"The authors provide a masterful synthesis of the teaching of the Messiah in the Old Testament, the context of Judaism, and in the New Testament. By intentionally addressing the contextual, canonical, messianic, and christological readings of all the key texts, and asserting how these grew and developed in their interpretation into the Christian era, these three scholars, each with expertise in expounding the message of the relevant texts, provide the reader with a clear path for understanding the fulfillment of the messianic expectation in Jesus Christ as more than just a collection of diverse prophecies. The work demonstrates the messianic message as woven through the text of Scripture and finding unique fulfillment in Jesus of Nazareth. This is the most useful work to date on the subject."

—Richard S. Hess,
Earl S. Kalland Professor of Old Testament and Semitic Languages,
Denver Seminary

"Many lay readers of Scripture and scholars have been waiting for a book like this, which sets a new standard and establishes a new method for exploring themes in biblical theology. The authors systematically examine the written evidence for the growth of the messianic hope in Israel, exploring in order the witness of the First Testament, Jewish writings from the second temple period, and the New Testament. Resisting the impulse to impose later visions of the Messiah upon earlier texts, they have offered a fair and balanced picture of a gradually revealed but vibrant and persistent thread of biblical belief. Thoroughly researched, logically organized, and lavishly illustrated, this volume represents the finest full length treatment of the subject available."

—Daniel Block,
Gunther H. Knoedler Professor of Old Testament,
Wheaton College

"I like the authors' distinction between a text's original, contextual meaning and the canonical significance ultimately given to it, and their progression from Old Testament to New via second temple Jewish literature."

—Leslie C. Allen,
Senior Professor of Old Testament,
Fuller Theological Seminary

"Bateman, Bock, and Johnston have definitely filled a gaping hole in this crucial area with their new work and done so artfully while specializing in their respective fields—Old Testament, second temple literature, and New Testament. It is about time we have a detailed discussion on this important area from evangelical scholars bridging this whole time period. Their discussions are nuanced and carefully worded, avoiding many pitfalls of either extremes and yet providing a very readable and clear work. Especially helpful is their progressive development in which they have highlighted crucial themes related to the Messiah throughout the biblical and non-canonical works. Whether one agrees or disagrees with all of their conclusions, there is no doubt that they have provided a workable, clear foundation in this area that will spawn many lively discussions into the future."

—Paul D. Wegner,
Professor of Old Testament,
Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary

# JESUS THE MESSIAH

## Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King

HERBERT W. BATEMAN IV
DARRELL L. BOCK
GORDON H. JOHNSTON

Kregel Academic

*Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King*



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*To*
*Sally Bock,*
*Danielle Johnston,*
*and Cindy Bateman*
*Thank you, ladies*

# CONTENTS

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

It was a pleasure to accept Herb Bateman's invitation to contribute to this volume. The collaboration is special for me because I was a professor to both Herb and Gordon. Our families have grown up together. In fact, Gordon and I attend the same church even today. The ideas we write about reflect decades of discussion between us all. They represent a way of putting the messianic puzzle together that makes sense out of what we have in the Testaments from both a historical and canonical point of view. Our hope is that this piecing together of the puzzle proves helpful to our readers.

Special thanks goes to the students and faculty I have had over the years on the use of the Old Testament in the New, including Don Glenn, Ken Barker, and Eugene Merrill, who taught me Hebrew and Old Testament. Howard Marshall, Harold Hoehner, and Martin Hengel have been the greater influences in my reading of the New Testament, while Elliott Johnson has been another wonderful conversation partner in all of this.

My deepest appreciation goes to my wife, Sally, who has had to endure many "conversations" on topics that look back centuries in history. Her faithfulness has been most appreciated, as has her understanding and support.

—Darrell L. Bock

In some publications, an author's acknowledgement is perfunctory; in my case, it is certainly sincere. Many scholars have shaped my thoughts on messianic prophecy and interpretation, but I want to acknowledge the profound impact of three of my former teachers/mentors at Dallas Theological Seminary: Professors Donald R. Glenn, Robert B. Chisholm Jr., and Darrell L. Bock.

It has been a delight to write this book with Darrell and Herb. Years ago Darrell first opened my eyes to the dynamics of messianic prophecy and interpretation in his doctoral course, "Christological Interpretation of the Old Testament," which he team taught with Don Glenn. Thus, this project represents something of the completion of a circle. Herb and I shared many great times together as doctoral students, then as junior professors getting started in our respective institutions. All three of us have shared many moments of laughter over the years. It has been a delight to work on a project with two good friends; they have sharpened my thinking throughout this project.

Words cannot express my appreciation to Danielle for her constant encouragement and more than occasional urging to finish already! Our three children—Bergen, Grey, Heath—are the joy of our lives, and the reason

grappling with the Messiah is so important. May they continue to love Jesus and walk with him all the days of their lives!

—Gordon Johnston

Of all the books I have published, I am most excited about *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King.* First, the book includes work by two men with whom I have had a relationship with for well over twenty years, Gordon H. Johnston and Darrell L. Bock. Although it has taken since May 2001 to complete this project, we've enjoyed the process of writing, dialoguing, and promoting the work at conferences and colloquiums. (I must admit, however, we often asked ourselves which would come first: the completion of this book about Jesus the Messiah or the second coming of Jesus the Messiah.)

Second, it is always an honor to work with my mentor, Darrell Bock. Moving beyond my dissertation, *Jewish and Apostolic Hermeneutics: How the Old Testament Is Used in Hebrews 1:5–13* (1993), the second project we worked on together was *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views* (1999). In many respects, this book is a broader and yet further development of a hermeneutical approach presented in both of those two works. I owe a great debt of gratitude to Darrell as well as Don Glenn who first introduced me to this hermeneutical field of study as well as those who introduced and further refined my understanding of the history and literature of the second temple period: Gordon Ceperly (Philadelphia Biblical University), Hal Roning (Jerusalem University College in Israel), Harold Hoehner (Dallas Theological Seminary), and James VanderKam (Notre Dame).

