CHAPTER FIVE

Messianic Trajectories in Isaiah

Isaiah's ministry took place during the days of Uzziah (767-740 BCE), Jotham (750-735 BCE), Ahaz (735-715 BCE) and Hezekiah (715-686 BCE). In fact, he was a contemporary of Amos, and Hosea. Unlike Amos and Hosea who spoke to the leadership in Northern Israel, Isaiah's energies were directed to the leadership in Judah. Furthermore, unlike Amos and Hosea, Isaiah composed many more oracles addressing the royal Davidic ideology of Israel, and predictions of a coming golden age when David's kingdom would be restored to its former glory. Isaiah foresaw both a future ideal Davidic king and an ideal time of deliverance and comprehensive peace. In keeping with the prophets of his day, Isaiah delivered oracles in terms meaningful to his contemporary audience, though many of his predictions did not come to realization during the pre-exilic period. Rather, they laid the foundation for the eschatological Messianic hope of of the postexilic and second temple period. Our discussion, however, steps back into history, to a time when Assyria not Babylon threatened Judah. It was a pre-exilic period when Isaiah spoke of an ideal Davidic king in three dynastic oracles (9:1-7, 11:1-9, 11:10-16), then predicted an ideal Servant who first would suffer and then be exalted by the Lord (42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12).

Messianic Trajectories in Isaiah 9:1-7

Isaiah 9:1-7 is an oracle of the nation's deliverance under an idealized Davidic king who fulfills the ancient promises to David. Some interpret this as direct prophecy about Jesus the Messiah and his eschatological Kingdom;[1] others see a purely historical sense expressing

[1] For example, J.A. Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1999) 98-105; Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995) 162-64; John N.

Isaiah's original hope that Hezekiah would deliver Israel from Assyria and restore the former united Davidic kingdom.[2] We avoid this false dichotomy. Reading the passage contextually as well as canonically, allows us to see how Isaiah 9:1-7 originally celebrated the birth and enthronement of Hezekiah, but also gave rise to expectations of a powerful and victorious eschatological Messiah ruling over a lengthy period of time in complete peace.

Contextual Reading

Isaiah 9:1-7 was originally composed as an oracle of national deliverance. It consists of three parts: prediction of deliverance from foreign subjugation (vv. 1-2), description of a stunning military victory over foreign oppressors (vv. 3-5), and the announcement of the birth and/or enthronement of an ideal royal son, who would be divinely empowered to restore the glory of David's kingdom and inaugurate a rule of peace (vv. 6-7).

Deliverance from Foreign Subjugation (9:1-2)

The northern kingdom recently suffered hardship, but Isaiah predicted a bright future for the nation. Whereas he portrayed judgment of the northern kingdom in 8:16-22 as a time of gloom, the coming deliverance in 9:1-2 would be seen as a light shining on a dark land.[3]

Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 242-48; Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965) 322-46.

[2] For example, Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 242-51; Hans Wildberger, *Isaiah: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991) 384-410; Marvin A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-39: With an Introduction to Prophetic Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996) 180-87; John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33* (Waco: Word Books, 1985), 130-39; Otto Kaiser, *Isaiah 1-12: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1983), 204-18; D.P. Cole, "Archaeology and the Messiah Oracles of Isaiah 9 and 11," in *Scripture and Other Artifacts* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994) 53-69.

[3] The introductory kî functions adversatively to denote a strong contrast between v. 23a with the verses which precede it: "But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish …" (e.g., GKC 500 §163a-b; R.J. Williams, Hebrew Syntax, 73 §449; cf. Gen 2:17; 17:15; 24:4; 37:55; 48:18; etc.). This usage of kî is well attested (Isa 3:1; 7:13; 10:7; 14:1; 23:18; 28:27; 29:23; 30:5, 16; 32:22; 52:12; 62:4, 9). Thus, v. 23 contrasts two periods: a time of gloom and darkness (punishment) followed by a time of joy and light (deliverance). See R.B.Y. Scott, The Book of Isaiah, 230; R.E. Clements, Isaiah 1-39, 104; J. Ridderbos, Isaiah, 94; J.D.W. Watts, Isaiah 1-33, 129; J.N. Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 239; Wegner, *An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35,* 150.

Although Isaiah does not here explicitly identify the light, the rest of his oracle suggests it is the ideal Davidic king of verses 6-7. While this royal scion does not come into focus until verses 6-7, his presence is implied in verses 1-2. The predicted deliverance would be wrought by his agency, since he would bring the light of deliverance (vv. 1-2) and drive foreign oppressors from the land (vv. 3-5). Thus, the ideal Davidic king, *the light,* would deliver the nation from its oppressors, namely *foreigners who are responsible for a period of darkness over the land*. But who are these foreign oppressors?

The initial historical meaning of the prediction of coming deliverance in Isaiah 9:1-2 is only properly understood in the light of the preceding oracle of doom in 8:16-22. The prophet foresaw a time of punishment befalling the northern kingdom, depicted as days of darkness when the people would be sent into exile (this chastisement is fittingly called a time of darkness for Israel's sin was its spiritual/moral darkness, v. 20). Isaiah envisioned the last days of Israel, when Assyria subjugated Galilee in 734-732 BCE, then destroyed Samaria and deported her citizens in 722 BCE. Similar predictions of judgment are evident in Hosea and Amos. Isaiah, however, made it clear the darkness of judgment would not shroud the land forever. Isaiah 9:1-7 introduced a contrast between the past gloom of 8:16-22 and coming light of deliverance that would dispel the darkness. Isaiah expected to see the end of the darkness and the dawn of the light in his own day: "I will wait patiently for Yahweh, who has rejected the family of Jacob" (8:16).

The contrast between the recent discipline and coming deliverance is emphasized by the expressions, "in the former time" and "the latter time." The literary context and historical setting of verses 1-2 suggest this former time of chastisement began in 734-732 BCE with the partial

annexation of the northern kingdom by the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III.[4] The overall context of 8:16-9:7 suggests the latter time of deliverance was to begin in the prophet's own lifetime (cf. "I will wait for Yahweh," 8:16). The prophet predicted the coming golden age would begin immediately and continue indefinitely: "from now and forevermore" (v. 7).

The geographical terms in verse 1 might suggest that Isaiah expected to see an aspect of deliverance in his own day. In verse 1, he referred to these northern regions by their traditional tribal names: "the land of Zebulun and Naphtili."[5] However, when announcing deliverance from foreign oppression, verse 2 shifts to the names after they were reorganized into Assyrian provinces by Tiglath-pileser III in 734-732: "the way of the sea," the provincial region of the Mediterranean coast whose capital was Dor; "the other side of the Jordan," the province of Gilead in Transjordan; "the Galilee of the Gentiles," the west side of the Sea of Galilee with its capital at Meggido.[6] These geographical terms indicate Isaiah was predicting the imminent deliverance of the northern kingdom from its subjugation to Assyria in the eighth century.

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[4] For example, Albrecht Alt, "Jesaja 8,23-9,6," 2.206-25; M.B. Crook, "A Suggested Occasion for Isaiah 9.2-7 and 11.1-9," *JBL* 48 (1949) 213-24; R.A. Carson, "The Anti-Assyrian Character of the Oracle in Is. IX:1-6," *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974) 130-35; A. Laato, *Who Is Immanuel?* 192-94; G. von Rad, "The Royal Ritual in Judah," *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, trans. E.W. Trueman Dicken (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966) 222-31; Walther Zimmerli, *Old Testament Theology in Outline*, trans. D.E. Green (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1978) 195. Tiglath-Pileser III reigned over the Neo–Assyrian empire from 745–727 BCE. He kept rebellion in check throughout his kingdom, particularly Babylon. During one of his campaigns in Northern Syria, Menahem, king of Northern Israel offers tribute to him (2 Kings 15:17-20). Ahaz, king of Judah, would later woo Tiglath-Pileser to serve as an ally and war against Pekah, King of Northern Israel (2 Kings 16:5-14). It is at that time, Tiglath-Pileser annexed a portion of Northern Israel (*ANET*, 282-284; Jean-Jacques Glassner, "Assyria Chronicles" in *Mesopotamian Chronicles*. Writings from the Ancient World [Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004], 173-76).

[5] Zebulun and Naphtali are tribal names for the regions of the Galilee. The two terms are often used as synecdoches of part for the Galilee region as a whole.

[6] In 734 BC, Tiglath-pileser III annexed the Mediterranean coastal region and changed its name to Duʾru after its capital city Dor. In 732 BC, Jezreel and Galilee were included in the area Magidū with Megiddo as its capital. At the same time, the area east of the Jordan (formerly Gilead) became known as the province of Galʾazu. For the correlation of these three Assyrian provinces with the traditional regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, see Y. Aharoni and M. Avi-Yonah, *The Macmillan Bible Atlas* (revised edition; New York: Macmillan, 1979) 95; R.E. Clements, *Isaiah 1-39*, 104-06; A.F. Rainey, "Toponymic Problems [cont.]," *Tel Aviv* 8 (1981) 146; Tom Dowley, *The Kregel Bible Atlas* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2003), 52.

Thus, part of what Isaiah envisioned was the imminent restoration of the northern kingdom in his own time. The fact that this deliverance failed to materialize does not diminish the genuineness of his prophecy. The timing of the fulfillment of any prediction of deliverance could be related to the people's repentance (e.g., Jer. 18:1-11). Its fulfillment also could be tied to the Davidic king, who was to function as the agent of deliverance, depending on Yahweh to accomplish this victory and its timing (cf. 9:7b). As other passages in the Book of Isaiah suggest, it was not the word of God that failed, but the people of Israel and Hezekiah the king of Jerusalem who failed to trust God. Nonetheless, the promise and its hope lived on.

Stunning Victory over Foreign Oppressors (9:3-5)

Whereas verses 1-2 figuratively pictured coming deliverance as light dispelling darkness from the land, verses 3-5 put it in concrete terms of a military victory liberating Israel from a foreign army oppressing its land. Since Isaiah 8:16-9:2 envisioned the subjugation of Israel in 734-722 BCE by the Assyrians, 9:3-5 doubtless predicted military deliverance from these foreign oppressors.[7] In a similar manner, Micah 5:5-6 also pictured an ideal Davidic king driving the Assyrian invaders out of the land of Judah.

Several features indicate Isaiah had Assyria initially in mind.[8] First, the term for warrior's "boot" (v. 4) is an Assyrian loan word (סְאוֹן, *HALOT* 738). The "yoke" image (v. 3) is drawn from the language of Assyrian statecraft, which depicted foreign vassals as oxen pulling a yoke (*ANET*[3] 286-88, 291, 295-97). For example, Sargon II depicted his subjugation of his western vassals thus: "I besieged and conquered the cities ... I declared them Assyrian vassals and they

[7] R.A. Carson, "The Anti-Assyrian Character of the Oracle in Is. IX:1-6," *Vetus Testamentum* 24 (1974) 130-35; A. Laato, *Who Is Immanuel?* 192-94.
[8] Paul D. Wegner, *An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35* (Lewiston, New York: Mellen Biblical Press, 1992)

pulled the straps of my yoke" (*ANET*[3] 286). Elsewhere Isaiah explicitly identifies Assyria as the tyrant whose "yoke" he would break (10:27; 14:25). Much of the vocabulary in Isaiah 9:3-5 is identical to 10:24-27 and 14:24-27, both predicting God's judgment on Assyria.[9]

Second, verse 4 compared deliverance of the northern kingdom from foreign oppressors to Gideon's liberation of the northern tribes from Midian.[10] Isaiah made this comparison explicit elsewhere: "Do not fear *the Assyrians* … Yahweh will beat them with a whip as when he smote Midian at the rock of Oreb" (10:24, 26). Since this deliverance was linked to the the new king of verses 6-7, he was the implied agent of victory in verses 3-5. Isaiah pictured the new David as a second Gideon. Just as Gideon conquered by divine intervention, God would conquer the Assyrians (v. 4b, "*You* will shatter") through his divinely empowered king (cf. v. 6b).

Announcement of an Ideal Davidic King (9:6-7)

The highlight of Isaiah's oracle is his description of an ideal Davidic king. Not formally introduced until now, this ideal ruler is the implied agent of deliverance in verses 1-5. This passage contains four parts: (1) celebration of the birth of the royal son (v. 6a); (2) declaration of the royal tutelary to be bestowed on the king at his enthronement (v. 6b); (3) prediction of the dominion, prosperity, peace, morality and perpetuity expected to characterize his reign (v. 7a); and (4) expression of confidence that God would fulfill these prophetic expectations (v. 7b).

