unity despite the differences between the authors and the times. In understanding the Bible, covenant theologians and dispensationalists have conflicting interpretations. Comparing the two schools of thought provides valuable insights for evaluating dispensationalism.

Covenant theologians interpret the Bible, focusing on the meaning of God's covenant and the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. By accurately understanding His covenant in history, one can establish a solid foundation for complex problems that previous biblical scholars did not solve. The view and flow of covenant theologians over the entire Bible is creation, fall, and redemption. God created all things perfectly in the beginning, but because of man's fall, everything became imperfect and unclean. Man himself cannot solve the resulting

³¹ Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 17.

³² Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel?*, 6.

imperfections and sins of the world. The only solution is for God to perfect and revive all things through Jesus. Salvation by grace through faith has always been what pleases the Lord in any dispensation (see Heb 11). The mainline members of dispensationalists and covenant theologians agree on this. However, the main issue is whether or not the church is extended back into the Old Testament. The plan of salvation has remained the same, but the programs have changed over dispensations.

Classical dispensationalists tend to overlook the present aspects of God's kingdom and emphasize its future-oriented characteristics. There has been much criticism of them because they may weaken the meaning of the first coming of Jesus. The view has led Christians to focus only on the second coming of Jesus and to neglect the life of reality. The kingdom of God has already come upon all who believe in Him, and this promise presents real hope to those who live in the present. Therefore, it is crucial to establish a view that balances and harmonizes the present and future aspects of the kingdom of God.

N. T. Wright's contribution as a Biblical theologian is an attempt to connect the Old Testament with the New Testament. In particular, he explains the New Covenant in relation to the Abrahamic Covenant, emphasizing that Israel's long history forms part of the history of God's salvation purpose.³³ However, he argues that spiritual Israel in the New Testament does not necessarily refer exclusively to the descendants of Abraham.

The Characteristics of Three Views on the Millennial Kingdom

There are three major views on the millennial kingdom. The book *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond* discusses eschatology, covering three main views on the millennial

³³ N. T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 2008), 198.

kingdom: postmillennialism, amillennialism, and premillennialism. This book introduces and discusses different views on various theological topics. When comparing and analyzing aspects of the millennium, this book is significant to ensure a balanced view of eschatology. Properly understanding the coming kingdom in the future will clarify the responsibility and purpose of the Christian.

The fundamental conception of postmillennialism is that there will be a millennial kingdom before the second coming of Jesus. The world will become increasingly Christianized. In both Jews and Gentiles, the number of believers will increase. Sin will be reduced to a minimum, although it will not reach the level of complete elimination. Humanity's political, economic, social, and cultural sectors will gradually progress, and war between nations will disappear.

Postmillennialists do not assume that Israel will have a restored kingdom but that a massive conversion of the Jewish people will occur in the future. They present Luke 17 as evidence against premillennialists who wait for the futuristic and catastrophic kingdom of God:³⁴ “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:20–21). Postmillennialists seem to emphasize the “now” sense in Luke 17 in their opposition to the “not yet” sense of the premillennialists.

Postmillennialism interprets Revelation as a book replete with symbols and figures, and it regards the millennium as a symbolic expression.³⁵ Postmillennialists in the past were optimistic

³⁴ Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., “Postmillennialism,” in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, eds. Stanley Gundry and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 38.

³⁵ Gentry Jr., “Postmillennialism,” 51.

that the beginning of the millennium was not the present but the near future and that the church's mission to turn the world to God would soon be completed. By contrast, present postmillennialists show stronger optimism by arguing that people are already living in that millennium. Postmillennialism's general position is that the great tribulation of Matthew 24 and the apostasy of 2 Thessalonians 2 have already passed.³⁶ Some scholars, however, assert that as Revelation 20:7–10 states, evil that attacks the church will be limited before the second coming of Jesus.³⁷ This period will be short and will not ultimately harm the church.

Amillennialists maintain that the Old Testament prophecies about Israel were spiritually fulfilled in the New Testament church. The Old Testament promise that God will restore David's tabernacle and send the Messiah through the line of David to reign forever will not be literally fulfilled in the millennial kingdom. Jesus spiritually governs the church's saints from heaven, so God's promise of salvation is spiritually fulfilled. Since amillennialists regard today's church as the new Israel, they attribute the prophecies given to Israel in the past to the present church, and they interpret the prophecies spiritually, not literally.

Premillennialists do not reject symbolic and figurative interpretations. They understand certain words symbolically and figuratively depending on the context. This understanding is also called plain interpretation because each word is simply understood as it is used without excluding symbols and figures of speech.³⁸ Amillennialists also accept literal interpretation as the basic principle of biblical interpretation. However, they interpret Old Testament prophecies

³⁶ Robert B. Strimple, "An Amillennial Response to Kenneth L. Gentry Jr.," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, eds. Stanley Gundry and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 64.

³⁷ Craig A. Blaising, "Premillennialism," in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, eds. Stanley Gundry and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 177.

³⁸ Ryrie, *Dispensationalism*, 81.

spiritually, while premillennialists consistently apply literal interpretations to Old Testament prophecies.

Amillennialists deny the literal millennial kingdom on earth, arguing that the millennial reign of Jesus Christ began with His ascension and will continue until His second coming. They understand the period of a thousand years and ending events in Revelation 20:1–6 as symbols, not literal events. They await the glorious and perfect kingdom to come after Christ's return but believe that the kingdom of God is now present on earth in the sense that the triumphant Christ is now ruling His people.

Premillennialism is the view that the second coming of Christ will occur before the millennial kingdom, which literally refers to Christ's reign on earth for a thousand years. Premillennialists anticipate the appearance of the personal Antichrist and the growing tribulation and apostasy in the world. In the last days, the resurrection of believers will occur, and the bodies of believers who are still alive will be transformed and glorified. The glorified and the resurrected will be lifted into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. After this rapture, Christ will descend to the earth and make a final judgment. Dispensational premillennialists suggest that it is crucial to recognize the distinction between Israel and the church to understand and interpret biblical texts regarding the end events.³⁹ They emphasize the literal interpretation of the Bible and its consistency with the context. The literal interpretation is important to understand the biblical texts consistently with respect to objects, backgrounds, and intentions, which will reveal their exact meaning. God made unconditional covenants with Abraham and David, but none of them have yet been fully and permanently fulfilled. Therefore, Jesus will come again and reign

³⁹ Blaising, "Premillennialism," 183.

for a thousand years; this is stated six times in Revelation 20 and depicts the time when God's prophecy will be fully accomplished.

Dispensationalism is a theological view based on premillennialism. Dispensationalists have clear criteria for literal and figurative interpretations. According to them, the text should usually be accepted in its usual literal sense unless it clearly refers to allegories or symbols. They do not exclude the possibility of using figurative expressions but encourage people not to read the meaning of the text as a metaphor unless they have a clear basis for understanding it figuratively.

Postmillennialism and amillennialism share several concepts in common. First, the millennial kingdom is not seen as the period in which Christ actually comes to earth, sits on the throne, and tangibly reigns the world. Second, the millennium is not interpreted correctly as a thousand years but as a figurative term. Lastly, they believe that the second coming of Christ is an event that will take place after the millennium.

Although there is something in common with the two camps above, Premillennialists and amillennialists highlight some issues with postmillennialism. According to them, the argument of postmillennialism that Old Testament texts foretell Christians' victorious rule on earth before the second coming of Jesus is not persuasive. There is also little evidence for postmillennialists to regard the great tribulation in Matthew 24 and apostasy in 2 Thessalonians 2 as past events. The story in Matthew 24 deals with both the destruction of Jerusalem and the events of the last days. This tribulation has not existed since Christ's first coming. In response to this issue, postmillennialists argue that the prophecy in Matthew 24 is related to the First Jewish-Roman

War in 66–70 and that the great tribulation against the first-century temple is an event in this generation.⁴⁰

With regard to the resurrection, amillennialists oppose the premillennial view of two separate resurrections: the resurrection of believers and the resurrection of the wicked. Gwyn Pugh explains the multiple resurrections of dispensational premillennialists:

In the pretribulational scheme, for example, the first resurrection is of deceased believers at the rapture. These join living believers to meet Christ in the air. After the tribulation, before the millennium begins, tribulation martyrs (O.T. saints also, according to many interpreters) are raised (20:4). A third resurrection, at the end of the millennium, will be for the ungodly of all the preceding dispensations, perhaps also of new believers converted during the millennium (20:5).⁴¹

Amillennialists take a negative stance on the thousand-year time gap of premillennialists.⁴² The teachings of Jesus and Paul refer to the resurrection as a future event involving the righteous and the wicked. Amillennialists do not believe that Jesus will come and reign in an earthly kingdom since they interpret Revelation 20 symbolically.⁴³

Amillennialists reject the literal interpretation of Revelation 20 and interpret it only symbolically, which can distort the meaning of the Bible. This risk of distortion applies not only to Revelation 20 but also to many other parts of the Bible, especially Old Testament prophecies. Amillennialists justify the distinction between literal and symbolic interpretations to understand the Bible more accurately, but a question remains as to whether they have legitimate authority

⁴⁰ Kenneth L. Gentry Jr, “A Postmillennial Response to Craig A. Blaising,” in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, eds. Stanley Gundry and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 234–5.

⁴¹ Gwyn Pugh, “Commentary on the Book of Revelation,” in *1, 2, 3 John & Revelation*, 1st ed., The Randall House Bible Commentary, ed. Robert E. Picirilli (Nashville, TN: Randall House, 2010), 141.

⁴² Robert B. Strimple, “Amillennialism,” in *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond*, eds. Stanley Gundry and Darrell Bock (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 127.

⁴³ Loraine Boettner, *The Millennium* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1957), 17.

and reason to make this distinction. The danger in their symbolic interpretation is a weakening of faith in biblical reality.

The amillennial and premillennial views contrast in many ways. Amillennialists take a negative position on separating Israel from the church and believe that the premillennial view distorts the meaning of the Bible. Their claim primarily consists of contradictions against premillennialism and postmillennialism. They attempt to deny the arguments of other views rather than focusing on building up their own views. Their symbolic interpretation is not considered to be a strict standard but as an arbitrary choice to support their ideas. Although they provide the flexibility of interpretation, they fail to establish a logical system.

Dispensational premillennialists consistently interpret the Old Testament prophecies literally and separate Israel from the New Testament church. In the early twentieth century, many theologians and pastors fell into liberal theology. Contrary to this trend, the ideas of premillennialism, which emphasize the literal interpretation of the Bible, rapidly spread in the United States. The concept of dispensationalism against liberal theology is significant in preserving the authority of the Bible.

It is clear that each of these millennial views has a number of conflicting issues. However, the fundamental issues can be summarized in two points. First, there is the hermeneutical dilemma of Revelation 20:1–6. Many scholars present various views on how to interpret a thousand years and the resurrection of the dead. Scholars' views also vary regarding whether the millennial kingdom will be interpreted as an earthly kingdom or a spiritual one. Moreover, a question arises about whether the entire structure of the book of Revelation will be viewed as a series of repeating cycles or in chronological order.

The second issue concerns Israel's eschatological salvation. The millennial kingdom of which premillennialists speak is actually for Israel, not for the church. For them, physical Israel plays a leading role, and the church plays nothing more than a supporting role. Amillennialists and postmillennialists also mention the eschatological repentance of Israel in the millennial kingdom but do not particularly emphasize it.

The biblical statement that God's promise of salvation will be fulfilled through the restoration of Israel leads to the significance of exploring eschatology. The word "eschatology" refers to the biblical outlook on events that will occur at the end of days. Eschatology thus concerns the last days, promises of the future, and hope for the signs. Eschatology is a subject unfamiliar to ordinary people, and its misinterpretations often create heresies and dangerous doctrines. The misperception of the eschatological idea is widespread in the church, deceiving and confusing believers of Christianity. Critically studying the restoration of Israel helps delineate proper eschatology and desirable biblical interpretation.

Eschatology, despite its importance, does not provide sufficient theological consensus on specific themes. Postmillennialists believe that Jesus Christ will return to a Christianized world where Christian principles are established as standards and rules. Amillennialists do not deny the existence of the millennial kingdom but interpret it as the kingdom in present reality, reigned over by the souls of believers with Christ in heaven. Premillennialists apply their literal interpretation principles to the book of Revelation. This approach demonstrates that a thousand years in Revelation 20 is Christ's literal reign over the earth. Although the millennial theories conflict with one another, there is a need to present eschatology on the correct teaching of the Bible by considering different views. Once the consistency of unconditional covenants has been demonstrated throughout the Old and New Testaments, the establishment of millennialism,

eschatology, and hermeneutics will help Christians properly understand, teach, and labor for God's kingdom.

Eschatology is the study of the biblical viewpoint regarding events that will occur in the world's last days. This research attempts to determine what a sound biblical interpretation of eschatology is. Since eschatology addresses events that have not yet occurred, its interpretation differs from one scholar to another. An incorrect interpretation adds to the misunderstanding of eschatology and confusion among believers. Therefore, this dissertation reveals God's faithfulness through the proper understanding of the covenant promises to Israel to help people better understand the end times.

Methods

Hermeneutical Framework

The basic framework for interpreting the Bible is historical-grammatical hermeneutics, which implies a literal approach to the promises and prophecies of the Bible. This dissertation attempts to form the concepts of the kingdom of God by collecting biblical data based on a literal interpretation. This study analyzes the correlations among the concepts to establish a paradigm that can interpret the kingdom of God. Accordingly, this method provides a framework for interpreting God's kingdom found throughout the Bible.

By examining Israel and the church based on a literal interpretation, one can recognize God's faithfulness in fulfilling His plan by understanding the Bible text as it is written and identifying the distinction between ages in the process of revelation. It is crucial that every detail in the Bible be interpreted as the intention of the original author so that the New Testament does not alter prophecies and promises in the Old Testament. As such, the spiritualization of physical promises should be avoided because it undermines the original intention of the Bible writers.

The Jews refused to acknowledge Jesus Christ as the Messiah and sent Him to His death. While they deprived themselves of the right to be the children of God, they are nevertheless the people of God who will receive the New Covenant. Only the faithfulness of God can explain all of this. For instance, Paul argues that all Israel will be saved, quoting Isaiah 59:20: “And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob” (Rom 11:26). The Redeemer comes from Zion to Jacob, indicating that God’s redemption is still valid for His specially chosen people even after they crucified their Messiah.

The coming of the Redeemer means restoration from sin, which should be seen as a fulfillment of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31: “Israel will be a nation forever before the Lord! It is not consistent or coherent to affirm the fulfillment of new covenant promises while denying a national future for Israel. The national and territorial promise to Israel is a constituent feature of covenant promise from Abraham to the new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah.”⁴⁴ It is critical to eliminate the misunderstanding of Israel in the Bible and to establish the right view. In this process, this study reveals that Jesus Christ is King and will reign over His kingdom forever.

Covenantal Framework

Louis Berkhof defines God’s covenant as follows: “The covenant of grace may be defined as that gracious agreement between the offended God and the offending but elect sinner, in which God promises salvation through faith in Christ, and the sinner accepts this believingly, promising a life of faith and obedience.”⁴⁵ A covenant is a solemn agreement between two or

⁴⁴ Craig A. Blaising, “Israel and Hermeneutics,” in *The People, the Land and the Future of Israel: Israel and the Jewish People in the Plan of God*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2014), 164.

⁴⁵ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1938), 277.

more parties to establish a formal relationship based on specific commitments or responsibilities. The characteristics of a covenant vary according to the following three categories: 1) unilateral or lateral, 2) unconditional or conditional, 3) everlasting or temporary. The unconditional covenants God established with Israel are unilateral and eternal promises.⁴⁶ This research explores the four major unconditional covenants God made with Israel.

The first one is the Abrahamic Covenant. God promised to give great blessings and the land of Israel to Abraham and his descendants. God appeared to Abraham in Genesis 12, when Abraham was seventy-five years old. He promised three things: land, descendants, and blessings. When people in the ancient Near East made a contract, they killed animals, halved them, and passed between the dead bodies.⁴⁷ The God who made a covenant with Abraham put Abraham into a deep sleep, and only God Himself, who was described as a blazing torch, passed between dead animals. Through this method, God reveals that He will surely fulfill His promise to Abraham.

The covenant God made with Abraham was an unconditional promise that God would fulfill His plan according to His total will, regardless of what Abraham did. Abraham did many things against God's will, for which God disciplined him. However, God guided him with unwavering faithfulness. The Abrahamic Covenant is a covenant fulfilled by God's absolute sovereignty, which opened the way for all nations to be blessed through Abraham's physical descendants. The righteousness of God is most evident in the covenant He made with the Israelites, and His faithfulness should be interpreted in the promise of His covenant with

⁴⁶ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Messianic Bible Study Collection*, vol. 6 (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1983), 11.

⁴⁷ Dianne Bergant and Robert J. Karris, *The Collegeville Bible Commentary: Based on the New American Bible with Revised New Testament* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1989), 55.

Abraham. From this unconditional, unilateral, and eternal covenant flow three other covenants, which further explain the full implications of what God promised Abraham.

The second covenant is the Palestinian Covenant. Deuteronomy, which contains details of the Palestinian Covenant, consists of three parts. The first part of Deuteronomy, chapters 1–11, illustrates what the Israelites have experienced in the wilderness until they arrive at the land of Moab. The second part, chapters 12–27, repeats the Leviticus law by mentioning the specific details. The third part, chapters 28–34, demands a determination to keep the law and presents a special covenant between Israel and God. All the laws Moses delivered are the things that must be kept in the new land.

The reason dispensationalists use the term “Palestinian Covenant” for Deuteronomy 28–30 is that the core of this covenant is about the Palestinian land. Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum highlights the difference between the Palestinian Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant: “The Palestinian Covenant is distinct and different from the Mosaic Covenant. The former is eternal and unconditional while the latter is both temporal and conditional.”⁴⁸ God will give the Promised Land to the Israelites regardless of their disobedience. The Palestine Covenant is also an extension of the Abrahamic Covenant in that they are both covenants regarding the land.

The third covenant is the Davidic Covenant. God promised David and the Israelites that the Messiah would come from the line of David and establish an eternal kingdom. God promised David that He would always be with David, defeat all enemies, and keep his throne forever. The background of 2 Samuel 7, where David’s covenant was recorded, was a period of peace after King David moved the ark of the covenant into the city of David. The Davidic Covenant is a

⁴⁸ Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: The Missing Link in Systematic Theology*, rev. ed. (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1994), 796.

reaffirmation of previous covenants and a concrete promise for the Messiah's coming from the line of David. God stated that David's descendants would build the temple and strengthen the kingdom. His promise to David became an eternal promise not only to David but also to his descendants.

God's promise to David has much in common with His promise to Abraham. The Davidic Covenant is connected to the Abrahamic Covenant: "I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you" (Gen 17:6). God's promise through Abraham is reaffirmed and specified through the covenant with David. The blessings of Abraham will continue through the seed of David, and both covenants reveal that the Messiah will establish and rule an eternal kingdom forever.

The last covenant is the New Covenant. God made the New Covenant with the divided houses of Israel and Judah through Jeremiah because the Israelites broke the Old Covenant. The covenant that Israel broke was made on Mount Sinai through Moses and is hence called the Mosaic Covenant. This covenant of Moses was a conditional covenant, through which the people of Israel received the law of God.

The Old Covenant is based on God's statement: "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God" (Exod 6:7). The Old Covenant was written on stone tablets and placed in the ark in the covenant. God commanded the Israelites to obey His laws and promised prosperity and protection in the Promised Land if they obeyed them. However, the central idea of the New Covenant is as follows: "For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more" (Jer 31:34). The remission of sins is the primary purpose of the New Covenant, symbolizing the crucifixion of Jesus. That is, the forgiveness of sins is the way to bless all peoples.

The terms “conditional” and “unconditional” must be defined. From God’s perspective, what He says will surely happen, which is the characteristic of unconditional covenants. However, from man’s perspective, how he responds to God determines whether he will be a part of what is to come. The blessings of God’s covenants require obedience generated from a true faith. Abraham’s obedience allowed him to enjoy God’s blessings. Israel will be blessed in the future because God said that a future generation would repent and mourn at the second coming of Christ.

The Bible clearly emphasizes the restoration of Israel. Vlach adds, “Deuteronomy 30:1–10 contains a ‘big picture’ prophecy concerning God’s future plans for Israel and mirrors the prophetic truths of Deuteronomy 4:25–31, yet with more details. Its themes of dispersion, gathering, and restoration also are emphasized in later revelation (see Ezekiel 36).”⁴⁹ Isaiah 49 foretells that Jesus will come. The Messiah will restore Israel and give light to the Gentiles. According to Jeremiah 31:31–33, God will restore Israel and make a new covenant. The people of Israel will receive a new heart and experience physical blessings. The verses that speak of the restoration of Israel evidently reveal that God’s plan is for Israel to be renewed to fulfill her mission among the nations. Although the Israelites did not fulfill this mission in the Old Testament, they will achieve their purpose in the future messianic kingdom based on His unconditional covenants.

Summary

In the Bible, many verses proclaim the restoration of Israel. This dissertation answers the question of God’s righteousness and faithfulness toward Israel by revealing the mystery of

⁴⁹ Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 103.

Israel's salvation in the theological context of the Old and New Testaments. God made promises to Abraham, the ancestor of the Jews, regarding not only Israel but also all nations. In the end, God's righteousness and faithfulness have the direction of universality that must be extended and applied to the Gentiles as well as the Jews.⁵⁰

Those waiting for Israel's restoration must exert further effort to spread the gospel to Israel based on Jewish-centered eschatology. Replacement theology disregards the prophecies and promises of God to national Israel. Dispensationalists indicate that acknowledging Jewish peculiarities is not about privilege but priority and promise, which is a strategic dimension for evangelism. Believing that Israel will one day play a decisive role in God's salvation plan does not mean that each Jew can be saved regardless of belief in Jesus. God chose the Jewish people for a special role, and this will become apparent when the remnant of Israel at the end of days repents at Jesus's return.

This study contends that the kingdom of God is a real kingdom revealed in the recognition and affirmation of God's rule and clarifies how one should understand the kingdom through God's unconditional covenants. This research explores its deep meaning through various commentaries and references. The specific issues of the kingdom of God and His unconditional covenants are examined. Once these topics are addressed, it will be evident what God's plan is in the Bible.

The messages in the New Testament and the Old Testament are consistent, and Israel will continue to play a pivotal role in God's salvation history. Vlach states, "The restoration of Israel is a major theme of the prophets and that land promises to Israel will be fulfilled because of

⁵⁰ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, vol. 38A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1988), 77–8.

God's faithfulness to the patriarchs of Israel. Just as Israel's first exodus was a real deliverance for the people of Israel, so too will this future restoration."⁵¹ Everything in the future will be renewed, and the twelve tribes of Israel will be restored based on God's unconditional covenants. It is imperative to understand how God operates this world and what relationship exists between Israel and the church because the power to change this world comes from the proper understanding of the Bible. This dissertation thus attempts to establish a theological framework to help believers fully understand the biblical truth.

⁵¹ Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 182.

CHAPTER TWO: THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Introduction

Discovering the central thought of the Old Testament can unite the various kinds of literature and teachings in the Old Testament into a coherent whole. However, in the postmodern era, various ideas challenge the coherent Old Testament perspectives. Many postmodern theologians argue that the Old Testament is a collection of conflicting ideas rather than a coherent flow. They reject a single and coherent logic in the Bible because they believe the God described in the Old Testament has contradictory images.

If there is one unified theme that binds the various parts of the Bible into one whole, it is the hope and expectation of the kingdom of God for those who are called to live under God's rule. Many verses in the Old Testament speak of God's reign as King over the earth (see Exodus 15:18; Psalm 93:1; 96:10; Isaiah 33:22; 52:7–11). The Hebrew word מָלַךְ means "rule."⁵² In the Old Testament, the Hebrew verb is used to indicate "to become king" (Prov 30:22) and "to reign" (Isa 24:23). God is the ruler of the world and humans, and He has a close relationship with them. Accordingly, the confession that God rules over the whole world is a politically, socially, and theologically arranged expression of the relationship between God and the world.

God's creation is His plan and reveals how He governs the world. From the beginning, God is always the same and acts according to His purposes. From this point of view, the kingdom of God should be regarded as having begun with creation. The kingdom that God has planned in advance can be confirmed by grasping His original intention for creation before the fall of man. In other words, the creation account in Genesis represents the beginning of the kingdom of God and its original meaning in human history.

⁵² Ludwig Koehler et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 590.

The kingdom of God determines the beginning and end of the world and confirms God's universal plan. The gradual development of the kingdom of God in history includes the creation event, the election of Israel as God's people, the birth of Israel's kingdom, the ministry of Jesus, the return of Jesus, and His reign. After God created man, He gave him authority over all living things, which is related to God's reign. God elected Israel and established her as His holy nation, which has great importance in biblical history because the election of Israel as His people places her at the center of the kingdom of God. Israel was chosen as a people in which God's plan, purpose, and rule were embodied. Through this, He revealed to all nations how great the kingdom of God is.

It is undeniable that the Gospels were under the religious and cultural influence of the Old Testament, and their worldview was fundamentally determined by biblical stories of how God treated the Israelites. Unsurprisingly, the authors of the Gospels interpreted the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus in connection with the Scripture of Israel. Analyzing how the New Testament writers used the Old Testament is crucial, as Richard B. Hays suggests that all four Gospel writers were deeply immersed in the symbolic world formed by the Old Testament.⁵³ Accordingly, one must persistently explore the meaning of God's kingdom in the New Testament by interacting with the Old Testament.

The kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus in the Gospels was a message for the Jews; however, when they rejected Jesus, God initiated the intervening church age. This period is temporary, so one has to wait for the future millennial kingdom. Although Israel has failed to fulfill her mission, God will achieve and restore the purpose of Israel in the future kingdom. Eschatology is an indispensable part of Christianity. Overlooking future prophetic events, such

⁵³ Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), xii.

as the second coming of Jesus and the new millennial kingdom, will misrepresent underlying biblical messages. The covenants God made with Israel will be fulfilled to reveal God's rule and plan in these end-times events.

This chapter will explore the origin of the kingdom of God in the Old Testament and Jewish literature. It will then examine the characteristics of the kingdom of God in the New Testament and address the present and future aspects of this kingdom in detail. Moreover, this dissertation reveals the consistency of kingdom of God in the Bible through the temple program. From the creation story in Genesis to the eschatological consummation in Revelation, the Bible reveals God's rule in His kingdom. Therefore, this chapter will address the future millennial kingdom that will surely come.

The Kingdom of God in the Old Testament and Jewish Literature

To understand the kingdom of God, one should examine the Old Testament and Jewish literature between the Old and New Testaments. Those documents established the foundation of the kingdom of God at that time. One of the most significant problems in understanding this concept is how to define the word "kingdom." To determine whether the kingdom should be viewed as the meaning of territory, it is vital to perceive how the term is used in the Old Testament and Jewish literature.

On the one hand, in the Gospels, the expression "the kingdom of God," or the similar "the kingdom of heaven," appears 112 times in total: fifty-one times in Matthew, sixteen times in Mark, forty-one times in Luke, and four times in John. Jesus uses the expression directly seventy-two times. On the other hand, the Old Testament does not contain the expression "the kingdom of God," and in Jewish literature, this expression is infrequent. Nevertheless, it is crucial to review the Old Testament and Jewish literature since one can discover how this

concept was formed in Jesus's day. The Old Testament, which influenced the Jewish background during the intertestamental period, formed the basis of the kingdom of God. One must recognize the situation of Jesus and His audience at the time to grasp the concept of the kingdom of God in the Gospels in the first century.

The origin of the notion of the kingdom of God can be attributed to the concept where Adam ruled over creation in the Garden of Eden in Genesis. God's kingdom also stems from the birth and growth of the nation of Israel. He chose the Israelites as His people and holy nation and established the kingship in them. The formal basis of the concept of His kingdom is the Abrahamic Covenant, and it is related to His choice of Israel as a holy nation. People began to form an idea of the kingdom of God through revelation. However, the moment when they formed such an idea should not be regarded as the beginning of the kingdom of God. God's kingdom already existed before people conceived the notion, which reveals the eternity of it.

The Old Testament contains no direct expression of the kingdom of God, but it occurs throughout the Old Testament as a concept of God's reign. Ladd adds,

While the idiom "the Kingdom of God" does not occur in the Old Testament, the idea is found throughout the prophets. There is a twofold emphasis on God's kingship. He is frequently spoken of as the King, both of Israel (Exod. 15:18; Num. 23:21; Deut. 33:5; Isa. 43:15) and of all the earth (2 Kings 19:15; Isa. 6:5; Jer. 46:18; Ps. 29:10; 99:1-4). Although God is now King, other references speak of a day when he shall become King and shall rule over his people (Isa. 24:23; 33:22; 52:7; Zeph. 3:15; Zech. 14:9ff.). This leads to the conclusion that while God is the King, he must also become King, i.e., he must manifest his kingship in the world of human beings and nations.⁵⁴

The notion that God rules over the world is prevalent in the Old Testament, which constitutes the core of Jesus's teaching. The representative Hebrew word translated in relation to the kingdom or royal power is מְלִכּוּת. The word appears ninety-one times in the Old Testament, and its

⁵⁴ George E. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, ed. Donald A. Hagner, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 58.

meaning is used in various ways. When the Hebrew word מְלִכּוּת is associated with the king, it is mainly used in abstract and dynamic meanings, such as “royal power,” “dominion,” “reign,” and “sovereignty.”⁵⁵ In this respect, Mark L. Strauss argues that the kingdom of God is not the concept of a realm but a reign, where God’s sovereignty rules all things.⁵⁶

In the New Testament, the words that indicate the kingdom and heaven are βασιλεία and οὐρανός, respectively. The phrase “the kingdom of heaven” is derived from the Hebrew phrase מְלִכּוּת שָׁמַיִם. The kingdom of God does not appear directly in the Old Testament, but the expression is rooted in the Old Testament because the basic meaning of the Greek word βασιλεία is similar to that of the Hebrew word מְלִכּוּת.

Jewish apocalyptic literature, such as the Book of Daniel, the Book of Enoch, the Assumption of Moses, and the Apocalypse of Baruch, was prevalent between the second century BC and the first century AD. Writers of that time shifted their focus from the present to the future and concentrated more on eschatological events.⁵⁷ This reflected people’s vivid frustration. The hope for the future was composed in apocalyptic literature. The primary point of such literature is thus the expectation that God suddenly intervenes in the world, punishing all enemies and establishing His kingdom.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 574–5.

⁵⁶ Mark L. Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus: A Survey of Jesus and the Gospels* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 438.

⁵⁷ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 291.

⁵⁸ Morna D. Hooker, *The Gospel according to Saint Mark*, Black’s New Testament Commentary (London: Continuum, 1991), 56.

The word βασιλεία refers not to region or territory but to God’s reign and kingship.⁵⁹ Considering the social background, it is clear that the Jews at the time of Jesus used the two words מלכות and βασιλεία in active and dynamic meanings.⁶⁰ The kingdom of God, rooted in the ideas and background of the Old Testament, is at the heart of Jesus’s teaching. Ladd argues, “In any case, throughout all Judaism, the coming of God’s Kingdom was expected to be an act of God—perhaps using the agency of human beings—to defeat the wicked enemies of Israel and to gather Israel together, victorious over its enemies, in its Promised Land, under the rule of God alone.”⁶¹ Therefore, the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed should be regarded as a dynamic concept, such as God’s reign and sovereignty, and as a spatial concept of territory.

One crucial factor in the discussion concerning the kingdom of God is the role of the Messiah in the kingdom. John J. Collins states, “The richest deposit of revolutionary political eschatology is found in Jewish literature, replete with hopes for a kingdom of God or for a messianic reign on earth.”⁶² Jewish literature during the intertestamental period does not consistently describe the role of the Messiah in the kingdom of God. The Messiah in Jewish literature is sometimes portrayed as an earthly Messiah and sometimes as a transcendental one. E. Ray Clendenen and Cole R. Dennis state, “Qumran sectarians were looking for possibly two messiahs, one of the lineage of Aaron (priestly) and one of the branch of David (royal); whereas

⁵⁹ J. Knox Chamblin, *Matthew: A Mentor Commentary*, Mentor Commentaries (Ross-shire, Great Britain: Mentor, 2010), 153.

⁶⁰ John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, vol. 2, Sacra Pagina Series, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002), 71.

⁶¹ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 60.

⁶² John J. Collins, “Eschatologies of Late Antiquity,” in *Dictionary of New Testament Background: A Compendium of Contemporary Biblical Scholarship*, eds. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 331.

for Christianity the Messiah had come and fulfilled the Law and the Prophets and would return in the eschatological future for the saints.”⁶³ In the context of this Jewish literature, the Qumran community seemed to be expecting two types of Messiahs.

The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Gospels

The Characteristics of the Kingdom of God

This section discusses the kingdom of God, focusing on Jesus’s ministry and His role. Mark begins with the verse, “The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1). William L. Lane notes, “The word ‘beginning’ has biblical overtones which lend an awesome ring to the opening phrase, and serves to recall that it is God who initiates redemption on behalf of men.”⁶⁴ Jesus presents His role and identity through the proclamation that the kingdom of God has come. Ladd states,

Modern scholarship is quite unanimous in the opinion that the Kingdom of God was the central message of Jesus. Mark introduces Jesus’ mission with the words, “Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel’” (Mk. 1:14–15).⁶⁵

The kingdom of God is the central theme in the Gospels, but no one uses the expression except Jesus Himself. This further emphasizes that the kingdom of God is the primary point of Jesus’s proclamation.

Mark 1:1 summarizes the entire book. Mark describes the concept of the kingdom of God, deeply rooted in the Jews, more specifically with Jesus Christ. Examining the

⁶³ E. Ray Clendenen and Cole R. Dennis, “Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, eds. Chad Brand et al. (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 404.

⁶⁴ William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 42.

⁶⁵ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 54.

circumstances of the Markan community can clarify the purpose for which Mark was written. False prophets deceived the community, claiming that the second coming of Jesus had already occurred.⁶⁶ Furthermore, the Jews and the Roman Empire were violently persecuting Christians. In this situation, Mark recorded the Gospel of Mark and tried to correct the false view of the second coming of Christ within the community. Moreover, outside of the community, he encouraged people to fight against the fiery persecution of Rome and warned not to apostatize but to keep the faith. Despite these difficulties, the Jews lived with the expectation of the good news of the messianic kingdom realized through an ideal king like David.

A key theme that spans all of Jesus's ministry is the kingdom of God. In his commentary, Ronald J. Kernaghan notes, "The kingdom of God is an expression that embodied the hopes of the Jewish people that God would one day remove all evil from the world and inaugurate a new, unprecedented age of blessing, prosperity and joy."⁶⁷ People can enter the kingdom by repentance and faith, not by law. This is the true gospel that Jesus conveys.

The mystery of the kingdom of God refers to the knowledge of God's kingdom given not to man's generals but to his disciples. The kingdom of God is a secret kingdom that is visible only to those with eyes of faith. Jesus says, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you" (Mark 4:11). The term "secret" has a unique characteristic in that it appears only in this verse. Arland J. Hultgren notes, "It can be said at this point that the 'secret' is that specific understanding which has been disclosed to certain persons (the disciples) by God alone through Jesus, namely, the understanding that God's kingdom is breaking in and operative through Jesus'

⁶⁶ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1–8: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 27, Anchor Yale Bible (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2008), 501.

⁶⁷ Ronald J. Kernaghan, *Mark*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 41.

words and deeds.”⁶⁸ Jesus does not convey any information that allows people to have a privileged sense of the kingdom of God. Instead, Jesus teaches the kingdom of God, the secret itself. Ronald Kernaghan adds,

He has divided the characters into two groups of people: those on the inside and those on the outside. The insiders learn the meaning of the parables. The outsiders are left with the unexplained parables, and we are on the outside. Mark does not tell us directly what the secret of the kingdom of God is. He does not tell us how to resolve the tension between the light that illuminates and the things that are hidden in order to be revealed.⁶⁹

Hearing the words of Jesus means believing and acting on them, which represents the secret of the kingdom of God and His reign over individuals, churches, and the world.

The Gospels state that the kingdom of God is like a mustard seed (see Matt 13:31; Mark 4:30). According to the Gospels, the mustard seed is the smallest of all the seeds on earth.

Kernaghan adds, “The parable of the seed growing by itself compares the kingdom of God to the growth of a seed.”⁷⁰ Now one must focus on the fact that the smallest seed becomes the largest plant. The kingdom of God is like a change in a mustard seed, which is elaborated in Acts.⁷¹ The kingdom of God in the ministry of Jesus was hidden from people. However, Christians can anticipate the kingdom because it certainly existed in the ministry of Jesus. Lane argues, “It has been shown that in the Gospel of Mark the Kingdom of God and the person of Jesus are so

⁶⁸ Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary*, The Bible in Its World, eds. David Noel Freedman and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2002), 457–8.

⁶⁹ Kernaghan, *Mark*, 95.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁷¹ 1) “So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

2) “But the word of God continued to spread and flourish” (Acts 12:24).

3) “The word of the Lord spread through the whole region” (Acts 13:49).

4) “In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power” (Acts 19:20).

integrally bound together as to be inseparable.”⁷² The kingdom of God present in Jesus must be fulfilled someday regardless of any human endeavor, will, and adversity.

Jesus began to teach children actively about the kingdom of God. In Mark 10, Jesus states, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these” (Mark 10:14). David E. Garland notes, “The true disciple must become as a child to receive the kingdom rather than act like an overseer, who drives others away.”⁷³ The vital characteristics of a child are integrity, humility, and trust—the same characteristics of the citizens in the kingdom of God.

Mark 10 and Matthew 19 describe the rich as having difficulty entering the kingdom of God. Jesus proclaims, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:24–25). Because wealth competes with loyalty to God, those with a lot of money have difficulty accepting God’s reign. To amazed disciples, Jesus stresses how difficult it is for a person to enter the kingdom of God using the parable of a camel.

Jesus eats the Passover meal with His disciples and speaks of the kingdom of God. He says, “I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt 26:29). Through this verse, Jesus offers a vision of the coming kingdom of God. His solemn declaration confirms the certainty of hope for the kingdom of God.

The zealots at the time of Jesus ultimately tried to achieve the order of salvation in this world through human struggle. Likewise, today, some people attempt to fulfill the kingdom of

⁷² Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 312.

⁷³ David E. Garland, *Mark*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 381.

God on this earth through the efforts of human beings. They do not realize the centrality of God in this kingdom. God's kingdom has a God-centered character because it is a futuristic realm given only by His sovereignty. The essence of God's kingdom is that God establishes His sovereignty in it so that man may enter the realm and be under His dominion.

This centrality of God in the kingdom of God explains why Jesus and John the Baptist declare salvation and judgment together in Mark 1:15: "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!" Sharyn Dowd adds,

Mark 1:14–15, although it closes the frame on the introduction to the Gospel, also serves as a transition into the narrative about Jesus' authority and power. It provides the change of scene that gets Jesus out of the desert and into Galilee, where all the action in 1:16–4:34 takes place. It gives the audience a summary of Jesus' preaching and serves notice that all that follows should be understood as manifestations of the nearness of God's reign, announced by Jesus in 1:15.⁷⁴

Salvation and judgment are direct consequences of God's plan. The kingdom of God is a concept containing salvation because God exercises His royal righteousness upon all who believe in Him; thus, repentance has a significant meaning. God qualifies citizens for His kingdom.

Although the kingdom of God has come into this world through Jesus Christ, the state of the world is still dominated by evil, and the work of rebellion against God is prevalent. This fact gives rise to questions about what it means to be under God's reign. This issue is related to the theological concept of "already but not yet." Believers are now participating in the dynamic kingdom of God, which fights the absurdity that is prevalent in this world. Although God's kingdom has already come into this world, it will be fulfilled in the future to its fullest.

With regard to the dynamic kingdom of God, Mark 9:1 states, "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come

⁷⁴ Sharyn Dowd, *Reading Mark: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Second Gospel*, Reading the New Testament Series (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, 2000), 16.

with power.” The present dynamics of the kingdom of God are also specified through the miracle of healing the sick (see Matt 11:2–5) and the event that casts out demons (see Matt 12:28).

Regarding the dynamic kingdom of God, Ladd argues,

The centrality of this abstract or dynamic character of the Kingdom of God is illustrated by the fact that the Hebrew word *malkuth* bears primarily the dynamic rather than the concrete meaning, and refers first to a reign, dominion, or rule and only secondarily to the realm over which a reign is exercised. Even when *malkuth* is used of human kingdoms, the primary reference is to the rule or reign of a king.⁷⁵

The dynamic kingdom of God created a moment when Satan fell from heaven (see Luke 10:18).

Jesus declares, “If it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:28). He emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the dynamics of the kingdom of God.

The Galilean community naturally maintained a Jewish identity because of its conservative stance on the law. The Jews regarded the land where they lived as holy and the land where the Gentiles lived as unclean. The Gospel of Mark contains a wide range of open attitudes of Jesus toward the Gentiles and introduces the encounter with the Gentiles through the villages. With respect to the preaching of the gospel, the story of a Syrophenician woman in Mark 7:24–30 reveals a strategy of “first to the Jews, then to the Gentiles,” which is consistent with Acts and Paul’s mission. The balance between the Jews and Gentiles in Mark’s Gospel allows for the assumption that the Markan community consists of both groups. Mark brought the gospel to the Jews and Gentiles, and at the center is the kingdom of God proclaimed by Jesus.

⁷⁵ George E. Ladd, *The Presence of the Future: The Eschatology of Biblical Realism*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 46–7.

The Present and Future Aspects of the Kingdom of God

The kingdom of God in Mark has apocalyptic elements, and the expression appears fourteen times in the Gospel of Mark. The kingdom of God in Mark is more imminent than in Matthew or Luke. Mark 1:15 states, “The kingdom of God is near.” Here, the Greek verb ἤγγικεν (come near, is near) is written in the present perfect tense. This tense includes a completed action in the present context with abiding results: the kingdom of God has already arrived. However, a potential future interpretation is that the kingdom has not yet come. Despite the apparent contradiction, this verse contains both meanings.⁷⁶ The kingdom of God is unfolded as a vast apocalyptic drama that reaches the end of the world. Jesus Christ overcomes Satan’s opposition but is temporarily defeated by human political opposition; however, the power of Jesus’s resurrection overturns this opposition and gives people victory.

Tension exists between the present and future of God’s kingdom. After being baptized by John, Jesus proclaimed, “The time has come,” and “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15). In this verse, πεπλήρωται (has come or has been fulfilled) and ἤγγικεν (has come near) are present perfect passive and present perfect active forms, respectively, implying the urgency to accept God’s kingdom, since it has already come in some sense. In the ministry of Jesus, the kingdom of God encompasses all of these concepts, such as the hidden achievement of the kingdom of God in the present and the future perfection of His kingdom.

The kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed and the concept that the Jews had at that time were different from each other. The most notable difference is that in the first century, the Jews had a futuristic view toward the kingdom of God. However, as Jesus proclaimed, God’s kingdom

⁷⁶ Kernaghan, *Mark*, 41–2.

contained present characteristics as well as futuristic ones. Jesus emphasized the present aspect of the kingdom of God by declaring its fulfillment through Himself: “Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near’” (Matt 4:17). Mark also said, “After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. ‘The time has come,’ he said. ‘The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!’” (Mark 1:14–15). This proclamation by Jesus is unique in that it is not found in any Jewish literature or the Old Testament. This is because Jesus’s proclamation is not solely about the future, meaning that the kingdom of God will come. This kingdom came upon the world through Jesus. While emphasizing the futuristic event, Jesus focuses on the present state that the kingdom of God has already begun.

The present state of the kingdom of God is revealed in detail through the miracle of healing the sick. Matthew speaks of Jesus preaching the kingdom of God and healing the sick in the same context. The evidence is revealed as a miracle of healing the sick beyond the natural laws. Furthermore, the present state of the kingdom of God is demonstrated through the events of Jesus’s exorcisms. Strauss notes, “Through his exorcisms, Jesus is attacking and taking back Satan’s ‘possessions,’ those people over whom Satan has gained control. The exorcisms are proof that the kingdom of God is engaging and overwhelming the kingdom of Satan.”⁷⁷ When Jesus cast out demons, the Pharisees said that He did it by the power of Beelzebul. It is worth noting Jesus’s response in Matthew: “And if I drive out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your people drive them out? So then, they will be your judges. But if it is by the Spirit of God that I drive out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you” (Matt 12:27–28). Here, Jesus primarily emphasizes that the kingdom of God is against the kingdom of Satan and that He came

⁷⁷ Strauss, *Four Portraits, One Jesus*, 462.

to fight Satan to realize the kingdom of God. Indeed, Jesus showed that this kingdom was already realized through His ministry that drove demons out.

Through the forgiveness of sins, the present condition of the kingdom of God is also revealed: “But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. So he said to the man, ‘I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home’” (Mark 2:10–11). This is a story of a paralyzed man. Jesus proclaims that the paralyzed man is forgiven now, not in the future. When Jesus was at the house of the Pharisees, a sinful woman brought perfume and poured it on Jesus’s feet. Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven” (Luke 7:48). Through this declaration of forgiveness of sins, He proclaimed the kingdom of God, which came upon the earth.

The Pharisees asked Jesus when the kingdom of God would come. The present state of this kingdom is clearly revealed in His reply to them: “The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is in your midst” (Luke 17:20–21). Jesus declared the present state of the kingdom of God to those who doubted that it had come.