Special thanks must go Jim Weaver and the Kregel staff who are always a delight to work with and deserving of many thanks. However, my deepest gratitude is reserved for my wife of over thirty years. She is forever committed to and supportive of the ministries I accept. Such support includes writing projects like this one that always appear to demand more of us than is initially expected. Thank you, Cindy, for the patience, support, and encouragement you extended to me so that this book might reach the press.

—Herbert W. Bateman IV

# ABBREVIATIONS

## Ancient Near Eastern Sources

| | |
|---|---|
| *AEL* | Miriam Lichteim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 3 volumes (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973–80). |
| *ANET 3* | James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, Third Edition. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969. |
| *AR* | Adolf Erman, *Die ägyptische religion*, Handbücher der Königlichen museen zu Berlin. Berlin: G. Reimer, 1905. |
| *ARE* | James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt: Historical Documents*, Volume II: The Eighteenth Dynasty. New York: Russell & Russell, 1906. |
| *COS* | W.W. Hallo and K. Lawson Younger, Jr., eds., *The Context of Scripture, Volume 1: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*. Leiden/Boston: E.J. Brill, 2003. |
| *SAA 9* | Simo Parpola, *Assyrian Prophecies*, State Archives of Assyria 9 (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 1997. |
| *TAPE* | William J. Murnane, *Texts from the Amarna Period in Egypt*, Writings from the Ancient World, Volume 5. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995. |

## Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha Sources

| | |
|---|---|
| 1 Esdr | First Esdras |
| 2 Esdr | Second Esdras |
| Tob | Tobit |
| Bel | Bel and the Dragon |
| Jdt | Judith |
| Wis | Wisdom of Solomon |
| Sir | Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) |
| 1 Macc | First Maccabees |
| 2 Macc | Second Maccabees |
| 3 Macc | Third Maccabees |
| 4 Macc | Fourth Maccabees |
| *Barn.* | *Epistle of Barnabas* |
| *Ep. Arist.* | *Epistle of Aristeas* |
| *Jub.* | *Jubilees* |
| *Odes Sol.* | *Odes of Solomon* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *1En.* | *1 Enoch (Ethiopic Apocalypse)* |
| Poly *Hist* | Polybius *History* |
| *Pss. Sol.* | *Psalms of Solomon* |
| *Sib. Or.* | *Sibylline Oracles* |
| *T. Adam* | *Testament of Adam* |
| *T. Ash.* | *Testament of Asher* |
| *T. Gad* | *Testament of Gad* |
| *T. Iss.* | *Testament of Issachar* |
| *T. Jud.* | *Testament of Judah* |
| *T. Levi* | *Testament of Levi* |
| *T. Naph.* | *Testament of Naphtali* |
| *T. Reu.* | *Testament of Reuben* |
| *T. 12 Patr.* | *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* |
| *T. Sol.* | *Testament of Solomon* |

## Qumran Sources

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| CD | *Damascus Document* | |
| 1QM | *1QWar Scroll* | |
| 1Q28 | 1QS | *1QRule of the Community* |
| 1Q28a | 1QSa | *1QRule of the Congregation* |
| 1Q28b | 1QSb | *1QRule of Blessings* |
| 1Q30 | | |
| 4Q161 | 4QpIsaa | *4QIsaiah Peshera* |
| 4Q171 | | |
| 4Q174 | 4QFlor | *4QFlorilegium* |
| 4Q175 | 4QTest | *4QTestimonia* |
| 4Q246 | 4QpsDan ar | *4QAramaic Apocalypse* |
| 4Q252 | 4Q*commGen*a | *4QCommentary on Genesis A* |
| 4Q266 | 4QDa | *4QDamascus Documenta* |
| 4Q285 | 4QSM | *4QSefer ha-Milhamah* |
| 4Q287 | | |
| 4Q369 | 4QPEnosh | *4QPrayer of Enosh* |
| 4Q375 | | |
| 4Q376 | 4QapocrMosesb | *4QApocryphon of Mosesb* |
| 3Q377 | | |
| 4Q382 | *4QParaphrase of the Kings* | |
| 4Q423 | *4QInstructiong* | |
| 4Q458 | *4QNarrative A* | |
| 4Q496 | 4QMf | *4QWar Scrollf* |
| 4Q521 | *4QMessianic Apocalypse* | |
| 11Q13 | 11Q*Melch* | *11QMelchizedek* |

## Josephus

| | |
|---|---|
| *Ant* | *Antiquities* |
| *Ap* | *Against Apion* |
| *War* | *Jewish Wars* |