The passage follows the typical pattern of prophetic birth announcements.[11] Such oracles feature three elements: (1) *prediction* of the imminent birth of a son: "you will give birth to a son"; (2) *declaration* of his symbolic name: "you will call his name …"; and (3) *prophecy*

[9] Wegner, *Kingship*, footnote 425, writes,"This passage appears to describe the hope of a coming deliverer, not in vague futuristic terms, but rather in the immediate future and in the context of the Assyrian crisis."
[10] J.P.J. Olivier, "The Day of Midian and Isaiah 9:3b," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 9 (1981) 143
[11] Paul D. Wegner, *An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35* (Lewiston, New York: Mellen Biblical Press, 1992) [see footnote 238]. mples of prophetic birth announcements are evident in Genesis 16:11-12; 17:19; Judges 13:3-5; Isaiah 7:14-17; Luke 1:13-17, 31-33; cf. Isaiah 8:1-4).

concerning his destiny: "he will …".[12] However, in its present form, verses 6-7 constitute a thanksgiving hymn celebrating the recent birth of the royal son.[13] Isaiah may have composed this in imitation of a prophetic birth announcement (cf. Isa 8:1-4), or reworked an earlier oracle predicting the birth of the new king to celebrate its recent fulfillment. If we assume the latter, by the time he composed verses 6-7, the first half of his earlier oracle was fulfilled, but not the second. The new king had been born ("a son *has been born* to us"), but had not yet taken the throne ("he *will rule* on David's throne") nor fulfilled the prophet's idealistic expectations ("he *will establish and uphold* justice and righteousness"). Of course, actual fulfillment of his calling would be contingent on his loyalty to Yahweh (cf. 7b).

Many suggest the initial historical referent of verses 6-7 was Hezekiah the son of Ahaz (7:1-25).[14] Isaiah may have predicted his birth (cf. 7:14-17) then composed this passage after he was born, but before he took the throne (cf. 2 Kings 18:2; 2 Chron. 29:1). Having shown early signs of trusting in Yahweh, the prospect of his enthronement must have been a source of great joy for the faithful. Indeed, Isaiah himself expressed great expectations of what the Davidic king might accomplish. Tragically, Hezekiah never lived up to Isaiah's idealistic expectations, relying on alliances with Egypt and Babylon rather than trusting in Yahweh. The non-fulfillment of the oracle concerning this king opened up subsequent expectations of a greater eschatological

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[12] Prediction: Genesis 16:11; 17:19; Judges 13:5; Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:13, 31. Declaration: Genesis 16:11; 17:19; Isaiah 7:14; Luke 1:13, 31. Prophecy: Genesis 16:12; Judges 13:5; Isaiah 7:15; Luke 1:15-17, 32-33.

[13] S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 102; A. Laato, *Who is Immanuel?* 176-78; iphus Gakuru, *An Inner-Biblical Exegetical Study of the Davidic Covenant and the Dynastic Oracle*, Mellen Biblical Press Series, Volume 58 (Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000), §6.2.3.2; Paul D. Wegner, *An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35* (Lewiston, New York: Mellen Biblical Press, 1992); G. von Rad, "Royal Ritual," 222-31; A. Alt, "Jesaja 8,23—9,6," 2.219.

[14] For example, Albrecht Alt, "Jesaja 8,23-9,6," 2.206-25; M.B. Crook, "A Suggested Occasion for Isaiah 9.2-7 and 11.1-9," *JBL* 48 (1949) 213-24; G. von Rad, "The Royal Ritual in Judah," *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966) 222-31.

fulfillment in Messiah, which is ultimately fulfilled in Jesus (cf. Luke 1:31-33).[15] For God's promise would come to pass.

Birth of the Royal Son (9:6a)

Isaiah 9:6a describes the birth of the new heir to David's throne. While the basic sense of the verse is clear, the precise time frame of the birth was open. The Hebrew may be translated one of three ways: (1) It may recall a *recent/past* birth: "to us a child *has been born*, to us a son *has been given*." (2) It may celebrate a *present* birth: "to us a child *is born*, to us a son *is given*." (3) It may predict a *future* birth: "to us a child *will be born*, to us a son *will be given*."[16] This syntactical openness was divinely inspired to allow for an original historical referent (Hezekiah), as well as a subsequent future typological referent (Jesus the Messiah).[17]

The closest parallels are announcements celebrating the birth of a son: "A man brought news to my father: '*A son is born to you!*'" (Jer. 20:15); "The village women proclaimed, "*A son is born to Naomi!*'" (Ruth 4:17). Verse 6a expresses the people's celebration at the news that the royal son had come: "A child *is born* to us, a son *is given* to us!" The nation celebrated the birth of the royal son as God's gracious provision to the nation.

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[15] Scott R.A. Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms: The So-Called Royal Psalms in their Ancient Near Eastern Context*, SBL Dissertation Monographs 172 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 168-178; Antti Laato, *Josiah and David Redivivus: The Historical Josiah and the Messianic Expectations of Exilic and Postexilic Times*, ConBOTT 33 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1992) 69-80.

[16] The construction in each of the parallel lines may refer to a past, present or future birth. In v. 6aα, the perfect of the verb "give" + noun "son" or "child" + indirect object "to [someone]," may recall a past birth (1 Kings 3:6, "You have given a son to him"), celebrate a present birth (Gen. 30:6, "God gives a son to me!") or predict a future birth (Gen. 17:16, "I will give a son to her"). Likewise in v. 6β, the perfect of the verb "bear" + noun "son" or "child" + indirect object "to [someone]," may recall a recent birth (Gen 21:7, "I have borne a son to him"), celebrate a present birth (Jer. 20:15, "A son is borne to you!" Ruth 4:17, "A son is born to Naomi!") or predict a future birth (Gen. 16:11; Judg. 13:3, 5, 7, "you shall bear a son").

[17] H.G.M. Williamson, *Variations on a Theme: King, Messiah and Servant in the Book of Isaiah*. The Didsbury Lectures 1997 (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1998) 30-46; G.L. Klein, "The Prophetic Perfect," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 16 (1990) 45-60.

The declaration, "a child *is born*!" is conventional (Jer. 20:15; Ruth 4:17), but the parallel, "a son *is given*!" is theologically loaded. The implied agent is God, the passive form highlighting divine benevolence in the gift of this son (Gen. 30:6, 48:9; Isa. 8:18; 1 Kings 5:7; 1 Chron. 28:5). While the term "child" is conventional, the parallel "son" may carry the technical sense of heir to the throne (Pss. 72:1; 89:30; 132:12). In royal Davidic ideology, the king enjoyed a father/son relation with God (2 Sam. 7:14-16//1 Chron. 17:13-14; Ps. 89:26-27). In a similar way, Psalm 2:7 pictured the historical Davidic king as metaphorically "begotten" by God on the day of his formal enthronement. In other words, on the day of his enthronement as king, each historical Davidic king entered into a metaphorical "father/son" relationship with God.

Royal Tutelary of the New King (9:6b)

During the time of Isaiah, royal titles were an important part of a coronation of a new king. Names chosen for people were important. The birth of a son was often celebrated by proclamation of his name, carrying some kind of symbolic meaning: "He called his name …." For instance, women from Naomi's neighborhood named her grandson, "they named him Obed."[18] Prophetic birth announcements of the imminent birth of a son often featured instruction about the child's name, conveying a special symbolic meaning: "Call his name …" For example, God told Hosea to name his three children Jezreel (as a sign of the forthcoming divine punishment), Lo-Ruhamah (meaning "No Pity") and Lo-Ammi (meaning "Not my People"). In a similar manner, Kings were given names at their coronation as the new-born ruler of a nation. In

[18] Similar examples abound in the Genesis: Adam and Eve's naming of Seth (4:25; 5:3), Lamech's naming of Noah (4:29), Abraham's naming of Ishmael and later Isaac (16:15; 21:3), Lot's older daughter names Moab and his younger daughter names Ben-Ammi (19:37, 38), Rebekeh's naming of Esau and Jacob (25:25, 26), Leah's naming of Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar (29:32, 33, 34, 35; 30:18), Rachel's naming of Reuben and Ben-Oni and renamed by Judah, Benjamin (30:8, 35:18), and Tamar's naming of Perez and Zerah (38:29, 30).

Isaiah 9:6b, the prophet followed this pattern in publicly proclaiming the symbolic name of the newborn king: "His name shall be called …"[19]

The new king's name would consist of four theophoric royal titles: "His name shall be called, 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'" (RSV). Isaiah gave a long double name to his own son, "Maher Shalal, Hash Baz," meaning, "Quick to the plunder, Hurry to the spoil" (Isa. 8:1). The length of these multiple names pailed in comparison to the fourfold name Tiglath-Pileser III gave to the gates of Calah: "Gates of Justice, Which Give the Correct Judgment for the Ruler of the Four Quarters, Which Offer the Yield of the Mountains and the Seas, Which Admit the Produce of Mankind before the King their Master."[20]

Many features of the ancient Israelite royal enthronement ritual find parallels in typical ancient Near Eastern practice.[21] In fact, it is possible that the fourfold name on this newborn king may reflect the typical ancient Near Eastern practice of proclaiming a fourfold royal tutelary on a new king at his enthronement.[22] The fourfold royal title supplemented the king's personal

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[19] Due to ambiguity of Hebrew syntax, v. 6b can be rendered legitimately in four different ways. (1) The first three names refer to God who bestows the last name on the royal son: "The Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father will call his name, 'Prince of Peace'." (2) The first two names refer to God and the last two are royal names given to the son: "The Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God calls his name: 'Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'." (3 God bestows two parallel sets of theophoric names on the son: "His name will be called: 'The Mighty God is planning grace,' 'the Eternal Father is a peaceful ruler'." (4) God bestows four regnal names on the son: "His name will be called, 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'." The latter is the traditional approach and adopted here for complicated reasons about which we will spare the reader.

[20] John H. Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, eds., John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas (Downers Grove: InterVarsity 2000) 597.

[21] Gerhard von Rad, "The Royal Ritual in Judah," *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays* (London: SCM, 1966) 222-231; Frank Moore Cross, Jr., *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic*, 257; K.E. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition and Early Judaism: Its History and Significance for Messianism*, SBLEJL 7 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 19; P.D. Wegner, *An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35* (New York: Mellen, 1992) 169-72.

[22] Jedidiah was renamed Solomon (2 Sam. 12:24, 25); Azariah called Uzziah (2 Kings 15:1; 2 Chron. 26:1-2); Shallum called Jehoahaz (2 Kings 23:30, 31, 34; Jer. 22:11); Eliakim renamed Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:34); Mattaniah renamed Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:17). In Assyrian royal literature, Tiglath-pileser III is known as Pulu; Shalmaneser V is called Ululai. In Hittite literture, Urkhi-Tesep is called Mursili III; Sharrikushukh of Carchemish is known as Piyassilis. See T.N.D. Mettinger, *Solomonic State Officials: A Study of the Civil Government Officials of the Israelite Monarchy*, Coniectanea Biblica, Old Testament Series 5 (Lund 1971); Scott R.A. Starbuck, *Court Oracles in the Psalms: The So-Called Royal Psalms in their Ancient Near Eastern Context*, SBL Dissertation

name given at birth. The typical ancient Near Eastern king had five names: his birth name and fourfold royal title.[23] To fully appreciate the meaning and significance of the titles, we must first understand the typical form and function of the royal tutelary throughout the ancient Near East.

1. Egyptian Royal Tutelary. For over twenty-five centuries (ca. 2510-330), each Egyptian king received a royal tutelary on the day of his enthronement. Consisting of four throne names, taken at his accession, plus his personal name, given at birth, the fivefold tutelary was treated as a single name. The tutelary of each king combined conventional and creative features, consisting of five invariable titles expressed by five individual names. Two titles depicted him as the physical embodiment/representative of Horus, two declared his control of all Egypt, and one restated his birth name while also identifying him as the royal son of the god Re.[24]

In royal enthronement inscriptions, declaration of a newly enthroned king's royal tutelary followed a fixed literary structure: (1) oracular introduction, "Let his tutelary/name be called …" (2) identification of the fivefold tutelary, (3) concluding wish-formula, "… may he live forever." The middle element, the royal tutelary, also followed a fixed order and form, consisting of (1) *Horus name*: presented the king as earthly embodiment of Horus, the prototype and patron god of Egyptian kings; (2) *Nebti name:* declared him ruler of Upper and Lower Egypt, as the embodiment of Nekhbet and Wadjet; (3) *Golden Horus name:* expressed the wish for his immortality as the embodiment of the eternal god Horus, and depicted by gold, thought to last for

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Monographs 172 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995) 168-178; M. Crook, "A Suggested Occasion for Isaiah 9:2-7 and 11:1-9," *JBL* 68 (1949) 213-24.

[23] The number of throne names in the royal titulary varied from the traditional sixfold titulary in Ugarit, fivefold titulary in Egypt and fourfold titulary in Sumer. Since the practice of bestowing multiple throne names on the new king was widespread in the ancient Near East, it is not necessary to suggest that the royal titulary in v. 6b reflects one particular source of influence. However, scholars often compare the fourfold titulary in v. 6b with the fivefold royal titulary bestowed on Egyptian kings of the Middle and New Kingdom periods. In Egyptian royal coronation inscriptions, four titles were given to the king on the day of his enthronement, the fifth title (personal name) having been previously bestowed at his birth. See K.A. Kitchen, *Ancient Orient and Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1966) 109 note 86.