Through Jesus’s earthly ministry, the kingdom of God already began in the world, but it has not been fully achieved in this world. The ultimate realization of this kingdom exists beyond the present, and a new order will be formed there. According to Luke, “There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God” (Luke 13:28–29). The kingdom of God has the future aspect, and the believers are told to participate in the feast that

will occur in the future. This phase of the kingdom of God has not yet been entered into but is recorded as a future event.

The future aspect of God's kingdom concerns a renewed old world for a millennium, followed by a brand new world in the eternal state. Matthew says, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt 7:32). This verse is related to the time of the last judgment. Furthermore, on the night before Jesus was captured, He had the last supper with His disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:25). This means that God's kingdom will surely come and that people will eat the new fruit of the vine at that time. Since the kingdom of God has not been completely fulfilled on earth, believers must endure hardship in any circumstance. The kingdom of God will be perfected by the return of Jesus Christ; therefore, it is a world that still belongs to the future.

The kingdom of God is both present and futuristic. Jesus proclaims that the kingdom of God has already come, but He also declares that it will come in the future. One of the most important tasks of biblical theology is to answer the question of how the kingdom of God can have both present and future aspects. Ladd adds, "The future is related to the present because both present and future visitations are acts of the same God on behalf of his people."⁷⁸ God's kingdom contains two elements: current achievement and future perfection.

Theologians interpret the tension between the present and future kingdom of God as "already and not yet." Nicholas Perrin states, "Paradoxically, the kingdom is already here, even as it is not yet here. This paradox can be explained by admitting the gradual in-breaking of the

⁷⁸ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 69.

kingdom in the present time while also affirming its climactic appearance at the parousia, or second coming.”⁷⁹ The nature of God’s kingdom is now internal rather than external. The church should recognize that the end of the world is near. At the same time, the church must continue to plan for the future on the present land that will last for some time. Anthony A. Hoekema argues, “It is, in fact, impossible to understand New Testament eschatology apart from this tension. Tension between the already and the not yet is implicit in the teachings of Jesus. For Jesus taught that the kingdom of God is both present and future, and that eternal life is both a present possession and a future hope.”⁸⁰ A critical element in the New Testament is the tension between “already” and “not yet completed.” The New Testament should be understood from this perspective.

The eschatological salvation of the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaims in the New Testament is futuristic. Otherwise, the teaching about the kingdom of God in the Lord’s Prayer, “Your kingdom come,” is meaningless (see Matt 6:10; Luke 11:2). In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus asks people to pray for the coming of the kingdom of God. The fact that those who stand with Jesus will not die until they see the coming of the kingdom of God should be accepted as a precursor to the kingdom of God. Jesus states, “Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power” (Mark 9:1). This verse has a significant meaning in that it contains an apparent reference to the period concerning God’s kingdom. The verb ἐληλυθυῖαν (has come) is a perfect participle, indicating that the result remains when the action is performed.

⁷⁹ Nicholas Perrin, *The Kingdom of God: A Biblical Theology*, Biblical Theology for Life (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 34.

⁸⁰ Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 68.

The lesson, miracle, and life of Jesus were the evidence that the kingdom of God was in power; however, Jesus, who performed such a ministry, was hidden by the messianic mystery. Peter, James, and John witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. This event can be regarded as a special revelation of the kingdom of God because it was a special manifestation of the King. Peter, James, and John received a special sneak preview of the kingdom of God. Jesus's transfiguration is what He will look like when He next appears. People will see that the power of the Messiah will be fully exercised when He returns.

The Kingdom of God in the Parables

Jesus used many parables to explain that He had brought the kingdom of God to this earth. Without accurately understanding these parables, one cannot properly understand Jesus's teachings. In the New Testament, two Greek words translate to parable. One is *παραβολή*, which appears forty-eight times in the Synoptic Gospels and twice in the Book of Hebrews. The other is *παροιμία*, which appears four times in the Gospel of John and once in 2 Peter. The Greek word *παραβολή*, which appears mainly in the Synoptic Gospels, is a compound word of the preposition *παρα* and the verb *βολή*. The preposition *παρα* means "side by side" and "beside," and the verb *βολή* means "throw." Therefore, the word *παραβολή* means throwing something side by side to help people compare them. The parables of Jesus are a means of asking the audience to respond to His message. They are a self-revelation of Jesus Himself because one meets Jesus's central message, the kingdom of God, through His parables. One can find the true meaning of the parables by studying the context of the passages that contain them.

A parable is a form of literature that explains certain truths for clarity, using everyday life occurrences. The purpose of Jesus's parables was to reveal the truth, and many of His parables

aimed to proclaim the kingdom of God, which He described as a hidden kingdom. Regarding the kingdom of God in the parables, Hultgren notes,

Along with three other parables (the Sower, the Seed Growing Secretly, and the Leaven), the Mustard Seed is often called a “parable of growth.” These parables are all concerned about the kingdom of God, and they provide pictorial contrasts between tiny beginnings and grand, magnificent endings. They do not portray progress in the sense of a gradual development, but a contrast between small beginnings and big endings.⁸¹

Through the parables, Jesus tried to make others understand Him in situations where the crowd did not believe in Him.

Jesus preached the kingdom of God, but people reacted to it differently. Some responded as though seeds fell on the roadside, and others as though seeds fell on rocky places and thorns. A few people responded as though seeds fell on good ground. According to Perrin, “Only the seed that falls on good soil grows and multiplies, the good soil representing those who truly hear the word and manage by divine empowerment to bear fruit.”⁸² People must wait patiently for the kingdom of God because no one knows when it will come.

Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God through fellowship with tax collectors and sinners. He approached those who were regarded as outsiders of Jewish society and proclaimed the kingdom of God through the direct action of eating with them. There exist the endless love of God, forgiveness, reconciliation, and justice in the kingdom of God. God’s kingdom is open to all people, including the sick and the weak.

Jesus ministered to all classes of people with a broad understanding of human life. The purpose of the parables is to make Jesus’s teaching more interesting and memorable, but the fundamental effects are summed up in two ways: revealing and concealing effects. First,

⁸¹ Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 395.

⁸² Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 90.

regarding the revealing effect, Jesus wanted to reveal the truth through parables. He preached the truth first and then used a parable to reveal the truth more clearly. He taught the lesson of loving one's neighbor by using the parable of the Good Samaritan. The parable of the Prodigal Son exemplifies the gracious love of God forgiving sinners. Jesus used the parables to represent the truth and message of salvation concisely.

Second, the parables of Jesus had a concealing effect, which was actually gracious because if Jesus had simply revealed all these truths to those who did not have ears to hear, then they would be held even more accountable to those truths during judgment. Through the parables, Jesus revealed something about heaven only to those who were permitted. The most representative parts of this concealing effect are Matthew 13 and Mark 4. Jesus says, "They may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!" (Mark 4:12). He continues, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?" (Mark 4:13). Here, the parable was Jesus's teaching itself, not the metaphor for understanding. Kernaghan notes, "God did not intend for them to believe, and so Jesus spoke in parables to conceal the truth from them. In this interpretation those on the outside are the people whom God predestined not to believe."⁸³ Since Jesus concealed His intention through the parable, many disciples were bewildered and did not grasp the essence of His teaching. Jesus taught not only those who followed Him but also the Pharisees, who sometimes opposed Him. The reason Jesus hid His intention in this way is that His antagonists, such as the Sadducees and the Pharisees, existed among the hearers of His teaching. He tried to avoid disputes with religious leaders, especially when His time had not yet come. Jesus preached

⁸³ Kernaghan, *Mark*, 88.

the kingdom of God, using parables as a way to avoid direct conflicts, especially before the enemies who attacked Him.

When Jesus used parables to convey the truth, the audience sometimes did not understand the teaching. Despite their simple expression, the parables of Jesus held a profound spiritual truth. People could not correctly interpret them; therefore, interpretation principles should be presented for understanding these parables. God's Word is deeply related to people's lives, and Jesus aims to convey a central theme through the parables. People must recognize their primary teaching and apply it to their lives.

One must understand the context of life at the time when Jesus taught the parables. These parables should be seen in the context of Jewish Palestine in the first century AD. Since the parables of Jesus were given to certain people of that period, it is necessary to examine the circumstance of Jesus's life to perceive His intention in the parables. The context, literary composition, and intention of the Gospel writers should be considered in the parables' interpretation. Through a structural analysis, one can discern the exact situation in which the parables were presented.

The clear recognition of the parables of Jesus relates to the understanding of the kingdom of God, which is the essence of the parables. The parables represent the truth concerning the plan for God's kingdom. Jesus spoke both directly and indirectly of it. Through the parables, He immediately corrected the false concept of the kingdom of God. Therefore, to accurately interpret the parables, it is necessary to recognize their relationship with the kingdom of God.

Matthew 13 contains the most parables about God's kingdom in the Gospels. Each metaphor reveals both the present and future aspects. The parable of the Sower is found in the Synoptic Gospels: Matthew 13:1–23; Mark 4:1–20; Luke 8:4–15. It is the first of many parables

in Matthew 13 and the basis for interpreting the rest of the parables. An accurate understanding of this parable is the key to interpreting the other parables. In the first century, Jewish society was a farming society, so Jesus's listeners were accustomed to agriculture; however, the farming methods in the text are unfamiliar to modern people who have a different background. Klyne Snodgrass notes, "The parable tells of a normal sowing procedure which presumes that sowing precedes plowing and that no seed is wasted or thrown carelessly."⁸⁴ The farming methods of this parable in the Palestinian context are an accurate description of agriculture at that time.

This parable should not go beyond the scope of Jesus's interpretation of the four kinds of soils because He presents the meaning of the parable in the text. The sower is one who sows the Word of God, and the proclamation of the word "sower" can be seen as the presence of the kingdom of heaven. This parable represents that the majestic aspect of heaven has come unobtrusively and simply as a farmer sows seeds. Ladd states,

The Kingdom is working quietly, secretly among men. It does not force itself upon them; it must be willingly received. But wherever it is received, the word of the Kingdom, which is practically identical with the Kingdom itself, brings forth much fruit. There is no emphasis upon the harvest, either in the parable or in its interpretation. The single emphasis is upon the nature of the sowing—the present action of God's Kingdom.⁸⁵

The kingdom of God has already come, but it does not force people to accept it. Those who are not ready to take it reject God's kingdom as revealed in three of the four soils.

The secret that Jesus wants to make known through the parable is the mystery of the kingdom of God. This mystery helps people to understand who Jesus is and what the characteristics His teachings and ministry are. Lane argues, "The harvest is a common figure for

⁸⁴ Klyne Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 166–7.

⁸⁵ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 230.

the consummation of the Kingdom of God and in the parable there is a significant reflection on the future, eschatological aspect of the Kingdom: it shall be glorious in character.”⁸⁶ The parable of the Sower reveals the mystery of God’s kingdom and the gradual process of salvation through Christ.

Through His work, Jesus emphasizes that the kingdom of God has already come by linking the parable of the Sower to the concept of God’s kingdom in Matthew 13: “Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them” (Matt 13:11). In Luke 8:4–8, Jesus explains the parable of the Sower and then links it to the parable of a lamp on a stand (Luke 8:16–18) to contrast what is hidden with what will appear to highlight His eschatological ministry.

Mark 4:11 reveals two qualities: the hidden and the manifested. The mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to Jesus’s disciples, but it has been hidden to those on the outside. After Jesus distinguishes between disciples and outsiders, He uses the parable of the Sower as a means of judgment by concealing the mystery of heaven to the outsiders and as a means of grace by revealing it to the disciples. The truth is concealed in the parable, so it must be interpreted for clear understanding.

Jesus’s disciples experienced a secret revelation that was characteristic of the messianic era, but the outsiders did not understand that the kingdom of God was realized. The disciples’ realization of the eschatological mystery of the kingdom of God implies that they have the privilege of knowing the secret. The power to perceive the mystery is not in the disciples but in the revelation of God.

⁸⁶ Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 154.

The parable of the Weeds in Matthew 13:24–30 and 36–43 is recorded only in the Gospel of Matthew. This parable seems to reflect the actual life of the early church. It also has relevance to another parable: “The similarity of the parable of the net to that of the weeds strongly suggests that the two are designed for the same audience.”⁸⁷ Both parables reveal the kingdom of God. The main issue of this parable is the view of the field. Jesus says, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed is the sons of the kingdom. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sowed them is the devil.” (Matt 13:37–39). The world has both believers and unbelievers. This parable emphasizes that the kingdom of God came with the coming of Jesus, but it did not instantly destroy sin and eradicate evil. This indicates that good and evil will coexist until the end of the world, when glorious separation will take place.

The parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven suggest that the kingdom of God has already come upon the world, even though it is small and concealed. In these two parables, Jesus offers a direct interpretation; however, in the parable of the Mustard Seed, He does not present any straightforward interpretation. Rather, He allows the listeners to interpret the parable. Donald A. Hagner adds, “The kingdom of God has humble beginnings; it is like a mustard seed, small and unimpressive. It can be overlooked or dismissed as a trifle. Its coming did not overwhelm the world, as had been expected. Yet it is destined to become an impressive entity in radical contrast to its beginnings.”⁸⁸ The mustard seed is so small that it is difficult to see it with the naked eye; thus, it is used to refer to tiny things. Matthew 13:32 says, “It is the smallest of all

⁸⁷ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 538–9.

⁸⁸ Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, vol. 33A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 387.

seeds, but when it has grown it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree.” The incredible growth of the mustard seed shows how the kingdom of God expands. The parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast in Matthew 13:31–33 signify the gradual and ultimate expansion of the kingdom of God.⁸⁹

The parable of the Leaven also has a similar lesson. Leaven is commonly used to make bread because it is a rising agent. It symbolizes the force that affects the whole. This parable demonstrates that the kingdom of God will grow and gain power to the extent that no other thing can compare to it. Ulrich Luz argues, “Once the leaven is in it, an irresistible process leads to excessive fullness. In this parable the idea of ‘growth’ is more central than it is in the parable of the mustard seed.”⁹⁰ The parable of the Leaven emphasizes that the kingdom of God will continue to grow toward ultimate and perfect triumph. Therefore, the two aforementioned parables indicate both the present and future aspects of the kingdom of God.

The parables of the Hidden Treasure and the Pearl of Great Value naturally follow those of the mustard seed and the leaven.⁹¹ Matthew 13:44 presents the parable of the Hidden Treasure. In Palestine, wars occurred so frequently that people often hid their treasures in the fields to protect their property. If they died during the war, another person would likely find the hidden treasure. In this parable, the hidden treasure symbolizes the kingdom of God. People did not intend to find this treasure, but they discovered it by chance when they cultivated the field. Therefore, the kingdom of God is not obtained by their efforts but by the grace of God. This

⁸⁹ Gentry Jr., “Postmillennialism,” 39.

⁹⁰ Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20: A Commentary on Matthew 8–20*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 2001), 263.

⁹¹ Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 62.

parable also reveals that the kingdom of God is noble and precious, like the hidden treasure.

Those who recognize this value will have joy and naturally abandon their possessions.

The parable of the Pearl of Great Value also contains a similar teaching. The pearl was not well known in BC times, but in the first century, it represented the status of the rich. At that time, merchants traveled to find fine pearls. Anthony J. Saldarini states,

The twin parables of the treasure in the field and the extremely valuable pearl (vv. 44–46) testify to the importance of the kingdom of God and to the total commitment necessary to gain it. Both the farmer who unexpectedly found the treasure in a field and the merchant who was searching for fine pearls used all their resources to acquire the single most valuable and important object of their desire.⁹²

The parable of the Pearl of Great Value represents a desperate effort and sacrifice to find pearls symbolized as the kingdom of God.

The parable of the Net in Matthew 13:47–50 is located at the end of the parables regarding the kingdom of God. At the time of Jesus, a net was an efficient means of catching fish. Many fishermen followed Jesus, and they could easily understand this parable. Matthew 13:48–49 says, “When it [the net] was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into containers but threw away the bad. So it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous.” Here, the good and the bad refer to edible and inedible fish, respectively, which means the righteous and the evil, respectively. Ladd argues,

The parable of the draw-net reaffirms the truth that though the Kingdom of God has come among men now in an unexpected manner, it will nevertheless issue in the final judgment and in the separation of the good from the wicked and the destruction of evil. The revelation of the coming of the Kingdom in the Old Testament emphasized this catastrophic, apocalyptic event. When God brings His Kingdom, the society of wicked men will be displaced by the society of those who have submitted themselves to God’s rule who will then enjoy the fulness of the divine blessings freed from all evil.⁹³

⁹² Anthony J. Saldarini, “Matthew,” in *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible*, eds. James D. G. Dunn and John W. Rogerson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 1031.

⁹³ Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, 62–3.

In this parable, the net represents the preaching of the gospel as a means of grace, and the fishermen can be seen as evangelists who follow Christ's command. The parable of the Net emphasizes separation between the righteous and the evil. This parable is similar to Ezekiel 20 in that it explores the judgment and separation that leads to the millennial kingdom.

The Kingdom of God in John's Gospel

The kingdom of God is the central theme of the Synoptic Gospels, and the expression appears frequently. However, it is only used four times in John's Gospel: once each in John 3:3 and 5, and twice in 18:36. It is critical to know what the kingdom of God means in John's Gospel and why it is referenced only a relatively small number of times in this gospel compared to the Synoptic Gospels. One can discover a more precise difference by clearly understanding the context and the purpose of writing in each book. John 20:31 reveals the purpose of John's Gospel: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name." The Gospel of John focuses on promoting faith so that readers can gain life.

While the kingdom of God is used frequently in the Synoptic Gospels, seven unique "I am" expressions are used in John's Gospel:

1. "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35).
2. "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).
3. "I am the gate" (John 10:7, 9).
4. "I am the good shepherd" (John 10:11, 14).
5. "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25).
6. "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6).
7. "I am the true vine" (John 15:1, 5).⁹⁴

These statements essentially result in soteriology. Richard D. Phillips adds that the meaning of these sayings is closely related to the very heart of the Christian faith. John's Gospel explicitly

⁹⁴ Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 120.

demonstrates that believing in Jesus Christ is the only way to enter God’s salvation.⁹⁵ Eternal life implies life in the kingdom. According to the Fourth Gospel, the purpose of Jesus’s coming is for people to gain and enjoy eternal life by believing in Jesus, the Messiah.

The kingdom of God is described as the resurrection and the life in the Gospel of John. Jesus says, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die” (John 11:25–26). George R. Beasley-Murray argues,

The eschatological rule of God for which Martha hopes, with all its blessings for humankind, is vested in Jesus. The greatest gift of God’s saving sovereignty is precisely *life eternal* under that sovereignty and entry upon it through *resurrection*. The power to initiate it resides in Jesus (“the Resurrection”) and to grant it in its fullness (“the Life”). Both elements of this function are his by God’s appointment.⁹⁶

Believers can enjoy eternal life; death cannot destroy them because they are united with Jesus Christ, the life. In the kingdom of God, the force of life dominates that of death. This fact is proved through Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead. The Gospel of John emphasizes the present condition of having eternal life through Jesus’s ministry.

Jesus Christ Himself is the life, and this gift is not in the distant future: “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life” (1 John 5:13). Anyone in the world can experience the resurrection and the life by believing in Jesus. Eternal life obtained by faith in Jesus is the present eschatological gift. People can be freed from sin and the wrath of God. Accordingly, they can move from the scope of sin to the realm of life and participate in God’s reign (see Gen 3).

⁹⁵ Richard D. Phillips, *John*, vol. 1, 1st ed., Reformed Expository Commentary, eds. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2014), 626.

⁹⁶ George R. Beasley-Murray, *John*, vol. 36, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1999), 190.

The kingdom of God is not often mentioned in the Gospel of John, but its thought and reality are internalized throughout the book. The author of John's Gospel presupposed the significance of the kingdom of God, so he did not need to state it directly. Ruth Edwards adds,

Many scholars therefore see Jesus' promised 'coming' as his resurrection, with his gift of Spirit as a continuation of his presence, fulfilling his promises to send the Paraclete (16:7) to guide the disciples and remind them of his teaching (14:26; 15:26; 16:13). However, John's eschatology is not entirely 'realized': he refers repeatedly to 'the last day' (6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24; 12:48) and to the future resurrection of believers (5:25, 28f.). It is therefore likely that in passages like 14:3 there is at least an indirect allusion to the *parousia* (cf. 1 Jn 2:28).⁹⁷

Being the last of the Gospels, John felt no need to rehash much of what had already been written. The present aspects of the kingdom of God are indeed inherent in the Gospel of John, but future elements also coexist in the Fourth Gospel. In a complete sense, the kingdom of God still belongs to the future.

There is an explicit mention of the last day in this verse: "For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day" (John 6:40). It also contains many expressions of future eschatology, which implies the second coming of Jesus and the future resurrection of believers. Paul N. Anderson notes, "Believers will receive their final reward only on the last day (5:25; 6:39, 40, 44, 54; 11:24), authentic worship and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit appear yet to be in the future (4:21; 7:39; 14:26), and the 'hour' of Jesus' glorification appears not yet actualized at places in the narrative (2:4; 7:6, 8, 30; 8:20)."⁹⁸ The present and future aspects of the kingdom of God are held together in John's Gospel, and tension exists between them. The eschatology of John's

⁹⁷ Edwards, *Discovering John*, 76.

⁹⁸ Paul N. Anderson, "On Guessing Points and Naming Stars: Epistemological Origins of John's Christological Tensions," in *The Gospel of John and Christian Theology*, ed. Richard Bauckham and Carl Mosser (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 315.

Gospel consists of complementary, intertwined ideas: a correlation exists between historical and transcendental reality in the Gospel of John.

Miracles in the Synoptic Gospels represent the idea of the Messiah centered on the coming kingdom of God. The kingdom of God brought by Jesus reveals the real authority in the miracle that expels and removes the evil force on earth. Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, the miracles of John's Gospel are considered to be distinctive signs. Jesus came to the world as the love of God, and the Gospel of John refers to the light of Christ as a sign. The subject of the Synoptic Gospels is the kingdom of God. By contrast, the kingdom of God is mentioned only twice in John 3. However, the Gospel of John and the Synoptic Gospels are still related. John further elaborates and develops the subject and diversity of his Gospel with the themes of light, life, truth, and eternal life. In other words, John uses different vocabulary to discuss the kingdom of God.

The Synoptic Gospels and John's Gospel, which appear to be superficially different, are not in conflict but are rather complementary. They should be regarded as a wide variety of literary devices and genres pointing to the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The mystery of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cannot be grasped entirely by human reason and knowledge. Only through the revelation of God do people become aware of the reality of Jesus. John's Gospel is a book containing hidden treasures. The Gospel of John's great symbols of Jesus and His kingdom are further enriched by understanding the background of the Old Testament. This allows people to experience profound concepts in the Gospel of John.

John 3:1–2 introduces a Jewish leader named Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a member of the Sanhedrin. Nicodemus appears only in the Gospel of John. His name means the victory of the people. Phillips notes, "Nicodemus is a Greek name. Upper-class Jews often gave their children

both Jewish and Greek names, signifying the two worlds in which they traveled. Nicodemus may have chosen to adopt his Greek name because he was an admirer of the philosophers.”⁹⁹ The use of the Greek name implies that he received a Greek education. He was an intellectual in one of the few elite groups. He was also a highly moral man who strictly obeyed Moses’s law.

Nicodemus came to Jesus at night. Perhaps, he did not want others to know that he visited Jesus. In John 3:2, he says to Jesus, “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.” This verse reveals Nicodemus’s perception of Jesus. He calls Jesus a rabbi, but he does not seem to view Jesus as a simple law teacher because he perceives that Jesus comes from God.

Nicodemus may have recognized Jesus as one of the prophets who performed miracles in the Old Testament. His use of “we know” instead of “I know” suggests that he came to see Jesus as a representative of the Jews. Nicodemus does not ask how to enter the kingdom of God, but Jesus knows his heart. Jesus says to him, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again” (John 3:3). Jesus emphasizes that man must be born again to see the kingdom of God. The arrival of the kingdom of God was also an issue among the Jews. They believed that the reign of God could be fulfilled by keeping the law well, but Jesus did not speak of the law. It is not a matter of human will to see the kingdom of God and experience the reign of God. Man should be regenerated.

Jesus explains to Nicodemus how to enter the kingdom of God: “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5). Jesus emphasizes that people cannot enter the kingdom of God through a physical birth but through a

⁹⁹ Richard D. Phillips, *Jesus the Evangelist: Learning to Share the Gospel from the Book of John* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Publishing, 2007), 59.

spiritual birth: “Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again’” (John 3:6–7). Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God, not just to Nicodemus but to all the Jews. This theme is eventually linked to eternal life: “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him” (John 3:14–15). Eternal life signifies the specific state of life enjoyed in the kingdom of God.

In response to Nicodemus’s question, Jesus first answered through the kingdom of God and ultimately explained it through eternal life; thus, eternal life is a new interpretation of the kingdom of God. Anyone who believes in Jesus Christ can have eternal life, based on God’s love for the world. Accordingly, the kingdom of God, as seen through dialogue with Nicodemus, is related to salvation. John’s Gospel eventually offers the only way to be saved: by believing in Jesus Christ. Jesus explains how to enter the kingdom of God through dialogue with Nicodemus. On the one hand, in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus uses many similes and metaphors to express the kingdom of God; on the other hand, John’s Gospel directly addresses the particular method of entering the kingdom of God.

When the Jews captured Jesus Christ, the high priest questioned Him, and then He stood before Pilate. Pilate asked Him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” (John 18:33). Jesus did not answer Pilate’s question directly but instead posed another question to clarify Pilate’s question: “Is that your idea, or did others talk to you about me?” (John 18:34). Pilate then asked Jesus again, “Your own people and chief priests handed you over to me. What is it you have done?” (John 18:35). Here “your own people” refers to the Jews, and Pilate wanted to confirm whether Jesus was really the king of the Jews. Jesus suddenly proclaimed the kingdom of God to Pilate: “My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the

Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place” (John 18:36). Jesus explained to Pilate that His kingdom is distinct from this world. This was also a circuitous answer to Pilate’s first question: “Are you the king of the Jews?” (John 18:33). The kingdom that Jesus spoke of was not political because Christ’s kingdom did not belong to the world. Jesus implies that He is King of this kingdom. Hence, Christ’s kingdom is where Jesus is King and rules over the world. The word “now” in John 18:36 implies the present aspect of the kingdom of God.

Pilate realized that Christ’s kingdom did not refer to a political organization or physical entity. Beasley-Murray states, “Pilate therefore must recognize that his rule is wholly different from that of the political powers of this world, and wholly different from anything that Pilate has experienced; hence he constitutes no threat to Roman authority.”¹⁰⁰ After Pilate’s tension was alleviated, and he seemed to acknowledge Jesus’s statement by saying, “You are a king, then!” (John 18:37). However, Jesus is not the king of a political kingdom of the Jews. His kingdom is not of this world, but it is open and influential to all regions and nations. The kingdom is where those who belong to the truth gather to listen to the voice of Jesus. It is a present kingdom that has already arrived. The Synoptic Gospels emphasize the present and future of the kingdom of God in a balanced way, whereas John 18 reveals the present aspect of it. The kingdom has already come upon this world, and only those on the side of the truth can enter God’s kingdom.

The Kingdom of God in Other New Testament Texts

The book of Acts is helpful in grasping the big concept of the kingdom of God. One must focus on Jesus to know the plan of God in the end. In Acts, Jesus is the mediator of God’s blessings, and the role of Israel is continuously emphasized in His salvation plan. Jesus’s

¹⁰⁰ Beasley-Murray, *John*, 331.

kingship is linked with the hope of Israel's restoration throughout Acts. Although Jesus partially fulfilled this hope during His earthly ministry, His full reign will be consummated with His Second Coming.

The book of Acts begins with the resurrected Jesus speaking of the kingdom of God in the city of Jerusalem, and it ends with Paul coming to Rome and preaching the kingdom of God boldly. Acts 1 contains the final story of Jesus and His disciples before His ascension. Jesus is with them for forty days after His resurrection and is about to leave them and ascend to heaven. The disciples ask a question that expresses their hope for the restoration of the kingdom: "So when they met together, they asked him, 'Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?' He said to them: 'It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority'" (Acts 1:6–7). The Jewish understanding of the messianic prophecy explains why the disciples asked this question. During Jesus's forty days with the disciples, He teaches them about the kingdom of God, and they finally know that His death and resurrection are the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53. For those who support the "now" sense of the kingdom of God, the visible kingdom will not be restored, but it opens the door for later.

The disciples understand the achievement of the messianic prophecy, but they ask Jesus if He will fulfill the rest of the prophecy and restore the kingdom of Israel. In other words, the disciples want to know whether Jesus will evict the Romans, restore the Davidic kingdom's rule in Jerusalem to end the time of the Gentiles, and bring peace across the world. Jesus clearly states that the times or dates are under the authority of God, indicating that Israel will be restored in the future, but not now. O. Palmer Robertson states, "Although the kingdom was present in the person and ministry of Jesus, it was also still future. This can only mean that it would come

progressively. In light of this teaching of Jesus, his disciples should have been well prepared for the further unfolding of the kingdom of God as it actually developed in the book of Acts.”¹⁰¹

The restoration of Israel will be fulfilled through the Messiah, the descendant of David, at Jesus’s return.

The door of hope for Israel’s restoration will never be closed, and Peter challenges everyone who interprets the Old and New Testaments differently. In Acts 3, he speaks of the return of Jesus:

Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you--even Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets (Acts 3:17–21).

If people want to know what will happen when Jesus returns, they must read again what God foretold through all the prophets because God has already revealed all of them. When Jesus returns, He will reign forever in His kingdom.

Replacement theologians have deliberately distorted the consistent message of the entire Bible by disregarding the relevant verses of Israel’s restoration in the New Testament. In the early church period, Gentile believers began to ask themselves if it was the right choice to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord when Jewish leaders were oppressing the church. It was a key challenge for the Gentiles to accept the new idea at the time. One way in which Luke solved this

¹⁰¹ O. Palmer Robertson, *The Israel of God: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2000), 124.

problem was to argue that many of the promises in Christianity were based on the Hebrew Bible.¹⁰² All of the logical arguments in his book lie in God's covenantal promises to Israel:

The restoration of Israel provides the catalyst for events that lie beyond the geography of the Land and even the nations. Luke anticipates the restoration of all things (Acts 3:19–21) and the inclusive participation of all peoples in the more comprehensive epoch of salvation, which includes Israel's restoration, but also the inclusion of Gentiles into the assembly of God.¹⁰³

The restoration of Israel is based on God's unilateral, unconditional, and everlasting covenants. God promised that the house and throne of David would be forever. Based on His covenant, God will surely restore the kingdom of David's throne in the future.

The concept of God's community as the temple of the living God can be understood in relation to the idea that God dwells among His covenant people (see 2 Cor 6:16). On the one hand, the Christian community as the temple of God is the place where God dwells among His covenant people. On the other hand, the wicked are against the church community, and they are thoroughly excluded from the kingdom of God: "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1 Cor 6:9a). They become a force in strong contrast to God's kingdom and will not inherit it because of their evil deeds (see 1 Cor 6:9–10; Gal 5:21).

Paul describes Christ as the foundation of the temple and explains the relationship between Christ and the Christian community as the relationship between Christ and His body.¹⁰⁴ Paul further states that each member of His body is also the temple of the Holy Spirit: "Do you

¹⁰² Darrell L. Bock, "Israel in Luke–Acts," in *The People, the Land and the Future of Israel: Israel and the Jewish People in the Plan of God*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2014), 105.

¹⁰³ Michael E. Fuller, "The Tradition of Restoration: An Examination of the Motifs of Israel's Re-gathering and the Fate of the Nations in Early Jewish Literature and Luke-Acts" (PhD diss., Durham University, 2005), 292, <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/2859>.

¹⁰⁴ Barbara E. Bowe, "Body of Christ," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, eds. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 195.

not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own” (1 Cor 6:19). For Paul, the Christian community as God’s temple becomes the dwelling place of God through unity with the Atonement of Jesus Christ, who becomes a true temple and a cornerstone. Therefore, the unity of God’s people is based on His kingdom and reign.

When Jesus returns, He will defeat all His enemies and rule as King (see 1 Cor 15:24–28; Rev 12:10). Revelation 20:4 describes Christ’s return, defeating His enemies, the angel binding Satan, and the beginning of Christ’s millennial reign. The book of Revelation also reveals what will happen after the thousand-year reign of Christ: “When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth—Gog and Magog—to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore” (Rev 20:7–8). Revelation declares that Satan will be completely defeated in this war (see Rev 20:9–10). Christ will destroy all evil forces that oppose God and return the kingdom to God the Father (see 1 Cor 15:24).

In 2 Timothy, Paul charges Timothy in view of Christ’s appearing and His kingdom: “In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge” (2 Tim 4:1). The kingdom of God is where God reigns, and it is the Christian’s inheritance, which suggests that if God’s people obey His commands, they will share in the glory of Christ and His kingdom. God will deliver them from all evil, and they will enjoy His eternal kingdom that cannot be shaken (see 2 Tim 4:18; Heb 12:28; 2 Pet 1:11).

The kingdom of God in the Pauline Epistles also shows the dualistic ideas of already and not yet.¹⁰⁵ In Colossians 1, Paul also teaches the now aspect of the kingdom: “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves” (Col 1:13). However, the future aspect of God’s kingdom is emphasized in 1 Corinthians. Believers already live in the kingdom of God but are still waiting for the coming of God’s kingdom. The reason Christians must take on the image of heaven through the resurrection is to inherit the kingdom of God (see 1 Cor 15:49–50). They have already experienced new life (see 2 Cor 2:16) but still await the inheritance of eternal life (see Gal 6:8).

The Kingdom of God through the Temple Program

Israel’s temple is a sacred place where one can experience God’s presence and reign, and it has political, social, and theological significance. It is God’s throne on earth from which He rules His kingdom. The God who created the whole world met the Israelites in the temple, which is thus the holiest place in the world and the center of faith and life. Examining the meaning of the temple allows people to understand what the temple program is and to gain a clear understanding of how it relates to the kingdom of God.

Biblical scholar G. K. Beale addresses how the theme of the temple develops in the Old Testament.¹⁰⁶ The temple means the kingdom of God and the people belonging to that kingdom. Beale argues that the concept of the temple in Christianity transcends the idea of the temple as a building, implying a cosmic and eschatological character that reveals the essence of the kingdom

¹⁰⁵ Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future*, 51.

¹⁰⁶ G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God*, vol. 17, *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL; England: InterVarsity Press; Apollos, 2004), 26.

of God.¹⁰⁷ The tabernacle and the temple reveal the cosmological dimension of the apocalyptic reality that God's presence, which was believed to be limited to the most holy place, actually spans the entire world.¹⁰⁸ In this context, the vision of Revelation 21 represents the temple of the last days that will fill the entire universe. This dissertation develops the theological and religious significance of the temple, where God's reign is realized, within the framework of God's unconditional covenants.

The Garden of Eden

The history of the Kingdom of God in the Old Testament can be traced from Genesis because the sovereignty and rule of God form the core concept in His kingdom. Genesis begins with the proclamation: "In the beginning God created (בָּרָא) the heavens and the earth" (Gen 1:1). This verse is the declaration of God's rule over all creation. The Hebrew verb בָּרָא focuses on God and emphasizes the providence and transcendence of God the Creator.¹⁰⁹ The psalmist describes the whole universe filled with God as a house: "The LORD wraps himself in light as with a garment; he stretches out the heavens like a tent and lays the beams of his upper chambers on their waters. He makes the clouds his chariot and rides on the wings of the wind" (Ps 104:2–3). In this passage, God, the Creator and ruler of the world, uses a method similar to building a house when creating the whole universe.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 26.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

¹⁰⁹ Claus Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 1–11* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1994), 98.

¹¹⁰ Donald B. Redford, "Akhenaten," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, eds. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 135.

The creation story of Genesis 1:1–2:3 can be viewed as the theological insight related to God’s kingdom, revealing the universe’s order.¹¹¹ Genesis says, “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering (מְרַחֵף) over the waters” (Gen 1:2). The Hebrew word implies the meaning of “rule” and “reign.” The command to grow and multiply in Genesis 1:28 was the mission of expanding God’s kingdom, which was given to Adam, the priest in the Eden temple.

The depiction of God placing man in the Garden of Eden closely resembles the setting of the priesthood in the tabernacle and temple. This fact reveals that in the Garden, man must be not only the cultivator or keeper of the Garden but also a priest who worships and obeys God. Gordon J. Wenham adds, “Indeed, there are many other features of the garden that suggest it is seen as an archetypal sanctuary, prefiguring the later tabernacle and temples.”¹¹² The words used to describe the Garden of Eden have many linguistic parallels with the later tabernacle and temples.¹¹³

The works given to Adam in the Garden of Eden are reminiscent of the rituals in the temple. God gave Adam the mission for the Garden of Eden: “The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work (עָבַד) it and take care of (שָׁמַר) it” (Gen 2:15). The words used here relate to worship in the Old Testament.¹¹⁴ The Hebrew word עָבַד expresses a sacred sense of serving God: “And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the

¹¹¹ K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, vol. 1A, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 145.

¹¹² Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, vol. 1, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 61.

¹¹³ Paul J. Kissling, *Genesis*, vol. 1, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub. Co., 2004), 155.

¹¹⁴ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, vol. 1A, 209.

stars—all the heavenly array—do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshipping (עֲבֹד) things the LORD your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven” (Deut 4:19).

Moreover, the Hebrew word שָׁמַר is commonly used in the legal texts in relation to the Levites’ responsibility for observing religious orders and obligations: “Keep (שָׁמַר) my decrees and laws, for the person who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD” (Lev 18:5). This similarity reveals the connection between Adam’s role and the Levites’ ministry as priests.¹¹⁵

God created the Garden of Eden as an archetypal temple and placed Adam there as God’s vicarious ruler (see Gen 2:15).¹¹⁶ In Genesis 2:19, Adam gives names to the creatures God made. Naming the creatures is to exercise authority over them.¹¹⁷ However, Adam, as king and priest, failed to rule the created world properly, and Israel assumed this role.¹¹⁸ God chose a special nation, Israel, and made a covenant with her to preserve the sacred dwelling place. The temple that governed everything in Israel’s society was a miniature pattern that reflected God’s presence and reign.

The Old Testament consistently indicates that the kingdom of God is the place where He reigns. However, the Garden of Eden, the first dwelling place of God, was destroyed by Adam’s sin and did not fully reveal God’s rule. God also wanted to restore His rule and create order through the history of Israel, but the tabernacle built in the wilderness and Solomon’s temple did not fully allow for this divine plan to be achieved.

¹¹⁵ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, vol. 1A, 209.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 66.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 215.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

Israel's temple has social implications beyond the spatial meaning of a sacred building in a specific place. The temple is an important place in exploring the purpose and nature of Israel's special status and role. It also plays a central role in society and reflects the ideals of the community. Beale argues that the temple in the Old Testament has symbolic meanings:

The outer court symbolized the visible earth (both land and sea, the place where humans lived); the holy place primarily represented the visible heavens (though there was also garden symbolism); the holy of holies stood for the invisible heavenly dimension of the cosmos where God dwelt (apparently not even the high priest who entered there once a year could see because of the cloud from the incense which he was to put on the fire).¹¹⁹

He explains the eschatological expansion of the Old Testament temple. God's purpose of establishing the order of the Garden of Eden in the world was revealed through Israel. The Israelites were assigned Adam's lost role and position that Adam lost to convey the blessings of Abraham. They were chosen as God's people to fulfill His purpose for the created world. What is crucial in understanding the Old Testament temple is that it is the dwelling place of God's presence. God dwells in the temple to meet His people, hear their prayers, and forgive their sins. Examining God's created world and the history of Israel will reveal the temple as the place where God and His kingdom are present.

The temple is closely related to God's creation from the beginning of the Bible.¹²⁰ God created the entire universe as a temple in which He dwells, but He particularly distinguished the Garden of Eden from other places. Just as God's created world represents a prototype temple as a macrocosm, so the Garden of Eden reveals the world as a microcosm—a miniature cosmos.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 48.

¹²⁰ John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 147.

¹²¹ James B. Jordan, *Creation in Six Days: A Defense of the Traditional Reading of Genesis One* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1999), 139.

Various temple motifs can be found in the account of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2:8–17. The Garden of Eden and the tabernacle are cosmic in concept and the place where God dwells.¹²²

John H. Sailhamer further explains the reasoning:

Chapter 2 makes still another contribution to the picture of man’s creation in God’s image. It can be seen in the author’s depiction of the land that was prepared for man’s dwelling. The description of the Garden of Eden appears to be deliberately cast to foreshadow the description of the tabernacle found later in the Pentateuch. The garden, like the tabernacle, was the place where man could enjoy the fellowship and presence of God.¹²³

The author of Genesis demonstrates the similarity between the Garden and the tabernacle. The description of the shape and role of the Garden of Eden in Genesis 2 is closely related to that of the tabernacle.

In Genesis 2:1–3, God created the heavens and the earth for six days and then rested on the seventh day. The Hebrew word that is translated as “rest” is שָׁבַת. Haag states, “The vb. *šābat*, which maintains the same basic meaning ‘cease, come to an end,’ in the qal, niphil, and hiphil, developed the specialized meaning ‘celebrate’ in the OT in connection with the observance of the seventh day.”¹²⁴ The seventh day indicates the integrity and completion of creation.¹²⁵ The seventh day of creation is a day that belongs only to God and has a special meaning as a day to recognize the importance of the finished creation.

¹²² Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 174.

¹²³ John H. Sailhamer, “Genesis,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, vol. 2, ed. Frank E. Gaebel (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1990), 41.

¹²⁴ E. Haag, “שָׁבַת,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. XIV, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 382.

¹²⁵ Westermann, *A Continental Commentary: Genesis 1–11*, 168.

Genesis 2:1–3 invites creation and humans to rest, which signifies that rest is the primary purpose of creation.¹²⁶ John H. Walton adds, “God not only sets up the cosmos so that people will have a place; he also sets up the cosmos to serve as his temple.”¹²⁷ The fact that God created the world and rested on the seventh day signifies that God entered His sanctuary after completing His ministry. Psalm 132:8 demonstrates this point: “Arise, LORD, and come to your resting place, you and the ark of your might.” Psalm 132:14 also says, “This is my resting place for ever and ever; here I will sit enthroned, for I have desired it.” In particular, “resting place” in verse 14 denotes the temple as God’s place of residence, which reveals the connection between God’s kingdom and His creation.

God descended and walked in the Garden of Eden: “Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking (הלך) the garden in the cool of the day” (Gen 3:8a). The Hebrew word הלך, which means “walk,” is used in the Bible to describe God’s presence in the sanctuary of Israel: “I will walk (הלך) among you and be your God, and you will be my people” (Lev 26:12).¹²⁸ As God walked in the Garden of Eden, He also walked in the tabernacle, which represents the relationship between the Garden and the later temples.

Trees and rivers mentioned in Genesis 2:8–17 explain the similarity between the Garden of Eden and the temple. K. A. Mathews adds, “Both Ezekiel’s temple (Ezek 47:1–12) and Revelation’s New Jerusalem (Rev 22:1–2) possess flowing rivers that provide the luscious

¹²⁶ Walton, *Genesis*, 148.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Deuteronomy 23:14 says, “For the LORD your God moves הלך about in your camp to protect you and to deliver your enemies to you. Your camp must be holy, so that he will not see among you anything indecent and turn away from you.” Also, 2 Samuel 7:6 says, “I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving הלך from place to place with a tent as my dwelling.” The Hebrew word used in those verses in the meaning of “move” shares the same root as the word when God was walking in the Garden in Genesis.

growth of trees and nurturing power for life and healing.”¹²⁹ Whenever Eden is mentioned in the Bible, it is portrayed as a fertile area where water is abundant and large trees grow. This description is a sign of God’s presence and blessing in Eden. The explanation of the rivers mentioned when describing the landscape of the Garden of Eden is also reminiscent of the temple. The images of the rivers originating in Eden are similar to Ezekiel’s eschatological description of Jerusalem and symbolize God’s life-giving presence.¹³⁰ Eden and the later tabernacle and temple share the symbols implying His presence.

The temple program supports God’s rule over His kingdom in this chapter. Beale regards the Garden of Eden as the first archetypal temple in which God’s reign is embodied.¹³¹ The Garden of Eden is a special place among all things created as the temple of God. The story of Noah and Abraham has a motif similar to that of the Eden temple. The ark was a temple to Noah, and the Promised Land of Canaan was a temple to Abraham. In particular, Mount Moriah, where Abraham was about to offer Isaac as a sacrifice to God, later became the temple site for Solomon, revealing the importance of the temple program flowing in the Bible.¹³² The Garden occupies a special and central position in Genesis, distinct from the outside world, and it can be considered as the essence of God’s creation.

The structure and contents of the temple symbolize the created world described in Genesis 1–2. The Garden of Eden is a miniature version of the universal temple made by God. It was the first temple and the original tabernacle. Adam was created as a priest in the image of

¹²⁹ Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, vol. 1A, 208.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 26.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 147.

God, and through his reign, the temple expanded universally.¹³³ In the Garden of Eden, God wanted to establish the kingdom of God in which His reign would be completed. However, because of Adam and Eve's sin, they lost the Garden. Eden is God's kingdom that He is trying to restore.

The Tabernacle

God's covenant and presence are central concepts that prevail in the Old Testament. The Exodus event is deeply related to God's covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage according to the promises made to the patriarchs in Yahweh's name. Exodus 1–18 describes the process of the Israelites experiencing the wilderness after the Exodus and arriving at Mount Sinai. All Exodus events are associated with the covenant made on Mount Sinai by encountering God, which appears from Exodus 19.