## Periodical

| | |
|---|---|
| *AUSS* | *Andrews University Seminary Studies* |
| *BBR* | *Bulletin and Biblical Research* |
| *BibTo* | *Bible Today* |
| *Bib* | *Biblica* |
| *BI* | *Biblical Illustrator* |
| *BSac* | *Bibliotheca Sacra* |
| *BT* | *The Bible Translator* |
| *BZ* | *Biblische Zeitschrift* |
| *BZAW* | *Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* |
| *CTJ* | *Calvin Theological Journal* |
| *CBQ* | *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* |
| *CJP* | *Cambridge Journal of Philology* |
| *ConJ* | *Concordia Journal* |
| *CurBS* | *Currents in Biblical Research* |
| *DBSJ* | *Detroit Baptist Seminary Journal* |
| *DSD* | *Dead Sea Discoveries* |
| *ErIsr* | *Eretz Israel* |
| *ETL* | *Ephemerides theologicae lovanieness* |
| *ExAud* | *Ex Auditu* |
| *GTJ* | *Grace Theological Journal* |
| *GOTR* | *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* |
| *HTR* | *Harvard Theological Review* |
| *HvTSt* | *Hervormde Teologiese Stud* |
| *Int* | *Interpretation* |
| *JBQ* | *Jewish Bible Quarterly* |
| *JAOS* | *Journal of the American Oriental Society* |
| *JATS* | *Journal of the Adventist Theological Society* |
| *JBL* | *Journal of Biblical Literature* |
| *JETS* | *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* |
| *JhebS* | *The Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* |
| *JJS* | *Journal of Jewish Studies* |
| *JNSL* | *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* |
| *JSNT:Sup* | *Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series* |
| *JSOT* | *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* |
| *JSP* | *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* |
| *NovT* | *Novum Testamentum* |
| *NTS* | *New Testament Studies* |

| | |
|---|---|
| *OTE* | *Old Testament Essays* |
| *Or* | *Orientalia* |
| *PEQ* | *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* |
| *PQ* | *Philological Quarterly* |
| *PRSt* | *Perspectives in Religious Studies* |
| *RevQ* | *Revue de Qumran* |
| *RTR* | *Reformed Theological Review* |
| *SJOT* | *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* |
| *SR* | *Studies in Religion* |
| *SWJT* | *Southwestern Journal of Theology* |
| *STRev* | *Sewanee Theological Review* |
| *TJ* | *Trinity Journal* |
| *TynBull* | *Tyndale Bulletin* |
| *UF* | *Ugarit Forschungen* |
| *VT* | *Vetus Testamentum* |
| *WTJ* | *Westminster Theological Journal* |
| *ZAW* | *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* |
| *ZNW* | *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* |

**Reference**

| | |
|---|---|
| *ABD* | *Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by D.N. Feedman. 6 vols. New York, 1992. |
| BAGD | Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker. *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Second Edition. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1979. |
| BDAG | Walter Bauer, Frederick W. Danker, William F. Arndt, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek–English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. Third Edition. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2000. |
| BDB | Brown, Francis and S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon*. Original publication: Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1907; reprint; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996. |
| *DJD* | *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels.* Edited by J. B. Green and S. McKnight. Downers Grove, 1997. |
| *EncDSS* | *Encyclopaedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls.* Edited by L. H. Schiffman and J. C. VanderKam. 2 vols. New York, 2000. |
| *EncJud* | *Encyclopaedia Judaica.* 16 vols. Jerusalem, 1972. |

| | |
|---|---|
| *HALOT* | Koehler, Ludwig; Walter Baumgartner, Johann Jakob Stamm. *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*. 2 Volumes (Leiden/Boston: E.J. Brill, 2002). |
| *ISBE* | *The International Standard Biblical Encyclopaedia.* Ed. by G. W. Bromiley. 4 vols. Grand Rapids, 1979–1988. |

**Series**

| | |
|---|---|
| AB | Anchor Bible |
| ANTC | Abingdon New Testament Commentaries |
| BECNT | Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament |
| CBC | Cornerstone Biblical Commentary |
| CBQMS | Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series |
| DJD | Discoveries in the Judean Desert |
| EKKNT | Evangetisches Handbuch zum Altern Testament |
| EUS | European University Studies |
| HDR | Harvard Dissertations in Religion |
| ICC | The International Critical Commentary |
| IVPNT | IVP New Testament Commentaries (IVP) |
| NCB | New Century Bible Commentary |
| NIBCNT | New International Biblical Commentary on the New Testament |
| NICNT | New International Commentary on the New Testament |
| NICOT | New International Commentary on the Old Testament |
| *NIDNTT* | *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology* |
| *NIDOTTE* | *New International Dictionary of the Old Testament Theology* |
| NIGTC | New International Greek Testament Commentary |
| NTL | New Testament Library |
| SBLD | Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series |
| SNTSMS | Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series |
| *TDOT* | *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* |
| *TWOT* | *Theological Wordstudy of the Old Testament* |
| WBC | Word Biblical Commentary |
| WUNT | Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament |

**Translations**

| | |
|---|---|
| ESV | English Standard Version |
| KJV | King James Version |
| LXX | Septuagint |
| MT | Masoretic Text |
| NASB | New American Standard Bible |
| NCV | New Century Version |
| NET | New English Translation |
| NIB | New Interpreter's Bible |
| NIRV | The New International Reader's Version (NIrV) |

| | |
|---|---|
| NIV | The New International Version |
| NLT | New Living Translation |
| NRSV | New Revised Standard Version |
| REB | Revised English Bible |
| RSV | Revised Standard Version |
| TEV | Today's English Version |
| TNIV | Today's New International Version |

**General**

| | |
|---|---|
| BCE | Before the Common Era (equivalent to B.C.) |
| CE | Common Era (equivalent to A.D.) |
| NT | New Testament |
| OT | Old Testament |

# INTRODUCTION

Herbert W. Bateman IV

Without question, Jesus is an unsurpassed, certainly an unequaled figure in human history. Belief in his life, death, and resurrection has transformed and even redirected world empires, cultures, and people. No one person has ever affected the world and its history like Jesus. And though the principle sources of information regarding Jesus' life and teachings are the Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), Jesus has been the subject of personal and public letters, sermons and lectures, pamphlets and books, skits and plays, documentaries and movies. Identification with him can bring both positive and negative responses. Jesus can be both endearing and repelling. Thus Jesus has been and continues to be a worthy person to ponder. *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King* is yet another presentation about Jesus, more specifically a consideration about his messiahship. Who is Jesus, the Messiah?