[24] James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents*, Volume II: The Eighteenth Dynasty (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1906) 24-25.

eternity; (4) *Throne name:* king's official name, preceded by the title, 'King of Upper and Lower Egypt,' and containing the name of the god Re; (5) *Birth name:* personal birth name (used by modern historians, e.g., Ramesses II), usually preceded by the title, 'Son of Re,' to depict the king as physically begotten by his human parents, but mythologically begotten by Re.[25]

So popular was the Egyptian royal protocol that many foreign kings adopted this practice. Thus, other nations mirror the Egyptian practice. Cambyses king of Persia employed an Egyptian priest to compose a suitable throne name. During the Ptolemaic period, Greek kings who ruled the land adopted Egyptian royal titularies. So it should come as no surprise that Isaiah adopted the convention of the royal tutelary to depict the new Davidic king as the equal—if not the superior—to any ancient Near Eastern ruler.

2. Sumerian Royal Tutelary. Conventional fivefold royal tutelaries also appear in Sumerian royal enthronement inscriptions. For instance, the "lasting name," bestowed on Shulgi on the day of his enthronement, consisted of four royal titles, which he took on taking the throne, in addition to his personal name, given at birth. Thus, we read in his enthronement inscription: "Shulgi, he of the lasting name: 'the shepherd of prosperity, the king of the festival, the mighty one, the seed engendered by a faithful man' . . ." (*COS* 1.172, lines 29-30). The four titles pictured Shulgi as the ideal king. The first title, "shepherd of prosperity," conveyed his calling to exercise a benevolent rule, which was to provide prosperity to his people. The notion of sacral

[25] James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents*, Volume II: The Eighteenth Dynasty (New York: Russell & Russell, Inc., 1906) 55-68 (§§131-166), 87-100 (§§215-242), 334-36 (§841-844); William J. Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt*, Writings from the Ancient World, Volume 5 (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 230-33 (§106), 233-34 (§107A). For example, the royal titulary given to Horemheb during his ritual enthronement read: "Let *his titulary* be like the majesty of Re: (1) *Horus*: 'Mighty Bull, Ready in Plans,' (2) *Favorite of Two Goddesses*: 'Great in Marvels in Karnak,' (3) *Golden Horus*: 'Satisfied with Truth, Creator of the Two Lands,' (4) *King of Upper and Lower Egypt*: 'Zeserkheprure, Setepnere,' (5) *Son of Re*: 'Mernamon, Harmhab,' may he be given life!" The royal coronation inscription of Thutmose I proclaims the following titulary: "Make my titulary as follows: (1) *Horus*: 'Mighty Bull, Beloved of Maat,' (2) *Favorite of Two Goddesses*: 'Shining in the Serpent-diadem, Great in Strength,' (3) *Golden Horus*: 'Goodly in Years, Making Hearts Live,' (4) *King of Upper and Lower Egypt*: 'Okheperkere,' (5) *Son of Re*: 'Thutmose,' living forever and ever!"

kingship was seen in the second title, "king of the festival." The third title, "the mighty one," depicted Shulgi as a victorious warrior, divinely empowered by the gods. The fourth title, "the seed engendered by a faithful man," asserted his legitimate claim to the throne as the physical offspring of his father, who was the divinely chosen founder of the royal dynasty.

3. Ugaritic Royal Tutelary. In the Ugaritic royal enthronement inscription of Niqmaddu, we find a sixfold royal tutelary. It consists of his personal name given at birth, followed by five titles bestowed upon his ascension: "Niqmepa the son of Niqmaddu, King of Ugarit, Legitimate Lord, Governor of the House, King of the Gate, King Who Builds."[26] The first three asserted his position as the newly enthroned king. The last two expressed his divine commission to render justice at the city gate, and to build temples to his patron god who had chosen him as king.

Four Royal Titles of the Ideal King (9:6b)

1. "Wonderful Counselor" (פֶּלֶא יוֹעֵץ). This royal title depicted the Davidic king as an extraordinary military strategist.[27] The related expression, "wonderful in counsel," refers to supernatural guidance given to humans (28:29).[28] This title pictured the king as divinely equipped to conquer his foes, thanks to supernatural guidance God would provide (cf. Isa. 11:2, lit., "spirit of counsel and might," means "a spirit that provides ability to execute plans," NET).

Many ancient Near Eastern kings bore similar royal titles. For example, in Egyptian royal inscriptions, we find: "Ready in Plans," "Great in Marvels" (Horemhab); "Great in Wonders" (Amenmes); "Lord of Wonders" (Ramesses II); "Working Many Wonders" (Seti I, Ramesses II, Seti II). In the royal enthronement inscription of Ramesses, the god Ptah is said to have declared:

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[26] KTU 7.63 1-7 = PRU II XVI—XVII. See John Gray, "Sacral Kingship in Ugarit," *Ugaritica* 6 (1969) 289-91.
[27] Robert Chisholm, "A Theology of Isaiah"
[28] See H.B. Huffmon, *Amorite Personal Names in the Mari Texts: A Structural and Lexical Study* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965) 254; M.D. Coogan, *West Semitic Personal Names in the Murasu Documents*, HSM 7 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1976) 81.

"I will cause to befall your great wonders, and every good thing to happen to you, for the Two Lands under you are in acclamation" (*ARE* 3.180).

While carrying divine connotations, it did not suggest to the original historical audience that the historical Davidic king was God. Nevertheless it was open enough in wording to allow for subsequent hermeneutical escalation and legitimate Messianic connection. Therefore, this royal title is a classic example of a divinely inspired pattern fulfillment, having one connotation in its initial reference to Hezekiah and heightened meaning in its ultimate reference to Messiah.

2. "Mighty God" (אֵל גִּבּוֹר). The original meaning and significance of this title is debated, since it may be translated five ways: "God [is] mighty," "God [is] a warrior," "divine warrior," "mighty warrior," or "mighty God." The ambiguity stems from several factors. First, God is frequently described as a warrior (גִּבּוֹר; Isa. 42:13; Jer. 20:11; Ps. 24:8). Second, the term frequently translated as "God" (אֵל) may mean "mighty one," which may refer to God (Isa 5:6), a human king (Job 41:17; Ezek. 31:11; 32:21), or an angelic being (Pss. 29:1; 82:1; 89:7).

A parallel title occurs in an inscription from Medinet Habu, in which Ramesses III bears the royal epithet, "Divine Warrior," depicting him as supernaturally empowered in battle as the human representative of Re. Another inscription celebrates the military prowess of Ramesses II as the earthly embodiment of Seth and Baal, the celebrated war-gods in Egyptian and Canaanite mythology, respectively: "No man is he who is among us! It is Seth great-of-strength, Baal in person! Not deeds of man are these his doings! They are of one who is unique!" (*AEL* 2.67).

The king spoken of in Isaiah was clearly human ("a child has been born …").This phrase, however, reappears in Isaiah 10:21, where it clearly refers to God (vv. 20-21, "they will rely on Yahweh … they will return to the Mighty God"). Therefore, this royal title has built within it a word play. It should be nuanced in the light of Psalm 45:6-7, in which an historical Davidic king,

who was celebrating his wedding to a princess, was addressed as "God" as Yahweh's earthly representative.[29] Although the initial historical Davidic king was not God, he functionally represented God and bore divine ruling authority over the people of Israel.[30] Thus, we might render this title "Mighty *like* God" or perhaps "*Uniquely Mighty One*." However, what was metaphorically true to the initial historical Davidic king would be literally true of the Messiah. While the historical Davidic king would merely function as the royal representative of God, the Messiah would be none other than God himself. This reflects the escalation in pattern fulfillment. Of course, this ultimate Messianic sense, would not become clear until the incarnation of the Son of God. Even then the absolute monotheism of Israel caused many, but not all, to resist the startling claim of Jesus to be God incarnate, as those who rejected him accused him of blasphemy. Yet the deity of the Messiah as the ultimate Davidic king had been revealed as early as Isaiah 9:6-7. This understanding would be reinforced by God's actions in incarnation within Jesus' ministry and in the significance of the resurrection, pointing to the correspondence with a full sense of Isaiah's wording.

3. "Everlasting Father" (אֲבִיעַד). This title may be translated "eternal father" (KJV) or "everlasting father" (NASB, NRSV, NIV, NET). The diplomatic language of ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions often pictured the king as a father, highlighting his benevolent protection and gracious provision of his people. For example, Azitawadda of Adana said he was like "a father and a mother" to his people; Kilamuwa of Samal boasted, "To some I was a father; to some I was a mother" (*ANET*[3] 499–500). Thus it was not unusual to speak of a royal figure as father. Furthermore, the term "everlasting" may refer to kings who rule their whole life (Isa.

[29] A similar occurrence exists in Exodus 7:1 where God says to Moses: "See, I have made you God (אֱלֹהִים) to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron will be your prophet." Except for KJV, most English translations recognize that Moses appeared *like* a God to Pharaoh and rightly insert the comparative, *like* (NIV, NRSV, NET) or *as* (NRSB).
[30] Hayes and Irvine, *Isaiah*, 181–82.

47:7; Prov. 29:14). God promised David's dynasty would endure forever (Pss. 89:29; 132:12), so the Davidic kings' reigns were often depicted as everlasting (1 Kings 1:31; Pss. 21:4-6; 61:6-7; 72:5, 17). Thus, this child spoken of by Isaiah was to be a royal figure who would act like a father and whose ruling authority would last his entire lifetime and extend within the dynasty.

Of course, the Christian reader in retrospect recognizes that the Messiah as the incarnate Son of God is himself pre-existent and eternal in his own person. However, the title "Everlasting Father" should not be confused as a direct reference to God the Father as the first person of the Trinity. The term "father" must be understood as the Hebrew idiom of a benevolent ruler who acts like a father figure to his people. Thus, what was metaphorically true of the historical Davidic king such as Hezekiah is now seen to be literally true of the Messiah. Again pattern and escalation are at work here within the language of the text.

4. "Prince of Peace" (שַׂר־שָׁלוֹם). This title emphasizes that the king would be the agent of the nation's military security and domestic peace. In the context of verses 1-5, this would be won by defeating the foreign army occupying the land. As a second David, he would reprise the military success of his illustrious forefather, to whom God promised success in battle, ensuring national security (2 Sam. 7:10). As this title suggests, the new king would fulfill the dynastic duty of providing peace (Ps. 72:3, 7).

A parallel to this royal title occurs at the conclusion of a royal inscription of Ramesses II, "by the command of this your son, who is upon your throne, lord of gods and of men, sovereign celebrating the jubilees like when you bear the two sistrums, son of the white crown, heir of the red crown, possessing the Two Lands in peace, Rameses II, given life forever and ever."[31]

[31] Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt*, 3.182.

When viewed from an historical perspective, these four royal titles pictured the historical Davidic king functioning as the earthly representative of Yahweh. As human coregent of God's rule on earth, he would exercise the divine will and demonstrate divine authority.[32] However, when considered in the light of the incarnation of the Son of God and his resurrection from the dead and ascension into heaven and in light of the scope of the promise of the victory in Isaiah's text, it is also clear that these four titles should be seen as ultimately prophetic of the Messiah.

His Secure Throne and Perpetual Kingdom (9:7)

While Isaiah's oracle opened with the northern regions suffering under the oppression of the Assyrian Empire, it closed with the restoration of the former glory of David's kingdom. As a second David, the new king would sit on the throne of its illustrious founder and fulfill God's promise of an everlasting kingdom. Fulfilling the dynastic duty to establish moral righteousness and uphold social justice, he would inaugurate a rule of perpetual peace and security. Reflecting the traditional language and stereotypical imagery of 2 Samuel 7:12-16, where Nathan promised David an everlasting kingdom and dynasty, Isaiah depicted his reign as lasting forever.

Royal enthronement inscriptions and hymns of the ancient Near East also frequently featured the motif of an eternally secure throne.[33] Egyptian royal titularies typically close with the theme of the new king's rule enduring forever. Following the declaration of the royal titulary, the royal enthronement inscription of Horemhab concludes, "Horemhab … may he live forever!" The corresponding element in the royal enthronement inscription of Thutmose I concludes in the

[32] This harmonizes with the royal ideology of the Chronicler who also viewed the Davidic kingdom as the kingdom of Yahweh, since the human king represented Yahweh on earth: "I will put him in permanent charge of My house and My kingdom" (1 Chron. 17:14; cp. Ps. 45:6-7).