The Israelites had the potential to abandon monotheism and adopt religious syncretism. The covenant united the Exodus community of diverse members. Through the Sinai Covenant, the community was transformed into a faith community. On Mount Sinai, God introduced the Israelites to the laws that must be followed to become a community of faith as God's chosen people. They exhibited a firm determination to obey God-given norms, which became the basis of Israel's existence.

The Israelites who came out of Egypt became God's people through the covenant on Mount Sinai, and the essence of this covenant was to serve Yahweh God. The covenant made on Mount Sinai is a rule of voluntary response, showing gratitude for God's salvation and grace.¹³⁴

¹³³ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 77.

¹³⁴ Mark F. Rooker, *Leviticus*, vol. 3A, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000), 66.

In the Sinai Covenant, the Israelites can become God's possession by serving God rightly, and the realization of this promise is embodied in a kingdom of priests and a holy people: "You will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exod 19:6a). The ultimate purpose of the Exodus is the signing of the covenant in Sinai, which forms the basis of the lives of the Israelites.

In general, the tabernacle refers to a place created by Moses after receiving the covenant of God on Mount Sinai. This tabernacle is where God dwells with His people, meets them, and forgives their sins.¹³⁵ In particular, in the most holy place was the ark of the covenant as a symbol of God's reign over Israel, representing His universal reign over the entire world. The tabernacle was built to become a community under His direct rule. Moreover, it was a place not only for God's presence but also for the Israelites to come to God. They experienced His presence in the tabernacle. The tabernacle, like the Garden of Eden, is both a microcosm of the temple on earth and a macrocosm of the temple in heaven.¹³⁶

The tabernacle was to be built according to the plan that God presented to Moses on Mount Sinai. Sailhamer notes, "It suggests that the tabernacle was intended as a model or facsimile of God's heavenly abode. It thus was a kind of incarnation of God's presence with humankind."¹³⁷ Since the tabernacle contains the temple elements, God's will and plan to restore the Garden of Eden are revealed through the tabernacle, which shows that the structure of this

¹³⁵ Carey C. Newman, "Glory, Glorify," in *The New Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, vol. 2, ed. Katharine Doob Sakenfeld (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006–2009), 577.

¹³⁶ W. Ross Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known: The Missionary Heart of the Book of Exodus*, vol. 28, *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, ed. D. A. Carson (England; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2012), 150.

¹³⁷ John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1992), 299.

world is under God's rule.¹³⁸ Located in the center of the Israeli camp after the Exodus, the tabernacle specifically demonstrates God's reign and protection.

Several parallel relations exist between the Garden of Eden and the tabernacle. First, there are linguistic and thematic parallels.¹³⁹ In Genesis 1–2, God created the place where He would dwell. Likewise, in Exodus 35–40, those moved by the Spirit of God made a place for Him. Second, God's creation work and the construction of the tabernacle have a structure of command and fulfillment.¹⁴⁰ According to the creation account in Genesis 1, when God commanded each day, His orders were fulfilled immediately. In Exodus, God's commands and their corresponding achievements are recorded concerning the construction of the tabernacle. Lastly, just as God ended His creation work by seeing and blessing everything He had made, so Moses blessed the Israelites by confirming and evaluating what He had accomplished.

The actions and principles shown in God's creation are consistent with what He revealed when creating the tabernacle. The tabernacle is the place of God's covenant and the symbol of redemptive history, where God, who rules the whole world, chose and met the Israelites. Their relationship with God, which had been interrupted by Adam's sin, was partially restored through the tabernacle.¹⁴¹

After the Philistines took the ark of the covenant, the Israelites waited for its return. It returned to the territory of Israel, as it proved to be powerful enough to humiliate the Philistine

¹³⁸ Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known*, 135.

¹³⁹ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 75.

¹⁴⁰ Carl Friedrich Keil and Franz Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament*, reprint ed., vol. 1, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996), 543.

¹⁴¹ Blackburn, *The God Who Makes Himself Known*, 204.

god.¹⁴² It sat in Israel for a long time before being moved to Jerusalem. In this historical context, David restored the tabernacle by bringing the ark of the Lord to the City of David in Jerusalem.¹⁴³ Psalm 132, which covers the return of the ark of the covenant, integrates concepts such as the ark of the covenant, indwelling, the throne, and the temple. With the Ark of God, Israel regained a central sanctuary and a unique place of His reign.

David clearly identified his role in the lives of the Israelites through Samuel and Nathan. He recognized the shabby tent with the ark of the covenant in contrast to his splendid palace and tried to build the temple as a symbol that would permanently ensure God's glory. David had the desire to build God's temple. Instead of accepting his proposal, God promised that one of David's descendants would build a house for God. A parallel exists between the scene of God making a covenant with David on the one hand and the covenant of God and Moses on Mount Sinai and the subsequent tabernacle construction by Moses on the other.

Solomon's Temple

David built the first altar in Jerusalem for Yahweh. He also prepared for the temple construction, but this critical task was handed over to Solomon. Solomon built the temple for seven years in the name of God, which parallels the fact that it took seven days for God to create the world. A mobile sanctuary called the tabernacle is replaced with the temple during the kingdom of Israel. In the days of Solomon, the construction of the temple resulted in sacrificial rituals reaching their climax.

¹⁴² Joyce G. Baldwin, *1 and 2 Samuel: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 8, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 219.

¹⁴³ Eugene H. Merrill, "2 Samuel," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, vol. 1, eds. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 464.

Detailed reports of the construction process and the dedication of the temple reveal the glory of the house of God. 1 Kings 6 contains a detailed description of the temple: “On the walls all around the temple, in both the inner and outer rooms, he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers” (1 Kgs 6:29). Verse 32 contains further descriptions: “And on the two olive-wood doors he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers, and overlaid the cherubim and palm trees with hammered gold” (1 Kgs 6:32). This image of the temple reveals a close relationship between the Garden of Eden and the tabernacle. Although the temple differs from the tabernacle in its specific size and arrangement, both are built to symbolize God’s presence and rule among His people.

The tabernacle and the temple have an organic relationship, which indicates that the redemptive meanings of the tabernacle were transferred to the temple.¹⁴⁴ The temple, like the tabernacle, reveals the restoration of Eden. Solomon’s temple shows God’s revelation and His reign in history: “Yours, O LORD, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the majesty and the splendor, for everything in heaven and earth is yours. Yours, O LORD, is the kingdom; you are exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all” (2 Chr 29:11–12). Solomon’s prayer for the dedication of the temple focuses on the relationship between Israel and Yahweh, focusing on the fact that He fulfills His covenants for His people (see 2 Chr 6).

Fixing the place of worship in the temple indicates a social change in which the Israelites who wandered after the Exodus settled into an agricultural culture. God’s presence in the temple demonstrates that His presence continues for the Israelites and assures them of the future of

¹⁴⁴ J. A. Thompson, *1, 2 Chronicles*, vol. 9, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 87.

Israel. The temple is where God comes to meet His people. Beale explains the connection between Solomon's temple and the Garden of Eden under the theme of the temple.¹⁴⁵ The ark of the covenant, which was given as a symbol of God's presence in Moses's wilderness life, was located in the temple in Jerusalem. By placing the ark of the covenant inside the temple, Jerusalem became the center of God's reign. The temple is thus the central place of Israel's identity as God's people; it reveals the presence of God in Israel.¹⁴⁶ The temple became a visible and tangible sign of the relationship between the Israelites and God.

Solomon's temple, called the temple of the Lord, was an expression of faith that God lived in the temple on earth. At that time, the Israelites believed that Yahweh's ultimate dwelling place was in heaven, but His name was on earth. The temple was the dwelling place of God's name and became a holy sanctuary. Solomon, in his prayer, demonstrates an intimate knowledge of God's covenant: "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way" (1 Kgs 8:23). The temple in Jerusalem was the center of the world for the Israelites and became a fountain of life that enriched the whole world.

The tabernacle and temple played a central role in the history of Israel as symbols of God's presence. Beale maintains, "The Old Testament tabernacle and temples were symbolic microcosms of the whole creation."¹⁴⁷ The tabernacle was the principal symbol of God's

¹⁴⁵ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 72.

¹⁴⁶ Donald A. Hagner, "Judaism," in *The New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed., eds. D. R. W. Wood et al., (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 622.

¹⁴⁷ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 26.

presence, revelation, fellowship, and holiness, from the Exodus to the Canaan settlement.¹⁴⁸ The temple was also a channel of communication with God in the history of Israel.¹⁴⁹ The Israelites, who regarded the temple as the most holy place in the world, could imagine the reality of heaven. Therefore, the tabernacle and temple represent the holy and glorious reign of God in Israel.

Ezekiel's Temple Vision

Ezekiel provided a vision for the eschatological temple and the city of Jerusalem through three elements: covenant, people, and land.¹⁵⁰ His vision for the new temple was a foundation for hope and perseverance. The temple that Ezekiel saw depicts the glorious kingdom of God that He will rule as King at the end. In this context, it is theologically important to explore the meaning of the temple in the history of Israel in the Babylonian captivity.

The captive community in Babylon faced the question of how to experience God's presence and glory. At this time, Ezekiel saw the vision of God's throne, which comprises three points. First, the glory of God describes His transcendence.¹⁵¹ He is exalted above the heavens and all other spiritual beings. Second, Ezekiel's vision describes God's universal sovereignty.¹⁵² The image of the throne symbolizes power and authority. God's throne is where He rules history

¹⁴⁸ Douglas K. Stuart, *Exodus*, vol. 2, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 565–6.

¹⁴⁹ Robert Webber, *The Biblical Foundations of Christian Worship*, 1st ed., vol. 1, The Complete Library of Christian Worship (Nashville, TN: Star Song Pub. Group, 1993), 129.

¹⁵⁰ Daniel Isaac Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 746.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 107.

by exercising kingship over the kings of the earth. Lastly, Ezekiel's vision reveals that God is with the Israelites.¹⁵³ God came to a place where it seemed He did not exist. Many Israelites thought that God was defeated, humiliated, and far away; however, He came to Babylon with all His kingdom, power, and glory.

Ezekiel saw more visions than other prophets, and through them, he declared the Word of God. Chapters 1–3 describe the vision and calling of God, and chapters 8–11 address idolatry in Jerusalem and the departure of God's presence. Ezekiel 37:1–14 addresses the valley of dry bones, and chapters 40–48 demonstrate the blueprint of the new temple and the new kingdom within the old Promised Land. This research focuses on the glory of God and the following three visions: Ezekiel's first vision (chapter 1), the vision of judgment upon the temple of Jerusalem and the departure of God's glory (chapters 8–11), and the vision of the new temple (chapters 40–48).

Ezekiel 1 serves as an introduction to the entire book of Ezekiel. The text has the dual aim of judgment predicting the destruction of Jerusalem and God's call to Ezekiel. Chapter 1 demonstrates that the destruction of Jerusalem is not because of God's incompetence but because of people's idolatry and injustice. The visions of God occupy an important place in the text in that they contain all the concepts that play an essential role in Ezekiel's message.¹⁵⁴

Ezekiel sees a detailed description of God's throne. Daniel Isaac Block adds, "This vision not only serves as a means for calling Ezekiel to the prophetic ministry; it also provides an orientation to his message."¹⁵⁵ God prepares Ezekiel's ministry by making him see the visions of

¹⁵³ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, 107.

¹⁵⁴ Iain M. Duguid, *Ezekiel*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1999), 47.

¹⁵⁵ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, 109.

God's glory and dignity before he is called to serve God. However, Ezekiel has difficulty in accurately expressing the throne of God in language. He uses expressions such as "looked like" (Ezek 1:5) and "was like" (Ezek 1:13) to describe it. The ultimate reason why Ezekiel describes this image indirectly, rather than directly, is that the glorious vision of God's throne was extraordinary; it had not been encountered in the ordinary realm and radiated a light that was difficult to describe.

Four living creatures appear in Ezekiel, and each of them has four faces, four wings, and four wheels that can run in any direction. This shape may seem bizarre, but the basic motif is the ark of the covenant in the Jerusalem temple, symbolizing the presence of God. God's throne with four wheels signifies mobility, indicating that God, who came to Jerusalem, now comes to the river of Babylon. Ezekiel 1 focuses on the glory of God's sovereignty. The vision of God's glory begins with a storm (v. 4) and ends with a throne (v. 26). The two are a combination of the two traditions of theophany in the worship of God. While the throne image speaks of static power and authority, the image of the storm turns it into dynamic movement and freedom.

The second vision is closely related to the first vision in terms of God's presence and the moving throne. The throne of God's glory leaving Jerusalem was the same throne that Ezekiel saw near the Kebar River. Ezekiel 8–11 consists of approximately four visions; the detestable sins in Jerusalem (8:1–18); the judgment on sins (9:1–11); the departure of God's glory (10:1–22); and the judgment against evil leaders (11:1–25). These four parts form one long paragraph from chapter 8, the beginning of God's vision, to chapter 11, the last part of the vision.

Ezekiel 8:1–18 shows four idolatry scenes in the Jerusalem temple. God took Ezekiel to Jerusalem in visions where he saw the glory of God in the temple. God showed the prophet Ezekiel the idols in the gate of the altar and the temple. The elders worshipped idols in the house

of God because they thought that God had left them at the time of the disaster and could not care for them.

In chapter 9, God proclaims judgment against idolaters. God withdraws His glory from the cherubim and moves it to the threshold of the temple; this marks His first move to leave the temple.¹⁵⁶ The glory of God departs the temple because the Israelites are corrupted with sin and place various idols in the temple. Chapter 9 focuses on the judgment of the wicked and emphasizes that God is righteous. The judgment scene continues in chapter 10. This chapter has many parallels with the vision found in chapter 1 and describes God leaving the temple.¹⁵⁷ The vision of the departure of God's glory from the temple, which begins from chapter 8, ends in chapter 11.

Ezekiel 8–11 represents the fundamental problem of why God's glory left the temple in Jerusalem and why the enemy had to trample upon the temple. God could not be in the temple in Jerusalem because the Israelites abandoned Him and worshipped idols. God chose to place His name in the temple, and the Israelites ought to have worshipped Him there. However, the kings after Solomon repeatedly failed to sanctify the temple and even promoted idolatry in many high places and within the temple itself. As such, Ezekiel's vision is the message of judgment following this history of abominations.

Israel's sin signifies the defilement of the temple and ultimately threatens God's holiness. The people of Judah, who had defiled the earth by injustice, violence, and uncleanness, had no choice but to be judged. Ezekiel proclaimed that the temple would be destroyed, as God had left

¹⁵⁶ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, 306.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 324.

the temple because of their wickedness.¹⁵⁸ The theological meaning of Ezekiel's vision is the message of judgment against abominable worship that trampled on God's holiness.

The physical glory that filled the tabernacle and Solomon's temple did not inhabit Zerubbabel's temple. Ezekiel, who saw the detestable sins in the temple in chapters 8–11, concludes this section by witnessing God's glory leaving the temple and staying on the mountain east of the city. The last part of Ezekiel, chapters 40–48, records the return of God's glory to the new temple. Ezekiel contains the process of restoration: the return of the people, the cleansing of the land, and the dwelling of God in the temple. Ezekiel must have been moved to see the glory of God return to the temple. When God entered the temple, His glory filled it. This event is reminiscent of the glory of God after the completion of the tabernacle in the wilderness and Solomon's temple. Therefore, the focus of Ezekiel 40–48 is on the restoration of the disconnected relationship between God and the people of Jerusalem in their homeland.¹⁵⁹

Ezekiel's prophecies show the restoration of salvation through the Messiah, the holiness of the kingdom of God, and the distinct image of the saved people. In Ezekiel 47, Ezekiel is at the entrance to the temple, and he sees water flowing from the threshold. The source of this water is inside the temple, and the water flowing from the temple rises to the ankles, knees, and waist and soon becomes a river that cannot be crossed. Iain M. Duguid explains the growth of this river:

The miraculous growth of this river from small beginnings is not the only lesson to be observed, however. This river is also a transforming force wherever it flows. It brings fertility to the ground surrounding it, indicated by the presence of a great many trees on both sides of the river (47:7). After flowing eastward and then south through the Arabah, which here seems to indicate simply the region of the Jordan Valley, the river transforms

¹⁵⁸ Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 1–19*, vol. 28, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1994), 167.

¹⁵⁹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, 505.

the Dead Sea, healing its waters—that is, turning its salty water, which is undrinkable and hostile to life, into drinkable, life-supporting water (47:8).¹⁶⁰

The water brings life back to every place it touches and plays life-giving and healing roles. This water from the temple is also reminiscent of the image of the Garden of Eden.¹⁶¹ This portrayal of the river of life suggests a renewed creation. Therefore, the water flowing from this temple represents that life is revived through the relationship with God.

According to the decree of Cyrus, the Israelites returned from Babylon to Jerusalem, and they built the second temple. The temple construction was the result of God’s faithfulness to restore the covenantal relationship with His people.¹⁶² The second temple built by Zerubbabel was different from the glorious temple in Ezekiel. Zerubbabel’s temple does not refer to Ezekiel’s complete temple because the second temple does not match the exact design revealed to Ezekiel. Ezekiel’s temple vision not only provides guidance on how to rebuild the temple, but also refers to a restored relationship between God and obedient people beyond the physical temple. Ezekiel’s vision reflects the restoration of God’s holiness and the humble response of His people.

Ezekiel describes the temple-centered kingdom that Israel will achieve in the future. Randall Price argues, “The ancient promises to the Levitical priesthood cannot have a literal fulfillment unless Ezekiel’s prophecy is eschatological.”¹⁶³ Ezekiel’s temple vision depicts the

¹⁶⁰ Duguid, *Ezekiel*, 531.

¹⁶¹ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, 696.

¹⁶² Leslie C. Allen, *Ezekiel 20–48*, vol. 29, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1990), 287.

¹⁶³ Randall Price, *The Coming Last Days Temple* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1999), 524.

glorious kingdom of God to be completed in the end times.¹⁶⁴ The temple in the Old Testament is a holy symbol of God's presence, covenant, and rule. The new temple inevitably leads to the restoration of the land as a new creation, meaning the restoration of the Garden of Eden and God's creation order.

God's Kingdom and the Temple Places

The Old and New Testaments consistently emphasize that the temple in the true sense indicates God's dwelling place from which He rules His kingdom. In his new temple vision, Ezekiel saw the restoration of the new covenant people ruled by God, the completion of the millennial temple. Paul also says in 2 Corinthians, "I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people" (2 Cor 6:16b). There is continuity between the Old and New Testaments in that the New Testament also sees the community of God's covenant people as the temple.¹⁶⁵ The concept of the temple in Christianity transcends the idea of the temple as a building and implies a cosmic and eschatological character that reveals the essence of the kingdom of God.

The Israelites' miserable experiences were the momentum for the development of apocalyptic literature by moving their expectations into an indeterminate future. The disillusionment they felt after their return from exile led to their complete denial of the present situation. The Israelites believed that the world could no longer be renewed; therefore, it must

¹⁶⁴ Bruce Vawter and Leslie J. Hoppe, *A New Heart: A Commentary on the Book of Ezekiel*, International Theological Commentary (Grand Rapids; Edinburgh: Eerdmans; Handsel Press, 1991), 185.

¹⁶⁵ Eckhard J. Schnabel, *Paul the Missionary: Realities, Strategies and Methods* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 199.

end completely, and a whole new world must be created. They abandoned their hope for the temple built by humans and waited eagerly for the heavenly temple that God would create.

In the Second Temple period, the temple became the place for the work of salvation to be completed. The view of the temple found in the Qumran documents reveals the expectation that a new and better temple will be built.¹⁶⁶ The Jews believed that the prophecy of the ideal temple of Zion must be fulfilled in an uncertain future. Furthermore, linking past salvation events with the temple demonstrates that the temple was at the center of the history of redemption from the beginning. In particular, if one applies the temple concept to Adam, the temple was the place of creation in the world and the Garden of Eden. Thus, the temple is where the new heavens and the new earth will be created.

The prophet Haggai declares the glory of God's presence in the millennial temple through a description of its gold and precious treasures: "I will shake all nations, and what is desired by all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory," says the LORD Almighty. "The silver is mine and the gold is mine," declares the LORD Almighty" (Hag 2:7–8). Similarly, Revelation says, "The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald" (Rev 21:18–19). John's description of the New Jerusalem highlights gold and precious gems that show God's glorious presence among His people.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Randall Price, *The Temple and Bible Prophecy: A Definitive Look at Its Past, Present and Future* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 2005), 212.

¹⁶⁷ Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 383.

The Gospels describe Jesus Christ as the last Adam and the temple of the new creation. Furthermore, Beale states, “What would appear to be the building of the new spiritual temple at Pentecost included symbolic representatives of all the nations because this temple will not fail to fulfil the intention of Eden’s and Israel’s temples to expand its borders until the entire earth comes under its roof.”¹⁶⁸ The presence of the Holy Spirit in the Pentecost event is the manifestation of the heavenly temple, and the event demonstrates the textual evidence of Acts explaining Jesus Christ as the new temple.

John’s Christology can be described as temple Christology.¹⁶⁹ The Gospel of John is a story of how God became human and how the Creator became part of His creation. The God who created the whole universe made the temple among the nation of Israel by faithful acts of grace. God built the tabernacle in the wilderness and later the temple in Jerusalem. The Babylonian destruction of the temple in 587 BC was the worst disaster for Israel. However, God promised to return and rebuild the temple, and John maintains that this promise is initiated by the first coming of Jesus.

Ezekiel’s temple vision of restoration is related to Revelation 21, which describes a new heaven and a new earth. Revelation 4–5, which describes the vision of the heavenly temple, is closely related to Ezekiel 1 and 10, which mentions the throne of God, the four living creatures, and the glory of God.¹⁷⁰ Additionally, Revelation 4–5 is closely linked to the description of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21–22 in that chapters 4–5 cover the ultimate end through the

¹⁶⁸ Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, 208.

¹⁶⁹ Regev, *The Temple in Early Christianity*, 210.

¹⁷⁰ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 123.

throne of heaven. The connection between Ezekiel and Revelation demonstrate that the ideas of Ezekiel play a crucial role in the formation of the theology of Revelation.

John emphasizes the heavenly temple in Revelation and introduces a unique approach to the temple in the apocalyptic genre. Regev states, “In the New Jerusalem there will be no Temple but that God and the Lamb will be the Temple.”¹⁷¹ Unlike the Jerusalem temples on earth, Jesus Christ is the temple in the New Jerusalem. The book of Revelation represents the kingdom of God by examining the mystery of the heavenly temple and its influence on the earthly world.

Conclusion

This dissertation attempts to expand the realm of God’s reign to His creation as well as the history of Israel. God created the world according to the structure of the temple for the purpose of achieving the kingdom of God through His creation. The essence of God’s reign in relation to creation is that God intervenes freely and graciously in His created universe. God created heaven and earth and continues to intervene in His created world, ruling it with faithfulness, orderliness, and wisdom. Therefore, all the beings of heaven and earth depend on God, and He holds all things in orderly rule and reigns as King over all creation.

The kingdom of God is the realm where He reigns as King. Ladd understands God’s kingdom as a dualistic concept of “not yet” and “completion” and states that tension exists between the two.¹⁷² In Mark 13, the disciples are warned to keep watch because of the imminence and unexpectedness of the end time.¹⁷³ Believers today must also be constantly alert

¹⁷¹ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 226.

¹⁷² Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 65.

¹⁷³ Dowd, *Reading Mark*, 137.

because they live under tension between the coming kingdom of God and the present evil world. The present state of the world does not diminish the value of Jesus's proclamation regarding the future. The kingdom of God is already here on earth, but it moves toward completion in the future.

As this study examines how Israel's temple reveals God's rule and will in history, it addresses the temple program according to the flow of history and how it influenced the New Testament through its development. The purpose of the first creation will be fully restored through the restoration of Eden in the New Jerusalem.¹⁷⁴ In the New Jerusalem, God Himself is with His people and is the source of the water of life. A new heaven and a new earth described in the book of Revelation are free from all struggle, suffering, and the meaninglessness of life: "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away" (Rev 21:4). The New Jerusalem represents the ultimate fulfillment of God's unconditional covenants, and His reign becomes perfect there.

God made Israel the people of God through His unconditional covenants. God chose Israel as the kingdom of priests to save the Gentiles by making them participate in God's kingdom. The New Testament church became God's people through the covenant of faith in Jesus Christ and was called to be a missionary community to save all nations. This idea helped early Christians understand God's sovereignty and salvation.

The temple-centered eschatology complements the interpretation of the Bible based on the history of redemption, aiding in understanding the will of God in the Bible. God commanded the first Adam and humanity to govern the earth on His behalf, but the mission of this kingdom

¹⁷⁴ Oren R. Martin, *Bound for the Promised Land: The Land Promise in God's Redemptive Plan*, vol. 34, *New Studies in Biblical Theology*, ed. D. A. Carson (England; Downers Grove: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2015), 112.

was not fulfilled. The purpose of God's salvation for humans is to restore the temple of their bodies such that the Holy Spirit may dwell in them. As a great high priest, Jesus makes people the temple and extends the temple's territory to the end of the earth. The Messiah, the last Adam, will rule over the earth in the last days and fulfill the first Adam's failed mission. Jesus will restore the physical and spiritual aspects of the first Adam's kingdom in the millennial kingdom.

The Bible describes God's reign in history encompassing the past, present, and future. A comprehensive study of how God rules over the world portrays the nature of the kingdom of God. Even before the creation of the world, God had prepared the actions He would take in His kingdom to redeem humans from their sins. God's kingdom represents His rule, and He reigns through His unconditional covenants from various holy locations on earth as well as from heaven. God's rule establishes the correlation between those covenants and the kingdom. Moreover, God's kingdom reinforces His faithfulness to His covenants, and His unconditional covenants are the foundation of His kingdom. Therefore, this research reveals more deeply the connection between the kingdom of God and His unconditional covenants.

CHAPTER THREE: ABRAHAMIC COVENANT

Introduction

The Abrahamic Covenant is perhaps the most relevant covenant to today's Israel because it contains all aspects of the other three major covenants. Fruchtenbaum states, "Reducing the Abrahamic Covenant to its very basics, it contains three aspects: the land, the seed, and the blessing. The land aspect is developed in the Palestinian Covenant; the seed aspect is covered in the Davidic Covenant; and the blessing aspect is presented in the New Covenant."¹⁷⁵

Replacement theologians claim that since Jesus fulfilled all the covenants, including the Abrahamic Covenant, they cannot be applied to Israel. According to them, God's covenants are accomplished in the church, and Israel has no future.¹⁷⁶ Contrary to this idea, J. B. Hixson and Mark Fontecchio state, "The priority of the Abrahamic Covenant can be witnessed repeatedly in the New Testament."¹⁷⁷ The Abrahamic Covenant is still valid and has not been replaced by the New Testament.¹⁷⁸

In the New Testament, the name "Abraham" is mentioned approximately eighty-two times. The name appears many times because the New Testament message, both directly and indirectly, contains elements of the promises related to the Abrahamic Covenant. The significance of this covenant is revealed in the first book of the New Testament, Matthew: "This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1). By

¹⁷⁵ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 552.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 177–8.

¹⁷⁷ J. B. Hixson and Mark Fontecchio, *What Lies Ahead: A Biblical Overview of the End Times* (Brenham, TX: Lucid Books, 2013), 96.

¹⁷⁸ Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 257.

presenting the genealogy of Jesus, this verse demonstrates that Jesus is a descendant of Abraham and David.

Proving that Jesus is a descendant of Abraham is vital because of God's covenant with Abraham. The fact that Jesus is Abraham's descendant reveals the fulfillment of God's prophecy and the faithfulness of His covenant. Jesus the Messiah came to fulfill the Old Testament promise as a Savior, to save His people from sin, which demonstrates that the Abrahamic Covenant is directly related to the Messiah (see Gal 3:16).

In the New Testament, Israel always refers to ethnic Jews, and the Bible does not apply the word "Israel" to the Gentiles. It is not God's plan that the Gentiles become Israel, as God wants Israel to be a gateway to blessing the Gentiles. Alister E. McGrath states, "The true restoration of Israel involves the invitation of those outside Israel to share in its blessings. The mission to the Gentiles can thus be understood as an invitation to join the new and restored covenant community."¹⁷⁹ God's call and purpose are extended not only to the Jews but also to the Gentiles. The Gentiles can become the people of God if they believe in God (see 2 Pet 2:10).

Several verses in the New Testament distinguish between Israel and the Gentiles: "This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus" (Eph 3:6). Romans also states, "If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you" (Rom 11:17–18). In Ephesians 3:6, three points prove that the Gentiles are different from

¹⁷⁹ Alister E. McGrath, "Reality, Symbol & History," in *Jesus & the Restoration of Israel: A Critical Assessment of N.T. Wright's Jesus and the Victory of God*, ed. Carey C. Newman (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 171–2.

the Jews. First, the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel. Second, they are members of one body. Lastly, the Gentiles share in the promise of Jesus. They do not become the Jews, and there is a clear distinction between the two.

The olive root symbolizes the Jews, and a wild olive shoot signifies the Gentiles. Paul clearly states that the Gentiles do not boast over those branches because the root, Israel, supports the branches. Paul further states in Romans 11, “After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!” (Rom 11:24). Although some scholars argue that God abandoned Israel, the Bible clearly demonstrates the uniqueness and significance of Israel in God’s plan: “But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their fullness bring!” (Rom 11:12). God still has a plan for Israel and will fulfill His covenant promises to Israel.

This chapter will first address the Abrahamic Covenant in Old Testament texts. It will then explore the Abrahamic Covenant in both Pauline and non-Pauline New Testament texts. This study will explain how the covenant God made with Abraham extends out to the world through Jesus and blessings flow to the Gentiles. This research will reveal an explicit promise of Israel’s restoration and the Abrahamic Covenant in the New Testament.

The Abrahamic Covenant in Old Testament Texts

The Israelites distrusted and killed the Savior Jesus; therefore, it seemed that God’s promise and covenant had been handed over to the Gentiles. However, the people of Israel have not been permanently rejected because God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12 is unchanged: “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you

will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Gen 12:2–3). God made a promise to Abraham, and Abraham obeyed His call. Through Genesis 12, God’s covenant becomes concrete and clear. When Abraham reached the land of Canaan, God appeared to him again and said to him, “To your offspring I will give this land” (Gen 12:7). Through this verse, God confirmed once again the promise of both the land and descendants.

After Abraham’s nephew, Lot, left, God appeared to Abraham and showed him the land, reminding him of God’s promise again: “I will make your offspring like the dust of the earth, so that if anyone could count the dust, then your offspring could be counted. Go, walk through the length and breadth of the land, for I am giving it to you” (Gen 13:16–17). In verse 16, God promises that Abraham’s descendants will multiply greatly. Since Abraham had no children yet, he continued to have doubts about God’s promise. However, God revealed His faithfulness by fulfilling His covenant by giving Abraham a son when he was one hundred years old.

Abraham needed a son to fulfill the Abrahamic Covenant. However, when the son, whom he had wished for all his life, had grown to some extent, God commanded that this son, the seed of promise, be offered as a sacrifice on Mount Moriah. Although Abraham did not understand God’s will at first, when Abraham obeyed God, he discovered God’s wonderful plan: “I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me” (Gen 22:17–18). Through this process, God confirmed His covenant to be fulfilled through Abraham. Abraham’s thorough obedience was the pinnacle of his journey of faith. Afterward, the promise

to Abraham became more concrete and clearer than before, revealing how faithful God was to His covenant.

The fact that Jesus is the descendant of Abraham clarifies that the Messiah came to the world as God had promised. Jesus came to fulfill the promises of the Old Testament. The relationship between the kingdom of God and Jesus Christ originates from the Old Testament. In Genesis 22, the coming Redeemer is referred to as Abraham's offspring: "And through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me" (Gen 22:18). The prophecy about the Messiah in Genesis 22:18 concerns the covenant God made with Abraham, which promises that Abraham's descendants will receive blessings through the seed of Abraham. The Old Testament prophets foretold the repentance of the Israelites and the restoration of Jerusalem. They represent the promise of God that the entire world will be blessed with the covenant of Abraham's descendants.

Isaac, Abraham's son, married Rebekah at the age of forty and, trusting the covenant, prayed until sixty to have Esau and Jacob. God chose Jacob over Esau in Rebekah's womb to become the heir to the Abrahamic Covenant: "Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples from within you will be separated; one people will be stronger than the other, and the older will serve the younger" (Gen 25:23). God promises to Isaac that He will faithfully fulfill His covenant with Abraham.

In Gerar, God confirms to Isaac His covenant with Abraham: "Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham" (Gen 26:3). Isaac inherits the Abrahamic Covenant, including the promise of land, descendants, and blessings: "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and

through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed” (Gen 26:4). Isaac is afraid of losing his wife, Rebekah, and tells the people of Gerar that Rebekah is his sister (see Gen 26:7). Despite this mistake, Isaac receives God’s blessings, which reveals the unconditional fulfillment of His covenant. After Isaac moves from the valley of Gerar to Beersheba, he builds an altar there and calls on the name of the Lord, remembering God’s faithfulness and covenant.

Jacob tricks his brother Esau and leaves for his uncle Laban’s house in Haran. Before departing for Haran, Isaac calls for Jacob to bless him and his seed with the covenant with Abraham: “May God Almighty bless you and make you fruitful and increase your numbers until you become a community of peoples” (Gen 28:3). When Jacob comes to a place called Luz, he sees a vision while sleeping on a stone pillow at night. Jacob dreams of a stairway connecting earth to heaven at Bethel where God reiterates His covenant with Abraham to Jacob (see Gen 28:13–14). Jacob, who experiences God’s presence, wakes up early in the morning and anoints the stone for God’s faithfulness.

God chose Abraham with whom to make a covenant and commanded him to leave his country, relatives, and father’s household. Receiving this command, Abraham abandoned all amusements and his comfortable environment for the promise and the glory of the future. Through the obedience of Abraham, God made a covenant, promising Abraham a posterity, the land, and blessings. However, this promise should not be considered an ultimate goal in itself; it must be understood as an integrated history reaching its fulfillment upon the second coming of Jesus.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Louis T. Talbot, *God’s Plan for the Ages: A Comprehensive View of God’s Great Plan from Eternity to Eternity* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1946), 181.

Genesis 49:10 refers explicitly to this Redeemer coming from the tribe of Judah. Jesus declared that the age of the law and prophets had ended with John the Baptist, which means that a new era had begun and that the reign of God had ensued in this world in a new way. The covenant and kingdom of God refer to a basic biblical view of the relationship between the Creator and the created.¹⁸¹ Although the two can be distinguished from each other for theological analysis, they should be regarded as integral.¹⁸²

The Abrahamic Covenant in Pauline New Testament Texts

Overview

The church age exists without invalidating Israel's future covenant promises. Fruchtenbaum adds, "Dispensationalists do not believe that the Church existed in the Old Testament, but its existence is unique to this age."¹⁸³ The fact that the Jews and the Gentiles would form one body in the church was a mystery unknown to the Old Testament prophets. The truths about the body of Christ, the church, were first known to the apostle Paul.

Of the Pauline Epistles, the book of Romans has historically been a source of inexhaustible inspiration that has impressed numerous Christians and theologians with profound theological doctrines and ethical teachings. It is one of the most influential books in the development of Christianity. Origen, John Chrysostom, Augustine, and Thomas Aquinas set

¹⁸¹ Craig G. Bartholomew, *Contours of the Kuyperian Tradition: A Systematic Introduction* (Westmont, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2017), 72.

¹⁸² Gordon J. Spykman, *Reformational Theology: A New Paradigm for Doing Dogmatics* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 257.

¹⁸³ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 444.

their theological direction through their encounter with Romans.¹⁸⁴ Furthermore, Martin Luther states, “It is worthy not only that every Christian should know it word for word, by heart, but also that he should occupy himself with it every day, as the daily bread of the soul.”¹⁸⁵ The views of these scholars indicate that Romans has been a crucial part of Christian history.

The book of Romans is of great interest to many theologians because it logically develops primary doctrines. Based on the context of the Roman church, Romans was written to fulfill Paul’s pastoral, missionary, and dialectical aims while preparing for his mission to Spain.¹⁸⁶ According to him, there was conflict over salvation between the Jews and Gentile Christians in the Roman church. In this regard, Paul focuses on the salvation issues of the Jews and the Gentiles in Romans 9–11. In Romans 11:25–32, the salvation of Israel is presented as a mystery. Paul’s mystery relates to the full number of Gentiles being saved and some Jews rejecting the gospel in their hardening.

In Romans 3, the Apostle Paul makes clear that all human beings are under sin and that “no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law” (Rom 3:20). In this respect, the Jews were forsaken because of their own faults, not because God is not faithful. The Israelites who did not accept the gospel were responsible for the rejection of the Jews. Paul speaks of the need for the Gentiles to pray for the salvation of Israel. Israel was rejected and abandoned to redeem the Gentiles; thus, the Gentiles should not boast against their root but

¹⁸⁴ Peter Stuhlmacher, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, trans. Scott J. Hafemann (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994), 1.

¹⁸⁵ Martin Luther, *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, 3rd ed., eds. William R. Russell and Timothy F. Lull (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012), 76.

¹⁸⁶ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 17.

should try to bring the Jews back into the covenant relationship with God through Jesus the Messiah.

The New Testament indeed testifies that promises and covenants in the Old Testament still belong to Israel in Romans 11:

I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved, as it is written: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins” (Rom 11:25–27).

The word “until” suggests that the time to remove Israel’s blindness will come. Romans 11:26 clearly says that all Israel will be saved. Vlach states, “Paul draws upon Isaiah 59:20–21 in his declaration that national Israel will be saved and participate in the New Covenant (Rom 11:26–27).”¹⁸⁷ Paul reaffirms God’s faithfulness and promises to Israel in Romans 11. By quoting this passage from Isaiah, the apostle Paul reveals the message of Israel’s restoration in relation to the Old Testament.

Abraham was called to be a source of blessing for all the nations. God will use Israel to be a blessing to the Gentiles. Vlach states,

As God blesses Israel He will also bless other nations. Romans 11:12, 15 indicates that greater blessings await Gentiles with Israel’s future fulfillment (see Rom 11:26). So the blessings via Abraham will eventually impact the entire world. But this will occur through God’s plans for Israel and Israel’s land. God does not skip over the importance of Israel.¹⁸⁸

God is the one who keeps His covenant. He will keep His promises with Israel because God is faithful to her. No one can change His covenant once it is established, and the fact that God chose Israel is irrevocable: “Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a

¹⁸⁷ Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 171.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 308–9.

descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew” (Rom 11:1–2a). The New Testament does not identify the church as Israel. God has not rejected Israel permanently, but temporarily.

In Romans 11, Paul discusses various debates about the salvation of Israel: “I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening (πώρωσις) in part until the full number of the Gentiles (τὸ πλήρωμα τῶν ἐθνῶν) has come in. And so all Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:25–26). The scope of “all Israel” regarding her salvation has multiple interpretations.

F. Mussner excludes repentance and faith in the salvation of Israel, arguing that God, the deliverer who comes from Zion, will save all Israel in a special way.¹⁸⁹ This argument is inconsistent with God’s promise to turn sin away from Jacob and strictly denies that man can be saved only through faith and repentance. Krister Stendahl shares a similar view to that of Mussner regarding the salvation of Israel. He argues that Israel will be saved without accepting Jesus as the Messiah.¹⁹⁰ Israel had many covenantal privileges as the physical offspring of Abraham: “As far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs” (Rom 11:28). Salvation was prioritized for Israel first and then the Gentiles. Moreover, the apostle Paul states in Romans 9:4–5 that the adoption as sons (υιοθεσία), the divine glory (δόξα), the covenants (διαθήκαι), the receiving of the law (νομοθεσία), the temple worship (λατρεία), the promises (ἐπαγγελίαι), and the patriarchs (πατέρες) all belong to Israel.

¹⁸⁹ Robert Hodgson Jr., “Review of Gottes Ich Und Israel: Zum Schriftgebrauch Des Paulus in Römer 9–11, by Hans Hübner,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (June 1987): 344.

¹⁹⁰ Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 454.

Salvation was first for the Jews, but many Christians in Paul's age were Gentiles; most Jews had refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah. Paul was concerned that most Jews, God's chosen people, rejected Jesus. The salvation problem of Israel became notable among New Testament scholars in connection with the Nazi Holocaust during World War II. The Jewish massacre was mainly influenced by anti-Semitism. Western theologians attempted to reflect on the ideological atmosphere in which anti-Semitism had to arise and to understand the book of Romans from a new perspective. They recognized the core issue of Romans as a relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles.

The covenant with Abraham has not yet been fulfilled in Israel, God's chosen people. God made a covenant with Abraham and promised, "I will establish my covenant as an everlasting covenant (לְבְרִית עוֹלָם) between me and you and your descendants after you for the generations to come, to be your God and the God of your descendants after you" (Gen 17:7). In Romans, Paul keeps asking whether God's promises are still valid for Israel and whether God has abandoned His people, Israel. According to Thomas R. Schreiner, "The argument is strengthened when we realize the unified argument presented in Romans 9–11. That is, Paul is concerned in all of Romans 9–11 with the matter of Israel's salvation."¹⁹¹ Romans 9–11 primarily explores Israel's salvation issue, where the apostle Paul uses the word Ἰσραὴλ (Israel) eleven times. Israel may question the validity of the covenant and the faithfulness of God's promises because it seems that there is no salvation for them. The discussions about Israel's salvation are concentrated in Romans 9–11. Paul discusses God's purpose and plan for Israel and focuses on the necessity of the Gentiles praying for Israel's salvation.

¹⁹¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology* (Westmont, IL: IVP Academic, 2006), 244.

The hopeful expectation that emanates from Romans 9–11 cannot escape the theological context of Romans that the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ gives salvation to all believers.¹⁹² For Paul, the Abrahamic Covenant is a crucial concept when explaining the gospel that spreads to the Gentiles. The faithfulness of God in the history of salvation will be evident through the Abrahamic Covenant. Therefore, the problem of Israel should be discussed as a matter of God's faithfulness.

The Structural Interpretation of Romans 9–11

In Romans, Paul consistently discusses the salvation of the Jews. In Romans 1:16, he says that the gospel was first given to the Jews. Romans 4 introduces the faith of Abraham as a model of God's righteousness and relates it to God's faithfulness. In chapter 9, Paul expresses his sorrow and anguish toward the salvation of the Jews. Eventually, he represents the purpose of ensuring the salvation of all Israel in connection with the faithfulness of God. Chapter 9–11 are centered on Paul's references to the Jews, showing that the salvation of the Jews is a significant issue for him.

Paul concisely describes the topics in each sentence and paragraph and gradually unfolds them. Through an intensive analysis of Romans 9–11, which covers the salvation issues of the Jews and the Gentiles, this research reveals God's eternal plan for Israel. The basic structure of the book of Romans can be broadly divided into chapters 1–4, 5–8, 9–11, and 12–16. Romans 9–11 is the main section and a central part of Romans. In particular, chapters 9–11 are written on the foundation of chapters 1–8 and are naturally linked to the contents of chapters 12–16. Chapters 9–11 are centered on Israel's salvation, and here God's covenantal faithfulness is an

¹⁹² James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 500.

expression of His righteousness, which is the only means of restoring Israel. Regarding the salvation of Israel, Romans 11:25–32 serves as a conclusion and relates to the many key themes of the book of Romans. Paul concludes the doctrinal section of Romans 1–11, which precedes the more applicational section of Romans 12–16.

The apostle Paul describes the doctrinal aspects of justification in chapters 1–8, and suddenly in chapters 9–11, he delivers the message of Israel’s restoration. Romans 1–8 contains a key doctrinal discussion regarding justification, but Romans 9–11 reveals that the doctrine is not limited to any one group. This section demonstrates how salvation is completed for all humankind. The validity of the gospel was rejected by the Israelites, raising questions about the faithfulness of God. Paul intentionally reveals his deep interest in the Israelites through Romans 9–11, claiming that the faithfulness of God’s promises is still valid. Chapters 1–8 focus on the doctrinal aspects, emphasizing justification by faith, not by law. This declaration culminates in a discussion of Israel’s restoration in chapters 9–11.

Arguments regarding whether Romans 9–11 is the central structure of Romans are divided into two categories. Some scholars argue that chapters 9–11 are an appendix to the book of Romans, while others view the section as the central part.¹⁹³ Charles H. Dodd is one of the leading scholars who deems Romans 9–11 an appendix.¹⁹⁴ He regards Romans 9–11 as a

¹⁹³ Brian J. Abasciano, *Paul’s Use of the Old Testament in Romans 9:1–9: An Intertextual and Theological Exegesis*, vol. 301, Library of New Testament Studies, ed. Mark Goodacre (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 34.