Naturally our book about the messianic Jesus is not *totally* unique. Visit the religious section of a large bookstore or search online, and you will see an array of books about Jesus. Surprisingly, every book seems to have a different slant on Jesus. Some, for instance, do not consider Jesus' claim of Messiah and even minimize his Jewishness. They view him primarily through Greco-Roman lenses. For example, John Dominic Crossan creates a portrait of Jesus that envisions him as a Mediterranean Jewish peasant and cynic who lived like other itinerate cynics roaming the Greco-Roman world.[1] Jesus is, according to Crossan and a few others, a radical individual who advocates the avoidance of worldly entanglements and defies social conventions. His connection with his Jewish roots is clearly diminished.

1. John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991). For other works and advocates of this view, see Appendix A.

Others acknowledge Jesus' Jewishness but appear to ignore or reject his role as Messiah. He is a Jewish but non-messianic figure whose sole interest is social or religious reform. On the one hand, Theissen, Horsley, and Kaylor emphasize Jesus as a Jewish social reformer. On the other hand, Sanders Vermes, and Borg portray him as a religious reformer. Thus Jesus is some sort of Jewish reformer, yet non-messianic. Although his Jewishness is recognized, his claim of "Messiah" is minimized.

| JESUS: A JEWISH NON-MESSIANIC REFORMER | |
|---|---|
| **Social Reformer** | **Major Proponent with a Selected Work** |
| Jesus: radical charismatic itinerant preacher of social reform | Gerd Theissen: *The Shadow of the Galilean* (1987) |
| Jesus: peasant prophet for radical social change. | Richard A. Horsley: *Jesus and the Spiral of Violence* (1987) |
| Jesus: political prophet for social reform | R. David Kaylor: *Jesus the Prophet* (1994) |
| **Religious Reformer** | **Major Proponent with a Selected Work** |
| Jesus: prophet of a Jewish eschatological restoration | E. P. Sanders: *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (1993) |
| Jesus: charismatic Jew | Geza Vermes: *The Religion of Jesus and the World of Judaism* (1984) |
| Jesus: charismatic, healer, sage, and prophet for social change | Marcus Borg: *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (1994) |

Still others portray Jesus as a Jewish Messiah, and yet ponder his messiahship. Numerous authors fall into this category. On the one hand, some stress that Jesus is a messianic prophet. Allison, Casey, Ehrman, and Meier portray Jesus as a prophet who speaks primarily about the future millennium or kingdom. Yet Fiorenza and Witherington spotlight Jesus as a messianic sage, a teaching messiah who speaks on many issues. On the other hand, Wright prefers to speak of Jesus as a Jewish Messiah of restoration. He is the one who

will lead the nation of Israel out of exile. Others like Bockmuehl, de Jonge, and Stuhlmacher underscore various aspects of his messianic Sonship, namely whether that Sonship is Davidic, human, or divine.

| JESUS: A JEWISH MESSIAH FIGURE[2] | |
|---|---|
| **Messianic Prophet** | **Major Proponent with a Selected Work** |
| Jesus: the millennium prophet | Dale C. Allison: *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (1991) |
| Jesus: eschatological or apocalyptic prophet | Maurice Casey: From *Jewish Prophet to Gentile God* (1991)<br>Bart D. Ehrman: *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (2001) |
| Jesus: eschatological prophet who ushers in the kingdom of God | John P. Meier: *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 3 vols (1991, 1994, 1998, 2001) |
| **Messianic Sage** | **Major Proponent with a Selected Work** |
| Jesus: egalitarian sage | Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza: *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (1994) |
| Jesus: prophetic and eschatological sage | Ben Witherington III: *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (1994) |
| **Messianic Restorer** | **Major Proponent with a Selected Work** |
| Jesus: eschatological Messiah who leads Israel out of exile | N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (1996) |
| **Messianic Son** | **Major Proponent with a Selected Work** |
| Jesus: serving son of David | Marcus de Jonge: *Jesus, the Servant Messiah* (1991) |
| Jesus: martyred Son of Man | Markus Bockmuehl: *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* (1994) |
| Jesus: divine Son of Man | Peter Stuhlmacher: *Jesus of Nazareth—Christ of Faith* (1993) |

2. For an overview and bibliography for each view, see Appendix A: "Contemporary Snapshots of Jesus."

Naturally, many of the proposed portraits about Jesus as a Jewish messiah have merit; some do not. While some strive to distance Jesus from his Jewish roots, others recognize and embrace those roots. Those who minimize Jesus' connection with his Jewishness and his cultural connection of his messiahship via the First Testament have limited value. For instance, some may claim that the identity of Jesus, his messiahship, and the nature of his redemptive work, was God's well-hidden mystery from ages past and only first clearly revealed in Jesus by his death, resurrection, and ascension. Jesus, it is pointed out, confided *only* to his inner circle that his true identity and nature of his mission was a divine secret—concealed from others, but revealed to them. Some lay inappropriate stress on Paul's assertion that the true nature of Jesus and his messianic mission was a divine mystery hidden from all ages past and only revealed by the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus. These sorts of claims not only underestimate, they also fail to fully appreciate a connection with the First Testament and thereby negate the element of progression in the revelation evident in the First Testament prophecies about the "messiah." Consequently many of these scholars underscore the capacity and creative work of human authors of Scripture and downplay and perhaps even disregard God's overarching involvement in redemptive history. We, however, do not.

Although this book neither critiques nor contributes *directly* to the selection of books listed above, we do ponder the same question: Who is Jesus, the Messiah? So in that sense there is some connection to the works introduced above. However, the scope of investigation in *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King* is much broader in that it traces God's promise of messiah as first presented in the Hebrew Scriptures, then reflected upon during the *latter portion* of the second temple period (often referred to as the "Intertestamental Period"), and finally fulfilled in the coming of Jesus.