[33] For example, S.A. Kaufman, "Prediction, Prophecy, and Apocalypse in the Light of New Akkadian Texts," in A. Shinan, ed., *Proceedings of the Sixth World Congress of Jewish Studies 1973* (Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1977) 1.221-28; John Hilber,

indicative: "Thutmose … living forever and ever!" The motif of everlasting throne as a literary trope for the king's longevity and secure reign was common in Mesopotamian royal inscriptions as well. The coronation hymn of Ashurbanipal closes thus, "May his rule be renewed and may they establish his royal throne forever! May they bless him and guard his reign daily, monthly and yearly … Give our lord, Ashurbanipal, long days, copious years, great strength and a long reign—years of abundance!" (*COS* 1.143). We find a similar wish in the enthronement hymn of Tukulti-Ninurta I: "May Assur and Ninlil, the lords of your crown, set your crown on your head for a hundred years!" (*COS* 1.140). The enthronement ritual celebrating the inauguration of the reign of Sargon II closed thus, "Decree for him as his fate a life of long days! Make firm the foundation of his throne, prolong his reign!" (*COS* 1.141). In an example of *ex eventu* prophecy, the rule of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II was "predicted" as universal in scope and eternal in duration: "After him (Nebuchadnezzar I) his son (Nebuchadnezzar II) will arise as king in Uruk and rule the entire world. He will exercise authority and kingship in Uruk, and his dynasty will stand forever. The kings of Uruk will exercise authority like gods."

Considered from an initial historical contextual orientation, Isaiah's prediction was likely understood simply as an example of conventional royal hyperbole, celebrating the inauguration of the new king in robust terms. Such extravagant court style was widespread throughout the ancient Near East. Yet it is clear from the progress of revelation that God had more in mind with this wording. Although Isaiah 9:7 was originally true in a hyperbolic sense of the human Davidic king and his historical kingdom, we understand that it is literally true of the Messiah and his eschatological kingdom along the pattern of escalated realization in the ultimate fulfillment of the pattern. The fact that several passages we have noted are read ultimately in this escalated manner points to its likelihood.

Isaiah described a period of comprehensive peace mediated by a royal figure that fully represents God. Viewed from an initial historical contextual perspective, this portrait fit traditional royal ideology and court rhetoric. However, viewed from the vantage of a broader canonical perspective, it is clear that Isaiah provided a significant contribution to the foundation of what would eventually point to the eschatological Messiah.

Canonical Reading

Some interpreters point to Isaiah 9:1-7, which voiced Isaiah's idealistic expectations of King Hezekiah, as a parade example of the failure of prophecy. While God rescued Zion from Sennacherib in 701 BCE, the liberation of Israel from Assyria and glorious restoration of David's kingdom did not materialize as predicted in terms of Hezekiah. Yet, Isaiah was neither a wishful thinker nor fatalistic soothsayer. His oracle one day would be fulfilled. When Hezekiah made political alliances with Egypt and Babylon for protection from Assyria, Isaiah proclaimed that he had doomed—not saved—the nation. Hezekiah had failed, but the hope of Isaiah lived on. In a prophecy of judgment, Isaiah announced that Jerusalem would not be delivered from Assyria, but destroyed by Babylon and sent into exile (Isa. 39:1-8 // 2 Kings 12:12-19). But that was not the end of the story.

Isaiah foresaw God would restore the Babylonian exiles to usher in a new age. While the full deliverance of Israel and restoration of David's kingdom did not transpire in his day, Isaiah believed God would fulfill his promise in days to come. This initial non-fulfillment pointed to the future as the ultimate time of realization. After all, God would keep his word. This led to an appropriate canonical reading of Isaiah's original oracle, projecting fulfillment into the future in a greater king to come who would do what Isaiah said. When read in the light of the Book of Isaiah as a whole, the fulfillment of his predictions—enthronement of new David, national

deliverance, restoration of the kingdom, reign of perpetual peace—is pushed into the future. His expectations were to be realized after the Babylonian exile ended through a second exodus.[34]

When these expectations did not materialize in Isaiah's lifetime or after the second temple was built (515 BCE), later Jewish interpreters began to appreciate that God was speaking of an eschatological future. This gave the hermeneutical segue for emergence of eschatological Messianic readings in Second Temple literature. Seeing in Jesus the ultimate agent of God's delivering light, the New Testament unpacked its Christological potential (Matt. 4:12-17; cf. Luke 1:79; John 1:5; 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:46). With that connection and realization, Christians also have seen in the royal titles of Isaiah 9:6 language suggestive of the deity of the Messiah.

Messianic Trajectories in Isaiah 11:1-9

Isaiah 11:1-9 envisions an ideal royal descendant of David's family tree. As the virtual embodiment of the dynasty's illustrious forefather and equipped to rule with the same energizing spirit, his rule would usher in an idyllic age of domestic peace and national security. Through his agency, God would restore the former glory of David's united kingdom, regathering a remnant of the exiles of the northern kingdom of Israel and bringing David's former vassals under his sway.

It is easy to see how this may be read as exclusively prophetic about Jesus the Messiah and his eschatological rule. Yet read contextually, it initially focused on Isaiah's idealized hope of the resurgence of Davidic kingship under Hezekiah, engendered by Yahweh's deliverance of Jerusalem in 701 BCE.[35] Rather than forcing a false dichotomy between the two but insisting on

[34] R.E. Clements, "The Messianic Hope in the Old Testament," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 43 (1989) 3-19.
[35] Willem Beuken, "The Emergence of the Shoot of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-16): An Eschatological or a New Event?" *Calvin Theological Journal* 39 (2004) 88-108; Moshe Weinfeld, "The Roots of the Messianic Idea," in *Mythology and Mythologies* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki Press, 2001) 279-287.

the legitimacy of both, we will show how the initial contextual/canonical meaning of this passages also provides the segue for its ultimate Messianic/Christological meaning.[36]

Contextual Reading

Isaiah 11:1-9 may be classified as an oracle of restoration. It envisioned a coming royal "branch," whose rule of justice and righteousness would usher in an idyllic age of peace. The oracle consists of three parts: prediction of the coming branch (v. 1); description of the ideal Davidic king (vv. 2-5); and portrait of his idyllic reign (vv. 6-9).

The initial meaning of this oracle can be appreciated fully only in the light of its literary context. The chart below suggests Isaiah 10-11 form a symmetrical literary unit. The coming ideal Davidic king who would rule in righteousness (11:1-16) stands in stark contrast with the evil kings of those days: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz (10:1-4). The ultimate evil was when Ahaz made an alliance with Tiglath-Pileser III against Northern Israel, which resulted in a portion of Northern Israel being annexed by the Assyrians (2 Kings 16:5-14). Thus Isaiah pronounced a series of indictments, judgments, and expectations.

A		indictment of the unjust kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz (10:1-4)
	B	judgment of Assyria and Sennacherib's assault on Jerusalem (10:5-11)
		C king of Assyria will be judged after God punishes Jerusalem (10:12-19)
		C' remnant will return to the Lord after God judges king of Assyria (10:20-23)
	B'	judgment of Assyria and Sennacherib's assault on Jerusalem (10:24-34)
A'		provision of the ideal king for Judah and his rule of justice (11:1-9)

The first oracle announced coming judgment on Judah's unjust kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz (10:1-4). The second oracle envisioned the invasion of Judah in 701 BCE by the Assyrian king Sennacherib (cf. Isa. 36:1-10//2 Kings 18:13-26//2 Chron. 32), the agent of God's punishment

[36] Joseph Wimmer, "Isaiah's Messianism," *Bible Today* 35 (1997) 216-221; D.P. Cole, "Archaeology and the Messiah Oracles of Isaiah 9 and 11," in *Scripture and Other Artifacts* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994) 53-69.

(10:5-34).[37] Yet, judgment would not be God's final word. The arrogant Assyrians would come under judgment (10:5-19, 24-34), and a faithful remnant of repentant Judahites/Jerusalemites would return to Yahweh (10:20-23). This return would be orchestrated by an ideal king, whose just and righteous rule would reverse the practices of his evil predecessors, restoring the glory of the Davidic kingdom (11:1-9). Thus, Isaiah 11:1-9 brings to conclusion the crisis of 701 BCE.

Prediction of the Coming Royal "Branch" (11:1)

Verse 1 pictures the new king in arboreal images, representing a fresh start for the family tree of David: a new leafy branch growing out of a tree stock, a new shoot sprouting up from the roots of a plant. Used literally, "shoot" (חֹטֶר) refers to a leafy branch as new growth of a tree. The term "stock" (גֶּזַע) may refer to the stem of a plant (Isa. 40:24) or tree stump (Job 14:8). The term branch (נֵצֶר) is a leafy bud representing new growth (Isa. 14:19; 60:21), sprouting from the root-stock of a plant (Ezek. 17:6-7, 9) or tree (Jer. 17:8).

The images have royal connotations. The Hebrew word "shoot" (חֹטֶר) is related to Phoenician "scepter" (חטר). The term "branch" (נֵצֶר) is metaphorical of a royal scion as heir to the dynastic throne (Dan. 11:7). The related term "crown" (נֵזֶר) designates the royal emblem (Prov. 27:24) and Davidic diadem (Pss. 89:39[40]; 132:18; cf. 2 Sam .1:10; 2 Kings 11:12).

Depiction of the new Davidic king as a branch of the stock of Jesse reflects ancient Near Eastern royal convention. The Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser III is called, "the precious branch of Baltil," and Sargon II is called, "the precious branch of Assur of royal lineage and ancient stock." The Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar I is, "offspring of Enmeduranki, king of Sippar, a branch of Nippur of ancient stock." As the examples reveal, the royal title, "branch of [someone]

[37] For the Assyrian account of this campaign and siege of Jerusalem, see *ANET* 287-288.

of ancient stock," supports a new king's claim as legitimate heir to the throne, and pictures him as the one in whom the past glory of the dynasty's illustrious founder would be restored.

These parallels from ancient Near Eastern royal inscriptions suggest the depiction in Isaiah 11:1 originally was not an exclusive eschatological prophecy about the Messiah. Considered from an initial historical and contextual point of view, they depicted the current king, Hezekiah, as an ideal monarch, whose roots reached back to the founding of the dynasty.[38] Just as Micah 5:1 reached beyond Jerusalem (the capital of David) to Bethlehem (the village of Jesse), Isaiah 11:1 reached beyond David to the ancient stock of Jesse. By framing the new king as a second David, Isaiah presented him as every bit the equivalent of the illustrious founder. It also set the model for the king to come who would do all that was hoped for and expressed here.

The arboreal image of Jesse's ideal branch/shoot (11:1) must be read in the light of the controlling motif of the Divine Forester and thick forest in 10:5-34. Wielding Assyria as his ax, God would hew down the forest of Judah and hack down David's family tree, leaving a mere stump (10:12-19, 33-34), yet preserving a remnant (10:20-27). This judgment of 701 BCE would be reversed by God's nurture of an ideal tender shoot and root of Jesse (11:1, 10), whose reign would usher in an idyllic age of peace and security (11:1-16). The linking of 10:5-34 and 11:1-16 suggests an historical setting for the resurgence of David's dynasty under Hezekiah as an initial realization of the promise.

The image of a branch coming forth from Jesse's root is reminiscient of Isaiah's promise to Hezekiah when Sennacherib besieged Zion, "The surviving remnant of the house of Judah will take root and bear fruit, for out of Jerusalem will come forth a remnant" (Isa. 37:31-32 // 2 Kings

[38] Some suggest the prophecy of the second David as Josiah, e.g., Marvin Sweeney, "Jesse's New Shoot in Isaiah 11: A Josianic Reading of the Prophet Isaiah," in *Sanders Festschrift* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 103-118; Antti Laato, *Josiah and David Redivivus: The Historical Josiah and the Messianic Expectations of Exilic and Postexilic Times*, ConBOTT 33 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1992).

19:30-31). Given the prophecy of the Assyrian king's invasion of Judah and siege of Jerusalem in 10:5-34, the prophet probably had Hezekiah initially in mind when he described the branch who would be the agent of deliverance of the remnant of God's people and restoration of David's dynasty.

Description of the Ideal Davidic King (11:2-5)

Verse 2 depicted the king as equipped with the same energizing spirit God put on Saul and David.[39] Isaiah described the enablement God provided special servants to fulfill divinely appointed tasks (Exod. 31:3; 35:31; Num. 11:25-26). Reminiscent of the pouring out of God's spirit on David at his anointing (1 Sam. 16:13), Isaiah portrayed the new king as a second David.