¹⁹⁴ Charles H. Dodd criticizes Schweitzer’s eschatology and suggests a new direction of eschatology. His apocalyptic theory is called realized eschatology. Dodd initially treats the gospel of Christianity as the issue of the present experience, claiming that the kingdom of God has already come. He indicates that eschatology is the transition from the future to the present or from the realm of expectation to the realized range of experience. See N. T. Wright, “Jesus (Person): Quest for the Historical Jesus,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, eds. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 799.

separate treatise, unrelated to chapters 1–8.¹⁹⁵ He suggests that Romans 9–11 was inserted during the editing process because it has enough logical flow as an independent entity.¹⁹⁶

In general, scholars understand that chapters 9–11 are associated with Paul’s argument that is carefully developed from chapters 1–8. Stendahl considers Romans 9–11 to be the climax of Romans and states that the section covers the coexistence of the Jews and the Gentiles in God’s secret plan of salvation.¹⁹⁷ J. Christiaan Beker indicates that neglecting Romans 9–11 and only considering chapters 1–8 to be significant can lead to a reduced understanding of Pauline theology.¹⁹⁸ Robin Scroggs suggests another possibility. Romans 1–4 and 9–11 are the texts for the Jews, and Romans 5–8 is the message for the Gentiles, so it is plausible that Romans 5–8, which focuses on the Gentiles, was inserted later.¹⁹⁹

The other view is that Romans 1–8 and 9–11 cannot be separated, and the latter must not be recognized as an appendix. Instead, Romans 9–11 is a culminating part in the context of Romans and can be considered an integral part of Pauline theology. Chapters 1–8 and 9–11 are not logically disconnected but should be seen as an inevitable process in Paul’s cogent development. Interpreting chapters 9–11 in relation to chapters 1–8 is an exploration of how justification by faith can be applied to Jews and Gentiles. Paul attempts to discover the connection between the salvation of the Gentiles and the future of Israel. In this sense, the

¹⁹⁵ Charles H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, ed. James Moffatt, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1932), 148.

¹⁹⁶ Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 148–49.

¹⁹⁷ Krister Stendahl, *Paul among Jews and Gentiles and Other Essays* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1976), 4.

¹⁹⁸ J. Christiaan Beker, *Paul the Apostle: The Triumph of God in Life and Thought* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 63.

¹⁹⁹ Richard N. Longenecker, *Introducing Romans: Critical Issues in Paul’s Most Famous Letter* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2011), 127.

restoration of Israel can naturally become the primary theme of chapters 9–11. Paul’s concern in Romans 9–11 is that God chooses Israel, but it is unclear how this choice can continue when Israel’s distrust is still rampant.

While the book of Romans is associated with various issues, it is most appropriate to view them as part of the epistle for the salvation of both Jews and Gentiles, centered on God’s righteousness. It is also convincing that Paul’s situation focuses on the salvation of the Jews and the Gentiles. He believes that God’s faithfulness will bring mercy to both groups. Paul discusses how both the Jews and the Gentiles are lost in the early chapters of Romans, so a discussion about the salvation of both groups naturally fits the later chapters. The key message in chapters 9–11 is God’s faithfulness. As Paul addresses the salvation of the Jews and the Gentiles, he clarifies that God’s people are not the Jews and the Gentiles but those who accept God’s righteousness.

Romans 11:25–36 is the structural conclusion of chapters 1–11 and is naturally linked to chapters 12–16.²⁰⁰ Regarding salvation, Paul first focuses on the Jews and then the Gentiles. God’s faithfulness and righteousness are essential because both Jews and Gentiles can be saved based on God’s righteousness (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ). Paul makes it clear that only His righteousness is an essential element of salvation.

God’s righteousness plays a decisive role in the salvation of Israel, and chapters 1–8 address His righteousness and covenantal faithfulness for all believers.²⁰¹ Paul declares God’s righteousness: “For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by

²⁰⁰ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: W.B. Eerdmans; InterVarsity Press, 1988), 429.

²⁰¹ David Arthur deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 619–21.

faith from first to last, just as it is written: ‘The righteous will live by faith’” (Rom 1:17). In chapter 8, Paul asserts that God predestined and called for the justification and glorification of the people of God and that no creature can be separated from the love of God (see Rom 8:30, 38).

Israel is in disobedience, but God will save her by being faithful and merciful. The apostle Paul, who agonized over Israel’s failure to respond to the gospel, found that the salvation of the Jews and the Gentiles would be possible only by God’s righteousness; therefore, Romans 9–11 is the center of the book of Romans concerning Israel’s salvation, and Romans 11:25–32 is of great importance as a conclusion.

The rhetorical question “Did God reject his people?” in Romans 11: 1 concerns the statement in Romans 10:21: “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.” The rhetorical question “Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery?” in Romans 11:11 subsequently asks whether Israel’s fall is permanent. Paul defends Israel by answering no to these two questions. In particular, the provisional hardening of Israel is a providential measure for “riches for the Gentiles” (11:12) in God’s plan of salvation. When the fullness of the Gentiles is reached, the stubbornness of Israel will be removed, and all Israel will be saved.

The salvation of all Israel is closely related to God’s faithfulness. On the one hand, the Jews who were under God’s mercy in the past are now under His wrath in the present because of their stubbornness. On the other hand, the Gentiles have His mercy because they obey the gospel. However, God’s promises to Israel have not been nullified, and His faithfulness to Israel is still valid. Despite Israel’s disobedience, God does not forsake her because He is a God of His word.

Paul struggles between theological principles and historical reality, as Israel rejects the gospel, while the Gentiles who were not originally God's people, accept it. The discussions in chapters 9–11 concern issues that naturally arise with the theological theories developed in chapters 1–8. Paul strives to grasp the concepts of both God's covenantal faithfulness to Israel and God's sovereign freedom to call even the Gentiles His people. It is apparent that God has not yet abandoned Israel: He is still faithful to the promises made to her.

The feature of the rhetorical structure in chapters 9–11 begins with the central theme in Romans 9:6a: "It is not as though the Word of God had failed" (Οὐχ οἶον δὲ ὅτι ἐκπέπτωκεν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ). Romans 11:25–32 is the concluding part of the statement that all Israel will be saved (καὶ οὕτως πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται). In Romans 11:25, Israel (Ἰσραὴλ) is closely related to the same word "Israel" in Romans 9:6. Paul has the conviction that the salvation of all Israel, presented as a mystery, will be completed by the faithfulness of God.

The Jews became enemies of God; however, some were loved by God for their ancestors. The many graces God granted Israel and God's calling in Abraham cannot be withdrawn. Israel is now disobedient but will eventually obey God and receive His mercy. In Romans 11:28, there is a contrast between "as far as the gospel is concerned (κατὰ μὲν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον)," and "as far as election is concerned (κατὰ δὲ τὴν ἐκλογήν)." The Greek word ἐλεέω (have mercy on) is used four times in verses 30–32 in various forms. God's mercy is directly related to Israel's salvation in terms of grace.

The apostle Paul speaks of the hope of the restoration of Israel in various ways, and he wants to convey the mystery of her salvation. The use of the conjunction "until" clarifies that when the full number of Gentiles comes in, the hardening of Israel will be removed (see Rom 11:25). Romans 1:1–11:24 can be interpreted as a prerequisite for the faithfulness of God and the

salvation of all Israel, and Romans 11:25–32 shows that the salvation of all Israel is based on God’s faithfulness.

The Specific Scope of All Israel

To discuss the salvation of all Israel in detail, it is necessary to clarify who all Israel entails because all Israel (παῖς Ἰσραὴλ) appears in Romans 9–11 as a central theme in connection with Israel’s salvation issue. The Greek word Ἰσραὴλ appears eleven times in Romans—all in Romans 9–11—referring to patriarchs, the Israelites, and a nation. Scholars hold various views on the definition of all Israel (παῖς Ἰσραὴλ).

First, Mussner maintains that all Israel in history is saved by God regardless of a preceding conversion to the gospel.²⁰² By being faithful to His promises to Abraham, God does not exclude Israel from His mercy. Scholars who maintain the two-covenant theory provide a logical basis for this view.²⁰³ According to this position, while the Gentiles are saved by believing in Christ, the Jews will not acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah and are saved by keeping the law.²⁰⁴ God will save all physical Israel that exists in the world regardless of her faith. However, this view is not convincing because it ignores the crucial principle that Jesus alone is the way of salvation for humanity (see John 14:6; Heb 11:6). All Israel can be seen as the chosen people among the physical Jews. Based on Romans 9:6, “For not all who are

²⁰² Charles H. Talbert, *Romans*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, eds. P. Keith Gammons and R. Alan Culpepper (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated, 2002), 245.

²⁰³ Arthur F. Glasser, “Two-Covenant Theory,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, Baker Reference Library, eds. A. Scott Moreau, Harold Netland, and Charles van Engen (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 976.

²⁰⁴ Walter Riggans, “Israel,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of World Missions*, Baker Reference Library, eds. A. Scott Moreau, Harold Netland, and Charles van Engen (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), 508.

descended from Israel are Israel,” Bengel asserts that all Israel is the elect portion of Israel.²⁰⁵

Hendriksen also states that all Israel is not the majority of Israel but the remnant chosen by grace and covenant.²⁰⁶

Second, all Israel refers to all Jews in history who believe in Jesus as a whole: “The deliverer will come from Zion; he will turn godlessness away from Jacob. And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins” (Rom 11:26–27). Mark A. Seifrid argues, “All Israel does not signify every descendant of Abraham for all time; rather, as an allusion to Scripture, it speaks of Israel as a corporate reality.”²⁰⁷ He clearly states that not all Israelites are the descendants of Abraham, so salvation is not guaranteed to the last member of Israel.²⁰⁸

Third, John Calvin and K. Barth assert that all Israel refers to a chosen group consisting of the Jews and the Gentiles as a large number of ethnic groups who will be saved in the end times.²⁰⁹ Israel is a chosen people consisting of Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus. R. C. H. Lenski states that all Israel refers to the chosen remnant by God’s grace and covenant.²¹⁰ Also, Luther shares a similar view to this.²¹¹

²⁰⁵ Frédéric Louis Godet and Alexander Cusin, *Commentary on St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1890), 256.

²⁰⁶ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 224.

²⁰⁷ Mark A. Seifrid, “Romans,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 673.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁹ Gerhard F. Hasel, “Israel in Bible Prophecy,” *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 139–40.

²¹⁰ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1936), 726.

²¹¹ Martin Luther, *Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, trans. J. Theodore Mueller (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1954), 146.

Finally, Herman Ridderbos argues that all Israel indicates the fullness of the entire nation of Israel and all the elect of Israel throughout the present age.²¹² He states all Israel in terms of the full number of the Gentiles: “As Israel because of its disobedience has become a cause of salvation for the Gentiles, so now the Gentiles must provoke Israel to jealousy.”²¹³ All Israel refers to all the elect of the nation of Israel that has been gathered through the centuries.²¹⁴

Some scholars argue that all Israel refers to spiritual Israel, and others assert that it indicates physical Israel. This dissertation focuses on the latter argument. In many of his letters, Paul refers to all Israel as the circumcised Jews, the descendants of Abraham, and the Israel of God, revealing that he considers Israel an ethnic group. Israel thus constitutes the physical, not the spiritual, descendants of Abraham, and the church and Israel are thoroughly separated.²¹⁵ Although all Israel could be interpreted as the New Testament church consisting of the Jews and the Gentiles, the proximate context of Romans 9–11 does not use Israel in this sense.

In Romans, the verb “save” (σώζω) and the noun “salvation” (σωτηρία) are used five times. Primarily in Romans 9–11, these two words are used to speak of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. Regarding the issue of Israel’s salvation, Charles Hodge clarifies that national Israel will be saved:

Israel, here, from the context, must mean the Jewish people, and *all Israel*, the whole nation. The Jews, as a people, are now rejected; as a people, they are to be restored. As their rejection, although national, did not include the rejection of every individual; so

²¹² Keith A. Mathison, “The Church and Israel: In the New Testament,” in *Tabletalk Magazine*, October 2012: *The Church and Israel*, eds. R. C. Sproul et al. (Sanford, FL: Ligonier Ministries, Inc., 2012), 22.

²¹³ Herman Ridderbos, *Paul: An Outline of His Theology* (London: SPCK, 1977), 359–60.

²¹⁴ Keith A. Mathison, “The Church and Israel: In the New Testament,” 22.

²¹⁵ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 453.

their restoration, although in like manner national, need not be assumed to include the salvation of every individual Jew.²¹⁶

Israel's salvation in the last days will be achieved as a nation, and the final time of national Israel's salvation will depend on the fullness of the Gentiles. Douglas Moo notes, "The Israel that has been partially hardened is clearly national Israel. For this reason, and also because of the usual meaning of the phrase 'all Israel,' I incline slightly to the view that Israel in v. 26a refers to the nation generally."²¹⁷ God will use the Gentiles as an internal tool to support the salvation of Israel.

It is reasonable to view all Israel as referring to Israel not as a sum of individuals but as a collective expression that indicates a nation. In the Old Testament and other Jewish literature, the expression "all Israel" is used collectively to refer to the entire nation of Israel. The sins of all Israel are described at the national level in Daniel 9: "Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you" (Dan 9:7). According to August H. Konkel, all Israel does not mean each individual: "In the mind of Paul, the salvation of all Israel is the redemption of the nation collectively, though not including unrepentant members."²¹⁸ Paul envisions a future timeframe for the national salvation of Israel at the final stage for the last generation living in the times of the Gentiles. The advocacy for Israel in the book of Romans indicates that despite Israel's current unbelief, God's promises to His chosen people remain unchanged and faithful.

²¹⁶ Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, new ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Louis Kregel, 1882), 589.

²¹⁷ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 722.

²¹⁸ August H. Konkel, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, Believers Church Bible Commentary, eds. Douglas B. Miller, Loren L. Johns, and Elmer A. Martens (Harrisonburg, VA; Kitchener, ON: Herald Press, 2016), 39.

The salvation of the Israelites and that of the Gentiles is not independent of each other but complementary. The partial hardening of Israel continues until the end of time. Because of Israel's stubbornness, the Jews rejected the gospel. Salvation will come to the Gentiles, and the full number of Gentiles will be saved. The salvation of the Gentiles will provoke Israel to jealousy, which will lead to the salvation of the Jews. Israel's present hardening is in God's redemptive plan. This hardening is temporary, and the Israelites will ultimately be saved. The process of Israel's salvation proves that God did not forsake His people. The Gentiles should not be arrogant toward the Jews because the Gentiles are grafted into the olive tree by the grace of God.

Combining the various views of all Israel in Romans 11, one can draw the following conclusions. All Israel refers to ethnic Israel, not to the New Testament church. Moreover, the only condition for salvation for Israel is faith in Christ, as Paul consistently argues in Romans. In this plan of salvation, all Israel means the total number of ethnic Israel who are saved by faith in history. In this context, the salvation of all Israel is the eschatological salvation that happens at the time of the second coming of Jesus Christ.

The Apostle Paul's Ultimate Expectation of Israel

There have been various arguments about the interpretation of the book of Romans in relation to the restoration of and God's faithfulness to Israel. Much controversy has surrounded Paul's position on the restoration of Israel because he identifies as an apostle of the Gentiles. Romans best reveals Paul's thoughts about the issue of the restoration and salvation of Israel; thus, it is critical to consider the overview of Romans 9–11 to understand Paul's ultimate concern.

The history of Israel started with the covenants God made with her. Israel's history is thus about God's choice. The Abrahamic Covenant is a promise and providence made unilaterally by God. The covenantal thought presents a form and content for a specific event. His choice is made in the framework of the covenant, which is the configuration of a critical event by God's grace.²¹⁹ Choice naturally implies a new relationship between God and the elect where they bind each other through the covenants. The fulfillment of God's covenant in the history of Israel is the central theme regarding establishing the nation's foundation; however, the Israelites were too obsessed with their anointment as the chosen people, and they had little interest in God's righteousness.

Paul was anxious about whether God had forsaken his people due to their rejection of the gospel. Israel had covenantal privileges as Abraham's physical offspring. Although the Jews were the first to be offered salvation, they were still far from it. Paul's significant concern was how to lead Israel on the path to salvation, as he saw the hardening of the Jewish people. Nevertheless, the covenant made between God and Israel is faithful and unchangeable. Paul expresses that God's promises are not broken: "It is not as though God's word had failed" (Rom 9:6a). He also states, "For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith'" (Rom 1:17). God's righteousness applies to both Jews and Gentiles, and they will be saved through Jesus Christ.

Israel followed the law instead of the faith, seeking righteousness as an act of the law. The Jews refused to recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah and deprived themselves of the right

²¹⁹ Edmond Jacob, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. Arthur W. Heathcote and Philip A. Allcock (New York, NY: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1958), 209.

to be God's children. According to Paul, their failure to attain salvation is their fault: "Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God's righteousness" (Rom 10:3). Jesus came to fulfill the law, but the Israelites did not respond in faith. They were blamed for the death of Jesus but still claimed to be the covenant descendants of Abraham, which created conflict with the early Christians and the Roman church.

In Romans 1, Paul explains that the gospel of God is about Jesus Christ. The phrase "a descendant of David" (Rom 1:3) shows that one cannot understand Romans while ignoring its connection with David. The mention of the prophets indicates a connection with the Old Testament, which means that it is difficult to interpret the Bible without grasping the true meaning of the Old Testament. Furthermore, when it comes to the beneficiaries of the gospel, Paul places the Jews before the Gentiles (see Rom 1:16).

The key parts of the connection between the salvation of the Israelites and of the Gentiles in the Old Testament are Isaiah 2:2–4 and Micah 4:1–4. These sections are commonly used to refer to Jewish universalism. The passages prophesy that the Gentiles will abandon their gods and come to Mount Zion to worship God when the restoration of Israel is fulfilled. Paul sees the salvation of all humanity in a pattern from the Old Testament passage above. Paul's view is that God will restore Israel first and then the Gentiles.

Paul makes it clear that the fall of Israel is reversible: "Again I ask: Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious" (Rom 11:11). He states that Israel's stumbling is not permanent but only temporary. Paul goes on to say that God has hardened the Israelites temporarily for the salvation of the Gentiles. Israel's turning back to God is Paul's expectation of the final climax concerning God's salvation history.

The eschatological and futuristic hope reveals God's purpose for Israel. Romans 9 emphasizes Paul's sincerity toward Israel. At the same time, it involves Paul's anguish over the Jews who rejected Christ. Paul says, "For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race" (Rom 9:3). This verse is similar to the mourning of Moses in Exodus 32:32, which seems to reflect Paul's strong sense of solidarity with Israel. Paul refers to the many privileges that Israel received from God, which provides a logical basis for addressing Israel's future destiny.

Only a small number of the Israelites acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, and the leaders of Israel publicly rejected Him. God forsook the nation of Israel temporarily from the center of His ministry. Paul felt great sorrow in the reality that the majority of Israel could not be saved, and his most significant concern was how to give Israel the opportunity for salvation. Romans contains the hope of Paul waiting for Israel to return to Jesus Christ.

Thomas E. McComiskey explains the covenant Paul refers to in Galatians 3:16–17 in relation to the covenant God made with Abraham. Explaining Abraham and his seed in Galatians, he understands that Paul equates "his seed" with Christ, which refers to the covenant relationship between the Father and the Son. The covenant is a divine mandate that enforces the promise of all human history by the Trinity of God.²²⁰ Based on this understanding of the covenant, it is crucial to further analyze the meaning of the covenant Paul uses. In Galatians 3:15, the covenant of God is inviolable; it cannot be abolished. The covenants in Romans 9:4 refer to the Old Testament proclamations regarding God's will, and in Romans 11:27, the

²²⁰ Thomas E. McComiskey, *The Covenant of Promise: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1985), 213–7.

covenant was used in close relation to the patriarchs and the salvation of Israel based on the Abrahamic Covenant.

Israel, the bearer of promises, rejected Christ because of her unbelief. Consequently, if God is faithful, then the question remains as to whether God's promise to Israel can be nullified. Paul's answer is that God's promise to Israel is still valid. Romans says that all human beings are under sin and that they will be justified by faith alone. People must believe in Jesus Christ to be justified. Only through Jesus Christ can they atone for their sins: "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law" (Rom 3:28). Justification is not a matter of keeping the law but of faith and grace, the gift of God. Paul expresses his grief over Israel, his kin, because the Israelites are forsaken due to their distrust. He emphasizes that God's abandonment of the Israelites is due to their disobedience, not because God is not faithful to His promises. According to Paul, God will never forsake Israel because of His faithfulness.

The Understanding of the Mystery (μυστήριον)

The Israelites have not been forever abandoned by God but will be restored through the Abrahamic Covenant, which is a hidden mystery. The Greek word μυστήριον used in the New Testament is derived from the verb μύω (to close). The word appears twenty-eight times in the New Testament. Considering that it is used twenty-one times in the Pauline Epistles, it is a concept of paramount importance for Paul.

In the New Testament, the word mystery (μυστήριον) is used seventeen times, but it is used only once in Romans, and it plays a crucial role in explaining the salvation of Israel in Romans 11. The secret is deeply related to Israel's hardened state. "Hardening" (πώρωσις) in verse 25 is associated with "hardens" (σκληρύνει) in Romans 9:18 and "were hardened"

(ἐπωρώθησαν) in Romans 11:7. Regarding the hardening of Israel, it is introduced at 9:18, confirmed at 11:7, and reconfirmed at 11:25.

In the future, the twelve tribes of Israel will be restored. God's promise to Israel is unchanged in the New Testament, and the apostle Paul focuses on this matter in the book of Romans. Paul presents the hardening and salvation of Israel as the mystery of God in Romans 11:25–32, and he foresees the future to be fulfilled by God's faithfulness and mercy:

Turning to the individual stages of the mystery, we find Paul reaffirming his interpretation of Israel's present obduracy in terms of divine hardening. But he also reminds us of God's continued faithfulness in preserving a remnant by indicating that the hardening has come only "partially" on Israel. And not only is Israel's hardening partial—it is also temporary.²²¹

Paul's statement includes the question of when and how the salvation of Israel will be accomplished. God once concealed the secret but has now revealed it. When the mystery hidden in this dilemma is properly interpreted, the righteousness of God in the gospel, which is the core of the Romans, will be achieved.

In response to various dilemmas surrounding Israel, the apostle Paul—in Romans 11—proclaims the mystery of Israel's salvation. Based on his Jewish background, Paul is deeply rooted in the hope for Israel. He does not separate himself from Judaism but merely distinguishes himself from it through a belief in Christ and his understanding of the law. The salvation of all Israel will occur by revealing the hidden mystery, and the Savior will come from Zion to remove Israel's sin. This promise is based on God's covenant and faithfulness. Dodd not only evaluates Paul's role and achievements in the early church but also defines the eternal significance of his

²²¹ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 717.

ideas. He presents a commentary that maximizes the beauty and clarity of Romans, through which Paul aims to explain and clarify the meaning of the mystery.²²²

In the Pauline Epistles, the Greek word μυστήριον is used twenty-one times. It appears in the plural form in 1 Corinthians 4:1; 13:2; 14:2 and in the singular form elsewhere. The word μυστήριον in 1 Corinthians is used as Paul's answer to believers who misunderstand him regarding the church's division. For him, the mystery of God is the crucified Christ and the hidden wisdom of God, and the mystery appears due to the work of the Holy Spirit.

Paul relates the mystery to the gospel, revealing that it is closely associated with the gospel of Christ and the fulfillment of God's prophecy. Paul uses the mystery of the gospel in connection with revelation: "That is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly" (Eph 3:3). He associates the apostleship with the mysteries: "This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed" (1 Cor 4:1). He attempts to proclaim that the apostle should be regarded as the same as the Old Testament prophets. He reminds Corinthian believers, who denied the resurrection of the body, that Christ rises from the dead as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and that they will be resurrected and transformed at the end of the days. He explains to the Corinthian believers the eschatological mystery of salvation.

In Ephesians, the word "μυστήριον" is used six times (Eph 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; 5:32; 6:19). In Ephesians 3:4, Paul calls the mystery realized in Ephesians "the mystery of Christ" (τῷ μυστηρίῳ τοῦ Χριστοῦ). The purpose of God is revealed through the gospel of Jesus Christ. God's revelation and salvation through Jesus will unite the Jews and the Gentiles in their belief

²²² Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, 182.

in Jesus. The mystery of Christ implicitly expresses the eschatological salvation plan that God has done in Christ.

The Greek word “μυστήριον” is used four times in Colossians (1:26–27; 2:2–3; 4:3, 4).

The mystery of God was hidden until the time came. Then, it was revealed to believers who had received the message by faith. Nijay K. Gupta states,

There is a divine secret that was hidden and recently revealed, but it is not a private and privileged piece of knowledge for the spiritual elite. The secret is “Christ in you” (1:27), and Paul happily publicizes it as apostolic herald. His whole purpose is to make known the long-hidden mystery so that *everyone* may benefit from it. He had no interest in hoarding the secret and its benefits for himself or some elite community of sages.²²³

Great blessings spread to the Gentiles through the covenant made with Abraham, but how they would come remained a mystery until the church age: “And to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms” (Eph 3:9–10). In this regard, the mystery of God revealed through Paul’s proclamation to the Colossian believers is of great significance.

In ancient mystery religion, secrets were understood to be known only to a certain few people. However, the mystery was disclosed to the Lord’s people, which was an extraordinary event because the recipients were mostly Gentiles. The mystery of God has been revealed, and the Jews and the Gentiles will participate in salvation in Christ. The Gentiles will become partakers in the promise together in Jesus Christ through the gospel, which is the mystery of God’s salvation plan in Colossians.

²²³ Nijay K. Gupta, *Colossians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, eds. Leslie Andres and R. Alan Culpepper (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated, 2013), 68.

There have been ongoing debates as to whether the Pastoral Epistles were written by Paul. Bible critics have argued that they were not Paul's writings because of stylistic and theological differences from the other Pauline Epistles. Regarding this issue, George W. Knight explains,

The first forceful challenge to Pauline authorship was made in 1807 by Schleiermacher, who disputed the Pauline authorship of 1 Timothy on the basis of its language and biographical statements. Despite these bases to Schleiermacher's argument, Schweitzer astutely evaluated this challenge by saying that it was "not Schleiermacher the critic, but Schleiermacher the aesthete who had come to have doubts about 2 Timothy" and, on that basis, about 1 Timothy.²²⁴

When one examines the contents of the Pastoral Epistles, it becomes evident that Paul wrote them. Especially in 2 Timothy, the apostle Paul's teachings of love are revealed in the intimate counsel between him and Timothy—1 Timothy and 2 Timothy were written based on Paul's personal relationship with Timothy. The Apostle Paul's love for Timothy cannot be imitated or artificially created.

1 Timothy demonstrates that the mystery is essentially the same as the core of Paul's gospel. Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann argue, "Mystery (μυστήριον) and other expressions of this type are used to refer to the fundamental realities of the gospel and of the life of the congregation. Moreover in the Pastorals still other sublime and weighty words have become formulas for ordinary Christian community life."²²⁵ Paul connects the mystery of faith with the proper confession of Christ, emphasizing that the mystery is the gospel revealed in Christ. The definitions of mystery in the Pauline Epistles are interconnected. The hidden secret is

²²⁴ George W. Knight, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Carlisle, England: W.B. Eerdmans; Paternoster Press, 1992), 21.

²²⁵ Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles: A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, Hermeneia—a Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible, ed. Helmut Koester, trans. Philip Buttolph and Adela Yarbro (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1972), 58.

revealed, the core of which is Christ, and it fulfills God's plan of salvation, which originated from the Abrahamic Covenant.

The Abrahamic Covenant in Non-Pauline New Testament Texts

Messages about Israel's restoration can be found throughout the New Testament. The Gospel of Matthew is considered to be the link between the Old Testament and the New Testament. It contains many positive messages concerning Israel in the New Testament. Wilkins states,

Jesus' instructions to his disciples when he sent them out on a mission tour provides an example from the "positive" perspective: "These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them, 'Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel'" (10:5–6). Matthew is the only Gospel to record this statement.²²⁶

The Gospel of Matthew signifies the restoration of Israel from the story of the birth of Jesus. Matthew 1 declares that Jesus is the descendant of Abraham and David and, at the same time, affirms that declaration by presenting the genealogy of Jesus. Proving that Jesus is the descendant of Abraham confirms the covenant between God and Abraham.

In Matthew, Jesus says to the disciples, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Matt 19:28). Although some scholars interpret "the twelve tribes of Israel" as the church, there is no reason to understand Israel as the church here. Jesus indicates that the future renewal will be complete when the Twelve Jewish

²²⁶ Michael J. Wilkins, "Israel According to the Gospels," in *The People, the Land and the Future of Israel: Israel and the Jewish People in the Plan of God*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2014), 89.

Apostles participate in the final establishment of the kingdom of God, meaning they will rule with Jesus in the millennial kingdom.²²⁷

Replacement theologians deliberately overlook the texts concerning the restoration of Israel in the Gospel of Luke, thereby distorting the consistency of the message throughout the Bible. Luke is the author of a significant part of the New Testament—the majority of people believe that the apostle Paul wrote most of the New Testament, but Luke wrote the largest part of it by sheer volume. Luke’s writing accounts for approximately a quarter of the New Testament.

Luke is a book written for the Gentile believers. Many Jewish leaders refused to accept Jesus as the Messiah and persecuted the early church, which wanted to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. In this social atmosphere, the Gentiles, deeply troubled by their decision to become Christian, questioned whether believing in Jesus was the right choice. Luke contains answers to their questions.

In the ancient world, accepting new ideas was always a challenge because the value of tradition was significant. Christianity was new to the Gentiles, and they thus had difficulty accepting it. Luke sought to solve this problem by demonstrating that although Christianity was a new concept, many promises in Christianity were rooted in the Hebrew Bible. It was Christianity that revealed that old promises were being newly realized. The foundation of the church was hidden in the old promises. This logical development was linked to Israel’s hope and God’s covenantal promises toward Israel. The core of the entire story was closely related to Israel’s restoration. Although the restoration of Israel has been delayed because she has rejected the Messiah, the unchangeable truth is that God will use Israel to bring hope to all humanity.

²²⁷ Wilkins, “Israel According to the Gospels,” 100.

It may seem that hope for Israel had disappeared because the Jews had rejected Jesus Christ, but the resurrection of Jesus revived this hope. In Luke 24, the disciples recall the life of Jesus: “We had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel” (Luke 24:21). This hope for someone to redeem Israel is the same hope that Zechariah expects in Luke 1. The crucial point is that the disciples’ significant concern was for Israel even after Jesus’s resurrection. These disciples also had a future hope for Israel.

Zechariah’s song, beginning from Luke 1:68, reaffirms God’s promises and prophecies regarding Israel. Zechariah’s praise explicitly reveals salvation for the nation of Israel, and the core element is in a horn of salvation in the house of David. This text contains Israel’s nationalistic features, offering clear evidence of the distinction between Israel and the church. “Our father Abraham” in Luke 1:73 recalls the covenant made between God and Israel. It is evident that God’s covenants with Israel expanded to the Gentiles; however, the promises God originally made with Israel are still valid. Zechariah’s song epitomizes the reason Jesus came to this world.

A righteous and devout man named Simeon lived in Jerusalem. He awaited the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him (see Luke 2:25). Simeon’s attitude shows the longing of the people of Israel waiting for the restoration of Israel and their belief in God’s covenants. Luke 2:28 mentions the redemption of Jerusalem, to proclaim the expectation of Jesus’s reign and the restoration of Israel. Luke explicitly states that Jesus Christ is a light for revelation to the Gentiles as well as glory to Israel (see Luke 2:32). God’s salvation plan is not a matter of choosing either Israel or the Gentiles, because the hope for both of them coexists.

Although the General Epistles may seem to have less of a message about the restoration of Israel compared with other parts of the New Testament, some texts infer the message of

Israel's restoration: "The principal purpose of Hebrews is to encourage and warn Jewish believers not to lose heart and abandon their faith in Jesus. If they abandon their faith, they will not enter the promised rest (Heb. 3:7–4:11). The promised rest, of course, is a typology centered on the land of Israel."²²⁸ The message is not as direct as in the Pauline Epistles, but Hebrews mentions implicit connotations for the future of the people of Israel. Hebrews 11:8–16 contains promises made to Abraham that have not yet been fulfilled: "Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them" (Heb 11:16). Yahweh promised Abraham that all the land he saw would be given to him and to his descendants (see Gen 13:14–17). Matthew 8:11 says, "I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." This verse indicates when this promise will be fulfilled.

The General Epistles have a shared emphasis and theme. They were written primarily for the people of ethnic Israel, the genetic descendants of Abraham, who are discouraged by persecution and the delay of Jesus's return. For Peter, James, and Jude, Christians are sojourners and still vulnerable to suffering because the restoration is yet to occur.²²⁹ The authors of the General Epistles encourage believers because they keep their faith despite many objections and persecutions (see James 1:1–12). God has promised many things to Israel, and the authors of the General Epistles speak of the message that God will eventually restore Israel.

²²⁸ Craig A. Evans, "Israel According to the Book of Hebrews and the General Epistles," in *The People, the Land and the Future of Israel: Israel and the Jewish People in the Plan of God*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2014), 142.

²²⁹ C. Marvin Pate et al., *The Story of Israel: A Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Apollos, 2004), 26.

The book of James is a letter to the scattered people suffering in their exile: “To the twelve tribes scattered among the nations” (Jas 1:1b). James speaks of their covenantal responsibilities to console the Diaspora in hope of the expected restoration of Israel based on the Abrahamic Covenant.²³⁰ Scott J. Hafemann states, “For James, as for the other writers of covenantal diaspora letters, the exilic existence of Israel was a painful experience requiring perseverance in hope of God’s ultimate triumph on behalf of his people.”²³¹ James encourages his readers and asks them to rejoice in tribulation: “Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (Jas 1:2–4). Because of their covenant with God, they will overcome all difficulties and receive the crown of life (see Jas 1:12).

The author of 2 Peter is traditionally known as Peter, but modern Bible critics have raised doubts about it. Because of the linguistic differences between 1 Peter and 2 Peter, they assume that 2 Peter was not written by Peter himself.²³² In addition, given that 2 Peter quotes several passages from the book of Jude, critics presume that 2 Peter was written with reference to Jude.²³³ Despite the several differences in tone and style between 1 Peter and 2 Peter, there is still no conclusive evidence to exclude Petrine authorship.²³⁴

²³⁰ Scott J. Hafemann, *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002), 141.

²³¹ Hafemann, *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect*, 141–42.

²³² Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 14.

²³³ DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods and Ministry Formation*, 879–80.

²³⁴ Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude*, 15–16.

2 Peter makes no direct mention of Israel, but it urges people to wait for new heavens and a new earth (cf. Ps 102:25–28). 2 Peter says, “But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Pet 3:13). Based on the message of the Bible as a whole, this statement can be interpreted in relation to the restoration of Israel. Craig A. Evans states,

The author of 2 Peter assures his readers that they will have “an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (1:11). This eternal kingdom is something other than this world, for “the heavens and earth that now exist have been stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men” (3:7). The old heavens and earth will be destroyed; “we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (3:10–13).²³⁵

The longing for new heavens and a new earth in 2 Peter 3 and God’s promise to solidify them until the last days are related to the Abrahamic Covenant. Isaiah 65:17–25 is connected with 2 Peter 3 because Isaiah describes what Israel will see when returning from all the nations from which they were scattered: “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind” (Isa 65:17). Isaiah clarifies that this new creation and restoration are for the people of Israel, Abraham’s descendants (see Isa 65:18–19). This promise of God indicates that the covenant made with Abraham will never be broken.

Conclusion

Paul uses “my covenant” in Romans 11:27 and depends on the book of Genesis for the Abrahamic Covenant. The issue is that covenantal legalism led to a new turning point in the traditional understanding of the Abrahamic Covenant. The legalism of the Jews at the time of Paul appeared to raise a significant problem not only in the Jews but also in all the Roman

²³⁵ Evans, “Israel According to the Book of Hebrews and the General Epistles,” 145.

churches because they started to believe that they could receive grace and salvation from God by good deeds.

The Israelites failed to realize the true meaning of the Bible because they lived with a misperception of the law and the covenant.²³⁶ This dissertation explains the background of how “my covenant” in Romans 11:26–27, the Abrahamic Covenant, is made between God and Israel. Furthermore, this research examines how the covenant works for the Jews and the Gentiles. When the Old Testament is cited in the New Testament, it is necessary to understand the continuity between the texts.

The Israelites will gather together in Jerusalem and confess, “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” (Matt 23:39). This is a greeting for the coming of the Messiah. Fruchtenbaum states, “The Abrahamic Covenant became the basis for the Dispensation of Promise. Because the Abrahamic Covenant is unconditional, it is still very much in effect though it has remained largely unfulfilled. The ultimate fulfillment will come during the Kingdom Age.”²³⁷ Even though the sin of Israel makes her stubborn, Paul suggests that there is still hope for Israel. If the full number of the Gentiles understand and accept the gospel, then the chosen of Israel will repent of their sins and be saved. What is notable here is that the fall of Israel brings salvation to the Gentiles. The Gentiles did not seek the blessing of God, but God fulfilled the promise. Likewise, despite Israel’s unbelief, God will not give up His plan of salvation for Israel.

Abraham was the ancestor of the Jews, and Christ was his physical descendant. Despite not accepting Jesus as the Messiah, the Jews are still loved by God. Since God must keep His

²³⁶ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9–16*, vol. 38B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1988), 588.

²³⁷ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 553.

covenant, His promises to Israel will not be nullified. The fact that God chose Israel is an unchanging truth. Just as God chose Abraham as the source of blessing for the nations, so He will choose Israel and use her as a blessing for the Gentiles.

Although their iniquities and failures denote riches for the world, the fullness of restored Israel will be tremendous. The denial of Israel's restoration is to misunderstand the message that flows consistently in the Bible. In the last days, the Israelites will not only recover their territory but also be spiritually renewed. They will accept Jesus as their Savior and spread the gospel all around the world. The Gentiles can also participate in the blessings of Abraham. Their future blessings will be based on the identity and recovery of Israel. Based on the Abrahamic Covenant, God originally chose Israel to be His people and through which to save the world's people.

The Bible says that God is faithful, and an explicit correlation exists between God's faithfulness and Israel's salvation. Paul explains the concept of the righteousness of God in Romans, stating that His righteousness is His power for salvation (see Rom 1:16–17). The fulfillment of God's promise and His righteousness is granted to believers on God's initiative. Therefore, the righteousness of God is His faithfulness to the people of Israel because His righteousness will save Israel by covenantal obligation despite Israel's failure.²³⁸

²³⁸ James R. Edwards, *Romans*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2011), 85.

CHAPTER FOUR: PALESTINIAN/LAND COVENANT

Introduction

Deuteronomy contains God’s promise to the land: “See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore he would give to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—and to their descendants after them” (Deut 1:8). An overview of Deuteronomy is important to understand the core idea of the Palestinian Covenant. Deuteronomy comprises three parts: the first part (chapters 1–11), the second part (chapters 12–27), and the third part (chapters 28–34). The third part of Deuteronomy consists of two sections. The first section (chapters 28–30), often referred to as the Palestinian Covenant, details God’s promise that the Israelites will be blessed in the land of Canaan. The second section (from chapter 31) is the last warning that Moses gives to Israel.

The core of Deuteronomy is in chapter 32, specifically “the Song of Moses.” In this song, the greatness and faithfulness of God are declared: “I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God! He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he” (Deut 32:3–4). In contrast to God’s faithfulness, Israel’s unfaithfulness is predicted: “They have acted corruptly toward him; to their shame they are no longer his children, but a warped and crooked generation” (Deut 32:5). The Palestinian Covenant and the song of Moses have the same purpose, with both indicating that the Almighty God will fulfill the covenant He has made for Israel.

For Deuteronomy 28–30, dispensationalists use the term “Palestinian Covenant” because the essence of this covenant concerns the Palestinian land. However, there is a problem with referring to the land as Palestinian land. The land never belongs to the Palestinian people, and

God never refers to the area as Palestine; therefore, some scholars argue that it is more appropriate to describe it as the Land Covenant.

If Israel adheres to the laws of God and remains in perfect relationship with Him, Israel will enjoy prosperity in the land. On the other hand, if Israel violates the laws and sins against God, she will be cursed and removed from the land. However, God does promise the Israelites that they will return to the land. Fruchtenbaum argues,

The special importance of the Palestinian Covenant is that it reaffirmed Israel's title deed to the land. Although she would prove unfaithful and disobedient, the right to the land would never be taken from her. While her enjoyment of the land is conditioned on obedience, ownership of the land is unconditional. Furthermore, it shows that the conditional Mosaic Covenant did not lay aside the unconditional Abrahamic Covenant.²³⁹

Regardless of the Israelites' disobedience, God will surely restore them because of the covenant He has made with them.

The uniqueness of the Palestinian Covenant is that it reaffirms the ownership rights of the land initially given in the Abrahamic Covenant. Although Israel might be punished for disobedience, her right to the Promised Land will never change. Fruchtenbaum states,

The Land Covenant, commonly known as the Palestinian Covenant, spoke of a worldwide regathering of the Jews and repossession of the Land following their Dispersion. While the Dispersion has already occurred and is still in effect today, the regathering and repossession of the Land still awaits fulfillment in the future. This, too, requires a future Kingdom.²⁴⁰

God makes clear the promise of this land through the prophet Ezekiel: "I will accept you as fragrant incense when I bring you out from the nations and gather you from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will be proved holy through you in the sight of the nations. Then you will know that I am the Lord, when I bring you into the land of Israel, the land I had sworn

²³⁹ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 583.

²⁴⁰ Fruchtenbaum, *The Messianic Bible Study Collection*, vol. 17, 5.

with uplifted hand to give to your ancestors” (Ezek 20:41–42). The Land Covenant was made between God and Israel. Moses prophesies that the Israelites will be scattered across the world in disobedience of the Mosaic Law. However, Israel will repent, gather again, and obtain the Promised Land, according to the Palestinian Covenant.

This chapter will trace the history of the Palestinian Covenant, from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The research will connect the promise of the land that Abraham received with the concept of God’s covenant and show how the promise of the land revealed in the Old Testament will finally be fulfilled in the New Testament. This dissertation will demonstrate that the significance of the restoration of the land is reiterated throughout the Bible from the Old Testament period, through the intertestamental period, and into the New Testament period. The Palestinian Covenant closely links the Old and New Testaments.

The Historical Progression of Israel’s Land Down to the Babylonian Captivity

When God created Adam and Eve, they initially inhabited the Garden of Eden, which He prepared for them. The land was important for human existence, as the purpose of the creation of man was for humans to cultivate and rule the place. God made a space in which His reign could be fulfilled and humans could fully enjoy His love. The Garden of Eden shows that human life and history began with land. The land that God gave to Adam and Eve was His promise, and it was for them to rule and maintain. It is also the center of God’s revelation because it is the holy place where God meets man. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden because of their sin.

God made a covenant for His people through the promise of the land. The patriarchal era that began with the advent of Abraham is recorded in Genesis 12–50. This section mainly deals with the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and ends with the scene in which seventy members

of Jacob's family enter Egypt. Israel's patriarchs move with their families, according to the nomadic lifestyle. When Abraham enters the land of Canaan and arrives at Shechem, God appears and promises this land to his descendants.

In Genesis, when God encounters people such as Noah, Abraham, and Jacob, the places immediately become fixed sites of God's presence. The oak tree in the land of Shechem later becomes the holy place of Yahweh. Mount Moriah also appears in 2 Chronicles 3:1, as the site of the temple in Jerusalem.²⁴¹ The place where Isaac was offered as a sacrifice became the site of the temple in Jerusalem in the days of Israel's kingdom. God confirms the promise of the land to Abraham: "To your descendants I give this land" (Gen 15:18), and this promise extends to Abraham's descendants. God makes it clear that His promise of the land includes all the land of Canaan (see Gen 17:8). Furthermore, Genesis 28 contains the story of Jacob encountering God in a dream. In this dream, God reaffirms the covenant he made with Jacob's grandfather Abraham. Jacob calls this place "the house of God" (see Gen 28:17).

In Deuteronomy 30, God promises to restore Israel's land even if the Israelites are cursed for their sins and become captives of the Gentile nations: "Then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you" (Deut 30:3). God will bring the Israelites back to the Promised Land because of His faithfulness. God will gather even those who are scattered at the ends of the earth: "Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back" (Deut 30:4). This shows the greatness of God's love and the infiniteness of His power.

²⁴¹ Walton, *Genesis*, 510.

As a result of God's judgment, the Israelites were deprived of the Promised Land and became captives. However, Deuteronomy contains God's message of hope and restoration for them: "He will bring you to the land that belonged to your fathers, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers" (Deut 30:5). In this verse, God shares His promise to make those who have sinned, failed, and been taken captive more prosperous than their ancestors. This message of hope reflects God's faithfulness toward the fulfillment of His covenant.

The book of Joshua shows how God partially fulfilled the Land Covenant. It records the process of occupying and distributing the land that God promised to Abraham and his descendants. After Moses has died, God appears to Joshua and says, "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them—to the Israelites" (Josh 1:2). On the basis of God's Word, Joshua then made plans and preparations to enter the Promised Land. The Israelites had to fight many wars, but because of the unconditionality of God's covenant, they entered the Promised Land. Joshua explains that God fulfills his promises and shows how Israel entered and conquered the Promised Land.

The book of Joshua contains many miraculous stories like the dividing and crossing the Jordan River and destroying the walls of Jericho. These miracles reveal the faithfulness of God's covenant and the greatness of His power. It is important to interpret the following verse accurately in regard to the Land Covenant: "So the LORD gave Israel all the land he had sworn to give their forefathers, and they took possession of it and settled there" (Josh 21:43). Hixson and Fontecchio argue, "Simply stated, Joshua 21:43 cannot be the fulfillment of the Land Covenant. We know this to be true because in later revelation the Word of God continued to predict that

one day Israel will possess the land.”²⁴² Although the Israelites had the land that God intended them to have, this could not be the final fulfillment of the Land Covenant, given the overall context of the Bible. Only when Jesus comes again will the Land Covenant be fully fulfilled.²⁴³

The Israelites who experienced God’s presence through the tabernacle finally received Canaan, the Promised Land, as a gift. The land of Canaan is the partial fulfillment of the Palestinian Covenant and the restored Eden. However, the Israelites, who must have lived a life as a covenant people, broke the covenant of God and served the Canaanite gods. This apostasy resulted in God’s absence from among them. The fulfillment of the Land Covenant in Joshua is only partial because some of the land that Joshua conquered fell back into the hands of the Canaanites (see Deut 7:22; Judg 1–3). Another reason is that some of the total land was never conquered in Joshua’s day initially (see Josh 13:1). God gave Joshua’s generation all the land on which they put their feet, but they did not traverse the full extent of the Palestinian land in their day. It was the role of the following generations to complete the task. God’s promise to Joshua’s generation was only partially fulfilled for the disobedient following generations.