## FOUNDATIONS OF OUR APPROACH

*Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King* offers contextual-canonical, messianic, and christological developments of God's promise of "messiah" within the larger framework and unfolding of Jewish history in canonical and extra-biblical literature. Naturally, the foundation upon which we build is with what Christians today call "the Old Testament." The books of "the Old Testament" were part of what was regarded by many Jews in Jesus' time as the sacred writings of their community. Our appeal to a canonical reading here, however, is distinct from its usual meaning today, which *assumes* a reading with the New Testament present. Consequently, when the books of the New Testament were being written, a New Testament as a collection of writings did not yet exist.[3] So

3. The earliest extant collection of the New Testament is p46 (200 CE), which includes most of Paul's writings and the book of Hebrews. The first extant manuscript to include

when someone asks, what Scriptures were read by those who wrote in the first century? The answer would be the Hebrew writings of the Jews. Their canonical and inspired works were the Hebrew Scriptures, what we Christians today call the Old Testament.

So in this book, *as a historical matter*, the term canonical refers to a reading that uses the sacred books of the Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures, whether being read in the first century or even during the period when the First Testament was being completed. This is an important distinction to grasp because for us it is here in Hebrew Scriptures that any canonical reading, even in the broader sense used today of both Testaments, starts. In other words, when a person from the first century or earlier saw any of these theologically respected books depicting the promise of Israel and their hope, we will ask this question: how were passages of promise read in light of the whole while at the same time taking into account developments of promise within that First Testament? This is precisely how we will use the term canonical while also recognizing that today the canon Christians acknowledge contains a Second Testament (our New Testament) that completes the messianic picture. Thus, a significant point of our book is to argue how this portrait of messiah presented in both Testaments is gradually unfolded, yielding a *more* complete canonical portrait.

We must first ask the right questions and then respond to them. How did the First Testament portray the promise of messiah? Was the portrait of the messiah in the individual texts as *explicit* and clear to the original readers as it became later in the Psalms and the prophets or as a part of Jesus' work? Or was the full messianic potential of many passages more *implicit*, especially in the earliest passages, while the full legitimate Messianic meaning of these passages only became more explicit as more elements of this promise was revealed in later passages and subsequent Jewish history, whether from the First Testament or as a result of Jesus' own revelatory work? Does the First Testament reveal christological clarity at the moment each text was introduced?

Our complete answer to these questions is, yes, *eventually* a clear portrait emerges, but each inspired text is but a piece of a much larger puzzle where the entire portrait gains clarity as the other inspired pieces are assembled, granting more clarity to what initially was often only *implicitly visible* within a given literary piece. The promise was in the original wording, as we hope to

all 27 books of the New Testament is Sinaiticus (4 CE). It was Marcion (*ca*. 140 CE), the heretic, who compiled the very first "canonical" collection of New Testament works, which he limited to ten of Paul's writings and Luke's Gospel. Muratorian Canon (*ca.* 160–180) contains all 27 books of the New Testament. The point is simply this: when people were wrestling with Jesus as Messiah, the only "canonical" Testament they had was the Hebrew Scriptures. So, *we must be willing to travel back to a time in history* when the Old Testament canon of Scripture had yet to be *formally fixed* and the theological developments we find in the New Testament concerning God's Kingdom and God's Messiah were *not yet fully realized*.

show, but it also became gradually connected to other texts of promise and pattern as they were revealed reflecting back on the earlier text and giving it more context and clarity. Scripture assembles its doctrine as God inspires human authors to write it. God does not disclose everything at once, especially at the start. Seeing Scripture reveal itself progressively and with more detail and clarity is something the church has consistently affirmed. Thus, we seek to set forth one methodological model for how that progressive unfolding works and to show God's intentionality behind it. For the sake of illustration, the progress of messianic revelation is like pieces of a puzzle, a messianic puzzle of promise.


God provided pieces of the messianic puzzle very early in Jewish history. In the book of Genesis, God expressed it as a hope to Abraham, with links to ideas of the seed that go back to Adam, expressed initially in general terms. (For a focused treatment on Genesis 3:15, see the special appendix on this specific text.)[4] That same promise was given specifics in 2 Samuel when God

4. The christocentric interpretation of Genesis 3:15, known as the *Proto-Evangelion* enjoys a long tradition among Christian interpreters. Yet it tends to be understood in one of two ways: (1) it is the first hint of the gospel, as the seed of the woman will be victorious over the forces of evil the Serpent represents, namely, Satan; (2) there is no real hint of the gospel in the text. Whereas the first sees the most direct messianic fulfillment, the second merely introduces the conflict and the curse as a result of Eve's disobedience and thereby sees no real messianism nor messianic implication in the text. Because of these diverse perspectives, we will deal with the passage in the appendix.

provided assurances to David about his descendants. Unfortunately, these sacred writings (The Old Testament) close with no one on David's throne due to Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Judah in 586 BCE when David's dynasty is dismantled.[5] Yet the prophets gave glimmers of hope for its restoration (e.g., Amos, Micah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah). This revelation progressed in the early sacred texts as the book of Daniel made clear. One day a human figure (the Son of Man) came with divine authority to establish God's kingdom and vindicate God's saints, completing the initial canonical picture of the hope of a deliverance for God's people (Daniel 2, 7, 9). Who exactly this figure was, where he fit, and how he connected to other pictures of deliverance opened up a discussion along with a host of views in Judaism that through our survey of the extra-biblical Jewish literature we shall show fueled the first century conversation about messianic hope.[6] Unlike those who underestimate or perhaps even reject the significance of Hebrew Scriptures for understanding Jesus the Messiah, our starting point *is* the Hebrew Scriptures because the sacred writings of the First Testament supply the essential pieces needed for joining and fitting together the scriptural puzzle about Messiah.