The basic duty of the House of David was to promote moral righteousness and uphold social justice (Pss. 72:1-4; 122:5; Isa. 16:5; Jer. 22:15). David and Solomon lived up to this ideal (2 Kings 8:15; 1 Kings 3:28); their royal descendants generally failed (Jer. 21:12; 22:3, 13, 15, 16). Isaiah indicted the unjust Davidic kings of his day (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz) of failing to protect the poor and punish the wicked (Isa. 10:1-4), but envisioned the coming royal scion as an ideal Davidic king whose reign would be characterized by moral righteousness and social justice (Isa. 9:3-5; 16:5; 32:1; cf. 42:1, 3-4; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Ezek. 37:24)

Idyllic Portrait of His Reign of Peace (11:6-9)

Whereas the unjust practices of the House of David (Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz) (10:1-4) had placed Jerusalem in jeopardy in 701 BCE (10:5-34), the coming king's reign of righteousness (9:1-5) would grant national security for Zion (11:6-9). In a series of portraits drawn from nature, Isaiah envisioned fundamental changes in the current order: "the lion will lay down with the

[39] God clearly equips both King Saul (1 Sam. 10:10; 11:6; 16:14; 19:23) and King David (1 Sam. 16:13; 2 Sam. 23:2; cf. Ps. 51:11[14]) with an energizing spirit. Isaiah expects the same energizing spirit to empower the Davidic King who will drive the Assyrians from the land.

lamb" (cf. 65:25). This picture of idyllic peace and harmony did not originally envision a miraculous transformation of the animal kingdom in the eschatological kingdom. The image of peace between hunter and hunted (vv. 6-8) is an extended metaphor of an equally dramatic change: foreign armies would no longer invade Judah or assault Zion (v. 9). Since God's spirit would rest on the coming king enabling him to promote righteousness and justice (vv. 1-5), Zion would be safe from the likes of Sennacherib—as long the House of David followed this path.[40] The new David, whoever he was, would bring real peace.

As parallels in ancient Near Eastern literature hint, Isaiah's image of wolf lying down with lamb originally envisioned peace. For instance, the Enmerkar Epic pictures a past golden age when nations lived in harmony before the rise of warfare between empires as a time in hoary antiquity when no carnivores stalked the earth: "A time when there was no serpent, when there was no scorpion; a time when there was no hyena, when there was no lion; a time when there was neither fear nor terror." A similar image occurs in a Sumerian royal inscription which predicts the reign of a new king would usher in an age of national security and domestic peace, portrayed as harmony in the animal kingdom: "In Dilmun the lion will not kill, the wolf will not snatch the lamb …" Considered from an initial historical point of view, Isaiah envisioned a social-religious change with the royal anointing or birth of the new king, Hezekiah, to reign over and rid Judah of foreign oppressors. What Hezekiah did in part, the new David would do in full.

Canonical Reading

Critical scholars generally assume the image of the royal branch sprouting from the stock of Jesse in Isaiah 11:1 presupposes the collapse of the dynasty in 586 BCE, when the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed Jerusalem, razed the Temple and carried off the last Davidic

[40] See Edward Lipinski, "Straw in the Neo-Assyrian Period," in *Built on Solid Rock: Studies in Honor of Ebbe Egede Knudsen* (Oslo: Novus, 1997) 187-195.

king into Babylonian exile. According to this approach, a later editor composed 11:1-9 in the exilic or postexilic periods. Thus it expresses the exilic community's hope of the restoration of the dynasty in the near future in the person of the next Davidic king (Zerubbabel?), or—once that hope eventually waned—the postexilic community's eschatological expectation of the full-fledged inauguration of the eschatological kingdom in the last Davidic king (the messiah).

However, the image of the new Davidic king as a branch from the ancient stock of Jesse does not demand a late date of composition, nor evacuation of the royal throne in 586 BCE. As noted above, the arboreal imagery of Isaiah 11:1 continues the controlling motif of the Divine Forester in 10:5-34, where the Assyrian king is the agent of God as the ax wielded against Judah and the sinful Davidic dynasty in Jerusalem (cf. 10:1-4). Thus, 11:1-16 is set against the historical events of 701 BCE, when Sennacherib invaded Judah, besieged Zion and threatened to terminate the dynasty. However, Isaiah foresaw that after God had cut the family tree of David's dynasty down to size (10:33-34), he would nurture a tender shoot from whom an ideal ruler would emerge, who would function as his agent to restore a righteous remnant (11:1-16).

Isaiah had voiced great expectations for Hezekiah, ideals engendered by his loyalty to Yahweh in 701 BCE, brought about the destruction of the Assyrian army and deliverance of Zion (Isa. 37:1-38 // 2 Kings 19:1-37). Yet when read in the light of the final form of the Book of Isaiah, 11:1-9 points to an ideal ruler to come beyond the Babylonian exile. Perhaps God's deliverance of Zion from Sennacherib prompted Isaiah to look beyond the immediate circumstances of 701 BCE into the eschatological future, when the Davidic throne would be occupied by one greater than Hezekiah—the one we now know as the eschatological Messiah.

Messianic Trajectories in Isaiah 11:10-16

This oracle of restoration functions as a parallel passage to Isaiah 11:1-9, featuring a coming ideal Davidic king. It consists of three parts: prediction of the restoration of the exiles of Israel and Judah (vv. 10-12); reunification of the two once hostile nations into one mighty nation, which would conquer the nations (vv. 13-14); and typological portrait of a second exodus in which a remnant of Israel would be re-gathered from Assyria (vv. 15-16).

Contextual Reading

Isaiah envisioned the coming king playing a central role in restoring David's once mighty united kingdom. Like a banner signaling the rallying point for troops scattered on a battlefield, he would regather the northern exiles scattered among the nations to form a potent army (vv. 10-12). Negotiating peace between Judah and Israel, he would command their united forces, giving the signal to attack the surrounding nations (vv. 13-14a). Under his leadership, the united nation would enjoy a renaissance of the past glory of the Davidic Empire since David's former vassals (Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom) would be subjugated once again (v. 14b). Using the archetypal motif of the past deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt, Isaiah predicts a future second exodus of the remnant of the northern Israelites returning from Assyrian deportation (vv. 15-16).

Second Exodus Typology

The second exodus typology in verses 15-16 often leads critical scholars to attribute this passage to a later editor when the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem were in Babylonian exile. They suggest the prediction of a new David in verses 10 and 12 presuppose the fall of David's throne in 586 BCE. However, mention of Assyria as the location of the exiles of the northern kingdom (vv. 11, 16) suggests 11:10-16 is set against the Assyrian deportation in the eighth

century not the Babylonian exile in the sixth century. Granted, verse 12 predicts the restoration of Israelite and Judahite exiles. Yet this does not demand a sixth century date of composition by a later editor. Having seen Samaria's deportation to Assyria in 722 BCE, Isaiah predicted that Hezekiah's alliance with the Babylonian king Merodach-Baladan would doom Jerusalem to a similar fate in a future Babylonian exile (Isa. 39:1-8 // 2 Kings 20:12-19). It is legitimate to attribute this passage to Isaiah, but date it late in the reign of Hezekiah after Isaiah not only predicted the yet future Babylonian exile, but also the restoration of the Babylonian exiles in a glorious second exodus.

The Coming "Root" of Jesse

While Isaiah 11:1 depicted a "branch of [Jesse's] root," 11:10 refers to a coming "root of Jesse." This subtle distinction in these two sets of royal titles might envision two distinct Davidic figures—one near, one far. While he probably composed 11:10-16 sometime during the reign of Hezekiah, Isaiah did not have this contemporary king in mind, but a future king, whom he nevertheless modeled on the pattern of Hezekiah. Of course, Hezekiah himself had been modeled after David, showing a pattern motif embedded in Isaiah's picture.

Hezekiah's successful break from Assyria and resistance of Sennacherib (2 Kings 18-19) prompted Isaiah's vision of the greater Hezekiah's complete liberation from Assyria (vv. 10-12, 15-16). Perhaps inspired by his success in reunification of northern survivors with southern faithful in worshiping Yahweh (2 Chron. 30:1-27, esp. v. 12, "God moved the people to unite"), Isaiah envisioned complete reversal of traditional hostility between Israel and Judah through the greater Hezekiah to come: "Ephraim's jealousy shall end and Judah's hostility will cease" (v. 13). Hezekiah's imperialism and conquest of the Philistia, Meunim, Moab and Amalek (2 Kings 18:8; 1 Chron. 4:39-43) engendered Isaiah's expectation of a greater conquest to come: "They

will swoop down on the Philistine hills to the west, together they will plunder the people of the east; they will conquer Edom and Moab, the Ammonites will be their subjects" (v. 14). Thus, Isaiah's hope is in King Hezekiah. He is the ideal Davidite who will execute the social-religious change necessary. Unfortunately, he fails to measure up.

Canonical Reading

Considered together, Isaiah 11:1-9 and 11:10-16 illustrate the dynamics of the prophet's original royal Davidic expectations pointing to a near realization only partially realized and then a complete fulfillment later in an escalated pattern. In 11:1-9, Isaiah voiced his early hope that once God had disciplined the sinful House of David at the hand of Assyria (10:1-34), Hezekiah would inaugurate a golden age of justice and perpetual peace. In partial fulfillment of his prediction, God did in fact rescue Jerusalem from Sennacherib in 701 BCE, thanks in no small part to Hezekiah's faith (36:1-37:38). Nevertheless, his alliance with Merodach-Baladan king of Babylon proved his undoing: rather than the means of deliverance from Assyria, it would be the cause of judgment in the form of the coming Babylonian exile (39:1-8).[41] Seeing Hezekiah failed to fulfill expectations, Isaiah expounded on his early picture of imminent restoration of David's House. If the oracle would not be fulfilled in his day, he projected its fulfillment beyond the end of the Babylonian exile. In 11:10-16, he foresaw a coming king greater than Hezekiah, who would regather the exiles of Israel and Judah, creating a reunited Davidic kingdom and restoring its former glory. Thus, Isaiah 11:10-16 laid the foundation for eschatological Messianism.

[41] In 721 BCE, Merodach-Baladan threw off Assyrian control and declared himself king of Babylon (721-710). In 710, however, the Assyrian king Sargon II (721-705) forced Merodach-Baladan to flee Babylon. When the Assyrian king Sennacherb (705-686) assumed the throne in 705, Merodach-Baladan instigated a revolt, only to be defeated in 703. When he learned that Sennacherib was unable to subdue Jerusalem in 701, Merodach-Baladan sent an envoy to meet this great king. See Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 194-97, 204-05, 259 note 4, 260 notes 21 and 25.

Messianic Trajectories in the Servant Songs

Isaiah portrays the Lord's ideal Servant in four oracles, popularly known as the Servant Songs (42:1-7; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12).[42] These texts are traditionally grouped together for three reasons: the ideal Servant's identity is anonymous;[43] the ideal Servant obeys Yahweh;[44] and the ideal Servant fulfills his calling despites suffering and so eventually is exalted by God.[45]

Contextual Reading of the Servant Songs

All four Songs highlight the Servant's suffering (42:4; 49:4, 7-8; 50:5-9; 52:14; 53:3-11). The first Song (42:1-7) highlights his refusal to give in to discouragement; he perseveres despite opposition and fulfills his calling. In the second Song (49:1-13), the Servant laments that his path is not smooth, yet he endures since God reveals his suffering will bring redemption, not just to Israel but to all nations. The third Song (50:4-11) describes the unjust corporeal punishment he suffers from those who treat him as a false prophet: his back is scourged, his beard torn from his

[42] The literature is seemingly endless, but especially see Randall Heskett, *Messianism within the Scriptural Scroll of Isaiah* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007); F. Duane Lindsey, *The Servant Songs: A Study in Isaiah* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985); Tryggve N.D. Mettinger, *A Farewell to the Servant Songs: A Critical Examination of an Exegetical Axiom* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1983); Harry Orlinsky, *Studies on the Second Part of the Book of Isaiah: the So-Called Servant of the Lord and Suffering Servant in Second Isaiah* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1977); Adolf Neubauer, *The Suffering Servant of Isaiah* (Hermon Press, 1969); Christopher R. North, *The Suffering Servant in Deutero-Isaiah: An Historical and Critical Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956); Johannes Lindblom, *The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah: A New Attempt to Solve an Old Problem* (Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1951). Also see Francis Landy, "The Construction of the Subject and the Symbolic Order: A Reading of the Last Three Suffering Servant Songs," in David J.A. Clines, ed., *Among the Prophets: Language, Image and Structure in the Prophetic Writings* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); Hans M. Barstad, "The Future of the 'Servant Songs': Some Reflections on the Relationship of Biblical Scholarship to Its Own Tradition," in *Barr Festscrift* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) 261-270; Colin G. Kruse, "The Servant Songs: Interpretive Trends Since C.R. North," *Studia Biblica et Theologica* 8 (1978) 3-27; H. H. Rowley, "The Servant of the Lord in the Light of Three Decades of Criticism," *The Servant of the Lord, and Other Essays on the Old Testament* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952).

[43] In contrast to other passages in Isaiah in which "Israel" is identified as God's Servant (41:8, 9; 43:10; 44:1, 2, 21; 48:20; 49:3), the ideal Servant is anonymous in three of the four Servant Songs (42:1; 49:5, 6; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11).