The Land Covenant, the tabernacle, and the temple are closely related.²⁴⁴ The initial fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant is the construction of Solomon’s temple. God’s promises related to the building of Solomon’s temple are linked with Deuteronomy 12: “But you are to seek the place the LORD your God will choose from among all your tribes to put his Name there for his dwelling. To that place you must go” (Deut 12:5). God’s promise of the site of Solomon’s

²⁴² Hixson and Fontecchio, *What Lies Ahead: A Biblical Overview of the End Times*, 104.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 105.

²⁴⁴ James M. Hamilton Jr., *God’s Indwelling Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Old & New Testaments* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2006), 35.

temple is linked to the promise made to Abraham. The place that Yahweh chooses is located in the Promised Land. This is repeated many times in the Bible.

Solomon reveals that God is the faithful One who keeps His covenant and that He fulfills the promises made to David: “He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel” (1 Chr 28:5). For the Israelites, the temple in Jerusalem was a symbol of God’s presence, revealing the fulfillment of the promise that they would enter and settle in the Promised Land. The Jerusalem temple is the most fundamental reason for Israel’s existence and the goal of the Exodus to achieve His covenant.

The Israelites commonly served Baal and foreign gods during the time of Israel’s kingdom. In particular, Solomon’s indiscreet marriages made Jerusalem not only a place in which high places of worship were prevalent, but also a place where all kinds of foreign religions were mixed. The ancient Israelites did not serve only Yahweh in their real lives. In fact, their beliefs took various religious forms. The prophets warned of God’s penalty for the Israelites’ transgressions and foretold their judgment. Subsequently, after Solomon’s death, Israel was divided into Northern and Southern Kingdoms.

In the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam built two golden calves in Bethel and Dan and offered sacrifices to the gods (see 1 Kings 12:28–33). In the Old Testament, most kings of the Northern Kingdom are criticized for following the ways of Jeroboam.²⁴⁵ This demonstrates how deeply rooted golden calf worship was in the Northern Kingdom. In particular, the forcing of Baal worship on the people after King Ahab married Jezebel, a foreign woman, vividly illustrates the reality of idolatry in this era.

²⁴⁵ John W. Olley, *The Message of Kings: God Is Present*, The Bible Speaks Today, eds. Alec Motyer and Derek Tidball (Nottingham, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2011), 148.

Hosea, who was active in the Northern Kingdom, urged the Israelites to repent and return to Jehovah: “For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings” (Hos 6:6). This verse points to the abuse of the Israelites’ sacrificial service. It accuses them of having no love for or loyalty to God and of making no efforts to understand and practice God’s will. Micah also warns of the false worship of the Israelites: “He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God” (Mic 6:8). Both Hosea and Micah emphasize the importance of serving God rightly and living a holy life.

By marrying the harlot Gomer, Hosea showed in his own life how thoroughly the people of the Northern Kingdom of that time had abandoned God and fallen into a foreign religion. He described the relationship between God and Israel as a marital relationship and accused the Israelites of worshipping Baal as a betrayal of their husband, God. Through the relationship with his unfaithful wife Gomer, Hosea showed that the Mosaic Covenant was broken, but God was not finished with His people, just like Hosea was not finished with Gomer.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was incorporated into the province of Assyria and subject to Assyria’s violence and oppression. Galilee and Gilead became Assyrian provinces as a result of the Syro-Ephraimite War in 736–732 BC. Isaiah 8:19–22 shows the political crisis and spiritual plight that dominated the Northern Kingdom of Israel before and after the Syro-Ephraimite War. The northern Israelites manifested the culmination of spiritual deviance by looking for the dead when encountering disasters without relying on God. Spiritual leaders misled people and failed to guide them according to God’s Word. Ultimately, in the process of destroying the Syro-Ephraimite allies, the Assyrians destroyed Syria and made the northern part

of the Northern Kingdom of Israel into the province of Assyria. This war eventually hastened the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

In 727 BC, when the prophecy of Isaiah 9 was proclaimed, the end of the Northern Kingdom of Israel was almost inevitable. There was no way to reverse the destruction of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and as Isaiah prophesied, Samaria was finally captured in 722 BC. Many people in the Northern Kingdom were taken captive and scattered, which became the Assyrian dispersion. However, Isaiah provides messages of salvation and restoration for the people remaining in the land.

In the Southern Kingdom, many pagan religions spread widely during the reign of Rehoboam. Hezekiah and Josiah attempted to eradicate the pagan religions prevalent in the Southern Kingdom. Hezekiah removed the high places and destroyed the stone statues and the Asherah poles through religious reforms (see 2 Kings 18:4). In the early days of Josiah, the astrology of the Babylonian religions was popular, and the worship of the sun, moon, and stars was widespread (see 2 Kings 23:5). King Josiah eliminated all idols in the temple and removed the false priests.

In the days of Jeremiah, the Southern Kingdom of Judah was on the verge of being destroyed by Babylon.²⁴⁶ The people of Judah relied on Egypt, a foreign nation, rather than God. They also practiced false worship and abandoned social justice.²⁴⁷ They were captivated by false beliefs and the proclamations of corrupt prophets who had led them in the wrong direction, ignoring the message of God's judgment delivered through Jeremiah. Eventually, the Southern

²⁴⁶ R. E. Clements, *Jeremiah*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Atlanta, GA: J. Knox Press, 1988), 41.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 46–7.

Kingdom was destroyed by Babylon, and Jerusalem's temple was decimated. The people of Judah were taken captive and scattered, which became the Babylonian dispersion.

The Israelites, who were unfaithful to the Mosaic Covenant, were destroyed due to religious syncretism and became captives of the Gentile nations. The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem was a tragedy for the Israelites. The two events of the Babylonian exile and Jerusalem's destruction shocked the people of Judah physically, mentally, and spiritually. The captives taken to Babylon were largely political and religious leaders. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, stopped the rebellion and economically devastated Judah.²⁴⁸ These covenant consequences of being cast out of the land can be tied back to the curses of Deuteronomy 28:15–68 and Leviticus 26:33. Here, God said that because of the Israelites' disobedience, they would be defeated by their enemies and scattered from their land: "The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in seven, and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth" (Deut 28:25). Also, Leviticus states, "I will scatter you among the nations and will draw out my sword and pursue you. Your land will be laid waste, and your cities will lie in ruins" (Lev 26:33). Ezekiel proclaimed the prophecy of the restoration of the land in the historical context of the destruction of Jerusalem.

Many prophets who had been active since the eighth century BC attempted to correct Israel's practices.²⁴⁹ They strongly criticized the meaningless formalism in worship, the failure to fulfill the responsibilities of the Israelites, and their impure motives. The prophets pointed out

²⁴⁸ Tremper Longman III, *Jeremiah, Lamentations*, Understanding the Bible Commentary Series, eds. W. Ward Gasque, Robert L. Hubbard Jr., and Robert K. Johnston (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 20.

²⁴⁹ Niels Peter Lemche, *Ancient Israel: A New History of Israel*, 2nd ed., The Cornerstones Series (London; New York; New Delhi; Sydney: Bloomsbury T&T Clark: An Imprint of Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2015), 252.

the sins of the Israelites and asked them to abandon their poor conduct and return to God.²⁵⁰

Their prophecies were gradually revealed along with the history of the destruction and suffering of the nation of Israel. Although the Israelites broke their covenant with God, He sent prophets to deliver the core of His Word and to proclaim the restoration of Israel in the Promised Land.

Land is a crucial concept to both God and man. In the Old Testament, God makes a covenant with Abraham, and He confirms the promise of the land to Abraham's descendants, Isaac and Jacob: "By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise" (Heb 11:9). The Land Covenant became a reality in the days of Joshua. God promised to give the land to His people because He was the owner of the land. Through the promise of the land and its fulfillment, God reveals to His people that He is God. God's plan is not abrogated by the failure of individuals or groups to share in the benefits of the promise of the land. Because of God's faithfulness, He will achieve the final fulfillment of His covenant.

The Restoration of the Land in the Old Testament

Pre-Exilic Prophecies

Archaeological evidence and biblical sources show that prophets in the ancient world engaged in various actions.²⁵¹ Their roles were not limited to the prophesying of the future. The word "prophet" is the Hebrew word נָבִיא, which refers to a spokesman of God who interprets His

²⁵⁰ V. H. Matthews, "Prophecy and Society," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, eds. Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 626.

²⁵¹ J. W. Hilber, "Liturgy and Cult," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, eds. Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 514.

purpose to people.²⁵² The prophets of the Bible received the will of God and proclaimed His message. If the prophets' ideas were removed from Israel's history, their thoughts would become a lifeless religion. The prophets, as the advocates of God, guided the Israelites with keen spiritual insights and helped them to interpret and transmit their religious heritage.²⁵³ They played a crucial role in precisely and courageously delivering the message of His will. The Old Testament prophets link the message of destruction with the message of rebuilding Israel. In other words, the warning of the curse concludes with a promise that God will restore Israel to her homeland in the last days. This section explores the prophecies of Joel, Amos, Obadiah, and Zephaniah.

The prophet Joel delivered the message of judgment. The land was desolate, and the covenant of God was in danger of being broken; however, the land was promised to Abraham and his descendants. God, who is faithful to His covenant, had compassion for the Israelites and promised to restore His chosen people and the land: "Then the LORD will be jealous for his land and take pity on his people" (Joel 2:18). A terrible judgment will come in the day of the LORD, but God will restore His people. God promises to be a refuge and a stronghold for His people and to protect them thoroughly (see Joel 3:16). Based on God's covenant, Joel prophesies the restoration of the land: "In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD's house and will water the valley of acacias" (Joel 3:18). It is God's plan to establish a kingdom of priests, who will inhabit the land and glorify God.²⁵⁴

²⁵² John J. Schmitt, "Prophecy: Preexilic Hebrew Prophecy," in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 5, eds. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 482.

²⁵³ S. G. Dempster, "Canon, Canonization," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, eds. Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 72.

²⁵⁴ Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 196.

Amos, who was active in the Northern Kingdom, criticized the corruption of Israel and the exploitation and oppression by the ruling class. He criticized the formal rituals of the Israelites and urged them to worship faithfully before Yahweh. He abandoned all of his social life and economic security and entered a new environment to spread the Word of God: “But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel’” (Amos 7:15). In his message, Amos denounces the excessively wealthy for exploiting the poor and emphasizes God’s special relationship with Israel, which fulfills His covenant.²⁵⁵

In terms of covenant relations, the prophetic books reveal the special relationship between God and people. The core of the covenant relationship is the message of life and love that God establishes, maintains, and fulfills. God’s will appears in various ways in any particular environment or age and among any group of people. The prophetic books recount stories of the wars between Israel and the Gentiles and of Israel’s destruction due to her disobedience of God. The Old Testament prophets predicted the captivity of Babylon and the return of the Israelites. God did not break His covenant with Israel but left her godly men trained in the process of discipline and trial. Mark J. Boda states, “The Israelite remnant will undergo even further purging as any remaining proud people will be removed, leaving behind a humble remnant who do no wrong and experience prosperity and security.”²⁵⁶ Although the Israelites acted in contravention of God’s Sinai Covenant, He spoke of the hope for restoration through the remnant, even during the judgment. Israel seemed to be utterly destroyed, but God promised to restore her, as His covenant is faithful.

²⁵⁵ R. A. Mason, “Prophecy and Tradition,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, eds. Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 634.

²⁵⁶ Mark J. Boda, “Zephaniah, Book of,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, ed. Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 904.

Obadiah proclaims that Israel will be saved in a situation in which southern Judah is destroyed by Babylon and the Edomites. Obadiah 1:19–20 shows Israel’s restoration of the lost land, and Obadiah 1:21 reveals that God rules over the world: “Deliverers will go up on Mount Zion to govern the mountains of Esau. And the kingdom will be the LORD’s” (Obad 1:21). The last verse of Obadiah declares the complete restoration of the kingdom of Israel.

Zephaniah 3:1 describes Israel as an oppressive, rebellious, and defiled place because the Israelites did not listen to God’s commands and instructions. The prophets—who were supposed to preach the Word of God—spoke arrogantly according to their personal desires, and the priests—who were supposed to cleanse the sanctuary and keep the law—defiled the sanctuary and broke the law (Zeph 3:4). God will bring judgment on the nations that disobey him and do not fear Him. However, God also promises a way of restoration for the chosen people of Israel. Zephaniah 3:10 declares that the scattered people will be gathered. God will restore Israel when He gathers the scattered people to the Promised Land. In verse 20, God again promises to gather the chosen people: “At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes” (Zeph 3:20). Since God’s covenant is faithful, He will surely fulfill this promise.

Exilic Prophecies

In the Southern Kingdom, Jeremiah accused the Israelites of bowing toward vain idols of stone and wood, as the people of Judah built high places everywhere, made numerous idols, and worshipped various gods. Along with idolatry, the sacrifice of children was an act of worship that incited God’s wrath. The prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel strongly criticized this practice. Jeremiah was a prophet of an introverted character who repeatedly struggled against his call. H. A. Thomas adds, “The prophet complains to God about the message that he has been given to

preach, God's actions in the world, and the suffering that the prophet himself endures."²⁵⁷

Responding to God's call, Jeremiah warned of violence and destruction, regardless of his will and despite being humiliated and insulted (see Jer 20:8). Although God judges Israel, this is not His purpose in itself.

God will lead Israel out of all the captive nations into the Promised Land: "But they will say, 'As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of *all the countries* where he had banished them.' For I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers" (Jer 16:15). Jeremiah 23 prophesies that Judah, taken captive by Babylon, will be restored to their homeland after a certain period of time: "I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of *all the countries* where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number" (Jer 23:3). Jeremiah 23 not only prophesies about the restoration of Judah but also northern Israel: "In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior" (Jer 23:6). Jeremiah repeatedly proclaims the promise of the land: "When I will bring my people Israel and Judah back from captivity and restore them to the land I gave their forefathers to possess" (Jer 30:3). His message of hope was proclaimed in a desperate situation. The prominent hope for the future proclaimed by the prophets is the promise that Israel will be rebuilt and returned to her land.

Jeremiah delivers hope to the people in despair over the ruin of Judah, sharing God's promise to gather them into the Promised Land: "'Restrain your voice from weeping and your eyes from tears, for your work will be rewarded,' declares the LORD. 'They will return from the

²⁵⁷ H. A. Thomas, "Suffering," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, eds. Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 762.

land of the enemy. So there is hope for your future,' declares the LORD. 'Your children will return to their own land'" (Jer 31:16–17). The New Covenant in Jeremiah 31:31–34 contains the core idea of the Land Covenant. God's unconditional covenants are His unilateral covenants, not based on mutual agreement. Since His unconditional covenants depend entirely on His faithfulness, human disobedience and sin cannot break them. Jeremiah announces the New Covenant with the introductory phrase, "The time is coming" (Jer 31:31). The basis of his hope is not a reliance on people's power but rather a dependence on God's sovereignty and plan. Through Jeremiah, God promises to protect the Promised Land forever.

Jeremiah 32 is the chapter in which the greatest message of hope is declared: "I will rejoice in doing them good and will assuredly plant them in this land with all my heart and soul" (Jer 32:41). Chapter 32, contained in the Book of Comfort (Jer 30–33), reveals that Jeremiah's proclamation delivered to the Israelites was not superficial but rather a concrete hope that could never be abandoned in the desperate circumstances of reality.

Jeremiah 33 focuses on the reconstruction of Jerusalem that would be the foundation of life after the Israelites returned: "'For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were before,' says the LORD" (Jer 33:11b). The people of Judah who did not believe in the words of God's judgment persecuted and imprisoned Jeremiah. They even tried to kill the prophet. However, even during these days of suffering, when the hope of restoration had disappeared among them, Jeremiah declared the message of restoration: "Do not fear, O Jacob my servant; do not be dismayed, O Israel. I will surely save you out of a distant place, your descendants from the land of their exile. Jacob will again have peace and security, and no one will make him afraid" (Jer 46:27). The people of Judah were not afraid because God would surely gather the scattered people back and restore them, based on His covenant.

Jeremiah was appointed as a prophet to the nations (Jer 1:5). Jeremiah covers a variety of countries neighboring Judah. Chapters 46–52 consist of prophecies about the nations of Egypt, the Philistines, Moab, Ammon, Babylon, and the fall of Jerusalem. The prophecies about Egypt and Babylon contain a message about the restoration of Israel because they are intended to convey a message of hope to the captives in Egypt and Babylon.

Jeremiah demonstrates God's sovereign rule over the Gentiles, proving that the kingdom of God will encompass Judah and the Gentiles. God promises that His rule and mercy will reach out to the Gentile nations and restore them. Jeremiah accused the Israelites of the wickedness and urged them to return to God because by repenting to God, they could receive His grace. He declared that God's mercy was valid not only for Israel but also for all nations.

God called Ezekiel, who was held captive in Babylon, a prophet. In Babylonian captivity, the Israelites began a serious theological reflection of questions about their identity. Ezekiel asserted God's plan, even in the midst of the fall of Israel. Through Ezekiel's temple vision, God condemned the fall of the temple in Jerusalem. He promised to restore the community and revealed that He would come in glory. The Israelites saw the fundamental reason for the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, and they recognized that the eternal rule of God would be restored.²⁵⁸

Ezekiel's vision began by the Kebar River in Babylon in the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin of Judah (see Ezek 1:1–3), which would have been 593/592 BC.²⁵⁹ Ezekiel was a priest, but he was called to be a prophet during the time of captivity. In 587 BC, Jerusalem was

²⁵⁸ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992), 138.

²⁵⁹ Lamar Eugene Cooper, *Ezekiel*, vol. 17, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 59.

captured by Nebuchadnezzar. The temple was destroyed, and many people including nobles and high officials were taken to Babylon. The fall of Jerusalem damaged the external structures that reflected Jewish faith, such as the temple, the ark, and the priesthood.

God spoke continually about the future through Ezekiel. The revelations he saw indicated that God would one day bring the Israelites out of the Gentile nations and into the Promised Land to rebuild the collapsed temple. The possibility of restoration as well as the message of judgment are presented in Ezekiel 8–11. God departed from the temple and provided sanctuary for the people living in Babylon. Ezekiel proclaimed that He would gather Israel from among the people and remove the detestable idols (see Ezek 11:18–21). Furthermore, God promised the restoration of the land, which would end the punishment.

The message of salvation and restoration in Ezekiel comes from God's promise to remember the covenant made with the ancestors of the people of Israel and to establish an eternal covenant (see Ezek 16:60). Abraham's name appears in Ezekiel: "Son of man, the people living in those ruins in the land of Israel are saying, 'Abraham was only one man, yet he possessed the land. But we are many; surely the land has been given to us as our possession'" (Ezek 33:24). When Ezekiel speaks of the promise of the land, this is the covenant that God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For Ezekiel, the proclamation of salvation is related to the land. He says that Israel will be safe and prosperous in the land: "I will make a covenant of peace with them and rid the land of wild beasts so that they may live in the desert and sleep in the forests in safety" (Ezek 34:25). The land will be restored like the Garden of Eden: "This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden" (Ezek 36:35). The prophecies of the restoration of the land reveal not only the return of the people of Israel to their land but also God's complete reign in the millennial kingdom and the revitalization of the land itself.

Ezekiel 34 proclaims the message of restoration through the contrast between the true shepherd and the false shepherd who took Israel into captivity. He says that there is a leader who will gather the people who are suffering and scattered after the destruction of Jerusalem: “As a shepherd looks after his scattered flock when he is with them, so will I look after my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places where they were scattered on a day of clouds and darkness” (Ezek 34:12). Ezekiel 34 presents the return to the land through the metaphor of the shepherd. Yahweh will destroy the oppressors who invade the weak, and a wonderful state of peace will be restored. This new state can only be attained as a result of God’s reign.

Ezekiel 36 continues with the theme of restoration focused on the land. Ezekiel recalls the reasons for the loss of the Promised Land: “I dispersed them among the nations, and they were scattered through the countries; I judged them according to their conduct and their actions. And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, ‘These are the LORD’s people, and yet they had to leave his land’” (Ezek 36:19–20). Verses 21–23 emphasize that the restoration of the covenant will not be due to Israel’s actions and righteousness but only due to God’s faithful covenant.

The phrase “You will live in the land I gave your forefathers” in Ezekiel 36:28 describes the land promise that God made with the Israelites. Ezekiel 36:29–30 then deal with the blessing of abundance in the restored land, such as the Garden of Eden. Furthermore, the Land Covenant in Ezekiel 37 clearly refers to the land in which the ancestors lived: “They will live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where your fathers lived. They and their children and their children’s children will live there forever, and David my servant will be their prince forever” (Ezek 37:25). God will keep His promises to the patriarchs by restoring the Israelites to their land, which was given by God’s covenant. It will be an everlasting covenant, just as the kingship

of David is eternal. The temporary loss of the land does not break the eternal Land Covenant made to Abraham and his ancestors.

After the judgment, the restoration, salvation, and forgiveness of the covenant people by God's mercy are proclaimed in Ezekiel 40–48, which completes Ezekiel's message. The section regarding the new temple in Ezekiel has many similarities to the Pentateuch. For example, God appears on a high mountain and prepares His place among His people. Thus, the visions of the new town and the new temple in Ezekiel 40–48 demonstrate the love of God, who shows forgiveness and mercy even in His judgment to restore His people.²⁶⁰

In Ezekiel 47, Ezekiel states that the division of the Promised Land will be subdivided into the twelve tribes. The division of the Promised Land represents the final fulfillment of God's covenant.²⁶¹ According to Ezekiel, "These are the boundaries by which you are to divide the land for an inheritance among the twelve tribes of Israel, with two portions for Joseph. You are to divide it equally among them. Because I swore with uplifted hand to give it to your forefathers, this land will become your inheritance" (Ezek 47:13–14). Ezekiel 48 is the final chapter of Ezekiel, and it proclaims the restoration of the land. Ezekiel's final message is, "And the name of the city from that time on will be: The LORD is There" (Ezek 48:35). This is a proclamation that God will never again leave His people nor drive them from the Promised Land. This promise that God is always with His people in the Promised Land reveals the presence and reign of God in the land in which He dwells. The Israelites will enjoy the eternal communion with God in the Promised Land.

²⁶⁰ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, 590.

²⁶¹ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 814.

Ezekiel saw the temple in his vision—distinct from Solomon’s temple—as the fullness of God’s glory. God said to Ezekiel, “Son of man, this is the place of my throne and the place for the soles of my feet. This is where I will live among the Israelites forever. The people of Israel will never again defile my holy name” (Ezek 43:7a). The new temple that Ezekiel saw in his vision gave the Israelites hope, as a demonstration of their restoration through the fulfillment of God’s promise.²⁶² The new temple was the glorious temple that God would build through the Messiah, who would come from the descendants of David. The temple built by Zerubbabel served as hope for God’s promises to the people who had returned from captivity and to the scattered people.

The exilic prophets proclaimed that the Israelites would imminently return to their land. However, the early post-exilic return from captivity would not be the final fulfillment of the Land Covenant. The prophets prophesied not only the return of the Israelites from captivity but also the completion of the land promise in the millennial kingdom. This consummation would be the final arrival of the kingdom of God in the land in which God would fully reign.

Second Temple Prophecies

The Old Testament is a revelation of God that contains His will and describes His gracious redemption of His people. The fulfillment of God’s promises depends wholly on God, and the temple reveals His clear plan to establish and rule His kingdom through Israel. However, the Israelites built high places, served foreign gods, and broke their covenant with God, and eventually, their temple was destroyed by Babylon. Many prophets pointed to the sins of the

²⁶² Block, *The Book of Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, 745–6.

Israelites and urged them to repent. The Israelites were devastated by God's judgment, but He will restore and gather them back into His Promised Land, which is centered on the temple.

God gave His people a piece of land centered on the temple. After the Babylonian captivity, the Jewish people expected to rebuild the temple. The promise of the land is the heart of the Palestinian Covenant. According to Deuteronomy, God's people will be driven out of the land if they are not faithful to God; however, if they turn from wrong conduct and return to God, they will return to the Promised Land. The Jews thus used this paradigm to interpret the Babylonian captivity and their return to Judah. They sought the presence of God by rebuilding the temple in the Promised Land.

Although the Israelites returned to their land, they remained under the rule of the Gentile nations and wanted God to intervene and change this situation. The Jews naturally developed hope for the future and eschatological ideas. They anticipated the day when God would act to save them. They longed for the true temple promised by the prophets, rejecting the corrupt temple ruled by the Gentiles.

By the decree of Cyrus, the Jews were able to return to their own land. However, this historical return was not as glorious as they had expected. The return of the Israelites from Babylonian captivity did not mean that they were entirely liberated from the oppression of the foreign empire.²⁶³ The rebuilt temple was not splendid, as foretold by the prophets, and the situations they experienced after their return were not the hopeful circumstances they had anticipated. Therefore, the prophets who appeared during this period declared that the restoration and reconstruction of the temple had not been fulfilled.

²⁶³ N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, Christian Origins and the Question of God (London: SPCK, 1992), 270.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied that the people of Israel would return and prosper in the land God had given to their forefathers. However, the return of the Israelites from captivity cannot be regarded as a complete fulfillment of the prophetic promise. Eighteen years had passed since Zerubbabel's return after the proclamation of the Edict of Cyrus. Even under this circumstance, the prophet Zechariah, in around 518 BC, continued to declare that Israel would be gathered from the Gentile nations: "Though I scatter them among the peoples, yet in distant lands they will remember me. They and their children will survive, and they will return" (Zech 10:9). The return from Babylonian captivity was not the final fulfillment of God's covenant with the land. Rather, the Land Covenant will only be fully achieved in the last days, when God will rule the world in its entirety.

The crucial meaning of the Second Temple period is that the messianic thought occurred at this time. In particular, Zechariah received the revelation that the man named "the Branch" would restore the temple (Zech 6:12). Haggai says, "The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house" (Hag 2:9). Haggai and Zechariah's prophecies demonstrate hope for the ultimate eschatological temple. Thus, their message in the Second Temple period indicates that the eschatological temple is more than an external building and that the Messiah will erect a future temple filled with God's glory in the restored land.

When the new community of the Israelites returned to their land, they experienced great difficulty rebuilding their nation from the heaps of destruction. They also experienced many problems caused by the famine. In this context, Haggai describes the eschatological temple that will bring the whole world into one place: "I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory" (Hag 2:7). The temple will be the center of the

king's reign in the millennial kingdom. In Haggai, the message of the eschatological restoration of the land is described with a focus on the covenant and the temple.

Solomon's temple, a symbol of God's presence, was destroyed by His judgment, but the prophet Ezekiel gave the Israelites a vision of the new temple to be restored. God created the temple through Zerubbabel, a descendant of David, and gave hope for the glorious temple that He would dwell in and rule from within the Promised Land. However, unlike Solomon's temple, the second temple built by Zerubbabel did not have the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies.²⁶⁴ The Spirit of God never entered it, as He had done with Tabernacle and Solomon's temple. Additionally, the exterior of Zerubbabel's temple was shabby. When those who remembered the appearance of the first temple lamented, God—speaking through the prophet Haggai—promised to fill the temple with greater glory than had been seen in the first temple and to give peace and restoration in the Promised Land (see Hag 2:7–9).

God promises, through Zechariah, to restore Jerusalem's lost position: "I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth, and the mountain of the LORD Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain" (Zech 8:3). Here, Zechariah prophesies that God will gather the Israelites to Jerusalem and fulfil His covenant (see Zech 8:8). He also proclaims that the rebuilding of the temple will be the foremost task of those returning from captivity. The rebuilding of the temple is emphasized in connection with Jerusalem, which will serve as the center of the world: "And many peoples and powerful nations will come to Jerusalem to seek the LORD Almighty and to entreat him" (Zech 8:42). The verse in Zechariah 8:23 should also be noted: "Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you."

²⁶⁴ Andrew E. Hill, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003), 234.

This sentence repeats the words of Abimelech in Genesis 21:22. Abimelech is the first Gentile to have a regular connection with Abraham. Zechariah confirms the faithfulness of the Land Covenant given to Abraham, revealing that God is with him and will surely fulfill the promise of the land.

The final chapter of Zechariah reveals that God will achieve the restoration in the last days. Jerusalem is threatened again, but Yahweh's intervention heralds the arrival of a new age and a renewed old creation: "It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime—a day known to the LORD. When evening comes, there will be light" (Zech 14:7). Jerusalem is again symbolized by the term "living water": "On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter" (Zech 14:8). Jerusalem becomes a place of worship for the Gentiles from all over the world, and they visit in response to Yahweh's kingship. Jerusalem is the capital of the holy land in which God dwells. Zechariah declares that God's sovereignty and reign will be restored. God will gather His scattered people in Jerusalem and protect the land forever: "It will be inhabited; never again will it be destroyed. Jerusalem will be secure" (Zech 14:11). Zechariah represents the realization of God's covenant to bring blessings to the world through Israel.

After returning from captivity, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah delivered God's message to the hopeless community. Amid political, social, and religious difficulties, the prophets Haggai and Zechariah delivered hope for the future of Israel, describing the glorious future of the temple. Their focus was not the building of the temple itself but rather God's presence and reign in the temple. In their eschatological description, they emphasize Israel and their hope for the Promised Land. The post-exilic prophets expected the fulfillment of the land

promise in the near future, but they also revealed the hope for the restoration of the land that Israel would enjoy in the last days.

The Restoration of the Land in the New Testament

God chose Israel to be His nation and began the relationship with Israel by making covenants with her. However, Israel continued to rebel against God and was eventually expelled from the Promised Land. Nevertheless, God has never abandoned Israel. David E. Holwerda explains the restoration of the land from a New Testament perspective:

The hopes for the land were centered on the city already in some of the Old Testament prophets. Jerusalem dominated the landscape of the future as the essence of the land and the symbol of the people of God. The blessings of peace, prosperity, and joy were contained within that city. The New Testament shares that focus. The virtual absence of explicit references to the land is not caused by neglect of a central theme of the Old Testament. Instead, following the lead of several Old Testament prophets, the New Testament concentrates the future on Jerusalem and the temple. In this city the inheritance of land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob finds its fulfillment.²⁶⁵

The New Testament promises a complete restoration of God's blessing with a return to the Promised Land. This includes a promise that Jesus, a descendant of David, will sit on the throne of David and reign forever at the second coming of Jesus.

Although the Israelites were expelled from their land due to the covenant curse for the Israelites' sins, God's promise to protect them forever is still valid. Fruchtenbaum states, "It was necessary to punish Israel by means of dispersion. Yet this dispersion is not final, for there will be a future restoration on the basis of the Palestinian Covenant."²⁶⁶ According to Acts 2, the Jews at the time were scattered throughout the nations: "Now there were staying in Jerusalem

²⁶⁵ David E. Holwerda, *Jesus and Israel: One Covenant or Two?* (Grand Rapids, MI; Leicester, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; Apollos, 1995), 106–7.

²⁶⁶ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 558.

God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5). The dispersion provided a catalyst for the spreading of the gospel in Acts, and God’s Word was spread among the Gentiles in this way. The Bible prophesies that, in the last days, God will restore the land according to the promise of salvation to Israel.

God promised that the Israelites would return to the Promised Land; therefore, it is essential to examine what their dispersion implies from the perspective of the New Testament. The First Jewish-Roman War is sometimes referred to as the Great Revolt. War broke out in 66 AD due to a religious conflict between the Jews and the Romans. Josephus attributes the revolution to Roman oppression, socioeconomic tensions, and religious agitation.²⁶⁷ In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus clearly prophesies a time when Jerusalem will be destroyed: “When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near” (Luke 21:20). In addition, Matthew uses a symbolic expression related to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem: “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation’” (Matt 24:15).²⁶⁸ Matthew 24 is a prophecy of the last days and reveals the events that will occur during the Great Tribulation. Passages in the book of Daniel also recount the prophecies of Matthew: “From the time that the daily sacrifice is abolished and the abomination that causes desolation is set up, there will be 1,290 days. Blessed is the one who waits for and

²⁶⁷ Adam Kolman Marshak, “From Pompey to Hadrian,” in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, eds. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 45.

²⁶⁸ Michael J. Wilkins argues, “Moving from general characteristics of this age until his return, Jesus now points to an event prophesied in Daniel 9:27, ‘the abomination that causes desolation.’ Some contend that at this point Jesus focuses exclusively on the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, while a wide spectrum of scholars hold that these events also presage a future time of eschatological defilement and destruction. The latter view is preferred here, especially when it is compared with Paul’s prediction of the eschatological man of lawlessness (2 Thess. 2:1–12) and with John’s vision of the beast in Revelation 13:11–18, which are remarkably similar to Jesus’ prophecy. Together they indicate some ‘evil, deified figure such as the AntiChrist.’” See Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew, The NIV Application Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 777.

reaches the end of the 1,335 days” (Dan 12:11–12). The specific periods in Daniel refer to events that will occur during the Great Tribulation at the end of time.

In 70 AD, after the Roman general Titus had destroyed Jerusalem, the Jews lost their nation and became scattered throughout the world. The Jews no longer seemed to exist on the stage of history. They wandered for nineteen hundred years without a country, until they gathered in 1948 to build Israel. Israel reappeared in history by building her own country in the land of Palestine, marking the first inkling of the fulfillment of the prophecy. Many verses prophesy the restoration of Israel in the New Testament. Some crucial passages in the New Testament reaffirm the restoration of Israel in the Old Testament. Israel is not destroyed forever but will be restored.

Jesus prophesied that the Romans would come and destroy the city and the temple of Jerusalem. The background of Luke 19 is Jesus riding into Jerusalem on the day called Palm Sunday or the triumphal entry. He is descending the Mount of Olives, a popular place from which people can look down onto the city of Jerusalem. Jesus is halfway down when He stops, as Luke recounts,

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you” (Luke 19:41–44).

Luke 19:41–44 is a solemn warning from Jesus concerning the coming days in Jerusalem. The city will be occupied and collapse. Jesus clearly states in Luke 19:44 that the destruction of Jerusalem will occur because the people did not recognize the time of God’s coming. The war ended in 70 AD when the Roman army led by Titus the general burned the temple and crushed

the Jewish insurgency. As a result of the defeat of their revolt, the Jewish people lost their country and were scattered throughout the Roman Empire.

The prophecy in Luke's Gospel demonstrates a clear promise of the restoration of Israel: "Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:24b). The conjunction "until" clearly reveals that Israel has a positive future and will be restored when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. The fact that these times are limited indicates that there must be subsequent times for Israel. It is the restoration of and hope for Israel that Luke proclaims. Furthermore, this passage represents a future role for Israel in God's salvation plan. From an eschatological point of view, the second coming of Jesus will be a critical point in the future. In addition to warning of the coming destruction, Jesus also indicates the restoration of Israel in the days that follow. The scattered Israelites will gather together, as Jesus promised, and play a critical role in the millennial kingdom of the future.

In Matthew 24, the disciples come to Jesus and say, "When will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" (Matt 24:3). Jesus answers, "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door" (Matt 24:32–33). In the Bible, fig trees symbolize Israel.²⁶⁹ The sign of a fig tree can be interpreted in two ways. First, when the Israelites, who have been scattered around the world, are reunited and established as a nation, one must prepare for the second coming of Jesus. The Israelites, God's people who rejected the Messiah, was driven out of the Palestinian land, but God will bring them back to the land He has promised. Second, the fig tree symbolizes the national life of Israel. In the Gospels, Jesus curses and dries up the fig tree, as the national life of

²⁶⁹ James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 449.

Israel was also to dry out. The blossoming of the fig tree thus signifies that Israel's ethnic life has been enriched.

There is another excellent example of Israel's restoration in Matthew 23:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matt 23:37–39).

Jerusalem will be scattered and desolate, and the Jewish people will be sent out to the Gentile nations, but the use of the conjunction "until" reveals that the situation and attitude of Israel will change, a conditional factor representing the significance of Israel's belief. This passage promises that the time will come when the Israelites acknowledge that Jesus, whom they rejected, is the Messiah.

In most New Testament texts, the concept of the land on which the temple resides is important. It is a symbol of God's reign over the Promised Land. The world is where God's glory is revealed. Beale notes, "The Temple—which is God's glorious presence—encompasses the whole earth on account of the consummate work of Christ."²⁷⁰ God's purpose of salvation is to restore the land, which makes the world His dwelling place.

The temple in the Bible reveals the redemptive-historical flow of God. The Bible can be understood under the notion that the temple is the dwelling place of God. The figures in the Old Testament, who appeared after Adam's sin, were the seeds for the restoration of the fallen world and temple. Genesis explicitly reveals the purpose of His creation of the world. God created the

²⁷⁰ G. K. Beale, "The Final Vision of the Apocalypse and Its Implications for a Biblical Theology of the Temple," in *Heaven on Earth*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and Simon Gathercole (Carlisle, England: Paternoster Press, 2004), 201.

universal temple and was enthroned as King over it. The concept of the temple, which begins in the Garden of Eden, leads to the New Jerusalem in Revelation.

The vision of heaven is described in both Revelation 4–5, but there are some differences: chapter 4 emphasizes God the Ruler, and chapter 5 emphasizes Jesus the Redeemer. In particular, the four living creatures around God’s throne in Revelation 4 are associated with the four creatures in Ezekiel 1. They worship God as representatives of all renewed creation. Revelation 5 says, “With your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth” (Rev 5:9b–10). Chapter 5 declares that through the death of Christ, the peoples, tribes, tongues, and nations can belong to God. Chapter 4 celebrates the creation of God, and chapter 5 proclaims the reign of God through the celebration of redemption by Jesus Christ.

The book of Revelation repeatedly describes the occurrences in the earthly and heavenly temples. The fight against evil forces must end in victory, and people are promised to enter the kingdom devoid of death, pain, and sorrow. The New Jerusalem with divine presence demonstrates a created world full of God’s presence. Since the entire New Jerusalem is a sanctuary, God, who sits on the throne in heaven, dwells on earth. The New Jerusalem has the infinite presence of God and the Lamb. The eschatological presence of God is followed by His holiness and glory. The New Jerusalem with God’s presence refers to the restoration of a new order of creation.²⁷¹ John, who proclaims God’s reign in Revelation 4–5, finally sees the completion of His reign through the new creation and the New Jerusalem in chapters 21–22. The

²⁷¹ Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 379.

last chapter of the Bible, Revelation 22, traces the biblical theme of creation and concludes with the New Jerusalem to reveal the final fulfillment of the Land Covenant.²⁷²

Salvation in the Bible is not only about going to heaven but also about the renewal of heaven and earth. It is the realization of God's plan to save not just human beings but all of creation (see Rom 8:21). Although a new heaven and a new earth will be completed in the future, people do not merely have to wait for a distant future, because God's new world is now proclaimed here.²⁷³ In addition to heaven being the place to which people are taken from this earth after their death, it is also designed to make people live in the world with God's reign upon the earth in the Promised Land.

The second coming of Jesus will reign over the nations on earth and punish them for their misbehaviors. Isaiah describes increased life expectancy in the millennial kingdom: "Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed" (Isa 65:20). The extended lifespan in Isaiah 65:20 must be fulfilled in an era distinct from the present age. The millennial kingdom still has births, deaths, sins, and nights, which are followed by the eternal state, wherein none of those things exist.

Revelation 21 describes a new heaven and a new earth: "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea" (Rev 21:1). A new heaven and a new earth do not mean the renewal of the first heaven and the first earth but rather the creation of a new order that is essentially different. God will be present in the new heaven and the new earth, and His reign will be complete. Sin and death

²⁷² Mounce, *The Book of Revelation*, 381.

²⁷³ Ladd, *The Presence of the Future*, 294.

entered the first heaven and the first earth through man's fall and became places that resisted God. This heaven and this earth anticipate the eschatological day of redemption, when sin and death will be completely removed, which is the eternal state.

In the Bible, the sea symbolizes various things, but in the book of Revelation, the sea appears in association with Satan: "And the dragon stood on the shore of the sea. And I saw a beast coming out of the sea. He had ten horns and seven heads, with ten crowns on his horns, and on each head a blasphemous name" (Rev 13:1). Waters such as the Red Sea and the Jordan River blocked the Israelites' way on their journey to the Promised Land. The absence of any sea indicates that waters will no longer hinder the path of the saints who are united with God and that they will no longer be tempted and ruled by Satan in a new heaven and a new earth.

Conclusion

It is important to note that the Palestinian Covenant is distinct from the Mosaic Covenant. As Jesus prophesied, Jerusalem was destroyed by the Roman general Titus in 70 AD. The nation of Israel suffered another destruction of Jerusalem and the temple less than half a century after Jesus had ascended. At that time, the Jews in rebellion against the Roman empire intensified the conflict, which led to a war known as the First Jewish-Roman War. The temple was entirely destroyed, and the Israelites were expelled from their land.

The nation of Israel had fallen into corruption and serious sin, ultimately receiving the terrible judgment. The Assyrian and Babylonian exiles had broken the Old Covenant. For the Israelites' sins, they were scattered, but in the Land Covenant, God promised to restore them and fulfill His covenant through them. The blessing or curse of Israel can be explained in relation to the promise of the land. God established Israel as His holy people and said that His promises would be more firmly established if they obeyed His commandments in the Promised Land.

There is no nation under God's reign except Israel. The recurrence of the promise regarding the land throughout the Bible demonstrates God's strong will to achieve the covenant.

Jesus foretold that Jerusalem would be trampled and ruled by the gentiles. Indeed, many foreign countries have occupied and ruled it. His prophecy, which seems to be a desperate message to Israel, is in fact a clear proclamation regarding the restoration of Israel. God chose Israel and made the Palestinian Covenant with her with unconditional grace. He did not invalidate His covenant, even when the Israelites sinned against God and abandoned Him. God's separation from Israel was not permanent. God forsook the Israelites temporarily to train His people and bring them back to the Promised Land and to His salvation. The prophets declared that, since the Israelites were God's chosen people, God would not destroy them and would surely restore their land. God promised that the restored Israel of the future would be tremendous. Therefore, the Israelites will restore their land and their spirit in the last days.

CHAPTER FIVE: DAVIDIC COVENANT

Introduction

The people of the Old Testament believed that God was involved in history. He was understood as the ruler of history and the Savior of the nation of Israel in crisis. Naturally, the Israelites expected those anointed by God to intervene in their time of trouble. God appointed a representative to rule the country, a king in the Old Testament. The mission of a king was to realize the will of God in his rule (see Deut 17:18–20). He was chosen in a special relationship with God. Being a king meant being God’s special choice and being anointed.

The term “Messiah” comes from the Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ, which means “the anointed one or chosen one.”²⁷⁴ In *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, Marinus de Jonge states, “the term [Messiah] going back to *Messias*, a Gk form (John 1:41; 4:25) of the Heb *māšîah*, denoting an anointed person. Hebrew *hammāšîah* (Aram *mēšîhā*), ‘the Messiah,’ is usually translated in Gk with *ho christos*, the Christ.”²⁷⁵ It was a term referring to kings, priests, and prophets endowed with divine authority.²⁷⁶ The word “Messiah” is not used in the Old Testament as the title of the ideal leader of the future kingdom. Rather, it is used to describe a person distinguished by God for a particular purpose.

2 Samuel reveals the covenant between God and David: “When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I

²⁷⁴ Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: Messianic Prophecy Objections*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003), 190.

²⁷⁵ Marinus de Jonge, “Messiah,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 4, eds. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 777.

²⁷⁶ Michael Welker, *God the Revealed: Christology*, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013), 258.

will establish the throne of his kingdom forever” (2 Sam 7:12–13). God said that one of the descendants of David would build a house for God. This prophecy was primarily fulfilled by Solomon and will be ultimately achieved through Jesus Christ.

God promised to protect the Davidic dynasty and Jerusalem. The Israelites believed that David had more power and goodness than any other king. He was a servant of God and was remembered as the king of God, who did justice to all the people. According to 2 Samuel 7:16, “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (2 Sam 7:16). The special relationship between God and David was thus to last forever—continuing with David’s descendants. However, with the fall of the kings after David, the Davidic line seemed to collapse. When the Southern Kingdom of Judah was destroyed by Babylon, it became impossible for kings to appear. During the Babylonian exile, the Israelites did not expect the Messiah as the King of the earth, but they longed for care and salvation under God’s rule. Nonetheless, due to the unconditionality of God’s covenant, God would protect the Davidic dynasty and send the Messiah from a descendant of David, who would save all people.

Recognizing the promise that David’s house and throne will be forever is crucial for understanding the Davidic Covenant. The New Testament states that the one who fulfills this prophecy is Jesus, a descendant of David:

But the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end” (Luke 1:30–33).

In Luke 1, there is an explicit promise that Jesus will have an eternal house, throne, and kingdom. The angel’s message to Mary concerning the birth of Jesus Christ proves the content of

the covenant. The only one who can fulfill the Davidic Covenant is Jesus because all other descendants of David except Jesus have finite bodies and sinful natures.