During the latter part of the second temple period (*circa* 100 BCE), people collected, pondered, and pieced together this messianic puzzle. Although some people appear indifferent (e.g., Ben Sirach and Josephus), others reflect on the scriptural puzzle and attempt to fit the pieces together (e.g., Qumran community). Gradually more and more scriptural pieces were linked together, in a variety of configurations, some of which the early Christians used and others which they rejected. The confusion these opinions introduced, as well as some of the helpful connections they saw in the Jewish sacred texts, are part of the early Christian conversation about Messiah and why Jesus handles the category of Messiah with as much care as he does. So by the time of Jesus, key elements were in place to make a unity of it all, something Jesus and the early church presented as a grand fusion of what God had said in Scripture and accomplished in Jesus. Jesus' teaching, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, therefore, complete the messianic puzzle.[7] Yet having

5. Some may question our use of BC–AD. or BCE–CE. We have opted to use the latter. The nomenclature began to change in the eighties and now BCE–CE tends to be the common practice in nearly all current biblical and second temple studies.
6. Why use the term "extra–biblical Jewish literature"? I prefer "second temple documents" but it lacks the needed separation from the Second Testament canonical works. So after some consideration, the description "extra–biblical" best communicates that later second temple texts of what is often called the intertestamental period are not read as inspired texts. Nevertheless, they contribute to the messianic ideas that are in play during Jesus' lifetime and during the time his followers write. Yet another good options used by Evans: "noncanonical." Craig A. Evans, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992, 2nd printing 1995).
7. Darrell L. Bock first used the puzzle metaphor in "A Progressive Dispensational Hermeneutic" in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views* (ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV; Grand Rapids: Kregel,

demonstrated that the foundation of our approach begins with the Hebrew Scriptures and thereby considers continuity with the Second Testament we might ask: How does our approach differ from other approaches that also begin with the Old Testament?

## DIFFERENTIATING OUR APPROACH

Granted, our starting point is not unlike other approaches that acknowledge the value of Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) when discussing Messiah. Yet there is a difference. Many people today unfortunately fail to grapple with the human journey of discovery about "Messiah." Many preachers who preach sermons about Jesus as the Messiah often *over* emphasize their theological system with limited or even no consideration of any progress of revelation in human history. Others may read the text historically, often looking exclusively to the long-term reality. But in their quest for a *singular* historical-contextual meaning throughout all of Scripture, they argue that what a First Testament human author said about Messiah *equals* that which is stated about Jesus the Messiah in the Second Testament.[8] They tend to suggest that Jesus and the apostles assert that the Hebrew Scriptures testify *directly* and (or more importantly) *exclusively* about him. In their mind, the evangelists and epistolarists believe Moses foretold *only* the death of Jesus the Messiah; David foresaw *only* the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah; Isaiah predicted *only* Jesus' ascension into glory; and that Abraham heard *only* the Gospel to the Gentiles preached to him.[9] Thus, they stress the work of the

1999): 85–101; *idem.* "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents" in *Three Views on the New Testament use of the Old Testament* Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde, editors (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 105–151.

8. See Walter C. Kaiser Jr., "The Single Intent of Scripture," in *Evangelical Roots: A Tribute to Wilbur Smith* (ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer; Nashville: Nelson, 1978), 123–41; *idem. The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985); *idem*. "Single Meaning, Unified Referents," in *Three Views on the New Testament use of the Old Testament* (ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde; Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 45–89. Elliott E. Johnson, "A Traditional Dispensational Hermeneutic" in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism,* 63–76. John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995). For another discussion about Sailhamer see footnote #9 below.
9. As Fee and Stuart note, "The primary difficulty for most modern readers of the Prophets stems from an inaccurate prior understanding of the word 'prophecy.' For most people this word means what appears as the first definition in most dictionaries: 'Foretelling or prediction of what is to come.' It often happens, therefore, that many Christians refer to the prophetic books *only* for predictions about the coming of Jesus and/or certain features of the new-covenant age—as though prediction of events far distant from their own day was the main concern of the prophets. In fact, using the prophets in this way is highly selective. Consider the following statistics: Less than 2 percent of Old Testament prophecy is messianic. Less than 5 percent specifically describes the New Covenant age. Less than 1 percent concerns events yet to come." Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to the Bible Book by Book: A Guided Tour* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993), 165–66.

divine author and thereby over emphasize an *unambiguous continuity* between the Testaments. The idea is that most or all of these texts need to be direct prophecies to work for Jesus being the messianic fulfillment in the way the Second Testament describes. Thus the argument is this: Jesus the Messiah is explicitly present very early on in a model that more often than not argues for direct prophecy in many specific First Testament texts, often exclusively directed at Jesus. There is but one single, *unambiguous* meaning concerning Messiah and that all authors, human and divine, are unified as to who that referent is. Clearly, they argue, he is Jesus.[10]


We, however, will offer a slightly different approach. Granted, there is most certainly a link, but we will argue, just *not a completely exclusive one*. One of our goals is to argue that these texts do not need to be *only* direct prophecies for them to reveal a messianic connections and fulfillment in Jesus. Such an *explicit-exclusive reading* of the First Testament tends to ignore the complexities of Jewish history as well as God's revelation and its progress. Such an explicit reading deprives us of historical information that ultimately helps us grasp what was going on in the lives of the Jewish people and what God's revelation told them about their present and future. While a traditional approach argues for *explicit predictions* about Jesus, we suggest that while the wording is *ultimately* messianic, it is often more implicitly stated and becomes clearer *only* as the entirety of God's portrait of messiah is eventually and fully disclosed, both by how the First Testament concludes and by what Jesus himself does to pull all the messianic pieces together.[11] What we mean to convey is