[44] While Israel failed to live up to its calling as the Lord's Servant due to sin (42:19, "My servant is blind, My messenger is truly deaf! My covenant partner, the servant of the LORD, is blind!"), the Lord's ideal Servant obeys Yahweh and fulfills his calling despite unjust suffering (42:4; 49:7-8; 50:4-11; 52:13; 53:12).

[45] The Servant Songs share common themes: God calls the Servant as light to the nations by establishing justice on earth (42:1-4, 6-7; 49:5-6); the Servant fulfills his calling despite suffering (42:4; 49:4, 7-8; 50:6-9; 52:14-53:10); he is God's agent in the Second Exodus (42:7; 49:8-13); God exalts him over all earthly kings (49:7; 52:13-15).

cheeks and his face spat upon.[46] The final Song (52:13-53:12) describes the nature of his suffering and pivotal role it would play in God's redemptive program.[47] Our discussion of the Servant Songs will focus on the nature of the Servant's suffering and ultimate exaltation by God.

The Nature of the Servant's Suffering

The nature of the Servant's suffering is clearly unjust. In fact, his plight mirrors Job's plight in many ways.[48] They both suffer unjustly, onlookers misinterpret their suffering as divinely deserved punishment for sin, and the community is appalled and shuns them.[49] Both must rely on God alone to vindicate their innocence, death seems certain, and it appears they would suffer the fate of the wicked.[50] Yet God rescues his suffering servant from death and exonerates him (Isa. 49:8; 53:10-11; Job 42:7-17). Both graciously intercede for their accusers (53:12b; Job 42:10). God rewards both by exalting them in the eyes of their contemporaries (Isa. 52:13; 53:12, 15; Job 42:9-12), blessing each with numerous offspring (Isa. 53:10b; Job 42:13-15) and long life (Isa. 53:10b; Job 42:16-17). 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

[46] Corporeal punishment in ancient Israel involved flogging the back (Exod. 21:20; Deut. 25:2-3; Prov. 10:13; 19:29; 23:13, 14; 26:3), or striking the cheek (1 Kings 22:24; Mic. 5:1; Ps. 3:7; Job 16:10; Lam. 3:30; 2 Chron. 18:23). Christians see this as prophetic of the Roman scourging of Jesus (Matt. 27:26; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:33; John 19:1-3). However, Israel is figuratively pictured as being struck on the cheek and beaten on the back when Zion was destroyed and her citizens taken into exile (Isa. 51:23; Lam. 3:30).

[47] See Bernd Janowski, Peter Stuhlmacher and Daniel P. Bailey, eds., *The Suffering Servant: Isaiah 53 in Jewish and Christian Sources* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004); Henning Graf Reventhlow, "Basic Issues in the Interpretation of Isaiah 53," in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998) 23-38.

[48] J.C. Bastiaens, "Language of suffering in Job 16-19 and in the Suffering Servant Passages of Deutero-Isaiah," in Willem A.M. Beuken, J. van Ruiten, and M. Vervenne, eds., *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A.M. Beuken* (Louvain : Leuven University Press, 1997).

[49] Unjust suffering (Isa. 50:6; 53:9; Job 6:24-30; 9:1-10:17; 19:6; 27:1-6; 34:5); misinterpretation (Isa. 53:4-6; Job 4:17, 17; 9:2; 11:2; 15:14; 22:3; 25:4; 32:2; 34:5; 35:2; 36:7); shunned (Isa. 53:1-3; Job 6:14-21; 12:4; 16:10; 17:2-9; 19:1-6, 13-22; 30:1-15);

[50] Divine vindication (Isa. 49:4; 50:7-9; Job 6:29; 8:3; 9:15, 20; 10:15; 12:4; 13:18; 16:18-22; 17:8; 19:23-29; 27:5, 6; 31:6, 35); death seems certain (53:7-9; Job 17:1, 10-16; cf. 3:20-26; 6:8-13); and it appears they would suffer the fate of the wicked (Isa. 53:9; Job 16:11).

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).

In What Way Would the Servant Bear the Sin of Others?

Does the Servant suffer vicariously on behalf of others or unjustly as the consequence of being a member of a nation requiring punishment? One set of passages depicts him suffering on account of the sins of others: "for (מִן) our transgressions … for (מִן) our iniquities… for (מִן) the transgression of his people" (53:5, 8). When prefixed to terms for sin elsewhere, the term highlighted above depicts an innocent party unjustly suffering as a consequence of God's punishment of the sin of others, e.g., Jer. 12:4 "The animals and birds die on account of the evil of the inhabitants of this land!" (cf. Isa. 57:1; Lam. 4:13; Mic. 7:13). There are no clear examples elsewhere in that an innocent party suffers vicariously to atone the sin of others. It is the unprecedented use of this idea that makes this text so suitable for its eventual use of Jesus.

According to 53:11, the Servant will bear the people's sins: "he will bear their inquities."[51] When used literally, the verb "bear, carry" (סָבַל) depicts the subject carrying a heavy load on its shoulder. For instance, Isaiah uses the term to describe God carrying his people (46:4) and later of people carrying heavy load (46:7). (cp. Gen. 49:15; Ps. 144:14). It is used of carrying sin elsewhere only in Lamentations 5:7, where an innocent generation suffers the consequences of punishment of the previous generation's sins: "Our fathers sinned and are no more, yet we bear their iniquities" (RSV); "our ancestors sinned and are now dead, so we are left to bear their punishment" (NET).

[51] For the exegetical ambiguity in v. 11, see Anthony Gelston, "Knowledge, humiliation or suffering: a lexical, textual and exegetical problem in Isaiah 53," in R.N. Whybray, Heather A. McKay and David J.A. Clines, eds., *Of Prophets' Visions and the Wisdom of Sages: Essays in Honour of R. Norman Whybray on His Seventieth Birthday* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993).

In Isaiah 53:12, the meaning of the expression, "he bore the sin of many," is also open. Used with terms for sin, the verb "to bear" (נָשָׂא) has a broad range of meanings.[52] The closest parallels to 53:12 describe innocent persons suffering the effects of God's punishment of the sins of others: "your sons will wander in the wilderness for forty years and suffer for your unfaithfulness" (Num. 14:33); "the son shall suffer for the iniquity of his father" (Ezek. 18:19-20); "you shall bear their iniquity" (Ezek. 4:4-6). However, there are also two passages in which the term is used in a Levitical sense of removing the sins of the nation (Lev. 10:17; 16:22). While Isaiah 53:12 may be understood in terms of unjust suffering or vicarious suffering, it is impossible to determine the original meaning simply on the basis of the contextual reading. So while this expression does not demand an atoning sacrifice, neither does it prohibit this.[53] It is in this open expression that we find another case of divinely inspired Messianic mystery.

The Nature of the Servant's Sacrifice

The precise meaning of 53:10b is discussed since it is beset with numerous uncertainties. The verse has been rendered in four different ways: (1) Yahweh offers the Servant as a sacrifice: "if You make his soul an ***offering*** for sin" (KJV); (2) the Servant offers a traditional sin-offering: "if he himself makes an ***offering*** for sin" (NET note); (3) the Servant makes restitution: "if he

[52] The term is used as follows: (1) person bearing his own sin, that is, being held accountable for his actions (Lev. 5:1, 17); (2) a person suffering the punishment of his sin (Gen. 4:13; Num. 14:34); (3) a person incurring the guilt of someone else's sin (Lev. 19:17); (4) a person suffering the effects of punishment of the sin of others (Num. 14:33; Ezek. 4:4-6); (5) a person unjustly suffering punishment for the sin of others (Ezek. 18:19-20); (6) God taking away the guilt of the people's sin, that is, forgiving their sin (Gen. 18:24, 26; 50:17); (7) the scape goat symbolically carrying away the sin of Israel into the desert (Lev. 16:22); (8) the priests symbolically removing the sins of Israel by eating meat of the sin offering (Lev. 10:17).

[53] Bruce R. Reichenbach, "By His Stripes We Are Healed," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 41 (1998) 551-560.

himself makes ***restitution***" (JPS); (4) passive sense: "once ***restitution*** is made" (NET).[54] This diversity of translations highlights the issues of the verse.

The first question we need to ask is simply this: Does Isaiah mean "restitution" (Num. 5:7-8; BDB 79.3) or "guilt offering" (Lev. 5:6, 7, 15; BDB 79.4)? Both are viable options. The latter is more likely since a subsequent statement explains 53:10b: "he bore (נָשָׂא) the sin of many" (53:12). When the term "guilt offering" (אָשָׁם) and expression "bear sin" (נָשָׂא חֵטְא) appear together elsewhere, the former refers to a guilt offering, which one presents for sin whose responsibility he assumes.[55]

Assuming a guilt offering is in view, the meaning of 53:10b remains enigmatic since the syntax can be taken in two ways: (1) the Servant presents a traditional guilt-offering on behalf of the sins of the people: "If he himself makes a guilt-offering …" (2) God treats the suffering/death of the Servant as a guilt-offering on behalf of the sins of the people: "If you treat his soul as a guilt-offering …"[56] Both options are valid and contextually viable. The first views the Servant presenting a traditional guilt offering on the altar in his ministry of intercession on behalf of those who unjustly mistreated / accused him. This finds support from one approach to verse 15: "he bore responsibility for the sins of the many and made intercession on behalf of the transgressors." In the second view, God treats the Servant's suffering as having atoning value. This finds support from an alternate approach to verse 15: "he bore the sins of the many and

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[54] The NET Bible translation follows the BHS editors who suggest emending the MT reading תְּשִׂים (hiphil) to תֵּשָׂם (qal passive): "If [an offering/restitution] is made …" Our discussion assumes the MT reading is original.

[55] The guilt offering is just one of five major offerings described in Leviticus 1:1–6:7. These sacrifices meet the various needs of the Jewish people as they approach God in worship: burnt offering (1:1-17), grain offering (2:1-16), fellowship offering (3:1-17), sin offering (4:1-5:13), and guilt offering (5:14-6:7). The term "guilt offering" (אָשָׁם) and "bear sin" (נָשָׂא חֵטְא) appear together in Leviticus 5:1, 6, 7; 5:15-18; 19:18, 21; Numbers 18:19, 22, 23.

[56] The first approach takes the verb תְּשִׂים as third feminine singular, the feminine singular term נַפְשׁוֹ ("his soul") as the subject of the verb, and the noun אָשָׁם ("guilt-offering") as the direct object: "If he himself makes a guilt offering …" The second approach takes the verb תְּשִׂים as second masculine singular, the feminine singular term נַפְשׁוֹ ("his soul") as the direct object, and the noun אָשָׁם ("guilt offering") as an adverbial accusative of respect: "If You make/treat his soul as a guilt-offering …"

intervened on behalf of the transgressors." Since this line is fraught with such ambiguity, it is easy to understand how the original readers would not necessarily have read 53:10 as predicting the Servant would suffer vicariously to atone for sin by a substitutionary death. Yet it also is easy to see the language and imagery allows for the Messianic potential of an atoning sacrifice.[57] What the uncertainty shows is that such a connection can exist, especially if the uniqueness of the overall expression is appreciated.

Would the Servant Actually Suffer Death?

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 pictures the Servant in danger of violent premature death, yet it is not clear from a contextual reading whether he actually dies. There are five significant contextual statements that may lead us to believe the language and imagery suggests his death. Yet they do not demand it because it may simply picture the servant's life is in danger of death.

First, the terminology in 53:5 may be understood as a fatal or non-fatal assault. The verb "wound [someone]" (חָלַל) refers to an assault that may be fatal (Isa. 51:9; Ezek. 32:26) or non-fatal (Ps. 77:10[9]; Prov. 26:10; Ezek. 28:9). The parallel verb, "bruise, crush" (דָּכָא), likewise refers to physical assault, whether fatal (Job 6:9; Ps. 89:10) or non-fatal (Ps. 143:3; Lam. 3:34). While the Servant's life is placed in danger, it is not clear whether or not he dies.

Second, the statement, "he was cut off from the land of the living" (53:8), seems to depict the Servant's death. The verb, "cut off" (כָּרַת), often refers to suffering a violent death (Gen. 9:11;

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[57] For example, see Antti Laato, "Isaiah 53 and the Biblical Exegesis of Justin Martyr," in Antti Laato and J. van Ruiten, eds., *Rewritten Bible reconsidered: proceedings of the conference in Karkku, Finland, August 24-26 2006* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008); Angela Russell Christman, "Selections from Theodoret of Cyrus's Commentary on Isaiah," in Stephen E. Fowl, ed., *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1997); Kathryn Greene-McCreight, "Selections from John Calvin's sermons on Isaiah," in Fowl, ed., *The Theological Interpretation of Scripture*, E. Robert Ekblad, "God is Not to Blame: The Servant's Atoning Suffering according to the LXX of Isaiah 53," in Brad Jersak and Michael Hardin, eds., *Stricken by God? Nonviolent Identification and the Victory of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007); J. Alan Groves, "Atonement in Isaiah 53," in Roger E. Nicole, Charles E. Hill, and Frank A. James, eds., *The Glory of the Atonement: Biblical, Historical & Practical Perspectives: Essays in Honor of Roger Nicole* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004).