This chapter will trace the development of the messianic idea in relation to the Davidic Covenant. In particular, the research will examine how the idea of the Messiah developed from Old Testament revelation and came to influence the early church in the New Testament era. It will also discuss how the messianic prophecies of the Davidic Covenant in the Old Testament were fulfilled in the New Testament and how they influenced the formation of Christology. Accordingly, this process will clarify the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant more clearly.

The Davidic Covenant in the Old Testament

With the advent of biblical criticism, many people began to reject biblical miracles and wonders that were not understood and explained by human reason.²⁷⁷ Some biblical critics argue that the messages of the prophets were not written by the authors of the time, but were edited and recorded by later generations in their historical context.²⁷⁸ There have been many attempts to disparage the truthfulness of the prophecies, but these criticisms distort the Bible's message and make it impossible to understand the nature of the prophecies. If one views the prophetic books without considering the messianic thought, the Bible loses its consistency and becomes a meaningless message. In-depth study of the prophetic books reveals the core ideas of the Bible and God's love for the whole world.

²⁷⁷ David Alan Black and David S. Dockery, *Interpreting the New Testament: Essays on Methods and Issues* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 507.

²⁷⁸ C. M. Toffelmire, "Form Criticism," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, eds. Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 260.

Following the emergence of liberalism in the eighteenth century, critics who emphasized the rational interpretation of the Bible focused only on historical Jesus and denied that He was the Messiah. They contradicted the completion of the redemptive ministry through Jesus's suffering and resurrection and destroyed the supernaturalism of Christianity by rejecting the revelation of the Bible. However, the Old Testament clearly prophesies Jesus and contains the Davidic Covenant to send the Messiah from David's descendants to redeem His chosen people.

The Old Testament is a book of promise that consistently reveals God's salvation plan. The prophecies in the prophetic books are not merely messages to the Israelites. They connect the Old and New Testaments by prophesying the coming Messiah. The proper interpretation of the Major Prophets and Minor Prophets reveals the Old Testament messianic thought and the restoration of Israel. The prophets speak of the Messiah from David's throne in the form of a covenant to save all humans from the death of sin and lead them to eternal life. The true meaning of the message of the prophets is revealed when understood in connection with Jesus Christ.

Among the prophetic books, Isaiah is the most frequently cited in the New Testament and has exceptional literary and theological value. In the Qumran documents and rabbinic literature, Isaiah is used with overwhelming frequency, compared to other prophetic books. Vlach adds, "Isaiah 2 addresses the coming kingdom and the roles of Israel and the nations in it. It predicts international harmony among nations as a result of Messiah's reign from Jerusalem."²⁷⁹ Isaiah serves as the primary support for the major theological themes of Judaism and messianic thought, evidencing the importance of Jerusalem.

²⁷⁹ Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 146.

The book of Isaiah describes the destruction of Israel, but it also contains the message that Israel will be restored.²⁸⁰ A distinctive feature of Isaiah's message of restoration and salvation is that the Messiah, who will save all humanity, including Israel, is predicted in various ways. Isaiah's message declares that God's salvation will dominate the world in its entirety. Andrew T. Abernethy's *The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom* provides a logical ground for understanding Isaiah and its connection with Jesus by examining the theme of the kingdom of God in Isaiah. Abernethy relates the expectations of the coming Messiah in Isaiah to the vision of God as king and the establishment of His kingdom.²⁸¹ Understanding the essence of Isaiah will allow people a richer experience of God's love and will for the world.

Abernethy attempts to interpret Isaiah consistently, rather than focusing on the historical formation of the book. The author explains the book in subdivisions of Isaiah 1–39, 40–55, and 55–66 and shows its consistency.²⁸² He begins with Isaiah's vision of the throne of God in Isaiah 1–39, where God is described as the only King and the One who makes impartial judgments of His people. In Isaiah 40–55, he portrays God as the only King of salvation. God appears as a shepherd, leading His people from dangerous wilderness onto good land. In Isaiah 56–66, God is described as a warrior and compassionate King who will rule all nations from the eschatological point of view.²⁸³

²⁸⁰ Ben Witherington III, *Isaiah Old and New: Exegesis, Intertextuality, and Hermeneutics* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 223.

²⁸¹ Andrew T. Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom: A Thematic—Theological Approach*, ed. D. A. Carson, vol. 40, *New Studies in Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL; London: Apollos; InterVarsity Press, 2016), 119.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 114.

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, 83.

King Ahaz feared the kings of Aram and Israel and sought military and political help from Assyria to face the two neighbors of the north. In this context, Isaiah's references to the ruler of justice and righteousness reveal the messianic image. Isaiah uses the metaphors of "the Branch of the LORD" (Isaiah 4:2) and "the Stump" (Isaiah 6:13) to describe the Messiah. Isaiah was born into an environment that emphasized the special relationship between God and David. In Isaiah 7, he explains the nature of the house of David and argues that its stability depends on God. The God of Immanuel will be with the Israelites in suffering and will keep His promise to save them.

Among the prophecies related to the Messiah, Isaiah 7:14 contains the message about the birth of Jesus Christ. Isaiah proclaims that a baby will be born in the future, connecting this message to the salvation of a nation. Some scholars have argued that this passage does not concern the birth of the Messiah and that Matthew's quotation of this verse is due to a misinterpretation of the Bible. The Hebrew word *הַעַלְמָה* can be translated as "the young woman."²⁸⁴ Some theologians believe that this woman lived in the eighth century BC and will not appear in the future.²⁸⁵ Opposing this viewpoint, Michael L. Brown argues,

It would be fair to say, however, that the birth of the child has something to do with the future of the house of David, since (1) the main threat of Israel and Aram, Judah's enemies in this chapter, was that they would oust the Davidic king and put their own man on the throne; (2) the Lord specifically says he will give a sign to the unbelieving house of David, and that sign has to do with the birth of a son; and (3) the following chapters, especially 9 and 11, contain some of the most significant Messianic prophecies in the Bible, focusing on the birth and supernatural reign of a new Davidic king.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ "Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman (*הַעַלְמָה*) is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel" (Isa 7:14, *NRSV*).

²⁸⁵ Gregory W. Dawes, *Introduction to the Bible*, vol. 1, The New Collegeville Bible Commentary, ed. Daniel Durken (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2007), 56.

²⁸⁶ Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, vol. 3, 19–20.

Isaiah describes the true meaning of the birth of the Messiah. God's redemptive work has proceeded without failure or momentary interruption, as He intended from the beginning, despite the disobedience of man, because God's grace is infinite.

Isaiah 9 introduces the enthronement of the new Davidic king as a savior for Israel in darkness through the Assyrian invasion.²⁸⁷ Isaiah is convinced that a unified kingdom, ruled by an ideal king such as David, will be established because it is only under the just rule of the Davidic king that Israel could return to a unified state. This chapter describes the darkness of the conditions in which Ahaz and the people of Judah distrust and reject the promises given to David. The mentions of darkness here emphasize the need for light, and this light will mark the birth of the Messiah and indicate that His royal rule is to be fulfilled.

Isaiah 9 provides the background to Hezekiah's throne and predicts the coming of the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah. God will end all war and liberate His people from the heavy yoke: "For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor" (Isa 9:4). True freedom and peace will be fully achieved through Jesus Christ.²⁸⁸ In the kingdom ruled by Jesus Christ, God's justice and peace will be eternal. Israel's salvation does not simply mean liberation from Assyria's oppression and threats; it is a salvation in which the truth of Immanuel—that God is with us—is fully realized through the coming of the Messiah.

²⁸⁷ J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 99.

²⁸⁸ Edward Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–18*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 346.

Isaiah 9:1–7 prophesies the birth of the Messiah and His reign, proclaiming that God’s people will be restored from darkness and suffering.²⁸⁹ The lands of Zebulun and Naphtali were occupied and desolated by Tiglath-Pileser III, the king of Assyria, and those living there endured days of pain and sorrow because of the invasion. Isaiah proclaims that God will glorify the despised land. Therefore, the theological meaning contained in this prophetic poetry is the restoration from the war and the coming of the Messiah. Isaiah not only represents the miserable situation and the suffering of invasion but also reveals the gloomy condition of mankind, living in sin before the arrival of the Messiah. Isaiah proclaims that the people will eventually see a great light, representing God’s presence and the restoration of life through the coming of the Messiah.

The prophecy of the Messiah in Isaiah 9 begins with the declaration that there will be no more darkness for those who have suffered. It proclaims that light, peace, and joy will be provided by the birth and rule of the Messiah and that a light will shine on those walking in darkness. In Isaiah 9, light and darkness are contrasted and emphasized. The word “darkness” has a symbolic meaning of despair, sadness, pain, and tribulation.²⁹⁰ It refers to a state in which there is no light of life and hope for the future is lost. A streak of light appears suddenly to those living in darkness. The people in darkness are thus given the freedom of light and rescued from oppression. The transition from darkness to light comes with the dawning of the light of hope. Isaiah 9:2 declares that people liberated from political oppression and sin will accept God’s salvation. Isaiah prophesies that those who suffer in the darkness of Assyrian domination will no

²⁸⁹ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 100.

²⁹⁰ Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary*, 2nd ed., eds. Peter Ackroyd et al., trans. John Bowden, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1983), 207.

longer endure despair, as a great light will come upon them. This great light symbolizes the end of their terrible darkness.

Isaiah 9:1–7 is a coronation prophecy addressing the throne of a new Davidic king. This section is prophetic poetry based on the spirit of Psalm 72, written by Isaiah, when Hezekiah, a descendant of David, ascended to the throne. Isaiah objected to Hezekiah’s attempt to engage war against Assyria. The end of the war is possible solely by God, not by people. With its literary style, the text can be defined as a hymn of praise.²⁹¹ This text praises the coming king, who will shine upon the powerless in their darkness. Isaiah 9:1–7 proclaims a new situation for the people cast in the light of God. The passage also praises God’s action to end the war by freeing the people from oppression. Thus, the text is a prophecy of the coming Messiah and the commencement of His reign.

The people are delighted by the dramatic change from darkness to light. In Isaiah 9:4–6, the specific grounds for the people’s joy are introduced. In verse 4, they are said to rejoice because the yoke of slavery has been broken by God’s redemption of His people.²⁹² The yoke, the bar, and the rod signify the hard lives of the Israelites, suffering tax burdens and forced labor. This verse declares that God has defeated the oppressor and given His people their freedom. Isaiah 9:5 introduces the second reason for the people’s rejoicing. God grants them freedom by ultimately ending their oppression and the war.²⁹³ They rejoice and enjoy freedom because their yoke is broken and they—the people who have been living in darkness—have received salvation.

²⁹¹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 242.

²⁹² Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 101.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

Isaiah 9:6 begins with the Hebrew word *וְ*. This is translated as “for,” used to introduce a climatic sentence.²⁹⁴ Although King Hezekiah’s political and military powers cannot be used to achieve God’s redemptive plan, his throne signifies the Messiah’s salvation. At the time that this messianic prophecy was proclaimed, the Davidic dynasty of Judah was in danger of disappearing, as the Gentile nations attempted to eliminate it through the Syro-Ephraimite War. God broke the yoke of the people and removed their burden and oppression by ending the war.²⁹⁵

In Isaiah 9:1–7, the perfect tenses are used as being future to the prophet’s day. In other words, they are prophetic perfects, as designated by Oswalt in his commentary:

All these events are manifestly in the future from the prophet’s point of view, yet the verbs are all in the perfect tense. Apparently these are prophetic perfects. Isaiah has a point of view different from the normal one. In the uncertainty of his own milieu he nonetheless can look at a future moment and describe its events with the certainty of completed actions.²⁹⁶

The prophet Isaiah confirms that the Davidic Covenant is fulfilled by Jesus. The expressions “a child” and “a son” in Isaiah 9:6 have a symbolic meaning. It is difficult to find a verse in the Old Testament that celebrates the birth of the king’s baby. According to the royal psalms, the king is proclaimed to be the Son of God: “You are my son; today I have become your father” (Ps 2:7b). The title “son” thus signifies that God has adopted as the Messiah a king who was a descendant of David.²⁹⁷

Isaiah contains the most explicit and diverse records in the Old Testament of the prophecies concerning the Messiah. Isaiah says, “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;

²⁹⁴ Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–18*, vol. 1, 329.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁶ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, 242–3.

²⁹⁷ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 103.

from his roots a Branch will bear fruit” (Isa 11:1). The messianic text of the Old Testament is essential for understanding the relationship between the Old and New Testaments and for exploring early Jewish messianic thought. The central tenet of the Old Testament is that the Messiah will come to fulfill this prophecy. The Messiah was used primarily as a title for a king, but over time it began to refer to a savior sent by God. Isaiah’s prophecy regarding the Messiah includes a common hope and emphasis on the salvation and restoration of Israel through the Messiah who will come from the descendants of David.

Assyria destroyed Israel, and Israel seemed to have no hope. However, the branch from the stump of Jesse conveyed the hope of the messianic kingdom by symbolizing the potential for revival of the Davidic kingdom for the northern ten tribes.²⁹⁸ Isaiah 11:1 provides an image of the future, depicting the revival and resurrection of the Davidic dynasty. The stump עֲצָב in Isaiah 11:1 represents a broken dynasty and the troubled times under the rule of Ahaz.²⁹⁹ The “shoot” הַקֵּץ and “branch” גֶּזֶר do not spring from the new dynasty, but from the existing stump or roots. This verse predicts the emergence of a new life and of a ruler from the descendants of Jesse to restore Israel. The words “shoot” and “stump” are also used in Job 14: “At least there is hope for a tree: If it is cut down, it will sprout again, and its new shoots will not fail. Its roots may grow old in the ground and its stump die in the soil, yet at the scent of water it will bud and put forth shoots like a plant” (Job 14:7–9). All the words used in Isaiah and Job describe the resuscitation of dead life, representing the restoration of the Davidic dynasty.

²⁹⁸ Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, 121.

²⁹⁹ John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, rev. ed., vol. 24, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2005), 209.

Isaiah 11 reveals the peace and coexistence of creation. All the conflict and destruction caused by human sin will disappear under the rule of the Messiah. The order of creation, initially intended by God, will be restored to the world. Isaiah proclaims that the world will be filled with knowledge of God, indicating that the world ruled by the Messiah will involve spiritual and personal relationships with God. Through the shedding of the blood, the Messiah will take away all human sins and oppression.

The historical context of Isaiah 11 is the same as that of Isaiah 9. The appearance of the Messiah in chapter 9 culminates in chapter 11. The expectation of the Messiah, which is only a hope in chapter 9, is further strengthened in Isaiah 11:1–9. Just as the “Prince of Peace” in chapter 9 sits and reigns on David’s throne, the ruler promised in chapter 11 also has its origins in David.

It is noteworthy that Isaiah uses the expression “the stump of Jesse” in verse 1. Other verses related to the Messiah refer to David, but there is a particular reason for mentioning Jesse here. Jesse’s family was in a state of collapse, and the name “Jesse” was used to express the lowliness of the family—as opposed to “David,” who had made Jesse’s family great.³⁰⁰ The expression reflects the paradoxical image of the birth of the most exalted person in an entirely humble place.

Isaiah 11:1–9 reveals that the Messiah, King of Israel, comes as a descendant of David to save the world. Verse 1, “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse,” means that David’s throne will be restored. The role of the Messiah is not limited to Israel and must be extended to

³⁰⁰ Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 1–39*, vol. 15A, *The New American Commentary*, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2007), 270–1.

the whole world. He will bring all nations to Himself, establish His kingdom, ultimately destroy all evil powers, and give salvation to all who believe in Him.

Isaiah 11:1–5 refer to the rulership of the future king, symbolizing the Messiah, and Isaiah 11:6–9 mention the coming of the kingdom of peace through the Messiah. Verses 6–9 describe the peace arising with the advent of the kingdom of peace, ruled by the Messiah. This section proclaims the peace of the messianic reign. All evil forces will disappear with the advent of the kingdom of peace through the Messiah. A vulnerable young child leading a ferocious predator indicates that, through the Messiah, the power to rule over all creatures given by God in the beginning will be restored.

Among the kings who ruled at the time of the prophet Isaiah, there was none who ruled over a nation with righteousness and justice. Witherington III notes, “The Messiah is viewed as God’s eschatological agent who will be victorious against Israel’s enemies and will then rule with wisdom (Isaiah 11:1–5).”³⁰¹ Isaiah anticipated the Messiah, who would come as the King and the true Savior. When the king who will succeed David’s throne comes and does justice, he will give respite to all humanity by ruling the world with righteousness.

The primary concern of the kings who ruled over Israel was maintaining their powers, not glorifying and obeying God. Isaiah clearly reveals how the Messiah differs from the evil rulers by listing the characteristics of messianic rule.³⁰² The Messiah’s reign will be defined by “wisdom,” “understanding,” “counsel,” “might,” “knowledge,” and “the fear of the LORD.” Isaiah 11:1–9 repeatedly emphasizes that the fear of the LORD will have an important meaning

³⁰¹ Witherington III, *Isaiah Old and New*, 38.

³⁰² In the Southern Kingdom of Judah, Hezekiah and Josiah are considered good kings. They led the people to turn away from idolatry and recognize the covenant promises God had made to them.

during the reign of the Messiah. Unlike the kings of the world, the Messiah will examine and judge the hearts of all with righteousness and peace and restore the rights of the oppressed.³⁰³ He will establish the justice and truth of the kingdom of God by punishing injustice, falsehood, and unfaithfulness.

Isaiah 11:5 demonstrates the messianic ruling authority. The Hebrew words translated as “righteousness” and “faithfulness” are צְדָקָה and אֱמֻנָה. These two qualities are the essential characteristics of a good king.³⁰⁴ The first word refers to righteous rule over the poor and needy. The second word indicates the policy and political action that restrains those who violate and break contractual principles. The king must be a mediator, practicing God’s justice and restraining the wicked.³⁰⁵

Isaiah 11:6–8 exemplify how the community ruled by the Messiah is changed. The world of righteousness and justice, where the wicked are restrained and the needy are cared for, is a paradise, like the Garden of Eden. In this world, chaos will disappear and the idyllic peace of the Garden of Eden will return. In the kingdom ruled by the Messiah, the wolf, the lamb, the leopard, the goat, the calf, the lion, the yearling, and the young child coexist peacefully. The messianic kingdom is a country of perfect peace. A society in which righteousness and justice are realized can achieve unity and reconciliation between people. Isaiah regards the establishment of righteousness and justice as a prerequisite for restoring the political and theological ideals of the Davidic kingdom.

³⁰³ H. G. M. Williamson, “Isaiah: Book of,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, eds. Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 365.

³⁰⁴ Watts, *Isaiah 1–33*, 210.

³⁰⁵ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 1–39*, 282.

The notion of the Messiah in Isaiah is the fulfillment of God's covenant for all humanity.

The servant in Isaiah and the Davidic kingdom have a deep connection. Regarding this issue,

Gordon H. Johnston states,

The term "servant" is often a royal title in ancient Near Eastern literature. It also functions this way in the Hebrew Bible where people like David, Nebuchadnezzar, the ideal Davidic king, and the Branch are called "My servant." If the Servant, who is depicted as a royal figure in the Servant Songs, is not the ideal Davidic king of Isaiah 11:1–16, then who is he?³⁰⁶

The promise of God to save all humankind gradually evolved through the Old Testament and appeared as a concept of the Messiah. With their desire for the arrival of the Messiah, the Israelites waited for the King to come and establish an eternal kingdom. The name "Messiah" refers to the one anointed to fulfill God's mission.

Hosea 3 depicts the symbolic act of Hosea loving his wife, Gomer, and buying her back from enslavement. Gomer symbolizes the idolatry and spiritual corruption of the Israelites. She married Hosea but committed adultery. Hosea actively shows God's love for Gomer and for Israel. Hosea 3 concludes by revealing that Jesus Christ will come from the descendants of David: "Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the LORD their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the LORD and to his blessings in the last days" (Hos 3:5). He will fulfill all the promises of redemption in these last days. God's plan to send the Messiah is revealed in Hosea 3.

Micah 5:2 is a verse prophesying that Christ the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem.

Brown introduces the differences between and controversies in the various interpretations of this verse. He explains why this verse must be referring to the coming Messiah. He argues, "So then,

³⁰⁶ Gordon H. Johnston, "Messianic Trajectories in Isaiah," in *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King*, eds. Herbert W. Bateman IV, Darrell L. Bock, and Gordon H. Johnston (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 166.

Micah 5:2(1) can also be understood as pointing to the Messiah's eternal nature, undergirding our reading of Isaiah 9:6[5] as pointing to the Messiah's divinity."³⁰⁷ In the grim situation of Assyria's powerful army insulting Judah, Micah sees God's vision that the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem. Just as David came out of Bethlehem in the past, God will raise the messianic King from that town once again to succeed David's lineage.

The book of Jeremiah describes the hope for a future Davidic king who will rule the world with justice and righteousness.³⁰⁸ The chapters discussing the hope for King David are Jeremiah 23 and 33. Here, the repeated mentions of David demonstrate that the message to be conveyed in this section is the Davidic Covenant. The Israelites broke the Mosaic Covenant by sinning, but the covenant and the relationship with God will be restored through the Davidic Covenant.

The expression "the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of pasture" in Jeremiah 23:1 refers to the kings and leaders who caused the destruction of the people of Judah. Despite the duty of the shepherds to take care of the sheep, they sinned, fell into corruption, and became involved in religious syncretism. As a result, the Northern and Southern Kingdoms were destroyed and the people taken into captivity. In the desperate situation, Jeremiah prophesied the birth of the Messiah from David's lineage: "When I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land" (Jer 23:5). The expression "a righteous Branch" in Jeremiah 23:5 describes the birth of the Messiah from David's

³⁰⁷ Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, vol. 3, 40.

³⁰⁸ D. G. Firth, "Messiah," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Prophets*, eds. Mark J. Boda and Gordon J. McConville (Downers Grove, IL; Nottingham, England: IVP Academic; Inter-Varsity Press, 2012), 541.

lineage.³⁰⁹ The verse primarily foretells the return of Judah's remnants, who were taken captive to the Gentile nations, and ultimately predicts the coming of the Messiah to rule the world with wisdom, righteousness, and justice.

Jeremiah describes the one who will come to rule with justice as David's descendant.³¹⁰ The Messiah will come and restore everything, as predicted by the Davidic Covenant: "In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch sprout from David's line; he will do what is just and right in the land" (Jer 33:15). Jeremiah 33 and Isaiah 11 both proclaim the restoration of Israel through the branch from David's line. The two chapters declare the hope for justice and righteousness and that this restoration will establish the eternal kingdom ruled by the Messiah.

God rebukes Israel's leaders for neglecting their responsibilities and duties in Ezekiel 34. God promises to send the good shepherd to care for and restore the flocks of Israel: "I will place over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd" (Ezek 34:23). This verse heralds the advent of a new shepherd that God will raise. The expression "one shepherd" emphasizes the uniqueness of the new shepherd, and at the same time, suggests the unity of the divided Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Ezekiel also says, "I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken" (Ezek 34:24). This verse foretells the coming of Jesus Christ through the line of David.

Ezekiel is told to combine the two sticks representing the two tribes of Judah and Joseph into one stick (see Ezek 37:16–19). The divided Northern and Southern Kingdoms will be reunited under God's servant David: "My servant David will be king over them, and they will all

³⁰⁹ Gordon H. Johnston, "Messianic Trajectories in Zechariah," in *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King*, eds. Herbert W. Bateman IV, Darrell L. Bock, and Gordon H. Johnston (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Academic, 2012), 197.

³¹⁰ Gregory Goswell, "The Hermeneutics of the Haftarah," *Tyndale Bulletin* 58, no. 1 (2007): 91.

have one shepherd. They will follow my laws and be careful to keep my decrees” (Ezek 37:24). This is God’s everlasting covenant, and it will last forever (see Ezek 37:25–26).

The book of Haggai presents the theme of rebuilding the temple and concludes with a focus on Zerubbabel, a descendant of David. Through the prophet Haggai, God foretells the blessing of Zerubbabel. He promises to judge the Gentile nations and exalt Zerubbabel (see Hag 2:21–23). Zerubbabel typifies Jesus Christ, confirming the promise that the Messiah will come from the line of David. Haggai gives hope that God’s covenant with David will be fulfilled, despite the destruction of Judah.

Zechariah is a prophet and contemporary of Haggai, encouraging the people of Judah to rebuild the temple with God’s Word. Zechariah prophesies that the eternal king of salvation will come to save the people of Israel: “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey” (Zech 9:9). This prophecy of Zechariah 9:9 is realized in Matthew 21, when the crowds shout to Jesus, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” (Matt 21:9). The prophecy of Zechariah points to the Messiah, who will come as a descendant of David.

The messianic concept found in Zechariah 12:10 is well represented in the word “pierced.” The Messiah is pierced by the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who represent the whole of Israel. The man who is “pierced” in Zechariah 12:10 attempts to restore the relationship with God and the sheep, but he is rejected and killed by the sheep. The Messiah’s death is the basis of the atonement for Israel’s sin. This concept of the atonement is similar to that found in Isaiah 53: “But he was wounded (מְחַלְלֵנוּ) for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed” (Isa 53:5, *NRSV*). The verb חָלַל used in Zechariah 12:10 is different from the one

appearing in Isaiah 53:5, but their meanings are clearly related in that the death of the pierced Messiah opens the door of salvation. Zechariah says, “On that day a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and impurity” (Zech 13:1), which indicates that the Messiah, who will come as the Son of David, will cleanse the sins of humankind and save them.

Studying not only the Prophets but also other parts of the Old Testament that prophesy the Messiah is important. For example, Psalm 132 is a chapter affirming the covenant between God and David.³¹¹ In any crisis, God will protect David’s dynasty and Jerusalem. God established a covenant with David that will not be broken and must ultimately be fulfilled. Significant parts of the Davidic Covenant have been realized, but substantial parts are waiting to be fulfilled with the second coming of Jesus, which is consistent with the two comings of Jesus comprising the fulfillment of Old Testament promises and covenants that unfold in phases. This is not surprising because the Davidic Covenant is a multi-faceted covenant composed of several aspects.³¹² Vlach states, “Those who espouse an “already/not yet” view of the Davidic Covenant often assert that Jesus’ Davidic kingdom reign was inaugurated with His first coming, yet the full fulfillment of the covenant awaits His second coming.”³¹³ The theological concept of “already/not yet” signifies that believers are partaking in the kingdom of God, but the kingdom will not achieve its full expression until Jesus returns to install it upon the earth.

The royal psalms (see Psalms 2, 21, 45, 89, 110, 132, and 144) praise God, who reigns as King of kings, and ask Him to be forever with David and his descendants. The psalmists sing of

³¹¹ Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum, *God’s Kingdom through God’s Covenants: A Concise Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015), 192.

³¹² Vlach, *He Will Reign Forever*, 575–6.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 569.

the reign and sovereignty of God. Ultimately, the royal psalms are a prophecy of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David. These psalms proclaim the future rule of Jesus Christ. They are a promise to those oppressed by the wicked. The royal songs declare that Jesus Christ will reign as King and fulfill His kingdom on earth.

The Davidic Covenant in the Qumran Documents

The Development of the Messianic Idea in the Qumran Community

The Qumran community consisted of Jews who developed their faith through the interpretation and application of the Pentateuch. The community members considered the Pentateuch to be the most authoritative book and believed that true faith was manifest through strict adherence to the law. Those who had faith in the Pentateuch regarded God as the Creator and Savior of Israel, who had made the covenant with Israel.

The community's members recognized it as the only community to know God's eternal secret found in the Pentateuch and the Prophets. They believed that God had sent the Teacher of Righteousness to them to establish the Qumran community: "And as for that which He said, *That he who reads may read it speedily*: interpreted this concerns the Teacher of Righteousness, to whom God made known all the mysteries of the words of His servants the Prophets" (1QpHab VII).³¹⁴ They considered their interpretation of the Bible to be the genuine truth of God's mystery.

According to the Damascus Document (CD), a priest known as the Teacher of Righteous was selected for this community: "God observed their deeds, that they sought Him with a whole heart, and He raised for them the Teacher of Righteousness to guide them in the way of His

³¹⁴ Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, rev. and ext. 4th ed. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 343.

heart.”³¹⁵ He was likely a high priest in the Jerusalem temple. Some people opposed the Teacher of Righteousness and attempted to kill him, but he returned to Judea to form a community with the Jews who had supported him. The Qumran community’s historical experience and exclusive self-regulation led to a negative attitude toward the present and the world. Their background led them to ideas of predestination, dualism, apocalyptic eschatology, and messianic thought. Like other Jews of the time, the Qumran community believed that the prophet would appear before the final war, as was the judgment of God, based on Malachi: “See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes” (Mal 4:5). The Qumran community thought that the prophet would come first, followed by the Messiah.

Many terms used in the Dead Sea Scrolls refer to the Messiah. The Qumran literature, which contains messianic content, is vital because it reveals the early Jewish messianic thought. With this basic understanding of messianic thought, it is crucial to examine the origin and development of the messianic idea in the Qumran documents. The Qumran community awaited two types of Messiah, namely the Messiah of Israel and the Messiah of Aaron: “The expression ‘messiahs of Aaron and Israel’ in 1QS is actually unique. A closely related expression, ‘the messiah of Aaron and Israel’ (משיח אהרון וישראל), is found three times in the Damascus Document (CD 12:23, 14:19, and 19:10), and in CD 20:1 we have the expression ‘a messiah from Aaron and from Israel’ (משיח מאהרון ומישראל).”³¹⁶ The community members believed that the two Messiahs would arrive together, before God’s judgment. The Messiah of Israel and the Messiah of Aaron would preside over the messianic banquet after the end of the war. Lawrence

³¹⁵ Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 97.

³¹⁶ John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 80.

H. Schiffman and Chaim Potok add, “This new community would then gather together for the messianic banquet, presumably in the aftermath of the great war between the Sons of Light and the Sons of Darkness.”³¹⁷ For the community members, a communal meal was an eschatological ritual and a foretaste of the coming messianic era.

The Bible implies that Jesus is the leader who rules, protects, and leads the community based on Daniel: “He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshipped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed” (Dan 7:14). This concept influenced the Qumran Documents in the Second Temple period. The Qumran community left the secularized temple, lived in seclusion, and waited for the Messiah, gathered around the Teacher of Righteousness. The community members understood that the Teacher of Righteousness ruled, guided, and protected the community and regarded it as the true temple in which God dwelled.³¹⁸

For many years, the Jewish nation was under the control of foreign countries, and the Israelites had lived without freedom. They had lost hope of emancipation by humanity and believed that God’s intervention in human history was the only possible path to liberation. This is well expressed in the Jewish apocalyptic literature as the arrival of the kingdom of God and the hope for the coming Messiah.

The messianic ideas of the Qumran community can be found in the biblical grounds for the division of the roles between the political leader Moses and the high priest Aaron during the nation’s infancy, and Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, and Joshua, the high priest, in the

³¹⁷ Lawrence H. Schiffman and Chaim Potok, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Lost Library of Qumran* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1994), 331.

³¹⁸ Hans K. LaRondelle and Jon Paulien, *The Bible Jesus Interpreted* (Loma Linda, CA: Jon Paulien, 2014), 26.

Persian period. The Teacher of Righteousness, the founder and high priest of the Qumran community, died without a successor, and the community members did not elect one, which may have been a factor in their waiting for the Messiah of Aaron to become the high priest.³¹⁹

The Qumran community's messianic thought did not concern only a long-awaited future, but also the hope of restoring the authority of the Teacher of Righteousness. The messianic expectations of the community members were a manifestation of a strong hope for a leader as a priest who would lead them politically, militarily, and religiously, which reflected the situation of the Qumran community at that time.

In 1947, a discovery marked a turn of eras in biblical study. Edwin M. Yamauchi states, "A Bedouin in search of a lost goat discovered the cave at Qumran which contained the Dead Sea Scrolls."³²⁰ Approximately 930 manuscripts were discovered in eleven caves from 1947 to 1956, and they are known today as "Qumran." The Qumran documents have allowed scholars to explore new areas of the Bible. The Dead Sea Scrolls include biblical and non-biblical records, and most are largely in Hebrew and Aramaic. Some twenty of the documents are written in Greek.³²¹

The discovery of the Qumran documents provided biblical scholars with more information about the theology of early Judaism. Prior to the discovery, scholars had relied only on the Apocrypha of the Old Testament to understand the idea of Judaism in the Second Temple period. However, through the extensive data in the Qumran literature, they were able to grasp the

³¹⁹ Hartmut Stegemann, *The Library of Qumran: On the Essenes, Qumran, John the Baptist, and Jesus* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 207–8.

³²⁰ Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Archaeology," in *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*, vol. 1, eds. Walter A. Elwell et al. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 148.

³²¹ Michael O. Wise, "Archives and Libraries," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, eds. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 372.

process of the formation of Judaism in the Second Temple period, which deepened their understanding of the early church and the New Testament.

The Old Testament prophets influenced the Qumran texts in terms of their eschatological vision.³²² The documents contain ideas similar to the eschatological views found in the New Testament. Elements of the New Testament such as the coming of the Holy Spirit, quotations from the Old Testament, and the messianic idea appear in the Qumran documents, although there are differences. This similarity reveals their influence and the connection between the Qumran community and the early church.

The Jewish sect called the Essenes, which is considered to have written and collected the Qumran documents, had a particular interest in biblical study. The Essenes showed a keen interest in the eschatological interpretation of the Bible, believing that its prophecies were at that time being fulfilled. The Qumran people left many Bible commentaries; and to write them, they needed many Bible manuscripts. Approximately two hundred manuscripts of the Old Testament were found in the Qumran texts. This discovery was a remarkable event in the history of Bible research because the Qumran texts were written almost a thousand years earlier than the Masoretic texts of the Middle Ages.

There is nothing more valuable than the Qumran documents for understanding the Jewish messianic hope during the intertestamental years. The Qumran literature contributed significantly to understanding of the ideas that influenced early Christianity and Jesus's ministry. To understand the Bible, it is necessary to explore Jewish life and the historical situation at the end of the first century.

³²² David Flusser and Azzan Yadin, *Judaism of the Second Temple Period* (Grand Rapids, MI; Jerusalem: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company; The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2007), 306.

In Second Temple Judaism, the messianic idea refers to the set of concepts related to the identity and activity of the eschatological intermediary established by God to execute His judgment, salvation, and rule.³²³ The Israelites awaited the political Messiah, who would come from David's descendants to liberate them from their enemies and establish the kingdom of God based on His covenants.

Paolo Sacchi argues that messianism arises in Jewish thought that consists of two essential factors: "The first is the certainty of the coming of a blessed world in some indefinable future moment. The second element, closely linked with the first, is the conviction that this blessed future world will not be the work of human force alone, but also of a mediator, endowed by God with particular charisms."³²⁴ The Israelites expected the Messiah to play an eschatological role as a future mediator. Living under foreign rule in the Second Temple period, the Israelites had no choice but to anticipate a better world through the Messiah.

The Israelites who observed the law awaited their future rewards based on messianic and eschatological expectations. Since the underlying message of the Old Testament prophets was the expectation of a better future, the Israelites naturally interpreted the Hebrew scriptures as including messianic ideas. They envisioned the Messiah who would judge and rule the world, and this expectation spread among the Jews.

The messianic idea of the Qumran community did not exist as a solely abstract theory but rather developed in close connection with the history of the community.³²⁵ The messianic

³²³ Kenneth E. Pomykala, "Messianism," in *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, eds. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 938.

³²⁴ Paolo Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic and Its History*, trans. William J. Short (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 150.

³²⁵ David Noel Freedman and Pam Fox Kuhlken, *What Are the Dead Sea Scrolls and Why Do They Matter?* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 28.

expectation of the Qumran Essenes spread beyond the community, influencing future generations and emerging in Jewish history. The expectation of the Messiah is linked to the core of Judaism's identity. This expectation drove people to seek a political leader to overthrow the Romans.³²⁶

The Jewish people expected a man of mighty military power and royal authority to come from the descendants of David, destroy all the enemies of Israel, and provide the peace and justice of God on earth. To grasp the messianic idea of the Qumran community, one requires a good understanding of the Teacher of Righteousness, who was once a high priest, as his life and death had significant influence on the development of the messianic idea.

Initially, while the Teacher of Righteousness was alive, the Qumran community had only an expectation of the royal Messiah and none of the priestly Messiah. Blessings (1QS^b) explains this issue:

The Master shall bless the Prince of the Congregation ... and shall renew for him the Covenant of the Community that he may establish the kingdom of His people for ever, [that he may judge the poor with righteousness and] dispense justice with [equity to the oppressed] of the land, and that he may walk perfectly before Him in all the ways [of truth], and that he may establish His holy Covenant at the time of the affliction of those who seek God.³²⁷

This passage is a document containing a blessing of the Prince of the Congregation, who is none other than the traditional royal Messiah. Thus, this document reveals the characteristics of the royal Messiah.

In the Qumran documents after 100 BC, various messianic ideas appear in addition to the royal Messiah. The two most prominent messianic ideas are the royal Messiah and the priestly Messiah. The Damascus Document (CD) says, "This is the exact statement of the statutes in

³²⁶ Freedman and Kuhlken, *What Are the Dead Sea Scrolls and Why Do They Matter?*, 97.

³²⁷ Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 270.

which [they shall walk until the coming of the Messiah]h of Aaron and Israel who will pardon their iniquity.”³²⁸ The Damascus Document is a compilation of the various kinds of regulations kept by the Qumran Essenes.³²⁹ The passage clearly demonstrates two Messiahs: the Messiah of Aaron and the Messiah of Israel.

The priestly Messiah and royal Messiah are both mentioned throughout the Qumran documents. In addition, the Dead Sea Scrolls describe an expectation of the coming prophetic Messiah. This development of messianic thought followed the death of the Teacher of Righteousness. When the righteous teacher died, the Qumran Essenes could not find anyone to replace him and developed a longing for a messianic high priest to appear.

The Royal Messiah

The Qumran literature describes the royal Messiah as the Son of God: “The son of God he will be proclaimed (or: proclaim himself) and the son of the Most High they will call him” (4Q246 II).³³⁰ This document describes the messianic figure and the phenomena that will result from his reign: “Their (the people of God’s) kingdom will be an eternal kingdom and all their path will be in truth. They will jud[ge] the earth in truth and all will make peace” (4Q246 II).³³¹ Those passages are similar to the description found in Daniel 7: “Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey

³²⁸ Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 113.

³²⁹ John J. Collins, “The Nature of Messianism in the Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls in their Historical Context*, eds. Timothy H. Lim et al. (London; New York: T&T Clark, 2004), 213.

³³⁰ Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 332.

³³¹ *Ibid.*

him” (Dan 7:27). The Son of God will overcome foreign countries and gain an eternal kingdom to bring peace to His people.

The Qumran community believed that the Messiah would come from David’s descendants: “Whenever Israel rules, there shall [not] fail to be a descendant of David upon the throne” (4Q252).³³² This is a key verse, as they anticipated the eventual reoccupation of David’s throne. Another Qumran document provides support for this idea: “And there shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse [...] the Branch of David and they will enter into judgement with [...] the Prince of the Congregation” (4Q285).³³³ In the Dead Sea Scrolls, the title “Son of God” contains the expectations of and respect for the King, who will come from David’s descendants. The Qumran community had a particular interest in scriptural covenants and identified the royal covenant given to David.³³⁴

The expectation of the Messiah began with the idea that only the Messiah, anointed and chosen by God, could save the Israelites from oppression by the Gentiles. This social environment formed the spiritual foundation of their lives. They were able to sustain themselves with hope for the coming reign of the righteous God and the end of the reign of the wicked. They expected a divine being to rescue them from trouble. Collins demonstrates that the typical messianic idea of Judaism is the royal Messiah: “Prior to the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the only clear evidence from the last two centuries before the turn of the era for the use of the term messiah (χρίστος) with reference to a future Davidic king, and indeed for the expectation of

³³² Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 302.

³³³ *Ibid.*, 150.

³³⁴ Scott W. Hahn, *Kinship by Covenant: A Canonical Approach to the Fulfillment of God’s Saving Promises* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2009), 210.

a Davidic messiah in any terms, lay in the *Psalms of Solomon*.³³⁵ In particular, the document “Psalm of Solomon 17” contains an expectation of the militant Davidic Messiah.³³⁶ The Jews were waiting for a military leader to defeat the forces hostile to Israel. They anticipated that the judgmental Messiah would rule over the unrighteous with the justice of God.

The royal Messiah has military and judiciary roles. As the descendant of David, the royal Messiah will defeat the Gentiles who trample Jerusalem and judge the Gentiles with His wisdom and justice. Collins notes, “The Branch of David/Prince of the Congregation has a role in the final battle against the *Kittim* at Qumran. The one who will be called the Son of God in 4Q246 will bring peace to the earth, but he will do so by military victory.”³³⁷ In the Qumran community, the royal messianic idea is no different from this typical Jewish messianic idea.

In the Qumran literature, the Son of God is a title that honors the royal Messiah. Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins explain the relationship between Daniel 7 and 4Q246, the Son of God text: “In Daniel 7, the eternal kingdom is explicitly given both to the ‘one like a son of man’ and to the people of the holy ones. In the same way, the tensions in 4Q246 can be resolved if the ‘son of God’ is understood as a messianic king, so that the kingdom is given simultaneously both to him and to the people.”³³⁸ In this analogy, the Son of God in the Qumran documents can be interpreted as the messianic king who can overcome the Gentile nations and

³³⁵ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 52.

³³⁶ Craig A. Evans, *The Interpretation of Scripture in Early Judaism and Christianity: Studies in Language and Tradition*, T&T Clark Academic Paperbacks (London; New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 107–8.

³³⁷ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 228.

³³⁸ Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 72.

gain the eternal kingdom, bringing peace to his people. The concept of representing the Messiah as the Son of God appears in 4Q174:

The Lord declares to you that He will build you a House (2 Sam. 7:11c). I will raise up your seed after you (2 Sam. 7:12). I will establish the throne of his kingdom [for ever] (2 Sam. 7:13). [I will be] his father and he shall be my son (2 Sam. 7:14). He is the Branch of David who shall arise with the Interpreter of the Law [to rule] in Zion [at the end] of time. As it is written, I will raise up the tent of David that is fallen (Amos 9:11). That is to say, the fallen tent of David is he who shall arise to save Israel.³³⁹

This document opens with the temple to be built in the last days and contains a message that God's anointed Messiah from the descendants of David will save Israel in the last days.

Even the Qumran documents that emphasize the royal Messiah reveal the desire to build God's holy house, demonstrating the messianic idea formed on the foundation of the temple theology: "Another Qumran writing (4QFlor 1.6) says that 'a sanctuary of Adam [or mankind]' (*miqdaš 'ādām*) will be built in the midst of the community."³⁴⁰ The emphasis on the temple reveals the influence of the Teacher of Righteousness, who wanted to sanctify the Qumran community.

The Qumran literature interestingly highlights the military aspect of the royal Messiah, reflecting the political environment of the time. The royal Messiah from the descendants of David will fight against the nations as a warrior. In War Rule (1QM), Numbers 24:17–19 is used for God's role in the eschatological battle.³⁴¹ This document expects the Messiah to be the King of war (see Zech 14).

³³⁹ Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 354.

³⁴⁰ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 155–6.

³⁴¹ Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 136.

In the Qumran literature, the messianic figure plays the role of the King, a descendant of David, and is identified as the Son of God. Some scholars argue that the Son of God has nothing to do with the concept of the Messiah and refers instead to pagan kings.³⁴² However, it is reasonable, based on the eschatological interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies, to see the Son of God as referring to the messianic figure, even where the word “Messiah” is not used. It is logical that the title “Son of God” describes the royal Messiah, who will ultimately defeat the Gentiles (see Ps 2).³⁴³

The messianic anticipation is based on the prophetic tradition. 4Q521, titled the “Messianic Apocalypse,” describes the role of the Messiah as follows: “He will glorify the pious on the throne of the eternal Kingdom, He who liberates the captives, restores sight to the blind, straightens the b[ent].”³⁴⁴ The Messiah will judge the world with mercy, heal the wounded, raise the dead, and play a prophetic role.

The Priestly Messiah

In the Qumran literature, the messianic characters appear in various forms. The messianic characteristics are not limited to the eschatological and political concepts of the future. The anointed one is also linked to the high priest in the Damascus Document. Zechariah advocates the priestly role of the Messiah: “It is he who will build the temple of the LORD, and he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne.

³⁴² Collins and Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God*, 67.

³⁴³ *Ibid.*, 73.

³⁴⁴ Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 245.

And there will be harmony between the two” (Zech 6:13). The Messiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls is associated with the priesthood or the legal and priestly work of the community.

In the Old Testament, the priest’s Urim and Thummim were used to determine the will of God. The Messianic Anthology or Testimonia (4Q175) says, “Give Thy Thummim to Levi, and Thy Urim to Thy pious one whom Thou didst test at Massah, and with whom Thou didst quarrel at the waters of Meribah.”³⁴⁵ This passage implies that the Urim and Thummim should be given to the priestly Messiah. Therefore, the principal role of the priestly Messiah is to discern God’s will properly.

Blessings (1QS^b) addresses the blessings of the high priest and priests. The document says, “All the members of the Covenant are blessed first, followed by someone who seems to be the priestly head of the Community, the Messiah of Aaron.”³⁴⁶ The Messiah of Aaron indicates the priestly role of the Messiah. The emphasis on the role of discerning God’s will and teaching His people was promoted by the Teacher of Righteousness, who was the founder of the Qumran community. Regarding this issue, Beale notes,

This passage (1QH 6.12–19) compares the Qumran saints to an Edenic tree with a “well-spring of light” and “brilliant flames,” which is directly linked to the “testimony” (!) of the Teacher of Righteousness (1QS 8.5–6 speaks likewise of the DSS community as “an everlasting planting ... the House of holiness for Israel and the Council of the Holy of Holies,” who are to be “*witnesses of truth*”).