10. For a presentation and evaluation of four Evangelical approaches about the use of the First Testament in the Second Testament see Darrell L. Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New: Part 1." *BSac* 142 (July–September 1985): 209–23; "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New: Part 2." *BSac* 142 (October–December 1985): 206–19.
11. See Wolter H. Rose, "Messiah," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch (*ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003),

simply this: *not all prophecy is exclusively pointing to Jesus,* just ultimately. Such a reading alerts us to the noteworthy reality of the dynamic nature of *pattern* and *prophecy* in Scripture, its progressive nature of revelation, and its various longitudinal trajectories across human history. Reading First Testament texts as though they are exclusively about Jesus ignores the prefiguring portraits that are also significant pieces of the puzzle that have to be both recognized and appreciated as we look from this side of Jesus' resurrection and exaltation.

Another way to say this is that we arrive at the same conclusion as these more traditional readings in terms of their being fulfillments in Jesus, but we take a different route to get there. The method we propose honors the clues in the original texts and aspects of their original meaning for the near historical context into which they were written. In essence, we have chosen to pause, ponder, and present God's gradual disclosure of his kingdom program preserved in God's inspired Scripture and written by people living in the midst of and wrestling with divinely directed historical events. Thus we adopt a threefold reading strategy of Scripture that is first contextual–canonical, then messianic, and finally christological.

## DEFINING OUR APPROACH

As noted above, our commitment is to neither under estimate nor over emphasize the connection between the two Testaments. In order to follow through with that desire, we evaluate the text, using three criteria: first contextual–canonical, then messianic, and finally christological. So what does this all mean? With contextual-canonical, we express how the earliest testament in part and whole generated such promises in the context of the progress of revelation. By messianic, we conclude how these messianic options were being contemplated by Jews through messianic reflection as we enter the time of Jesus. The choice of messianic here does not imply that there was no messianic hope coming out of the First Testament because it is the messianic and eschatological hope of that Testament that is generating the various views. Nor will we say that all these Jewish options are of equal value. Some of them were a part of the early Christian discussion and others were rejected by them. With christological, we consider how Jesus and the earliest church put all of this together into a coherent portrait that they also saw as revelatory about the promise as they entered into the debate over the various options, affirming some elements, rejecting others, and adding fresh emphases of their own. The burden of this book is the demonstration of this threefold reading

565–568. Sydney Greidanus, in *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* (Eerdmans 1999, 276), suggests seven different ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament: "redemptive–historical progression, promise–fulfillment, typology, analogy, longitudinal themes, Second Testament references, and contrast." Rather than simply referring to "messianic prophecies" in general, it is helpful to point out that there are numerous ways in which the Old Testament paves the way for the recognition of Jesus as Israel's deliverer, hope, and messiah.

strategy as fundamental for making sense of Jesus' and the early church's messianic claim.

In the *promises* of Israel's king (part one), we address the contextual-canonical reading of the First Testament.[12] In a contextual reading, the interpreter seeks to understand the First Testament passage in its original historical setting. This is an important first and often neglected step when discussing God's promise of Messiah in the Hebrews Scriptures. Here, we are especially concentrating on what the original human author meant and understood in his original historical setting. Furthermore, we focus on the exegetical meaning of a passage within its immediate theological and literary context. Thus, we read the passage as an ancient Hebrew in the light of his historical background, antecedent theology, and literary context. While at the same time, we also pay attention to how the wording of God's promises have *potential* for development long term.

In a canonical reading the interpreter takes into account the progress of revelation. Although any passage has a particular referential meaning in its original context, many biblical themes are not static but dynamic in the gradual historical unfolding of Scripture. In the progress of biblical revelation, God develops theological themes across time and in history. In other words, in a canonical reading we consider our passage from the perspective of a wider context—the final canonical form of the Hebrew Scriptures.

The focus on the First Testament as a whole and the unfolding of its messianic portrait will help to set up both what was discussed in the latter part of the second temple period (beginning *circa* 167 BCE) and what Jesus does with all of these options as he assessed them both pro and con. Initial statements made by human authors allow the principle of God's design and activity to be appealed to again at a later historical moment. Patterns of application of God's promise become clearer as salvation history unfolds in the sacred texts and as the patterns earlier texts described reappear. Some prophets had the strong sense that whatever was happening to kingship in their time (and not all of it was good by any means), that would not stop God from accomplishing what he had promised. They knew in the eschaton there would be a decisive deliverance. Later, when we read the same passages, we attempt

12. Due to similar terminology, some might erroneously link Johnston's approach with John H. Sailhamer. However Sailhamer merges contextual and canonical into single reading and thereby argues for a fully developed messianic eschatology. Johnston, however, does not. Johnston clearly distinguishes the original contextual meaning from the later canonical significance (e.g., Brevard Childs). Thus Johnston does not merge the two into a single reading. Furthermore Sailhamer articulates his view in an article entitled "Hosea 11:1 and Matthew 2:15" (*WTJ* 63 (2001): 87-96), but Dan McCartney and Peter Enns believe Sailhamer has misread Brevard Childs and that he is incorrect in arguing that (1) Hosea 11:1 is explicitly messianic, (2) the Pentateuch contains a fully developed messianic eschatology, and (3) Matthew limited himself to a strict grammatical-historical exegesis of Hosea. See "Matthew and Hosea: A Response to John Sailhamer," *WTJ* 63 (2001): 97–105.

to do so as though we were a Jew living during the early second temple (post-exilic) period (e.g., Genesis in light of the Psalms and Prophets, not just as a book on its own). Thus, we strive to draw on the understanding of themes, messianic themes, as they stood at the time of a later Jewish reading in Israel's history.