Lev. 26:22). Yet when Jeremiah laments, "I have been cut off!" (Lam. 3:54), he had not actually died, but feared death was certain: "I am about to die!" (NET). To be cut off from the land of the living may refer to a violent death (Job 27:8; Pss. 88:5; 109:13; Zech. 13:8), or be in a life-threatening situation (Pss. 31:22; 88:5[6]; Lam. 3:54; Ezek. 37:11). Both biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature often depicts the plight of someone in danger of death as being as good as dead. For the ancient Israelite, death was not a static state into which he entered when his body expired, but a dynamic power that threatened to cut him off from the realm of the living.[58]

Third, the statement, "they prepared his grave" (53:9), certainly suggests the Servant already had died. However, a stereotypical feature in biblical and ancient Near Eastern literature is the just sufferer lamenting death seemed so certain that his grave had already been prepared. Job laments his death seemed so certain that his grave was ready for him: "the grave awaits me!" (Job 17:1, NET). Likewise, ancient Near Eastern texts often refer to people preparing a grave for someone whose death seemed certain, even though the sufferer eventually recovered.[59]

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[58] An ancient Israelite suffering a life-threatening plight may describe himself as laid in the dust of death (Ps. 22:15), drawing near the gates of Sheol (Pss. 88:3[4]; 107:18), being dragged down to Sheol by its cords (2 Sam. 22:5-6; Pss. 18:4-5[5-6]; 116:3), descending to Sheol (Pss. 9:13; 22:15; Lam. 3:55), residing in the depths of the Pit (Ps. 88:3, 6) or shut in Sheol (Ps. 88:8[9]; Jon. 2:6). Deliverance from certain death is graphically pictured as being rescued from the gates of the netherworld (Ps. 9:13; Jonah 2:6), loosed from the snares of Sheol (2 Sam. 22:6//Ps. 18:5[6]), ransomed from the power of Sheol (Ps. 49:15; Hos. 13:14), rescued from Sheol (Ps. 56:13; 116:8), being brought up from the grave (1 Sam. 2:6), being brought up from the belly of Sheol (Jon. 2:2), being brought up from Sheol (Ps. 30:3; Jon. 2:6), pulled up from the Pit (Pss. 40:2; 49:15[16]), delivered from the depths of Sheol (Ps. 86:13), being brought out of the depths of the waters of the netherworld (Ps. 68:22[23]), being brought up from the depths of Sheol (Pss. 71:20; 86:13). Likewise, in ancient Near Eastern literature depicts deliverance from certain death as being rescued from the grave or brought from Sheol. For example, "The Lord revived me, he rescued me from the pit; he summoned me from destruction, he pulled me from the river of death … I who went down to the grave have returned to the Gate of Sunrise" (*COS* 1.153); "he snatched me from the jaw of death, he raised me up from the netherworld" (*COS* 1.152); "Where you look, the one who is dead lives; the one who is sick rises up" (*ANET* 384); "In the brunt of his anger, graves are dug; in another moment, the fallen are raised from disaster" (*COS* 1.153). One sufferer—eventually restored to health—believed his death was so inevitable that he described himself as though he had already succumbed: "Death pursues me … I myself no longer exist" (*ANET* 435).

[59] For example, death seemed so certain for Shubshi-meshre-Shakkan that his family already had dug his grave and made funeral arrangements: "My grave was waiting and my funerary paraphernalia ready; before I died, lamentation for me was finished" (COS 1.153). Yet he was restored to health: "The tomb he had prepared for him was set up for a feast … Marduk can restore to life from the grave" (COS 1.153). In another text, a righteous sufferer: "My family gathered round to bend over me before my time; my next of kin stood by ready for the wake … until the Lord raised

Fourth, 53:10 depicts God afflicting the Servant with physical malady, but it is not clear whether it is fatal or non-fatal. The verb "become ill" (הָחָל) depicts someone falling sick with fatal illness. For instance, the term is used to describe Jacob's condition just before he dies of old age (Gen. 48:1), Abijah's fatal illness (1 Kings 14:1, 5), Ahab's fatal illness from a battle wound (1 Kings 22:34), Elisha's terminal illness (2 Kings 13:14), and Hezekiah's near fatal illness, one which he survives (2 Kings 20:1, 12). Yet it is also used to describe non-fatal illnesses like that of King Asa's foot disease (1 Kings 15:23), and of King Ben Hadad of Syria who is ill but later recovers (2 Kings 8:7, 19).

Finally, 53:12b is unclear whether the Servant's life was merely in jeopardy or actually forfeited. Although traditionally rendered, "he poured out his soul to death" (KJV, RSV), this expression literally means, "he exposed his soul to death" (הֶעֱרָה לַמָּוֶת נַפְשׁוֹ). In its only use elsewhere, it does not mean to experience death, but for one's life to be in jeopardy of death: "do not expose me (אַל־תְּעַר נַפְשִׁי) to danger!" (Ps. 141:8, NET).

Thus, none of the five statements describing the Suffering Servant's plight in Isaiah 53:12-53:13 demands his premature death because the language and imagery is fraught with ambiguity. Yet when considered together, the plight of the Servant seems so bleak that it is difficult to read this passage without assuming that he dies. The only reason his death is not clear is that 53:10-11 describes God providing life and blessings to him after he had suffered, while 52:13 and 53:15 portrays God exalting him after he suffered (cf. 49:8-9). Thus, we are left with two options. First, God would rescue the Servant from premature death after he suffered a life-threatening plight. Second, God would rescue the Servant from the power of death after he had

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my head and brought me back to life from the dead" (COS 1.152). He describes his deliverance from certain death thus: "He snatched me from the jaws of death … he wrested the shovel from the digger of my grave" (*COS* 1.152).

physically died. Nonetheless, the weight of the likelihood is that the Servant dies. If the comparison to a sacrifice is made (53:10b), then a death seems even more likely.

In What Way Would the Servant's Life Be Restored?

According to Isaiah 53:10b, the Servant would be rewarded by God for his suffering with the enjoyment of life: "he will see [his] seed and prolong [his] days." The idiom, "to see one's seed," means one lives a long life to see his children and grandchildren (Gen. 33:5; 48:11; 50:23; Ps. 128:6; Isa. 29:23). However, the idiom elsewhere always takes the pronoun, "see *his/your* seed," which does not appear in 53:10. Although it might simply be assumed, one wonders why it is omitted here. If we view his experience as parallel to Job, we would assume his life was spared and he lived to see his grandchildren (Job 42:16). Yet the omission of this pronoun allows for and points to a Messianic potential: the Servant would live beyond the grave to see the redeemed "seed."

According to 53:10b, the Servant would experience life after suffering: "he will prolong [his] days" (53:10b). The idiom, "prolong one's days," means to enjoy longevity of physical life (Exod. 20:12; Prov. 28:16). After Job suffered, God restored him to health and he lived a long full life (Job 42:16-17).[60] Nevertheless, 53:10b differs from the standard idiom, since it does not explicitly say the Servant's own days would be prolonged, but literally reads, "he will prolong days." Here again, we can see how the original contextual reading is fraught with ambiguity, yet loaded with messianic potential. If read in the light of the standard idiom, 53:10b would suggest God rescued the Servant from premature death then extended his life. Yet the departure from the standard idiom allows another reading: the Servant did die, but he experienced life beyond the

[60] An Akkadian text reads: "The years and days you were filled with misery are over. Were you not ordered to live, you could not have lasted the whole of this grievous illness … I will see to it that you have long life!" (*COS* 1.151).

grave, and provided eternal life to those on whose behalf he suffered. Again, in a context where an offering is in view, a death also seems the more likely sense.

According to 53:11, the Servant is restored to life after he suffers: "after the travail of his soul, he will see light."[61] The expression, "see light," literally refers to seeing the sun (Job 31:26; 37:21; cf. Deut. 4:19). Since the living see the sun, to see the light is idiomatic for being rescued from death (Isa. 9:2[1]) or having one's life sustained (Ps. 36:9, "In your light we see light," cf. NET, "you are the one who sustains life"). The term "light" is often figurative for life (Job 3:20; 33:30; Ps. 56:14). The related idiom, "those who see the sun," refers to the living (Eccl. 7:11; cf. Ps. 58:8[9]; Eccl. 6:5; 11:7); those who die "never again see the light" (Ps. 49:19; cf. Job 3:16). Thus, the precise meaning of 53:11a is ambiguous. On the one hand, it could mean the Servant would be rescued from the threat of death: God would sustain his life. Yet it is equally plausible that after the Servant died, he would again see light: God would raise him from the dead. As before, we opt for the latter in light of the full combination of images.

In What Way Would the Servant Be Exalted?

The last two Servant Songs reveal that God would exalt the Servant as a reward for his successful completion of his calling in the face of suffering (49:7; 52:13; 53:11-12). Initially, the Servant would be despised by the Gentile nations, but one day all rulers would be subjugated to him: "Kings will see him and rise in respect; princes will bow down" (49:7). This portrait clearly carries royal connotations. Then as now, it was standard protocol to stand in the presence of

[61] The Masoretic Text (Codex Leningradis, ca. 1008 CE) reads, מֵעֲמַל נַפְשׁוֹ יִרְאֶה, "after the travail of his soul, he will see," which is awkward as it lacks an object. The two much earlier Isaiah manuscripts from Qumran (ca. 100 BCE) preserve the reading, מעמל נפשו יראה אור, "after the travail of his soul, he will see *light*." This early textual tradition is reflected in the Septuagint. The similarity of יראה אור may have led to accidental omission of the second word by a copyist. Thus, the Dead Sea Scrolls preserve the original.

special people out of respect.[62] The act of prostrating oneself on the ground was conventional protocol in the presence of a king.[63] Since the Servant would rule over restored Israel, Isaiah pictures the kings of all nations bowing before Israel as well (Isa. 45:14; 49:23; 60:14). Some suggest the Servant is Israel; however, if we view the Book of Isaiah as a whole, it is more consistent to view the nations bowing to Israel as a result of the exaltation of the Servant. For Israel, where there is a nation, there is a king, especially if one treats Isaiah as a unit. The royal hope clearly was expressed in the early portion of the book.

The Servant's exaltation is also described in the fourth Song: "He will be elevated, lifted high, greatly exalted!" (52:13). The term "elevate" (רוּם) is used elsewhere of God elevating a person by enthroning him (Ps. 89:19[20]; cf. Num. 24:7). The term "lift up" (נָשָׂא) is used of political leaders in positions of authority (Isa. 2:12-14). As a result of his faithfulness, God would exalt the Servant over all the kings of the earth (49:8-9; 52:12, 15; cf. 53:15). Elsewhere in the Book of Isaiah, both terms describe God's heavenly throne (Isa. 6:1; 57:15). Thus, this language allows a Messianic potential: God would elevate him to his own heavenly throne.

The Ambiguous Identity of the Servant

We now come to the most vexing question yet: "Who was the Suffering Servant?" There is no consensus among interpreters who consider this. On the basis of clues in the Book of Isaiah in general and Isaiah 40-66 in particular, the Servant has been identified with the following candidates: (1) corporate national Israel, (2) the righteous remnant of Israel, (3) the prophet

[62] Lot stands before two angelic beings and bows down with his face (Gen. 19:1), Abraham stands and bows before the local people, Hethites (Gen. 23:7), people are to stand in the presence of the aged and the elder (Lev. 19:32), Abigail stood and bows her face to David (1 Sam. 25:41), King Solomon stood and bows before Bethsheba (1 Kings 2:19), Mordecai does not stand and bow before Haman (Esth. 5:9) and young men stood and old men remained standing when Job secured his seat in the public square (Job 29:8).

[63] David bows his face to the ground before King Saul (1 Sam. 24:8). Mephibosheth, Joab, Absolom. Ziba, Ahimaaz, Araunah, Bethsheba and Nathan bow their face to the ground before King David (2 Sam. 9:6; 14:22, 33; 16:4; 24:20; 1 Kings 1:16, 23, 31). And Adonijah bows his face to the ground before Solomon (1 Kings 1:53).