The anticipation of the priestly Messiah led to the emphasis on the establishment of a holy sanctuary within the Qumran community, potentially demonstrating their recognition of the community as a temple.

³⁴⁵ Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, 356.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 268.

The Teacher of Righteousness was thought to have divine power to understand all the mysteries of the prophets.³⁴⁷ As the community leader, the Teacher of Righteousness led the community members in waiting for the priestly Messiah to become the righteous teacher, in line with eschatological expectations. In the Old Testament, priests play an important role in war. They ask God's will before war and stand in front of the soldiers' march to lead them. The Old Testament priests performing various roles in war influenced the priestly messianic thought of the Qumran community.

The messianic thought of the Qumran community has many similarities with that of Judaism. The people who formed the Qumran community also expected the Messiah to save them from persecution and oppression. However, the community members were unique in that they had a long-held desire for both the royal Messiah and the priestly Messiah. The role of the priestly Messiah, which the Qumran community longed to see fulfilled, is to realize the will of God.

The Davidic Covenant in the New Testament

Jewish messianic thought had a significant influence on the formation of the messianic ideas of the early church. The Jewish messianic understanding established within the Qumran community is similar to Christian messianic thought. The faith of the Jerusalem church was deeply related to eschatological hope and the messianic idea. The members of the early church also regarded Jesus as the Messiah, coming from David's lineage, and were convinced that He would return with almighty power in the last days to restore the temple of Israel.

³⁴⁷ James C. VanderKam, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2012), 157.

The title of “the Son of David” is closely related to that of the Messiah, which means anointed one. Those whom God anoints are given special responsibilities and missions. In the Old Testament and many Jewish documents, the Messiah is used to refer to the deliverer of the Israelites. The Messiah, whom the Jews anticipated, was always said to be a descendant of David.

Walter Brueggemann presents three of Yahweh’s promises to David: “I will make for you a great name” (v. 9); “I will appoint a place” (v. 10); “I will give you rest” (v. 11).³⁴⁸ 2 Samuel 7 reveals God’s blessings to David. David calls the God who blesses him Sovereign LORD (הַיְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ). This name is used six times in David’s prayer in 2 Samuel 7:18–29, and the phrase is not found elsewhere in Samuel. It should be noted that, in Genesis 15:2, 8, Abraham uses these words when God promises prosperity to his descendants. This reveals the connection between the Davidic Covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant: “I will make you very fruitful; I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you” (Gen 17:6). This is of relevance to Jesus’s genealogy, which includes Abraham and David, as shown in Matthew 1.

The first book of the New Testament, Matthew, clearly says that Jesus is the descendant of David (see Matt 1:1). The expression indicates that Jesus is the Son of David emphasized and prophesied in the Old Testament. The Gospel of Matthew is central to understanding the relationship between David and the Messiah. In Matthew 21, Jesus comes into Jerusalem in what is described as a triumphal entry. A large crowd of people shouts to Jesus, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest!” (Matt 21:9). These proclamations thus accept Jesus as the Messiah and as the descendant of David.

³⁴⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *First and Second Samuel*, Interpretation, a Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1990), 255.

In Mark's Gospel, the title "David's son" is used twice in the Bartimaeus story (Mark 10:46–52). It is also used in Mark 11:1–11 and 12:35–37. In Mark 11:1–11, the precise title does not appear, but it is used conceptually. Having restored the sight of Bartimaeus, Jesus is referred to as the Son of David by one of Israel's most miserable people. Evans adds, "Jesus is hailed 'son of David' by blind Bartimaeus in 10:46–52, and in 2:23–28 Jesus compares the actions of his disciples in plucking grain on the Sabbath to the actions of David and his men in 1 Sam 21:1–6. Jesus is thus linked to David."³⁴⁹ The Jews anticipated the Messiah, and the Jewish messianic expectation was that the Messiah would be born from the descendants of David. For the Israelites, messianic thought was thoroughly nationalistic and political and fundamentally associated with the reconstruction of the kingdom of David. Referring to Jesus as the Son of David implied that He could restore the 12 scattered tribes.³⁵⁰

Mark 10:46–52 describes Jesus entering Jericho on the way to Jerusalem. Jesus's disciples and many other people were following Him. Sitting by the roadside, Bartimaeus sees Jesus: "When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, 'Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!'" (Mark 10:47). Despite the disciples' rebuke, the blind man again shouts out, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:48). People order Bartimaeus to remain silent, but Jesus listens to him and responds to his cry for help.

The verb "to call" (φωνέω) is repeated three times in Mark 10:49, which reveals Jesus's desire to help the blind man. Garland adds,

The crowds tell Bartimaeus to keep quiet. Jesus, however, stops and says, "Call him"—further evidence that he came to serve, not to be acclaimed. Jesus answers Bartimaeus's insistent cries for help with an urgent call of his own. The verb "call" (*phoneo*) is

³⁴⁹ Craig A. Evans, *Mark 8:27–16:20*, vol. 34B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2001), 275.

³⁵⁰ Perrin, *The Kingdom of God*, 105.

repeated three times in verse 49: Jesus tells the crowd to “call him”; “they called to the blind man,” saying, “Cheer up! On your feet! He’s calling you.” Jesus does not call him to discipleship as he did the fishermen by the sea, but Bartimaeus responds just as rapidly as those first disciples. He springs up to come to Jesus.³⁵¹

Responding to the call of Jesus, Bartimaeus throws off his cloak and rushes to Him (see Mark 10:50). Jesus asks Bartimaeus for the concreteness of faith: “What do you want me to do for you?” (Mark 10:51). Bartimaeus answers, “Rabbi, I want to see.” (Mark 10:51). This answer demonstrates a belief that Jesus might transform Bartimaeus from a blind man begging on the street to a follower of Christ. Bartimaeus believes that Jesus can restore the sight of the blind. This scene reminds people of the promise in Isaiah 42:16 that He will lead the blind and turn the darkness into light.

The blind man shouts out the messianic title, “Jesus, Son of David” for the first time in Mark’s Gospel. In Mark, Jesus says, “Go, your faith has healed you” (Mark 10:52). In this verse, Mark uses the word *σέσωκέν*, which invokes the sense of salvation. More specifically, it refers to restoring the sight of the blind man. The title “the Son of David” is a sign that predicts Christ’s entry into Jerusalem. The events of the Bartimaeus story are said to have occurred immediately before Jesus’s entry into Jerusalem, when the disciples still did not fully understand who He was. Mark 10:46–52 is the last healing miracle recorded in the Gospel of Mark, and it helped the disciples to grasp the true identity of the Messiah.

The Son of David was an important title for the Jews who were wishing for a national revival through political recovery. The Jews firmly believed that the Son of David would politically restore Israel, rebuild their country, and fulfill God’s promise. This record of Mark’s Gospel represents the political and social aspirations of the time. Lane adds, “All that is required

³⁵¹ Garland, *Mark*, 420.

by the ensuing narrative is that the blind man recognized Jesus as the one from whom he could expect the gracious mercy of God. The ambiguity in ‘Son of David’ permitted Mark’s readers to hear his cry as an acknowledgment of Jesus’ messianic dignity.”³⁵² At that time, the Jews insisted that Jesus could not be considered the Messiah because He was not the Son of David. However, Jesus revealed Himself to be the Messiah by asking and answering Himself a question in the temple courts: “How is it that the teachers of the law say that the Christ is the son of David?” (Mark 12:35). Lenski notes, “As the Messiah Jesus now asks the Pharisees this question, and they know that it is no academic or theoretical inquiry but the supreme question concerning his own person.”³⁵³ Jesus raised questions about the theological view of Christ as the Son of David that the teachers of the law had at that time.

Mark 12:35–37 emphasizes the differences between the theological positions of Jesus and the teachers of the law and leads to a warning for them in the following paragraph (Mark 12:38–40). Mark 12:37 says, “David himself calls him ‘Lord.’ How then can he be his son?” The large crowd listened to him with delight.” This verse explains that the Messiah is not only a descendant of David but a higher power. Jesus challenges the authority of the teachers of the law by refuting the popular view of Christ as being only the Son of David. In fact, Jesus Christ is much higher than David. Although Jesus was the Son of David with respect to His human nature, He was also the Son of God.

Referring to Jesus as a descendant of David could limit His status and cause serious confusion, framing Him as a political Christ. While Jesus did not prohibit the title, He did not use

³⁵² Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, 388.

³⁵³ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mark’s Gospel* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 543–4.

it and highlighted the problems associated with it. Jesus's question in Mark 12:37 was embarrassing to the Jews at that time, seeming to deny that Christ was a son of David. However, the question was not to deny that Christ was a Son of David, but rather to emphasize that this alone was not enough to understand Christ. The expression "David himself, speaking by the Holy Spirit, declared" (Mark 12:36) appears only in the Gospel of Mark. When David wrote this psalm, he wrote with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, confirming that Jesus Christ is higher than David.

The title "Son of David" reflects the Jewish expectation. The Jews viewed the Messiah as a political figure. This was inconsistent with Mark's viewpoint, which emphasizes the sacrifice of the cross. Mark indicates that the Son of David is not a sufficient title for Jesus Christ. Robert H. Stein states, "More likely is the view that Mark understands the present text as teaching that the Messiah is the Son of David, but that such an understanding by itself is inadequate."³⁵⁴ The disciples did not understand Jesus's identity, despite His teachings. Mark emphasizes that Jesus Christ is not only the Son of David but also the Lord of David, thereby separating this notion from the messianic expectations widespread among the Jews.

Luke's viewpoint is deeply connected with the Old Testament and is rooted in the Davidic Covenant and the hope that God promised. This is why Luke 1:32–33 can be understood as a continuation of Israel's story:

They noted that the angel had told Mary that God would give Jesus "the throne of David" and that Jesus would rule "over the house of Jacob forever" (Luke 1: 32– 33). They also noticed that Jesus spoke of a day to come when the inhabitants of Jerusalem would welcome him. Just after lamenting Jerusalem as a city that kills its prophets, he speaks of the time when "you" in Jerusalem will say, "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the

³⁵⁴ Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 569.

Lord” (Luke 13: 34–35). Wilken says that early Christians interpreted these passages to point toward the “restoration and the establishment of a kingdom in Jerusalem.”³⁵⁵

In this context, Jesus Christ comes not only as King of all humanity but also as King of Israel. The eternal reign of Jesus proclaimed in the New Testament and the hope presented to the people through Jesus comes from the connection with the Old Testament, which continues God’s faithful covenant.

Jesus sits on the throne of David, fulfilling the eternal promise of an everlasting reign. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever (see Luke 1:32–33). The first fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant was through Solomon, Son of David, but the ultimate realization is through Jesus Christ. Bock states, “First Chronicles 29:23 tells us this throne on which Solomon now sits after his appointment as king by David is also the throne of the Lord. So the announcement in Luke 1:32–33 recalls a deeply held Old Testament hope with roots back into the rule of God over Israel.”³⁵⁶ This clearly indicates that the messianic idea in Luke is deeply rooted in the Old Testament. The foundation of God’s reign over Israel is in God’s promise to her. Luke emphasizes that Jesus is a descendant of David and begins the story of Jesus by declaring that He is the Messiah.

In John 6, Jesus feeds five thousand people with five loaves and two fish. Those who are fascinated by Jesus’s amazing miracle accept it as a sign that Jesus is the Messiah: “After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, ‘Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world’” (John 6:14). “The Prophet” indicates the Messiah as prophesied in

³⁵⁵ Gerald R. McDermott, *Israel Matters: Why Christians Must Think Differently about the People and the Land* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2017), 14–5.

³⁵⁶ Darrell L. Bock, “Israel in Luke–Acts,” in *The People, the Land and the Future of Israel: Israel and the Jewish People in the Plan of God*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2014), 105.

Deuteronomy 18:15. The crowd misunderstood Jesus as the Messiah who would solve their material problems. They tried to make Jesus King, but He refused their offer (see John 6:15). By doing so, Jesus indirectly revealed the meaning of the true Messiah, as the Son of David.

John confirms the Davidic Covenant by making it clear that the Messiah comes from the descendants of David: “Does not the Scripture say that the Christ will come from David’s family and from Bethlehem, the town where David lived?” (John 7:42). The book of Revelation also reveals the Messiah as the descendant of David, who rules the world: “Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals” (Rev 5:5). The same message is repeated in Revelation 22:16, indicating that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, as the Son of David, who will fulfill the Old Testament and save all humanity in fulfillment of God’s promise (see Rev 22:16).

It is crucial to study the Old Testament prophecies regarding the Messiah and how they are interpreted by New Testament writers. According to this interpretation, the Psalms reveal that Jesus Christ is coming and that He is the Messiah who will fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament from a New Testament perspective. The Psalms allow people to vividly experience the mind of Jesus, who was betrayed and suffered on the cross. Analyzing the validity of the relationship between the Psalms and the New Testament helps the reader to discern the meanings of both the Psalms and the New Testament from various perspectives.

The messianic psalms demonstrate that the work of salvation through God will be fully accomplished in spite of any obstruction. Psalm 40 also has a messianic element. In particular, verses 6–10 depict the incarnation of the Messiah. Some of these verses are quoted in relation to

the priestly ministry of Christ in Hebrews 10:5–7.³⁵⁷ The metaphors shown in the Psalms point to Christ. The suffering poetic speaker in the Psalms typifies Jesus Christ, who gave His life to save all people.

The Psalms are written to praise and express appreciation of Israel’s faith in Jehovah’s promises and presence. Many elements of messianic prophecy can be found throughout the Psalms. The expressions of desire for Jehovah’s mercy, grace, and salvation are related to the coming Messiah. Brown develops his argument for the messianic prophecy based on Psalm 22:

Psalm 22 is the great psalm of the righteous sufferer, publicly mocked and shamed, brought down to the jaws of death in the midst of terrible suffering and humiliation, and miraculously delivered by God, to the praise of his name (see above, 4.24). It was quoted in the Gospels with reference to the Messiah’s crucifixion (see Matt. 27:35 KJV; John 19:24).³⁵⁸

This psalm is not only a record of the facts of David’s time, it also illustrates Christ’s suffering. It testifies of the death of the Messiah and the resurrection of Jesus Christ; thus, the suffering of David can be seen to be fulfilled in Christ, who ultimately suffered on the cross.³⁵⁹

It appears paradoxical that God will not solve any problems of David, even when the latter prays earnestly to Him, “‘He trusts in the LORD,’ they say, ‘let the LORD rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him’” (Ps 22:8). Many people mocked Jesus with the same expression: “He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, ‘I am the Son of God’” (Matt 27:43). The people of the time had not realized that Jesus had finally fulfilled the prophecy of this verse. In Psalm 22:11, David cries out to God, “Do not be far from

³⁵⁷ John Goldingay, *Psalms: Psalms 1–41*, vol. 1, Baker Commentary on the Old Testament Wisdom and Psalms (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 129.

³⁵⁸ Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, vol. 3, 123.

³⁵⁹ Douglas J. Moo and Andrew David Naselli, “The Problem of the New Testament’s Use of the Old Testament,” in *The Enduring Authority of the Christian Scriptures*, ed. D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2016), 729.

me.” This is associated with the lament, “Why have you forsaken me?” in Psalm 22:1. Jesus also prayed that God would not forsake him. This break in the relationship with God was more frightening and painful to David and Jesus than any tribulation.

In Psalm 22:12, David likens the enemies surrounding him to the strong bulls of Bashan, vividly expressing the urgency of his situation. In verse 13, David compares the oppression and cruelty of the enemies to roaring lions that tear at their prey. This describes the Jewish crowd that caused the madness that, like a bloodthirsty lion, led to the killing of Jesus. The expression “poured out like water” in verse 14 indicates that David was exhausted by his harsh trials. Psalm 22:16 says, “They pierce my hands and my feet.” Similarly, John 19:34 states, “Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus’ side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.” This demonstrates a strong connection between Jesus and the events of the Psalms.

Psalm 22 expresses David’s troubles with his enemies, while clearly prophesying what would happen at the crucifixion of Christ. Psalm 22:17–18 says, “All my bones are on display; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.” This is related to John 19:24: “‘Let’s not tear it,’ they said to one another. ‘Let’s decide by lot who will get it.’ This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled that said, ‘They divided my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment.’ So this is what the soldiers did.” The enemies mocked and laughed at David. John 19:37 states, “They will look on the one they have pierced.” These correlations demonstrate that the prophecies made in the Psalms in relation to David are fulfilled in the New Testament.

Psalm 22 that begins with sighing and crying turns to thanksgiving and praise to God in verse 22. This is the manifestation of David’s faith that God will save him. This verse is quoted in the New Testament in Hebrews 2:12, where it is said that all spiritual brothers and sisters

should praise God together because God raised Jesus Christ from the dead. Psalm 22:26 says, “The poor will eat and be satisfied.” “Poor” is a translation of the Hebrew word עָנָו (‘ā·nāw). It seems that David invited the poor for dinner. This meal is reminiscent of the sacrament of holy communion, which commemorates the redemptive ministry of Jesus in the New Testament. At the same time, it symbolizes the feast of heaven in which all the saints will participate after the second coming of Jesus. David, enthroned as the king of Israel, typifies the life of Jesus Christ. David overcame his suffering and was glorified as king of Israel, reflecting the suffering and exaltation of Jesus Christ.

In Acts, as Paul explains God’s history of redemption to people, he reminds them of the Davidic Covenant, revealing that the Messiah has inherited the traditional throne of Israel: “After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.’ From this man’s descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised” (Acts 13:22–23). Acts 13:22 is quoted from Psalm: “I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him” (Ps 89:20). The book of Acts reveals the faithful fulfillment of God's covenant by quoting a verse from Psalm 89.

Psalm 89 concerns Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Daniel J. Estes states, “The numerous textual links between Psalm 89 and Daniel support a messianic interpretation of the psalm. In the NT, many of the terms relating to the Davidic king in Psalm 89 are applied to Jesus Christ.”³⁶⁰ God gives David authority and power: “I will appoint him to be my firstborn, the most exalted of the kings of the earth” (Ps 89:27). David’s authority and power in Psalm 89 are difficult to

³⁶⁰ Daniel J. Estes, *Psalms 73–150*, vol. 13, New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray. Clendenen (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2019), 173.

interpret as his alone. Ian Paul states, “The threefold description of *Jesus Christ* derives from Psalm 89, which combines praise of God’s faithfulness, delight in the Davidic kingship and lament over its failure.”³⁶¹ The references to authority and influence over the world are more applicable to Jesus Christ in the New Testament.

Conclusion

There is a message consistently proclaimed throughout the Old Testament. From Genesis to Malachi, the message of God’s covenant is that God will save His people and send the Messiah to redeem them. The Old Testament is a book of promises that prophesies and records the coming of the Messiah. The New Testament testifies that Jesus, the descendant of David, is the Messiah who will fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament. Thus, the Davidic Covenant is an important channel, connecting the Old and New Testaments.

The messianic idea found in the Davidic Covenant has a double referent of historical fulfillment in David and future salvation through Jesus Christ. The major “already/not yet” views reveal that Jesus is now ruling over the nations from the throne of David in heaven, and He will take the throne upon His return. The Davidic Covenant concerns the blessings of David in real history, but it also states that Jesus will complete the messianic ministry by saving all humanity and declaring universal rule.

The Davidic Covenant reveals the kingship theology and the hope that God will rule the whole world as King. A correct understanding of the kingship offers a solid foundation on which to understand the key themes in the Bible. The Davidic Covenant also provides an insight into how messianic expectations arose and evolved in the Bible. Jesus Christ is the perfect fulfillment

³⁶¹ Ian Paul, *Revelation: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. Eckhard J. Schnabel (London: Inter-Varsity Press, 2018), 62.

of the Davidic Covenant. He is the one to hold the title of the Son of David, the one with the greatest name and highest authority. He is the substance of the description of King David.

This chapter traces the development of the messianic idea within the Davidic Covenant. This research has investigated the development of the messianic idea drawn from the Davidic Covenant and strengthened the message of His ministry, addressing the different messianic perspectives. This dissertation presents a logical argument and dialectical methodology for those who oppose the messianic proclamation of Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. Accordingly, this process has revealed the theological significance and implications of the messianic prophecy.

CHAPTER SIX: NEW COVENANT

Introduction

The New Testament refers to the New Covenant established by the blood of Jesus, as “New Testament” originates from the term “New Covenant” (ברית החדשה, *berith chadashah*). The term “New Covenant” is first mentioned in Jeremiah in the Old Testament and is found frequently in the books of the New Testament, including Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Hebrews. The prophet Jeremiah foretold that the day would come when God would establish the New Covenant in Israel. The New Covenant is crucial to human salvation.

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament was the sacrificial ordinance given to the Israelites after God had made His covenant with them on Mount Sinai. The sacrifices of the Old Testament were closely related to God’s covenants because they were the sacrificial rules for restoring, maintaining, and developing the covenant relationship with Him. The sacrificial system revealed God’s heart regarding the covenants and had the practical effect of strengthening them. Without the Old Testament, one would be unable to understand why Jesus had to die on the cross and what the significance of that event was.

The sacrificial system of the Old Testament was entirely abolished in the New Testament because the purpose of the Old Testament sacrifice had been fully fulfilled in Jesus Christ. The five major sacrifices of the Old Testament (the burnt offering, the grain offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, and the trespass offering) were all offered to God in their perfect forms by Jesus Christ. The core idea of the atonement and covenant relationship in the system remained valid for the people of the New Testament. Thus, the understanding of the Old Testament sacrificial system is necessary if one is to grasp the New Testament.

Although the New Covenant is made with Israel, it is a covenant for all of God's people, without distinction, between Israel and the Gentiles (see Heb 8:10–11). Even the Gentiles will be entitled to enter God's new covenant community. The message that they, too, will be able to participate in God's salvation is revealed throughout the Gospels. For example, there is the parable of the great banquet in Luke 14:15–23. Those invited to the feast did not attend the banquet, giving various excuses. The owner of the house thus ordered the servant, "Go out to the roads and country lanes and compel them to come in, so that my house will be full" (Luke 14:23). This parable suggests that many people, including the Gentiles, are invited to participate in the feast of salvation.³⁶²

The New Covenant does not exist separately from the Old Covenant but was given as a replacement for it. Fruchtenbaum states, "The New Covenant, being an unconditional covenant, is still very much in effect. Again, these are Jewish covenants in that they were made with the Jewish people and are to be fulfilled to and by the Jewish people."³⁶³ The passage representative of the Old Testament and found in the New Covenant appears in Jeremiah: "When I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah" (Jer 31:31). "The people of Israel" and "the people of Judah" refer to the old Northern Kingdom and surviving Southern Kingdom in Jeremiah's day as the recipients of the New Covenant. However, the New Covenant established with the blood of Jesus applies to all people who voluntarily believe in Jesus.

God is faithful, trustworthy, and unchanging in His character. However, in Jeremiah 18, He is portrayed as the One who can change His will, just as the potter could make another pot the way he wanted it to be; but it is not appropriate to regard this as limiting God's faithfulness. God

³⁶² Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus*, 338.

³⁶³ Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology*, 587.

broke the Old Covenant because the Israelites first destroyed it. Their stubbornness and sin led to their destruction. God's true purpose is to renew them and establish the New Covenant to restore the Israelites. The research explores the relationship between Jeremiah's core theological ideas and the New Testament through the fulfillment of the New Covenant. This approach demonstrates Jeremiah's key theological ideas regarding this unconditional covenant, revealing the promise of God's restoration and true hope.

The prophetic books contain the historical background of the pre-exilic, exilic, and post-exilic periods. The prophets address the judgment handed down for breaking the Mosaic Covenant, as well as the future restoration of a new covenant relationship with God. The mission of the prophets was to deliver the message of God to the Israelites, who had fallen into idolatry and moral depravity, and to save them from their sins. Most Old Testament beliefs concern the Prophets, which were heavily influenced by the Torah, especially Deuteronomy. They contain various proclamations, but their message has a common principle of urging the people of Israel to follow the path of righteousness and stand firm, with faith in Yahweh based on the New Covenant. The prophetic books not only record the history of Israel but also reveal the plan for God's salvation. They provide an overview of God's entire redemptive history toward humanity.

The Old Testament begins with the creation and proclaims the story of salvation for humanity, and the New Testament also speaks of God's redemptive plan. Throughout the New Testament, Jesus Christ is proclaimed as the Savior. In other words, God's salvation through the sending of Christ is a fundamental idea in the Old and New Testaments; thus, this plan of salvation flows throughout the Bible, connecting the Old and New Testaments.

This chapter will deal with the failure of the Old Covenant and the fulfillment of the New Covenant in Jeremiah. Through the exegesis and analysis of key passages in Isaiah and Psalm

22, it will cover the prophecies about Jesus Christ, who came to save all humankind, and explore how the New Covenant was fulfilled through Him. This analysis will reveal the fulfillment of the New Covenant and the relationship between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant.

The New Covenant in Jeremiah

The Failure of the Old Covenant

Jeremiah was called to be a prophet during the reign of King Josiah. John L. Peterson notes, “The prophet Jeremiah was born in Anathoth (Jer 1:1). It was here that he began to prophesy and here that the people of Anathoth rebuked him because he had accused them of breaking the covenant.”³⁶⁴ At that time, Josiah’s reform had its limitations. Although he removed all idols and destroyed the shrines, the Israelites still sinned: “The children gather wood, the fathers light the fire, and the women knead the dough and make cakes to offer to the Queen of Heaven. They pour out drink offerings to other gods to arouse my anger” (Jer 7:18). When King Josiah died in 609 BC, the flames of this reform disappeared instantly. Josiah’s reform failed because it could not arouse the inner obedience of the Israelites.³⁶⁵ During the reign of King Josiah, false prophets emphasized only the change of formal worship and did not focus on the law of obedience, leading to the false confessions of faith. The failure of the reform became the background of the destruction of the Old Covenant.

To understand the New Covenant in Jeremiah, it is necessary to consider what the Old Covenant is. The book of Jeremiah describes the New Covenant in Chapter 31: “It will not be

³⁶⁴ John L. Peterson, “Anathoth (Place),” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, eds. David Noel Freedman et al. (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), 227.

³⁶⁵ J. A. Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), 375.

like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt” (Jer 31:32a). Here, God declares that the Old Covenant was made when He brought the Israelites out of Egypt, which indicates that this refers to the Sinai Covenant made by God with Moses. The Israelites were slaves of the Pharaoh before the Exodus, with no freedom to serve God. God liberated the Israelites from the oppressive rule of Pharaoh and chose them as His new covenant people. Israel, now emancipated from slavery, had to serve God, the true Lord. Thus, it was entirely by God’s love and grace that Israel was given the duty to devote herself to God.

The fundamental purpose of the Exodus is to make the name of the Lord known to all people so that they can know that Yahweh is the true God. God called the Israelites a holy people, and every life of that nation was to be dedicated in worship separated for God. He revealed Himself as the One who would dwell among them. While the Israelites stayed in the wilderness of Sinai, God gave them the Ten Commandments, various laws, and ordinances for the tabernacle.

A vital part of the text of the Sinai Covenant concerns the public encounter between Yahweh and Israel at Mount Sinai.³⁶⁶ God’s manifestation of His name is the exercise of His preemptive initiative, and through this process, revelation is bestowed upon His beloved people. God led the public meeting between Himself and Israel. It began when He called the Israelites out of Egypt and led them to Mount Sinai. God then made them His true people through the covenant. At this time, Moses came to God with divine authority as a mediator, and the elders worshipped at a distance. The Israelites could not climb the mountain and shared their respective roles, which allowed them to form a harmonious whole.

³⁶⁶ Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 46.

Before God gave Israel the Ten Commandments, He gave the conditions under which the Israelites could truly become His people. Through the covenant, God demanded a personal relationship based on personal faith and obedience. The covenant parties, the essential subjects of the Sinai Covenant, were God and the Israelites, with Moses playing the role of the mediator. God required the Israelites to be sanctified as a prerequisite for meeting Him, and they waited for His presence under Moses's guidance. Exodus 19:9–25 is not merely an expression of God's coming down to Mount Sinai, but rather a scene in which the covenant parties meet in person to establish a special covenant relationship.

God met the Israelites on Mount Sinai, where they directly experienced the remarkable power and manifestation of His presence. After the public meeting between the covenant parties, the Israelites were under obligation to obey the law of the covenant to maintain the relationship with God. This process is first described in the proclamation of the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai, followed by the laws regarding the detailed application of those commandments.

The two structures, the altar and the twelve pillars in Exodus 24:4, represent each party of the covenant: "He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel" (Exod 24:4). The altar signifies the presence of Yahweh, and the twelve pillars represent the twelve tribes.³⁶⁷ The altar symbolizes Yahweh not only because the sacrifice is offered there but also because half of the blood is sprinkled on it (see Exod 24:6).

Moses pours half of the blood on the altar and sprinkles half on the Israelites, reminding them that the covenant with Yahweh was made with blood. God knew that the Israelites would break the covenant because of their weakness, so He prepared the sacrificial system as a way to

³⁶⁷ John I. Durham, *Exodus*, vol. 3, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1987), 343.

restore them. God entered into a special relationship with the Israelites based on the covenant. They became the public people of Yahweh, and Yahweh became the God of Israel.

The basic meaning of the Old Covenant demonstrates the total grace by God, but it also mandates total obedience to the sovereign God. The Exodus event was the foundation for Israel's obedience to God's Word. The Mosaic Covenant explicitly expresses the relationship between God, the sovereign, and Israel, the subordinate.³⁶⁸ The Ten Commandments, which form the core of the Old Covenant, focus on the continuation of the established covenant relationship.³⁶⁹

The Old Covenant is not limited to the Ten Commandments. God gives the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20, but chapters 21–23 detail many other laws that God also gave to Moses. The laws concerned both those who settled in one place and those who wandered in the wilderness. The laws were regulations intended to control the problems that would arise not only at the time of the Exodus but also in the settlements after entering Canaan. The laws aimed to ensure that, when they settled in Canaan, the Israelites would serve only one God, Yahweh, in place of the Canaanite gods. Accordingly, the purpose of the Old Covenant was to make God's people obey God, whether they were in the wilderness or settled in Canaan, the Promised Land.

Jeremiah accused the Israelites of not doing justice to their neighbors and of oppressing them. He emphasized the importance of obedience to the covenant and denounced the sin of following other gods. False prophets pushed the theological claim that, regardless of one's hearts, the offering of sacrifices to God alone was sufficient to be saved and that one would

³⁶⁸ P. R. Williamson, "Covenant," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 151.

³⁶⁹ Durham, *Exodus*, vol. 3, 284.

never perish as long as there was a temple of God. Thus, the Israelites did not obey the Mosaic Covenant, which led to its destruction.

The Fulfillment of the New Covenant

The Old Testament sacrifices revealed God's purpose and will, and His covenant was fulfilled in Christ. Jesus Christ did not come to destroy the law but to fulfill it (see Matt 5:17). The work of Christ is the penetration of God's saving power into the history of humanity, showing that God's will for salvation was realized through the covenant. Living a holy life as the people of God requires remembrance of the nature of Christ's sacrifice.

Jeremiah called for repentance and change, as temple sacrifices would not guarantee salvation. However, the people ignored Jeremiah, and Judah was ultimately conquered by Babylon. Jeremiah shed tears as he saw the suffering of the Israelites. The temple of Jerusalem was destroyed, and numerous people were taken captive. Even in this situation, he described his hope that God would restore the people through the New Covenant and establish a new community.

The book of Jeremiah can be divided into four sections: the judgment on God's people (Jer 1–29), the declaration of salvation of God's people (Jer 30–35), God's Words of judgment for Judah (Jer 36–45), and God's judgment of the Gentile nations (Jer 46–52). J. A. Thompson divides Jeremiah into three parts, but based on his analysis, this dissertation divides the book into four sections.³⁷⁰ Jeremiah 31:31–34 contains the New Covenant, which presents the prophecies of salvation. In chapter 30, God promises the restoration of the Israelites, and in chapter 31, this

³⁷⁰ Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 27–30.

message is expanded and made specific.³⁷¹ This section describes the restoration of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah, representing Israel’s complete restoration. Jeremiah 31 also describes an ideal community that never again sins against God, introducing the New Covenant, distinct from the Old Covenant.

Jeremiah 31:31 mentions the New Covenant in the Old Testament: “When I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah” (Jer 31:31). This verse declares that the New Covenant, which cannot be broken, is to be established. The Hebrew word *שְׁדָרָה*, which translates as “new,” describes the restoration of the relationship between God and the covenant people.³⁷²

Jeremiah 31:32 states that the Israelites broke God’s covenant. The Hebrew word *פָּרַר*, which means “to break,” typically appears in the context of violating or destroying God’s covenant, associated exclusively with nonconcrete objects.³⁷³ The Israelites were declared entirely responsible for the breaking of the Old Covenant. The accusations against the Israelites in Jeremiah 11 can be interpreted as evidence for the destruction of the covenant in Jeremiah 31.

Jeremiah emphasizes the permanence of the fundamental law and proclaims the eternal relationship between the Israelites and God: “They will be my people, and I will be their God” (Jer 32:38). Also, the New Covenant contains the inner elements of people: “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts” (Jer 31:33b). Thompson states, “In the famous passage in

³⁷¹ John Goldingay, *Jeremiah for Everyone*, Old Testament for Everyone (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press; SPCK, 2015), 151–60.

³⁷² John M. Bracke, *Jeremiah 30–52 and Lamentations*, Westminster Bible Companion, eds. Patrick D. Miller and David L. Bartlett (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2000), 9.

³⁷³ L. Ruppert, “פָּרַר,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. XII, eds. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. Douglas W. Stott (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 116.

31:31–34 describing the New Covenant, Jeremiah reached the apex of his thinking on the new hope. One day God would give his people a covenant, not like the one they had broken during the centuries but one in which his law would be written on people’s hearts.”³⁷⁴ Jeremiah 31:31–34 can be understood as describing God’s will to instill His laws in people’s inner hearts, with obedience then naturally occurring through the laws planted inside them. Thus, the essence of the New Covenant is to rebuild the broken relationship between God and Israel.

In Jeremiah 33, God promises that the Israelites will enjoy new hearts and physical blessings. The New Covenant in Luke 22 confirms God’s promise in Jeremiah. Jesus and His disciples feasted on Passover, establishing this as a day on which to commemorate His death as the Lamb of God who took away the world’s sins. On this day, Jesus invited his disciples to eat the bread that represented His flesh, instead of the Passover sheep, and to drink the wine representing His blood, instead of sprinkling sheep’s blood on the door. Luke says, “He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you’” (Luke 22:19–20). Jesus formed the New Covenant by shedding His blood as a sacrifice to wash away the sins of the world. Jesus told His disciples to remember this covenant, so those who wait for the second coming of Jesus must always remember the New Covenant by commemorating Jesus’s body and blood.

Jesus achieved the New Covenant by shedding His blood as a sacrifice: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20). Luke 22 is closely related to Jeremiah 33 in that both chapters deal with the New Covenant. God promised to make the New Covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah (see Jer 31:31). Jesus ate a

³⁷⁴ Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 113.

Passover meal with his disciples to commemorate His coming death, and this was the fulfillment of the New Covenant, prophesied by Jeremiah.³⁷⁵

Passover is a feast at the beginning of the barley harvest, with unleavened bread and commemoration of the Exodus from Egypt's bondage. To commemorate this Exodus event, the Israelites offer a lamb as a sacrifice and sprinkle the blood on the doorposts. Passover is also a feast of redemption that reveals the graciousness of God, who brought the Israelites out of Egypt. Jesus presided over the Lord's Supper at the time of the Passover feast, thereby representing the Passover lamb: "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor 5:7). This emphasizes the Lord's Supper as the central ritual of the New Covenant. There is also a connection between Passover and Easter. If the former is centered on the Exodus event, the latter focuses on Jesus overcoming death and giving hope of resurrection, with His exodus from the tomb. Both feasts reveal the hope of life in the midst of death.

Jesus fulfills the prophecy of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53. He says, "It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment" (Luke 22:37). The New Covenant was made by Jesus's shedding His blood as a sacrifice for the world's sins. This forgiveness reveals a deep connection with the New Covenant in Jeremiah. Jesus fed His disciples with the bread and wine that symbolized His blood and his flesh to be torn on the cross, proclaiming the New Covenant, which was the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy. The feast was a ceremony in which

³⁷⁵ Walter A. Elwell, "Jesus Christ," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, Baker Reference Library, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 399.

Jesus Christ showed humanity His greatest love. The early church Christians preached this truth in the face of persecution and threats.

Jesus Christ became the final and complete sacrifice. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to be baptized, he recognized Him as the final sacrifice, saying, “Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Jesus was flawless, but He was willing to bear the sins of humanity and died on the cross to atone for humanity’s sins. The shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ is a promise to bring new life through forgiveness.

The feast of harvest is the fiftieth day of Passover, and it is a season of rejoicing and gratitude after the wheat harvest is finished. After the Israelites had settled in Canaan, the festival of harvest was celebrated as a day of thanksgiving, with the first fruits offered to God. The feast of harvest and the Pentecost of Christianity fall on the same day. On the feast of harvest, the Jews celebrate Moses’s receiving of the law on Mount Sinai, while Christians celebrate the early Christians’ receiving of the Holy Spirit.

On the day of Pentecost, Jesus’s disciples gathered together in Jerusalem, where they experienced the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1–4). This event marked the birth of the New Testament church. A community of faith then formed, with the members’ possessions divided according to the needs of each person. The number of community members grew as the disciples healed the sick and performed wonders and signs in the name of Jesus. The Jerusalem church still regarded itself as a branch of Judaism, and there was no desire to start a new religion. However, their members differed from other Jews in that they believed Jesus to be the Messiah for whom the Jews were waiting.

Those gathered in the community received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. The Pentecostal event broke barriers and enabled them to come to God.³⁷⁶ The Spirit transformed God's people into the temple on earth in which God dwelled. The Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost appeared as tongues of fire, reminiscent of the scene in which God descended in fire to Mount Sinai in Exodus 19.³⁷⁷

Under the Old Covenant, the Israelites failed repeatedly, without the ability to overcome their sins. The New Covenant is a promise that God will place the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those who believe, allowing them to do God's will: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws" (Ezek 36:26–27). The coming of the Holy Spirit reminded people of the significance of gathering in the temple and of yearning for God's presence.³⁷⁸ God's redemptive grace made each person a temple, signifying that overcoming sin—the most fundamental need of the human being—was only possible with the help of the Holy Spirit.

The Mosaic Covenant is a conditional covenant made between God and the people of Israel on Mount Sinai, which is then replaced by the New Covenant. People came into a relationship with God through the Messiah. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 3:6 that God has made him a servant of the New Covenant. The New Covenant is not a text of the law, but a covenant established with the Spirit: "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor 3:6). The apostle

³⁷⁶ C. Peter Wagner, *The Book of Acts: A Commentary* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 2008), 70–1.

³⁷⁷ Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, 205.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 278.

Paul could preach the gospel boldly with the hope of the New Covenant. The Old Covenant is not an ultimate but a preliminary and provisional revelation for the New Covenant in Christ.

The new creation in Isaiah 11 is the restoration of all things. The restoration of the relationship with various animals is reminiscent of Adam's intimate fellowship with animals in Eden. However, the restoration that appears in Jeremiah is based on the New Covenant and presents the object of the covenant of grace more specifically.³⁷⁹ The New Covenant details the kingdom of God and presents a broad sense of the messianic ministry. Jeremiah shows the progressive nature of God's covenant, which will be revealed in the realization of His perfect plan for His people. The central theme of the New Covenant is the messianic prophecy; thus, the prophecy is an expression of God's love, grace, salvation, forgiveness, and faithfulness.

Jeremiah is the longest prophetic book in the Old Testament, but there are five relatively short passages regarding the Messiah.³⁸⁰ Although the passages are short, they are significant in that they present the key message of hope and express the continuity of God's revelation. The prophecy about the Messiah is the subject encompassing the entire Bible, revealing the connection between the New Testament and Jeremiah.

God made a covenant with the Israelites first through the covenant from Sinai and later through Jesus. The fulfillment of the Old Covenant extended to all who believe in the death and resurrection of Jesus. The laws and rituals under the Old Covenant reflect God's will on the surface level, but in the New Covenant, Christ becomes the inner principle, guiding people's lives in line with the will of God.

³⁷⁹ Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 665.

³⁸⁰ See Jeremiah 3:14–17; 23:1–8; 30:8–9; 31:31–40; 33:14–16.

From the beginning of time, God made covenants with Noah, Abraham, and Moses. The covenant was God's promise and a channel of blessing to bring unholy humans into His kingdom. He sought to be bound with humans through it. The Israelites did not obey the law and desecrated the sacrifices offered to God, breaching the covenant by forgetting the nature of the law. The violation of the covenant drove the Israelites out of the Promised Land and left them languishing in captivity. However, Jesus fulfilled the laws and rituals by offering Himself as a sacrifice. The real meaning of the grace relationship with God, which began from the sacrifice of the Old Testament, was thus entirely fulfilled in Christ.

Jesus performed the processes of sacrifice so that people could obtain the grace of salvation at no cost. He abolished the need for formal and customary sacrifice, forgave all sins, and granted the salvation of God. The sacrifices of the Old Testament and of Christ are essentially related, but they differ in their efficacy and in covenant type. The essence of the covenant is the unchanging unity from the Old Testament to Christ. God's law is not an outward ritual; rather, it seeks the fulfillment of God's redemption in the hearts of all people.

The New Covenant in Isaiah

The coherent purpose of the entire Old Testament is to convey the certainty and work of the coming Messiah. Among the Old Testament messianic prophecies, the most prominent appearance of the Messiah can be found in Isaiah. Isaiah describes the Messiah's personality, character, and ministry more clearly than any other writer in the Old Testament. The messianism and eschatological ideas in Isaiah appear not only in the work of the New Testament authors, but also in the documents of the Second Temple period, especially in the Qumran literature.³⁸¹ The

³⁸¹ Witherington III, *Isaiah Old and New*, 36.

book of Isaiah is more detailed and broader than any other book in the Old Testament. It covers important aspects of Christian thought, such as God's love and salvation and the eschatological view, and the Twelve Prophets provide support for Isaiah's prophetic thoughts and messages. Isaiah suggests that the suffering servant is the Messiah and plays a decisive role in the restoration of Zion, which is confirmed through the later revelation of the New Covenant.

The central issue of Old Testament theology is God's redemption of humanity, as represented by Israel. Isaiah prophesies the coming of Christ from Israel to redeem the people of the world and to lead them to the eternal kingdom: "The themes of judgment on Israel's foes, and redemption for God's people, including even a return of the redeemed to Zion, are concepts we have already found enunciated in Isaiah 1–33."³⁸² The revelation of Christ, which makes this redemptive history complete, is the center of the Bible, connecting the Old Testament and the New Testament via the New Covenant.

The New Testament confirms the promises and prophecies of Isaiah regarding Christ. Patricia K. Tull notes, "Isaiah's name is invoked twenty-two times in the Gospels, Acts, and Romans."³⁸³ The New Testament proclaims that the promise of Jesus Christ is fulfilled.³⁸⁴ Of the many messianic prophecies, Isaiah 9 and 11 had the most significant influence on the early church, shaping thought about Jesus.³⁸⁵ Jesus Christ is identified as the Messiah, who comes as the King and rules with righteousness and justice.

³⁸² Witherington III, *Isaiah Old and New*, 132.

³⁸³ Patricia K. Tull, *Isaiah 1–39*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, ed. Samuel E. Balentine (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing, Incorporated, 2010), 26.

³⁸⁴ Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, vol. 3, 25.

³⁸⁵ Witherington III, *Isaiah Old and New*, 92.

Isaiah's prophecy is the basis of Jesus's mission to the Gentiles.³⁸⁶ When Jesus is threatened in Nazareth and criticized for preaching and displaying miracles to the Gentiles in Galilee, He justifies His ministry by saying that he is the servant Isaiah prophesied: "Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah" (Matt 4:13–14). John says, "Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus' glory and spoke about him" (John 12:41). When Isaiah is called to the ministry, he sees the glory of Jesus sitting on the throne (see Isa 6:1).

Isaiah greatly influenced the formation of Christianity in the early church. The prophecies about the Messiah in Isaiah include a variety of analogies and expressions that reflect the circumstances of the time. The figure of the Messiah, who will save humanity, appears in Isaiah with various features and characteristics. Isaiah speaks of the Messiah's personality, character, and ministry. He proclaims the destruction of Israel, while simultaneously prophesying that Israel will be restored through the Messiah. Isaiah declares that all of humanity—not just Israel—will be saved through the Messiah. Witherington III argues, "This could be said of virtually all the NT writers that draw on Isaiah for their soteriology and Christology."³⁸⁷ The apostle Paul proclaims, based on Isaiah, that the remnant will be saved. In addition to the explicit citations of Isaiah, the New Testament authors use the beautiful themes found in the Prophets. With their basic structure, the Old and New Testaments are deeply connected, testifying to God's work to save humanity through Christ.

Isaiah describes the rejection and suffering of the Messiah. This dissertation examines the significance of the servant songs of Isaiah and the true meaning of the suffering servant,

³⁸⁶ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 188.