Isaiah or another prophet such as Jeremiah, (4) the Israelite king in exile, or (5) the ideal Davidic king/the messiah.[64]

This ambiguity is due to the fact that the term "servant" (עֶבֶד) has a wide range of forms and referents in the Book of Isaiah. It occurs thirty-three times in three singular and four plural forms: "the servant of Yahweh," "His servant," "My servant," "the servants of Yahweh," "His servants," "Your servants," and "My servants." In most cases, the servant's identity is made explicit by an accompanying statement or made clear from the context. The plural expressions designate corporate national Israel (54:17; 56:6; 63:17; 65:8, 9, 13, 14, 15; 66:14). Three singular expressions designate an individual: "My servant David" (37:35); "My servant Eliakim" (22:20); "My servant Isaiah" (20:3; cf. 44:26). Eight singular expressions are collective for Israel: "Israel My servant" (41:8, 9; 44:1, 2, 21; 48:20; 49:3). This leaves six cases in which the singular title is not explicitly identified (42:1; 49:5, 6; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11). In two cases, the anonymous titles, "His servant" (49:5) and "My servant" (49:6), occur in an oracle in which the singular, "Israel My servant" (49:3), appears previously. The other four anonymous titles, "My servant" (42:1; 52:13; 53:11) and "His servant" (50:10), occur in oracles in which his identity is not explicitly stated. The attentive reader will realize that all six of these anonymous singular expressions appear in the four so-called Servant Songs (42:1-7; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12).

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[64] R. N. Whybray, *Thanksgiving for a Liberated Prophet*, JSOTS, 4 (Sheffield; University of Sheffield, 1978); David J.A. Clines, *I, He, We and They: A Literary Approach to Isaiah 53* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1976); A. van der Kooij, "'Servant of the Lord": a particular group of Jews in Egypt according to the old Greek of Isaiah. Some comments on LXX Isa 49,1-6 and related passages," in Willem A.M. Beuken, J. van Ruiten, and M. Vervenne, eds., *Studies in the Book of Isaiah: Festschrift Willem A.M. Beuken* (Louvain: Leuven University Press, 1997); Fredrik Hägglund, *Isaiah 53 in the Light of Homecoming after Exile* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008); Joseph Alobaidi, ed., *The Messiah in Isaiah 53: The Commentaries of Saadia Gaon, Salmon ben Yeruham, and Yefer ben Eli on Isaiah 52:13-53:12* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998); Antti Laato, *The Servant of YHWH and Cyrus: A Reinterpretation of the Exilic Messianic Programme in Isaiah 40-55*, ConBOT 35 (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1992); Robert R. Ellis, "The Remarkable Suffering Servant of Isaiah 40-55," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 34 (1991) 20-30.

Enigmatic Identity of the Suffering Servant in 49:1-13

The threefold use of the term in 49:1-13 is peculiar. It is the only oracle in which the title is marked in one case, but unmarked in two others: "My servant Israel" (49:3), "His servant" (49:5), "My servant" (49:6). Ordinarily, we would equate the unmarked uses with the initial marked use. Yet this is an unusual case since three features in 49:5-8 may suggest that Isaiah distinguished the Suffering Servant in 49:5-8 from Israel as God's Servant in 49:3.[65]

First, the Suffering Servant's identity is ambiguous since Isaiah 49:5-6 may be interpreted in two different ways: (1) God created/called the Suffering Servant to bring Israel to repentance, implying the Suffering Servant is distinct from Israel: "He formed me from birth to be His Servant *to restore* (לְהָשִׁיב) Jacob to Himself and regather Israel … He said, 'Is it too insignificant for you to be My servant *to reestablish* (לְהָקִים) the tribes of Jacob and *to restore* (לְהָשִׁיב) the remnant of Israel?'" (2) God created/called the Suffering Servant by bringing Israel to repentance, implying the Servant is Israel: "He formed me from birth to be His Servant *by restoring* (לְשׁוֹבֵב) Jacob and regathering Israel to Himself … He said, 'Is it too insignificant that you should be My servant *by reestablishing* (לְהָקִים) the tribes of Jacob and *by restoring* (לְהָשִׁיב) the remnant of Israel?'" In terms of Hebrew grammar, both are valid options. So the Servant's identity in 49:5-6 is not clear from a purely exegetical level.

Second, the Suffering Servant's identity is unclear since 49:7 may be interpreted in two dramatically different ways: (1) the Servant is abhorred by the nation and subservient to rulers: "the despised one, *the one abhorred by the nation* (מְתֻעָב גּוֹי), the servant of rulers," which distinguishes the Servant from the nation; (2) the Servant is the nation abhorred by the Gentile

[65] Christopher Seitz, "'You are My Servant, You are the Israel in Whom I Will Be Glorified': The Servant Songs and the Effect of Literary Context in Isaiah," *Calvin Theological Journal* 39 (2004) 117-134; Peter Wilcox, "The Servant Songs in Deutero-Isaiah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 42 (1988) 79-102.

rulers: "the despised one, *the abhorred nation* (מְתָעֵב גּוֹי), the servant of rulers," which identifies the Servant as the nation. Since both options are viable, the identity of the Suffering Servant is enigmatic when considered from a purely contextual perspective.

Third, the Suffering Servant's identity is unclear as his calling in 49:8 may be interpreted in two dramatically different ways: (1) God called the Servant to become a covenant-keeping nation: "I will make you a covenant people" (NJPS); (2) God called the Servant to function as mediator of a new covenant with the nation: "I will make you a covenant for the people" (NIV, TNIV, ESV), "I will make you a covenant to the people" (RSV), "I will give you as a covenant to the people" (CEV), "I will make you a covenant mediator for the people" (NET, NivR). The first pictures God transforming the disobedient nation into an obedient covenant-keeping people (cf. 56:4, 6). The second views the Servant as an individual, who would mediate a new covenant between Yahweh and Israel (cf. 54:10; 55:3; 59:21; 61:8).[66] Once again, it is impossible from a purely contextual perspective to determine the precise identity of the Servant.

Although the relationship of the Suffering Servant to Israel in Isaiah 49:5-8 is ambiguous, it is much more clear in 49:9-13. Yahweh portrays the Servant as a second Moses who will play the pivotal role in the so-called "Second Exodus" (49:8-13; cf. 42:7). Just as Moses orchestrated the rescue of the Hebrews from slavery in Egypt (pictured as a prison), the Servant would function as God's agent to free captives from the darkness of their prisons (42:7; 49:9). Elsewhere Isaiah describes the Babylonian exile as a prison (Isa. 3:24; 10:4; 14:17; 49:24, 25; 61:1). Yet, while Cyrus king of Persia would function as God's anointed in issuing the decree to allow the Jewish exiles to return from Babylonian exile (Isa. 44:28-45:4), the Servant would orchestrate a greater "second Exodus" of the nation of Israel (42:7; 49:9-13; cf. 49:14-50:3;

[66] Roland E. Clements, "Isaiah 53 and the Restoration of Israel," in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity, 1998) 39-54.

50:10-52:12; 54:1-17). This suggests that the identity of the Servant is narrowing as we proceed. What Israel was, the servant as the embodiment of the people became. By the time we get to Isaiah 53, the identity appears to narrow to an individual who suffers for the people.

Canonical Reading of the Servant Songs

Although the precise identity of the Servant appears to be veiled in ambiguity when considered from a purely contextual perspective, a canonical reading of the Servant Songs begins to peel back the veil and shows us how we should read the text itself. When the Servant Songs are read in the light of the final canonical form of the Book of Isaiah as a whole, one notices dramatic similarities between the Servant and the ideal Davidic king in 11:1-16.[67] Like the ideal Davidic king of 11:1-9, the Servant is endowed with the divine spirit (42:1; cf. 11:2) to establish justice (42:3-4; cf. 11:3-5). Like the ideal Davidic king of 11:10-16, the Servant will play the pivotal role in the "second Exodus" in God's eschatological work of redemption (42:7; 49:9-13).[68] Moreover, the Servant and the ideal Davidic king are both depicted through the image of a "shoot" (שֶׁרֶשׁ) sprouting up from the ground (11:10; 53:2). So we conclude the Servant and the ideal Davidic king in 11:1-16 are one and the same.[69]

When viewed from a canonical perspective and even within the book of Isaiah, it is clear that the Servant Songs also reflect royal Davidic conventions. Just as God called David's dynasty to promote social justice (Pss. 45:4, 6-7; 72:1-4. 12-14; Jer. 21:12; 22:3, 13, 15; Ezek. 45:9), God called the Servant to promulgate social justice (42:1-4). In fact, the Servant's calling to promote

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[67] Richard Schultz, "The King in the Book of Isaiah," in Philip Satterthwaite, Richard Hess, and Gordon Wenham, eds., *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of Old Testament Messianic Texts* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) 158

[68] For the Servant pictured as a Second Moses, see Gordon Hugenberger, "The Servant of the Lord in the 'Servant Songs' of Isaiah: A Second Moses Figure," in Satterthwaite, Hess, and Wenham, eds., *The Lord's Anointed*, 105-40.

[69] Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., "All Signs Point to Jesus: Isaiah's Servant Songs and the Christological Fulfillment of the Old Testament," *Bibliotheca Sacra* H. H. Rowley, "The Suffering Servant and the Davidic Messiah," *The Servant of the Lord, and Other Essays on the Old Testament* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1952); Stanley Porter, "Introduction: The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments," in Stanley Porter, ed., *The Messiah in the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007) 1-12.

social justice (42:1-4) and issue decrees to liberate prisoners (42:7) pictures him along the lines of ideal ancient Near Eastern kings like Hammurabi.[70] Just as David established social justice in ancient Israel (2 Sam. 8:15), the Servant would succeed in doing the same (42:4). By establishing justice, Isaiah's portrait of the Servant corresponds to Jeremiah's picture of the coming Davidic Branch and Ezekiel's vision of the Davidic Shepherd, who will establish justice (Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Ezek. 37:24). Just as the royal psalms depict all kings one day bowing down and serving the Davidic king (Pss. 2:10; 72:11), Isaiah predicts all kings will bow down before the Servant (49:7; 52:13, 15). Furthermore, the expression, "he will succeed" (יַשְׂכִּיל) (53:12) often refers to the success of a nation's leader (Josh. 1:7-8) or its king (1 Kings 2:3; 2 Kings 18:7). This recalls David's success (1 Sam. 18:5, 14, 15). Jeremiah predicted the coming new "David" would succeed in his calling: "I will raise up for them a righteous Branch for David; he will rule over them successfully (וְהִשְׂכִּיל)" (Jer. 23:5; cf. 3:15). While the Servant would succeed in fulfilling his calling, Isaiah laments Israel lacked all spiritual understanding, which prevented the nation from succeeding in its calling as Yahweh's servant (Isa. 44:18; cf. 42:18-19; 43:8; 44:18; 59:10).[71] Finally, the term "servant" is often a royal title in ancient Near Eastern literature.[72] 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."[73] 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?

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[70] Shalom Paul, "Deutero-Isaiah and the Cuneiform Royal Inscriptions," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (1968) 182; Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1995) 47-52, 60-61, 141.

[71] Mark A. Christian, "The Servants in the Songs," *Sewanee Theological Review* 49 (2006) 365-376.

[72] The Akkadian term "servant" is a royal title: M.-J. Seux, *Epithetes Royales Akkadiennes et Sumeriennes. Ouvrage publie avec le concours du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique* (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1967) 360-63.

[73] "My servant David" (2 Sam. 3:18; 7:5, 8; 1 Kings 11:13, 32, 34, 36, 38; 14:8; 2 Kings 19:34; 20:6; Isa. 37:35; Jer. 33:21, 22, 26; Ps. 89:3, 20; 1 Chron. 17:4, 7;); "My servant Nebuchadnezzar" (Jer 25:9; 27:6; 43:10). Cf. also the Messianic titles, "My servant David" (Ezek. 34:23-24; 37:24-25), "My servant the Branch" (Zech. 3:8).

Finally, Isaiah's portrait of the Suffering Servant bears striking similarities to Zechariah's later picture of the Suffering Shepherd (Zech. 11:4-17; 13:7; cf. 12:10). According to Zechariah 11:4-17, the people would wrongly reject the Good Shepherd, leading to his execution in 13:7-9. However, Zechariah 13:7 pictures the unjust death of the Good Shepherd as a pivotal event in God's redemptive plan for Israel. Like the Good Shepherd of Zechariah, the Suffering Servant would be rejected by his people but play a key role in God's plan of deliverance. So even if it was initially unclear that the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53 would be an individual suffering on behalf of the nation Israel, this is made clear by the time we get to Zechariah's portrait of the unjust suffering and death of the Good Shepherd. All of this points to a figure in the Servant who should be tied to the king. The royal Servant would suffer death first, then be exalted.

Conclusion

Who was this new David? Recognizing Isaiah only had pieces of the puzzle, it is legitimate to suggest the prophet foresaw a typological archetype of a coming ideal Davidic king who would bring victory and peace, signs of eschatological hope. Isaiah 11:1-16 launched a trajectory of a mysterious royal figure to come, who would participate in a period of unprecedented deliverance and inaugurate a future Golden Age. Isaiah foresaw a coming day when God would deliver his people and restore the kingdom through a divinely chosen servant, a servant who also would suffer. Since he had pieces of the puzzle, Isaiah was not able to see how the whole picture fit together in the same way that the Christian can today. Of course, God had the Messiah in mind all along, as one can see when all the pieces of the puzzle are fit together.