³⁸⁷ Witherington III, *Isaiah Old and New*, 39.

explaining how the New Covenant can save and renew the hearts of the Israelites and the Gentiles. This research confirms that the prophecy of Isaiah 52:13–53:12 refers to the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Brown explains, “Isaiah presents a picture of a totally righteous, guileless servant of the Lord.”³⁸⁸ The text of Isaiah can be divided into three parts: the introduction (52:13–15), the main body (53:1–10), and the conclusion (53:11–13). In his commentary on the book of Isaiah for the New International Commentary on the Old Testament series, John N. Oswalt divides the text into four parts:

- 1) Astonishment and Rejection (52:13–53:3)
- 2) Punished for Others (53:4–6)
- 3) Unjustly Punished (53:7–9)
- 4) Many Made Righteous (53:10–12).³⁸⁹

In Isaiah chapters 40–55, there are four kinds of songs in the unique prophetic form. Isaiah 52:13–53:12 is the final part of the servant songs and details the servant’s suffering. The passage suggests that the suffering servant plays a decisive role in the restoration of Zion. This text should be viewed as a single piece, starting at 52:13 and ending at 53:12, regardless of the chapters and verses. The division of the Bible into chapters and verses was done later, and these divisions often disturb the flow of the Bible as a whole. Through the accurate exegesis in this passage, one can identify the true meaning of the suffering and see how the passage reveals the New Covenant.

The four songs of the servant in Isaiah 42–53 have always been crucial to the interpretation of Isaiah. In particular, the fourth song of the servant who saved others through his suffering and death has been the subject of academic attention. Many scholars have investigated

³⁸⁸ Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, vol. 3, 52.

³⁸⁹ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 373–98.

this servant, a mysterious figure whose identity remains often debated. Isaiah carries a message of comfort and encouragement for the Israelites by emphasizing the need for reliance on God. This fulfillment of God's will through suffering further underlines the connection with Jesus.

Isaiah prophesies that the suffering servant will be the representative of Jehovah and provide redemption through his suffering. Isaiah 52:13–53:12, the last of the servant songs, is the longest and most easily identifiable. It explains in detail the elevation and humiliation of the Messiah. It is recorded that the Messiah has a royal and divine nature and must endure suffering to achieve salvation. Isaiah's prophecy has significant value as a typology of Christ because it portrays the personality, character, and ministry of the Messiah more clearly and vividly than anywhere else in the Old Testament.

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 can be read as a prophecy of Jesus Christ, who will bring salvation to humanity through redemptive suffering and death on behalf of sinful people. This passage offers a detailed description of God's will, mission, and plan, as presented to God's servant. It speaks of the reason for suffering and the atonement of the people. The image of the servant depicted in Isaiah 53 is the pinnacle of meekness and humility. The servant is described as saving the world by obeying God and seeking to fulfill His will and eventually being exalted by God. The servant thus demonstrates redemption through suffering and obedience.

Isaiah 52:13–53:12 presents the notion of the suffering servant who will appear for the salvation of humanity. This is the proclamation that the messianic prophecy will eventually be fulfilled. The servant song speaks of the appearance of the Messiah, the suffering of the servant, and his glorious life in the future. Walter C. Kaiser, Jr. adds,

The suffering and triumphant Servant of the Lord is narrated in five strophes of three verses each. The prophet, using an inclusion, begins and ends his description with assurances that the Servant will triumph and be successful. He begins with these words: "Behold/See, my servant will have success" (52:13; pers. Tr.), and concludes with the

Servant's receiving a portion with the great ones (53:12) and with his soul's being satisfied with what his death and resurrection have accomplished (53:11).³⁹⁰

A different assessment of his suffering is crucial for understanding Isaiah 52:13–53:12.

Traditionally, from an Old Testament perspective, it was understood that the suffering of Israel was the result of sin and that, when Israel rebelled against God, her suffering was delivered as a means of urging the Israelites to repent and return to Him. However, in Isaiah 53, the self-sacrifice of a servant is not due to his faults (Isa 53:9). Rather, the suffering of the servant opens up the path to salvation. James Smith adds, “He died vicariously: Yet he bore the sins of many. Though counted a sinner by some, yet his ultimate purpose was to pay the price of the sin debt of all who would embrace him.”³⁹¹ This passage explains that the servant's voluntary suffering is a hardship that brings healing and perfection. The ultimate goal of his suffering is to eradicate iniquity. The work of God's salvation transcends the scope of theological thinking in the Old Testament.

No Old Testament text describes and prophesies the ministry of Christ better than Isaiah 52:13–53:12. Examining the context of the main text, one can recognize that the preceding passage proclaims the liberation of Jerusalem (Isa 52:1–2), followed by the good news of salvation for the Israelites (Isa 52:3–12). The central speaker in this text is the prophet Isaiah. Isaiah 52:13, which begins with the word “See,” abruptly introduces the servant. It is worth noting that the speaker then changes to God, which emphasizes that he is a servant of God.

There have been many objections to the claim that the servant songs refer to Jesus Christ, with some arguing that the servant rather refers to the Gentile king, the nation of Israel, or

³⁹⁰ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 178.

³⁹¹ James Smith, *What the Bible Teaches about the Promised Messiah: An In-depth Study of 73 Key Old Testament Prophecies about the Messiah* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 318.

David.³⁹² Brown mentions that some Jewish leaders have interpreted this passage with reference to Israel, not the Messiah. This means that the non-messianic interpretation was explicitly accepted in Jewish circles more than three centuries before the Jews had completed the Talmud.³⁹³

The view of some scholars that the suffering servant is Israel, not the Messiah, is based on God calling Israel eleven times in Isaiah to be His servant. This claim has long been standard among Jewish interpreters, and it has been used primarily to deny the New Testament. However, as the problems of this view have become apparent, some scholars have begun to see Jehovah's servants as holy idealistic Israelites, rather than historically existent Israelites. They argue that Israel, which appears in the song of the servant, is idealized because of the plan that Jehovah has for Israel. Mentioning this issue, Brown adds,

If this could be said about a prophet of Israel (as interpreted by these medieval rabbis), how much more could it be said about the Messiah of Israel, who both represents and fulfills the destiny of the people of Israel? It simply means that Israel realizes its goals through her greatest King and Leader, the Messiah; therefore it should come as no surprise to us if, at times, the Messiah is referred to as "Israel." This presents no problem at all. In fact, it reinforces the connection between the Messiah and his people.³⁹⁴

The claim that the servant is Israel raises several significant questions. There is no sufficient explanation as to how Israel could save humankind by suffering for its sins. God's plan to save humanity is ultimately accomplished through the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Isaiah's most significant contribution is its introduction of the coming Messiah. Isaiah's Christology is described in detail.

³⁹² Gary V. Smith, *Isaiah 40–66*, vol. 15B, The New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2009), 153–6.

³⁹³ Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, vol. 3, 50–1.

³⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

That is, the birth of Christ and His genealogy, personality, suffering, death, resurrection, and second coming are foretold in Isaiah.

The servant, whom people initially considered a sinner, was eventually shown to be righteous, and God exalted the servant, whose appearance was marred. In the end, the people recognized that the servant's suffering was due to their sins. They condemned him as a sinner, but only the servant was righteous before God. The book titled *Jesus the Messiah* says that the servant's suffering is similar in many ways to Job's plight.³⁹⁵ Johnston argues, "Yet for all these similarities, the Servant's suffering and reward would outstrip that of Job. For his suffering would play the pivotal role in God's program of redemption of all people (Isa. 42:1–4; 49:5–8; 53:5, 6, 12); and God would bestow on him unprecedented worldwide honor (Isa. 49:7; 52:13; 53:12)."³⁹⁶ The servant suffered to atone for man's sin. The righteous were blessed by God and permitted to enjoy longevity and prosperity. In *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel state, "The comparison of the Suffering Servant's vicarious death in Isa. 53 with a lamb going to the altar to be killed as a sacrificial victim may have been understood by Luke as a prophecy of Jesus' voluntary death."³⁹⁷ This commentary mentions that the death of the suffering servant was vicarious, thus revealing the connection with Jesus.

The suffering servant in the fourth servant song (Isa 52:13–53:12) is clearly the Messiah, Jesus Christ. However, those who heard the song at the time would not have known who the

³⁹⁵ Gordon H. Johnston, "Messianic Trajectories in Isaiah," 155.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 156.

³⁹⁷ David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Luke," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, eds. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 399.

servant was. Although no one knew the reasons for the servant's suffering, the servant fulfilled God's promise silently and obediently. Jehovah's servant, as a suffering Messiah, is divine and justifies every sinner through his death. This is the core message of the passage. Scholars have long investigated the identity of the servant, but there is still no consensus regarding this matter. However, it is evident that Jesus Christ is the one who suffered and died for humankind and was exalted by God. The kingdom of God, which will shine through the servant and in the manifestation of justice and righteousness, will surely be established.

This dissertation clearly shows the meaning of the suffering of the servant. The research finds the true meaning of the messianic redemption in Jesus bearing people's sins. Isaiah 53:4 says, "Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted" (Isa 53:4). The use of the terms "took up" (נָשָׂא) and "bore" (בָּרָא) indicates that his suffering is vicarious, a substitutionary atonement for sin.³⁹⁸ At the end of verse 4, "we" misunderstand that "he" was punished and afflicted by God, which represents that "we" do not understand the redemptive suffering of the servant. The *Targum* says, "Then he will beseech concerning our sins and our iniquities for his sake will be forgiven" (Isa 53:4a, *Targum*). This *Targum*'s version more clearly reveals God's redemptive ministry.

Isaiah 53:5 describes the mission of the servant: "But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isa 53:5). Luke states, "He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out. Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.' But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be

³⁹⁸ John R. W. Stott, *The Cross of Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2006), 239.

ours” (Luke 20:12–14). Luke’s verses are connected with the suffering servant in Isaiah, which demonstrates that Jesus came to the world as the suffering servant to save all humanity.

The suffering of the servant increased from sickness to a wound because of people’s iniquities. Oswalt states,

We had thought God was punishing this man for his own sins and failures, but in fact he was *pierced through* as a result of our rebellion; he was *crushed* on account of our twistedness. The images have now shifted from illness to injury and have become more severe. While “pierced through” is not always specifically said to result in death, it is typically used in contexts with death.³⁹⁹

The words “pierced” (מְהַלֵּל) and “crushed” (אֶצְטַדֵּן) are related to death, which indicates that death is essential to the identity of the servant. This is the prophecy of the salvation ministry of Jesus, who chose death to save humanity. Verse 5 presents a sharp contrast between “he” and “we,” emphasizing “our” benefits enjoyed through “his” vicarious suffering.⁴⁰⁰ According to John D. W. Watts, through the lens of the New Testament, verse 5 reveals the message that Jesus died not for his own sins, but for the sins of humankind.⁴⁰¹

Isaiah 53:6 clearly reveals the reason the servant suffered: “We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa 53:6). Sheep have extremely poor eyesight, and the animal goes the way that it wants, which inevitably leads to its death. This represents the sinful human being who is spiritually blind. Human beings are made to be entirely dependent on God. This absolute dependence means that they must turn to God alone and enjoy happiness and joy only in Him. As humans have behaved

³⁹⁹ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, 387.

⁴⁰⁰ Edward Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), 348.

⁴⁰¹ John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34–66*, rev. ed., vol. 25, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc, 2005), 793.

stubbornly, God has made the servant bear the burden of their iniquities. The *Targum* version says, “All we like sheep have been scattered; we have gone into exile, every one his own way; and before the LORD it was a pleasure to forgive the sins of us all for his sake” (Isa 53:6, *Targum*). According to this version, it was a delight for God to forgive the people’s sins. This is evidence of God’s grace for sinners, including the nation of Israel. The redemptive work of God for humanity is completed by the servant.

Isaiah 53:10–12 is the conclusion of the servant song. This section begins with the conjunction “Yet.” Isaiah 53:10 says, “Yet it was the LORD’s will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life an offering for sin, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand” (Isa 53:10). Claus Westermann states, “Verse 10 begins with *wāw* adversative which in the psalms of lamentation so frequently marks the turning-point in a lament.”⁴⁰² The conjunction reflects a reversal of the situation regarding the servant. God remembered and restored the servant, and the servant then succeeds in his mission, through his own suffering and death.

The servant is sacrificed to God, and as a result, he will produce offspring and enjoy the blessings of a long life. According to the law, the offering must be a ram without blemish. The servant will be dedicated to Him as an offering. This reveals a typology in which the death of one man may redeem the sins of all others. Here, this dissertation identifies a crucial message. Since the dead do not see their offspring, the statement in the text that the servant “will see his offspring” refers to the resurrection.⁴⁰³ The end of verse 10 describes God’s plan that His will is

⁴⁰² Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66: A Commentary*, eds. Peter Ackroyd et al., trans. David M. G. Stalker, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1969), 266.

⁴⁰³ Young, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, vol. 3, 355.

to be accomplished by the fulfillment of the mission entrusted to the servant. This version clearly shows God’s promise to restore and free the servant from all difficulties and hardships.

Isaiah 53:11 displays the thematic unity and shows that this individual is Jehovah’s righteous servant: “After he has suffered, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities” (Isa 53:11).

In verse 11, the word “righteous” appears. Discussing this term, Oswalt states,

The entire book has been about the persistent sin and unbelief of the chosen people, not to mention the world at large. This man will change all that in a sentence? Furthermore, “righteousness” has been given a very broad scope since ch. 40. In these chapters the word is a synonym for deliverance (cf. 46:12–13, and esp. 51:4–6). This man is the Deliverer who fulfills all the promises of deliverance for the people.⁴⁰⁴

The knowledge of the servant has been a matter of discussion in verse 11. This knowledge is about God. An understanding of Hebrew syntax is needed to correctly interpret this verse.

Oswalt introduces D. Winton Thomas’s opinion: “Two different Hebrew roots have the consonants *yd*’, and that the second, meaning ‘to humble’ (in its noun form, ‘humiliation’), is the one used here.”⁴⁰⁵ Thomas interprets “knowledge” as humility; thus, according to his view, it is the servant’s humility that makes many people righteous.⁴⁰⁶

Verse 12 begins with “Therefore,” which indicates that 53:12 is the conclusion of the song: “Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isa 53:12). The servant suffered and died, but he justified many people by the knowledge of God, and as a result, he was

⁴⁰⁴ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66*, 404.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 403–4.

⁴⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

given a portion of God. The text emphasizes the meaning of this with its repetition of the verb אָחַל, which is translated as “portion” and “divide.”⁴⁰⁷ This signifies that God’s promise must be fulfilled. God’s plan is not frustrated by the death of this servant and will end with victory, promising blessings for the servant’s descendants. Verse 12 ends with a summary of the meaning of the servant’s suffering. The servant died, suffering ridicule and contempt at the hands of the world. However, the servant was brought to death to redeem the world, bearing the sins of the people. The story of the suffering servant in Isaiah 53 is a detailed account of the life, ministry, and sufferings of Jesus the Messiah.⁴⁰⁸ Thus, the suffering servant is connected to the New Covenant, revealing God’s redemptive mission to save all humanity.

The New Covenant in Psalm 22

Psalm 22 was recognized in the early church as a chapter on the suffering of the Messiah. Studying the implications of the words and expressions used in Psalm 22, this section provides an in-depth understanding of the suffering of the Messiah. Exhaustive analysis of Psalm 22 reveals the nature of the messianic suffering required by the New Covenant. Psalm 22 contains a poetic metaphor that condenses profound theological meaning, revealing a connection with the suffering servant in Isaiah.

Psalm 22 is associated with the death of Jesus and the experiences of David, owing to the use of expressions such as “forsaken,” “scorned,” and “despised.” This psalm describes the death of Jesus Christ and contains no curses for His enemies. Dale A. Brueggemann adds, “Either Jesus intentionally embodied the experience of the faithful suffering in Psalm 22, or the Gospel

⁴⁰⁷ They have the same lemma (חלק).

⁴⁰⁸ Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, vol. 3, 71.

writers articulated their understanding of Jesus in the light of their knowledge of Psalm 22, or both. One way or the other, the Gospels insist that Ps. 22 finds its fulfilment in the suffering of Jesus.⁴⁰⁹ The contents of Psalm 22 came to pass in reality through the suffering of Jesus.

The content of Psalm 22 consistently describes the suffering of Jesus Christ, and Jesus recited various parts of this psalm on the cross. James H. Waltner states,

All four Gospels let Psalm 22 shape the account of the crucifixion. The words Jesus spoke from the cross are a quotation of 22:1 (Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34). This psalm, which ends on a note of vindication and the universal coming of the kingdom of God (22:22–31), is echoed in the passion story as passersby deride Jesus and wag their heads at him (22:7; Matt 27:39; Mark 15:29; Luke 23:35). The division of Jesus' garments and casting lots for them (Matt 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; John 19:24) recall Psalm 22:18, and the demand that God deliver him (Matt 27:43) is like Psalm 22:8.⁴¹⁰

Psalm 22 depicts the kingships of both the Messiah and Yahweh. The psalmist is attacked by brutal bulls, lions, dogs, and the horns of oxen. These global enemies symbolize various international powers, which do not attack ordinary Israelites, but rather the king, the Lord's anointed. The vivid portrayals of this suffering describe the suffering of the messianic king.⁴¹¹

Both Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 detail the suffering of Jesus. Isaiah 53 provides a prophecy that the Messiah will achieve salvation for humanity through His suffering and death, which will lead to redemption. The appearance of the servant described in Isaiah 53 is one of meekness and humility. In Psalm 22:2, the psalmist cries out to God day and night. Psalm 22 explains the meaning beyond his personal suffering and thus describes the Messiah:

No known incident in the life of David fits the details of this psalm. The expressions describe an execution, not an illness; yet that execution is more appropriate to Jesus'

⁴⁰⁹ Dale A. Brueggemann, "The Evangelists and the Psalms," in *Interpreting the Psalms: Issues and Approaches*, eds. David Firth and Philip S. Johnston (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 276.

⁴¹⁰ James H. Waltner, *Psalms*, Believers Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale, PA; Waterloo, ON: Herald Press, 2006), 25.

⁴¹¹ O. Palmer Robertson, *The Flow of the Psalms: Discovering Their Structure and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2015), 71–72.

crucifixion than David's experience. The Gospel writers also saw connections between some of the words in this psalm (vv. 8, 16, 18) and other events in Christ's Passion. Also Hebrews 2:12 quotes Psalm 22:22. Thus the church has understood this psalm to be typological of the death of Jesus Christ.⁴¹²

Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 can be interpreted as parts of an overarching storyline concerning Jesus Christ's ultimate achievement in providing forgiveness for people's sins.⁴¹³

Psalm 22 invokes the suffering of Jesus. Jesus's own use of Psalm 22:1 encourages one to read the psalm as depicting the suffering of Jesus.⁴¹⁴ Furthermore, Psalm 22:6 emphasizes that many people mocked and despised David and uses a metaphor of a worm to represent the suffering of Jesus. Similar acts of mockery are found in Psalms 22:7 and Matthew 27:39: "All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads" (Ps 22:7), and "Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads" (Matt 27:39). This similarity provides further evidence that Psalm 22 predicts the Messiah. Matthew 27:46 says, "About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, 'Eli, Eli, lemasabachthani?' (which means 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?')." Regarding this verse, R. T. France adds,

This is not just a cry of pain, but an anguished appeal to God which reveals for a moment something of the mental and spiritual torment of the "cup" Jesus had accepted in Gethsemane. The words are taken directly from the opening of Psalm 22, to which we have already seen allusions in vv. 35–36, 39, 43; the psalm expresses the spiritual desolation of a man who continues to trust and to appeal to God in spite of the fact that his ungodly opponents mock and persecute him with impunity.⁴¹⁵

⁴¹² Allen P. Ross, "Psalms," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, vol. 1, eds. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 809.

⁴¹³ Timothy George, "General Introduction," in *Psalms 1–72: Old Testament*, vol. VII, Reformation Commentary on Scripture, eds. Herman J. Selderhuis et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2015), xliii–xliv.

⁴¹⁴ Richard P. Belcher Jr., *Messiah and the Psalms: Preaching Christ from All the Psalms* (Fearn: Mentor, 1996), 167.

⁴¹⁵ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1075–6.

The combination of the Old Testament sacrifice and the voluntary suffering of Jehovah's servant—which is fully fulfilled in Jesus—is expressed in Psalm 22. This verse, depicting a cry of extreme pain, signifies the culmination of Christ's suffering.

Psalm 22:27 states, "All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the LORD." This prophecy was accomplished explicitly by Jesus, who commanded the apostles to preach the gospel after His resurrection. Psalm 22:31 says, "They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!" God's salvation comes from His righteousness. To fulfill his promise, God gave His only Son, Jesus Christ, as a ransom sacrifice to forgive the sins of all humanity. The righteous can rejoice with hope in the midst of affliction due to the power of the salvation brought about by the blood of the New Covenant.

The New Covenant in Hebrews

Man is created to live in a personal relationship with God and their neighbors. Since humans have the image of God, they must establish a loving relationship with others: "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11). Humans were made in the image of God; therefore, they must have a personal relationship with Him in every aspect.

The Bible deals with the issue of man's fall. Man chose to break his relationship with God and became independent from Him, which thus destroyed the peace between God and man. Satan established the power of death by intervening in the human world when the relationship with God was destroyed. The iniquity of humanity destroyed the relationship with God. Although Adam failed to achieve his purpose and drove the entire order of creation into sin, Jesus, who came as the second Adam, reversed the situation. Jesus Christ came as a peace offering for reconciliation between God and the people. He abandoned the glory of heaven and

shed blood on the cross in order to restore the broken relationship, through which God resolved the problem of human sin.

In the Old Testament era, animals were offered as unblemished sacrifices and were accepted by God as a fragrant smell. As the Israelites' ritual degraded into a formal practice, the prophet Malachi pointed to the problem of bringing flawed and sick animals as sacrifices. In the New Testament, Jesus is described as a lamb without blemish. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was thus entirely without sin. If the Israelites could not offer a flawless animal as their burnt offering or sin offering, the sacrifice would be unacceptable to God. A flawed offering had no power to redeem a person of their sins; therefore, only a perfect and flawless Christ could satisfy God's demand.

Hebrews acknowledges the fulfillment of the New Covenant by quoting Jeremiah's prophecies in Hebrews 8:8–12 and 10:15–18. The writer of Hebrews mentions "better promises" to explain the basis of the New Covenant: "But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises" (Heb 8:6). This verse suggests that Jeremiah's New Covenant not only destroys the Old Covenant but also represents the prophecy of the work of Christ.

The New Covenant was brought into effect by the death of Christ: "For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant" (Heb 9:15). The fulfillment of the New Covenant includes the theological concept of "already but not yet." The New Covenant was inaugurated by the first coming of Jesus, but it has a future sense in that it will be completed on the day on which He comes again.

The theological ideas in Jeremiah explain the importance of relying on God in times of judgment, oppression, and suffering. God's promise of restoration continues forever, amid despair. The destruction of the Old Covenant and the fall of Jerusalem did not end the history of Israel. In this context, Jeremiah declared the promise of eschatological restoration. The New Covenant in Jeremiah demonstrates that God, the ruler of history, establishes the eternal covenant and restores all things. The promise is equally valid in both Jeremiah's time and in the present.

God uses animal sacrifice to foreshadow the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Since there is no forgiveness without the shedding of blood, animal sacrifice is an important theme throughout the Bible (see Heb 9:22). God commanded the Israelites to offer sacrifices according to His procedure. The sacrifice had to be an unblemished animal, and the person offering the sacrifice had to kill the animal himself. Christ's blood establishes the New Covenant. The New Covenant cannot exist without the blood of Christ, as this is the promise of the New Covenant and the fulfillment of the law. It is only by the blood of Christ, who is without blemish, that people could restore their broken relationship with God and experience the blessings of the New Covenant.

The book of Hebrews addresses the relationship between the Old Testament sacrifice and the New Covenant: "Then he said, 'Here I am, I have come to do your will.' He sets aside the first to establish the second" (Heb 10:9). In the Old Testament sacrifice, the person offering the burnt offering lays his hand directly on the head of the animal so that his sin is passed on to it. Those who had sinned took the animal and burned it to obtain forgiveness of their sin, which thus enabled the sinner to come to God. In the New Testament, God imputed the sins of the world to Jesus. Christ's cross thus had the power to impart life to all the people of the world:

“And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb 10:10). Jesus’s death provided salvation by fully embodying the essence of the ritual. His sacrifice allowed the people to live the life of God’s covenant people.

Jesus completed the work of redemption and sent the Holy Spirit after the Ascension. The author of Hebrews states that the Holy Spirit testifies to people about the New Covenant (see Heb 10:15). This means that the Holy Spirit does the leading work for the fulfillment of the New Covenant. The Holy Spirit, who dwells in the hearts of believers, establishes the New Covenant through His ministry. The Spirit is present in believers and united with their lives. Additionally, He does the work of teaching and leads to the truth all those who are ignorant of God’s laws and words. This work of the Holy Spirit is the fulfillment of the New Covenant, which engraves God’s law in the hearts of believers.

The book of Hebrews describes Jesus Christ as a high priest, merciful and faithful to the work of God. The crucial element of the representation of Christ in Hebrews is that He offered Himself as a sacrifice and that the efficacy of the sacrifice is complete and permanent.⁴¹⁶ Unlike the Levitical priests in the Old Testament, Jesus died for the sins of all and resolved the problem of sin entirely. In Old Testament times, the Israelites were forgiven of their sins by offering the sacrifice of animals and shedding the blood. However, this customary animal sacrifice did not satisfy the essence of the ritual. Imperfect sacrifice led to the breach of the covenant, and God restored the relationship between man and God by sending Christ, the New Covenant.

The blood of Christ not only eliminates the sins of the flesh but also purifies people’s hearts and opens up the pathway to God. The sacrifice of Christ, the mediator of the New

⁴¹⁶ Kenneth D. Mulzac, “Atonement,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, eds. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 128.

Covenant, redeems people from their sins and transforms them to the status of children, who receive God's inheritance by promise.⁴¹⁷ Sacrifice in the Old Covenant had the power to cover sins temporarily, but it was not a permanent solution. However, Christ's sacrificial death is an eternal sacrifice of atonement, permanently setting people apart from sin, thereby freeing them from their responsibility for the iniquity of the past.

Repeated sin prevents people from maintaining a covenant relationship with God through customary ritual. However, by offering His life as a sacrifice, Christ resolved the problem of human sin, restored the broken relationship between God and people, and granted the New Covenant. Christ's sacrificial death was the consummation of the sacrifice and brought people to the stage of inheriting new promises, in unity with God.

Conclusion

Jeremiah recognized God's plan for Israel, pointed out Israel's transgressions, and urged repentance. When Jeremiah proclaimed God's judgment upon the Israelites, the Israelites persecuted Jeremiah. Rather than turning away from sin, they did increasingly abominable things and more wicked deeds. God chose Israel as the covenant people, but their sins sparked His wrath.

The judgment that Jeremiah proclaimed was ultimately manifest by the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 BC. However, Jeremiah retained a message of hope and presented the New Covenant and the promise of restoration based on God's forgiveness. The destruction of Jerusalem was fundamentally due to the Israelites' disobedience of God's laws. Nevertheless,

⁴¹⁷ Arthur Walkington Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot, 1954), 491.

God promised a future restoration to the Israelites, despite their sin, based on His unconditional covenant.

With Jeremiah's message, God did not intend to bring frustration and despair to the Israelites. Rather, He wished to convey a message of hope. An essential point of Jeremiah's prophecy was its promise of restoration for the captives in Babylon.⁴¹⁸ Jeremiah 30–33, called “the Book of Comfort,” contains the message of restoration.⁴¹⁹ The Babylonian captivity was part of a plan by God to fundamentally restore and transform Israel. Indeed, the destruction of Jerusalem did not mean the end of everything, and the Babylonian exile became the starting point for the restoration of the Israelites.

God stands not only for the Israelites, but for all nations and wants all those who believe in Christ to be saved. Under God's plan for salvation, Israel is a nation of the New Covenant people who have been tasked with the priestly role of guiding the nations to salvation. The apostle Paul declares, “All Israel will be saved” (Rom 11:26). This verse plays a crucial role in understanding the relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles in God's plan for salvation. Discussing the time of Israel's salvation, the apostle Paul says, “Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in” (Rom 11:25b). The verse proclaims that, in the eschatological future, both Israel and the Gentiles will ultimately be saved, which shows the connection with Jeremiah and His covenant.

Some six hundred years after Jeremiah's day, the New Covenant for Israel was established. The ordinance that Jesus established before being caught was a new promise for all humanity, an essential truth for sinful humanity. The blood is the crucial element of the

⁴¹⁸ Thompson, *The Book of Jeremiah*, 551.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid.*

covenant, and the blood of Jesus is the key to the fulfillment of Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22. In the Old Covenant, the blood of animals was merely a sacrifice for the sins of individuals or communities, but the blood of Christ gives all who believe in that blood the grace of restoration, in line with all those people who have entered into the covenant of grace that began from the time of God's creation.

The blood of the Old and New Covenants has the same essence: "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life" (Lev 17:11). The Old Covenant had the significance of observing the law, following the ritual procedures, and forgiving of sins through the blood of the animal. In the New Covenant, the old sacrificial laws and rituals were changed from their original form, but the essence of the covenant was unchanged, with sins forgiven and the covenant people of God restored in the blood of Christ's sacrifice. The New Covenant made the Old Covenant obsolete. The Old Covenant is the shadow, while the New Covenant is the substance. The former is the lessor and the latter is the greater.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

Final Thoughts

God's kingdom is the basis for biblical theology, and one cannot understand the Bible properly without close familiarity with it. God's kingdom is continuous in nature, starting from creation and progressing until it is consummated in history. The kingdom of God is the kingdom in which God's plans and promises are realized. The Old Testament contains the expanding vision of the universal kingdom of God, and it is because of the fall of humanity that the temple was built and destroyed in Jerusalem on earth.

As God's history of redemption progresses, the direction of His covenant becomes clear. In the context of each age, God reveals the purpose of His covenant toward His ultimate redemption. That is, God's covenant is like a map that guides people to the kingdom of God, revealing His faithfulness. God's unconditional covenants are constantly progressing toward the completion of salvation, which is their ultimate goal. The four covenants are not separate but have one purpose: to accomplish the kingdom of God.

After the Babylonian captivity, the Jews longed for the restoration of the order of creation. They expected the purpose of creation to be fully restored, including the restoration of Eden, and they longed for the eschatological temple to show that the eternal kingdom of God would be achieved. The destruction of the temple in Jerusalem confirmed that Jesus would move toward a new creation, completing the universal temple as the second Adam to fulfill God's mission. The essential idea of God's reign also influenced the New Testament and the formation of temple theology in the New Testament. The transcendental and sacred features of the temple formed in the Second Temple period reveal to the whole world beyond Israel the new creation and the approaching end times.

The kingdom of God, which Jesus declared in the first century, is advancing and will eventually be completed under God's rule. In particular, Jesus employed the parables to explain how the kingdom of God should be understood. Through parables, He explained the present and future value of the kingdom of God. Although the present status of the kingdom is only vaguely discussed in John's Gospel, the Fourth Gospel clearly delves into the future aspect of the kingdom of God.

The concept of the kingdom of God is presented in diverse forms in the New Testament, according to the circumstances of each author's life and their theological emphasis, but the underlying messages are unified. The kingdom collides with the site on which evil is committed with great frequency. However, God's kingdom is present on this earth through Jesus Christ, and it continues to expand into the future. Although the kingdom of God is in tension between its present and future, it will ultimately lead to the absolute reign of God.

Everything done today to build the kingdom of God will continue into His future. A proper understanding of this future leads directly to the vision of hope that forms the basis of all Christian mission. God involved humans as stewards in the project of His first creation in Genesis 1, and He now allows them to work with Him as stewards on the new creation.⁴²⁰ Nothing that people do in God can be in vain because they are accomplishing what will become part of His new world in due time.

This dissertation reveals how the kingdom of God relates to His unconditional covenants. The four unconditional covenants that God made with Israel form the four pillars supporting the consistency of God's kingdom in the Bible. The first is the Abrahamic Covenant. In Genesis 12, the Abrahamic Covenant is given to Abraham and his descendants. According to the covenant,

⁴²⁰ Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 202.

God will bless Abraham and his posterity and choose Israel to bless other nations. All countries will gather in Israel to see God. All the nations will unite and praise God in harmony. God will not only save the individual but also work with the nation of Israel. God promised Abraham that blessings would flow to the Gentiles through his physical descendants, the Jews. Many Gentiles would come and worship before God through Israel. This reveals God's plan for Israel.

The election of Israel as a holy nation began with God's calling of Abraham. God made a covenant with Abraham and promised to bless him and make Israel a great nation. The fundamental element of the kingdom of God, as emphasized in the Abrahamic Covenant, is God's plan for salvation. The Abrahamic Covenant was not for Abraham and his descendants alone but for all the nations. Abraham was to be blessed, and through him, the nations would also be blessed.

The birth of Isaac, which seemed impossible, revealed the faithfulness of God's promise. The Abrahamic Covenant continued to exist, passed down to Isaac and Jacob. Jacob's name was changed to Israel, and he had twelve sons. These twelve sons became the twelve tribes, and these formed the nation of Israel in the land of Canaan, which was promised to Abraham. The birth of the nation of Israel was thus based on the Abrahamic Covenant. Abraham grew in faith by obeying God's Word, and the covenant he made with God was passed down to the next generation, thereby sustaining Israel.

Nothing can replace God's faithfulness to Israel. The apostle Paul makes it clear that God's hope and plan for her is everlasting. The covenant between God and Israel is to be fulfilled in connection with His complete plan of salvation. God's choice for Israel is not a plan of salvation for Israel alone. God made His covenant with Israel and does not forsake her because He has a plan to use her to save all nations, despite Israel's stubbornness and

disobedience. God's plan for Israel remains in effect because of His faithfulness. God will never forsake Israel but will fulfill His mission with her. Nothing can replace Israel, and God's blessings will continue to flow through her to the whole world.

The second unconditional covenant is the Palestinian Covenant. Jesus foretold that Jerusalem would be destroyed and that the Jews would be dispersed into foreign lands (see Luke 21:20–24). Deuteronomy describes the giving of new land to future generations, and it contains many lessons from the past, as warnings not to repeat the mistakes of one's ancestors. The book presents the message that if the Israelites are perfect before God, they will thrive in that land, but if they leave God, they will be driven out of the land. This expulsion is the judgment for sin.⁴²¹ As Jesus prophesied, the Israelites lost their land and the Jerusalem temple. Jerusalem has since been trampled and ruled by foreign powers. However, there is an explicit promise of Israel's restoration. The fall of Jerusalem is hence not eternal but rather a temporary condition.

The Israelites were too proud of being chosen people, and they disregarded God's righteousness and faithfulness. However, God promises that, through the return of the Israelites to the Promised Land, His plan will be achieved. They will be fully restored, and the reign of Jesus, a descendant of David, will be eternal. God will restore the land through the covenant He made with Israel, and the Israelites will enjoy the kingdom of God.

The third unconditional covenant is the Davidic Covenant. The Israelites were anticipating the Messiah, God's anointed, even after the Davidic dynasty had been dethroned and they were living in Babylonian captivity. The Jews were awaiting the Messiah who would liberate them from the oppressive rule of pagan kings. They were convinced that the Messiah

⁴²¹ James M. Hamilton Jr., *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 256.

would save and rule Israel in the last days and establish the kingdom of God. As an eschatological sect, the Qumran community hoped that the end of days would soon arrive. Although the community members did not experience the end of the world, the fact that they lived godly lives and left many documents means they remain theologically significant.

The prophetic books deal with the theological theme of the coming of the Messiah as the “King of Peace” as well as the restoration of David’s kingship and the reign of the land with righteousness and justice. True peace is the expectation that the will of God will be fulfilled in the world through the birth of a child and the emergence of His ministry. Only through the Messiah can people experience true peace. The Old Testament prophesies that the Messiah, who will descend from the Davidic line, will be born and that His ministry will bring forth God’s righteousness and justice as Prince of Peace in the Kingdom of God.

The last unconditional covenant is the New Covenant. The people of the Old Testament needed sacrifice to be redeemed from their sins. However, that is no longer required because the sacrifice has been fulfilled in Jesus, who was the final offering. Jesus died on the cross for the sins of humanity, and when people believe in Him, they partake in the covenant. People today can be forgiven for their sins through Jesus, the Messiah.

Isaiah prophesies that the coming Messiah will deliver fallen humanity and fulfill the promise of salvation and restoration. Isaiah testifies that the Messiah will give all believers the grace of redemption and that He will come as King to restore David’s kingship. The prophet Isaiah demonstrates God’s plan for saving humanity, with his firm belief that the Messiah will come to judge and save the world.

Hebrews describes the relationship between Jesus and the temple, and it interprets Jesus as the true high priest, replacing all other high priesthoods.⁴²² In the heart of its theology lies Christology, or the high priesthood. The general statement of Hebrews is that those who believe in Jesus as the Messiah have an inheritance that surpasses all that God has previously provided to Israel.

God made the New Covenant with the Israelites through Jesus Christ. The Old Covenant was fulfilled through the New Covenant for all who believed in the resurrection of Christ. The New Covenant replaced the Old Covenant, based on the organic relationship between the Old Testament sacrifice and the death of Christ. The Old Testament sacrifices were temporary. Their potential value can only be realized by the sacrifice of Christ. God has thus revealed Himself in Jesus the Messiah.

This dissertation demonstrates the continuity of the Old and New Testaments through God's kingdom, which has been implemented via four unconditional covenants. Jesus accomplished everything prophesied in the Old Testament. The claim that the Old Testament prophecies are unrelated to Jesus Christ distorts the message of the Bible as a whole. This dissertation has explored God's redemptive plan and the eschatological manifestation of the kingdom of God, which were gradually revealed through His unconditional covenants.

The Old Testament prophets exposed the sins of the nation of Israel. The Jews did not return to God, despite His warning, and the Gentiles destroyed them. However, the prophets promised that God would send the Messiah to redeem and restore Israel. The prophets prophesied the Messiah, the events of the end times, and the kingdom of God that would finally come. The prophecy of the Messiah links the Old and New Testaments.

⁴²² Regev, *The Temple in Early Christianity*, 252.

The unconditional covenants have research value, as they contain the core messages of the Bible and connect the New Testament with the Old Testament. The context of the Bible is bound into a coherent flow by the theme of God's kingdom, as each of the four unconditional covenants supports this. One must now prepare for the second coming of Jesus, which will open up a new world. Upon Jesus's return, He will begin the reign of God and establish the kingdom of God, based on His unconditional covenants.

The Consistency of the Bible

This dissertation demonstrates the unity of the Bible in accordance with the intertextuality of the Old and New Testaments. The key ideas of the New Testament cannot be understood without extensive knowledge of the four unconditional covenants. The overarching theme of the Old and New Testament is the kingdom of God. The Bible is a record of God's revelations about the kingdom of God and the Messiah, the King. The Bible contains a unified message and maintains a focus on God's reign and the ministry of Jesus.⁴²³ Some people prioritize the New Testament over the Old and seek to interpret the message of the Old Testament through the New. However, if they view the Old Testament's message from the point of view of the New Testament, without grasping its historical context, they will unintentionally degrade both Testaments.

The Bible reveals God's prophetic program for this world, and a holistic understanding of the book—from Genesis to Revelation—is required to read the Bible. The overall framework can help with evaluating and interpreting parts of the Bible. One may grasp the sense of the Bible by studying Israel's unconditional covenants and their connection to the kingdom of God in the

⁴²³ B. S. Rosner, "Biblical Theology," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, eds. T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 10.

New Testament. The prophecies in the Old Testament reveal God's plan for both the Jewish people and the Gentiles, providing eschatological hope. Therefore, to study the prophetic passages of the Bible is to study the whole context of the book.⁴²⁴

The Bible consistently attests to God's plan for salvation, revealing that this is fulfilled harmoniously in Jesus Christ. The purpose of this dissertation was to reveal the consistency of the Bible. The Bible is the Word of God, written by various authors, based on the inspiration of God, over a long period of time. The Bible is a complete collection of sixty-six books, and scholars today continue to explore the continuity between and diversity of the Old and New Testaments. Jesus declares that the purpose of the Bible is to testify about Himself: "You study the Scriptures diligently because you think that in them you have eternal life. These are the very Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39). Jesus further explains that the Old Testament testifies about Him.

Each book in the Bible was authored from a different perspective, reflecting the circumstances of its era. The composition of the Bible was a transgenerational process, and the diverse social, cultural, and historical backgrounds of the authors are plainly evident. The Bible was written in different places and situations over a long period of time, and this dissertation has analyzed and clarified various elements of the book to explore its unified theme. It is vital to understand the diversity contained within each book in the context of the unity of the entire Bible. The organic unity and development of the Bible make it reliable and trustworthy.

Intertextuality is a dynamic principle in biblical interpretation. Ben Witherington III states, "The Christian must learn to read the Bible both forward and backwards for fuller

⁴²⁴ Randall Price, *Jerusalem in Prophecy: God's Stage for the Final Drama* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1998), 55.

understanding.”⁴²⁵ Some Christians do not consider the original context of the Old Testament itself when reading the Old Testament passages in the New Testament, and others attempt to understand the Old Testament text without regard to its relevance to the New Testament and to Christ. An understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments will guide people to the right theological conclusions. When interpreting the kingdom of God intertextually, people can gain a rich understanding of the Bible. Therefore, an understanding of the kingdom of God is paramount, as this best represents the unconditional covenants of God that flow throughout the Bible.

Further Study

This dissertation investigated the interpretative and theological significance of the Bible, based on the unconditional covenants with Israel detailed in the Old Testament. It supports the argument that the kingdom of God is a central and cohesive theological theme that connects, coordinates, and uncovers critical issues in the New Testament. The history of Israel in the prophetic books comprised real events, through which God showed His will. God intervened directly in the history of Israel, and the prophets testified to this redemptive history.

The prophets of the Old Testament rebuked the Israelites, saying that God would not accept sacrifices if the person making the sacrifice did not do so with sincerity in their hearts. The prophets attempted to reform the Israelites’ worship based on God’s covenants. To understand the core idea of God’s covenants, it is crucial to examine the Old Testament sacrificial system in relation to the New Testament. In the Old Testament era, God’s truth was presented as types, symbols, and models through various sacrifices. Jesus appeared in the

⁴²⁵ Witherington III, *Isaiah Old and New*, 9.

fullness and light of God's covenant. Accordingly, to understand the context of the Bible, it is important to examine the characteristics of the Old Testament sacrifices.

The Prophets in the Old Testament contain the messianic prophecies, and the history of Israel is meaningless without considering the preparations for the coming of the Messiah. The Old Testament prophets foretold the destruction of the Israelites and, at the same time, proclaimed the message of restoration and salvation. In this message of hope, the Messiah, who would save not only the Israelites but all people, was prophesied in various ways. The Old Testament details various characteristics of the Messiah. It describes His birth, ministry, and suffering, as well as the glory He would receive.

The connection between the Edict of Cyrus and the Great Commandment shows that the expansion of God's kingdom and the mission command are related. 2 Chronicles says, "The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up, and may the LORD their God be with them" (2 Chr 36:23). This Edict allows the Israelites to go to Jerusalem, while Acts 1:8 orders them to spread out from Jerusalem. The Great Commission of Jesus can be interpreted as building and expanding God's reign on earth: "And you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8b). This includes not just establishing the church but restoring all areas of human life to the temple of God. To accomplish this mission, Jesus promises to be with His followers until the end of the world.

In an imperfect world, suffering and conflict are inevitable in Christian life. The Christian mission is to fight the absurdities of the world, with an unwavering principle of justice and with the weapon of hope, until God's will has been fully accomplished. Christians, as the messengers

of Jesus, should proclaim His lordship to the world and let His kingdom be on earth as it is in heaven.

The authors of the Bible wrote the text through God's inspiration. Considering the infinite distance between the Creator and the created, it is likely that God did not intend for the meaning of the Bible to be fully known to the human writers. In fact, it seems that the Old Testament writers may not have been conscious that they were predicting Jesus Christ, which leads to the need to study the Bible intertextually. Hays states, "The Gospels teach us how to read the OT, and—at the same time—the OT teaches us how to read the Gospels. Or, to put it a little differently, we learn to read the OT by reading backwards from the Gospels, and—at the same time—we learn how to read the Gospels by reading forwards from the OT."⁴²⁶ There is more mystery in the Bible than the Old Testament authors knew. This is why one must explore the connection between the Old and New Testaments.

The Old Testament background provides essential elements for understanding the early church. God showed the great things He had done through the Israelites, and Judaism gave Christianity the great legacy of the Old Testament. If the Jews had not preserved the Old Testament, Christians today would have been without many of their spiritual treasures. Thus, it is crucial to dispel Christians' misconceptions of Judaism and correctly establish the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

The connection between the Old and New Testaments is found in various areas of the Bible. People are responsible for uncovering the essence of God's Word by discovering the themes in the Bible. This dissertation concerns the flow of the Bible and sets out avenues for future research. The Old Testament presented the Word of God to people of its time. They

⁴²⁶ Hays, *Reading Backwards*, 4.

understood the message of hope delivered through the prophets in their own context. God's unconditional covenants provide the basis for a firm understanding of the entire Bible. It is thus important to grasp the core ideas of the Old Testament and their connection with the New Testament. People can find the crux of the Old Testament passages in the New Testament through a holistic understanding of the Bible.

Eschatology is so complex that Christians often overlook it. However, understanding eschatology is crucial because many Bible verses concern the last days. A precise understanding of eschatology gives people the power to willingly obey the Word of God. Furthermore, the desire for the coming of Jesus promotes perseverance in times of suffering and in the face of temptation. Christians must overcome the dualism of spirit and body and add value to modern life by understanding that the present is a process directly related to the hope for the coming kingdom of God.

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