In the *expectations* of Israel's king (part two), we focus attention on reflections about messianic promise evident in later extra-biblical but Jewish writings. Jewish interpreters read, explain, piece together, and apply sacred texts within a later second temple context (*circa* 167 BCE–70 CE). This involves interpretive, theological, and hermeneutical reflections that emerge during or as a result of major historical events: the rebuilding of the second temple (515 BCE), the desecration and rededication of the second temple (167, 164 BCE), the rise and fall of the Hasmonean dynasty that ruled Israel (143–63 BCE), etc. Although there remains a mysterious element about God's messianic promise, namely what and who was to come, *some* Jewish interpreters occasionally get it right in that they put some aspects of the messianic portrait together in helpful ways. They understood that First Testament trajectories could be interpreted as *ultimately* pointing to an eschatological Messiah.

Extra-biblical Jewish literature, composed during the intertestamental period, along with their numerous interpretations and reflections on theological themes in the sacred Hebrew writings, heighten the continuity and discontinuity between the Testaments. At times, open ended prophecies in the sacred texts are elaborated in extra-biblical materials, sometimes consistently producing a unified portrait—other times making a unity hard to find. And though extra-biblical Jewish literature authored around the time of Jesus are not Scripture nor inspired texts, they do inform us of early Jewish theological beliefs and expectations as well as provide us with examples of hermeneutical approaches to the First Testament that support those belief systems about various eschatological messiah figures.[13]

In the *coming* of Israel's king (part three), we concentrate on christological readings of the First Testament. In a christological approach, we look at the messianic portrait again, but as a Christian bringing scriptural hope together with the light of the ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus the Messiah. In some cases, passages are reused in ways that make their full force clear. In many cases the messianic understanding is assumed as present by revelation and vindicated by God so that the portrait is developed with a fullness and clarity that it had lacked, but now can be seen to have been there all along. In other words, we widen our context again—to Jesus and his inauguration of the new covenant. Here we discover both continuity

13. Herbert W. Bateman IV, "Second Temple Exegetical Practices: Extra-biblical Examples of Exegesis Compared with Those in the Book of Hebrews" in the Dead Sea Scrolls issue of *SWTJ* 53 (Fall 2010): 26–54.

and discontinuity with the variety of elements in early Jewish hope and with second temple Judaism. Pieces of the First Testament disclose the messianic identity and activity in Jesus' mission. Some of these elements were reflected upon and anticipated during the second temple period, but reaffirmed, unified, and fulfilled in the Second Testament.

So it should not come as a surprise that second temple interpretive approaches to the First Testament are often reflected in the Second Testament. Both second temple Jews and first century Christians were trying to make sense of what God had said. This is certainly the case in Hebrews 1:5–13 where the author links seven First Testament passages together to present Jesus as God's divine Davidic son.[14] We may also say that apostolic readings of the First Testament often connected new covenant truth into old covenant texts, making a revelatory step through the Spirit that brought together what had not yet been assembled into a coherent portrait. In doing so they complete a unified picture of the earlier pieces. Sometimes the picture is completed in unanticipated ways but never the less in ways that show a single hope is at work. This is why we find Second Testament writers sometimes engaged in literal, contextual exegesis (*peshat*), but other times in what some argue wrongly is christological eisegesis (*midrash*). This is not, however, eisegesis because the text is being handled appropriately in light of additional revelation, namely, an inclusion of the original fullness of the First Testament along with what took place in Jesus utilizing a larger historical and revelatory context. The difference is simply this: they are not dealing with exegesis of a specific book in its initial context alone, but rather performing exegesis across a collection of books, seeing God's Word as still active, alive and speaking to the new historical setting.[15] Furthermore, they are dealing with more than an individual verse. Instead they are dealing with theological concepts that appear throughout Hebrew Scriptures and reflected upon and written about during the latter part of second temple period. Unlike traditional readings that argue for an explicit exegesis of specific passages in a singular context, we contend for a unified reading involving canonical considerations of themes, reflections of which extend into the time of Jesus.

14. Herbert W. Bateman IV, "Two First Century Messianic Uses of the Old Testament: Hebrews 1:5–13 and 4QFlorilegium 1:1–19," *JETS* 38 (1995): 11–27; *idem*., "Psalm 45:6–7 and Its Christological Contributions to Hebrews," *TJ* 22NS (2001): 3–21.
15. For other Second Testament examples see Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New: An Introduction*, Continuum Biblical Studies Series (New York: Continuum, 2001); Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1st ed., 1975; 2nd ed., 1999); Craig A. Evans, "The Function of the Old Testament in the New" in *Introducing New Testament Introduction* (ed. Scott McKnight; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989); E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

## RELEVANCE OF OUR APPROACH

Needless to say, all three backgrounds (contextual-canonical introductions, messianic reflections, and christological conclusions of God's promise of "messiah") are relevant to understanding how these texts ultimately are read and are part of the historical process by which these passages came to be affirmed as about Jesus. Neither approach trumps the other; *all three work in concert* but in distinct ways. The First Testament set the stage for the discussion, by introducing and presenting the promise, giving us many of its key revelatory elements. The time of messianic reflections was really a period of contemplating messianic options. It wrestled to make sense of all elements of these promises and put them together with varying degree of success and failure. This period showed the variety of ways the Jewish audience of the first century might have contemplated the topic and what options a messianic discussion of the first century needed to address. With the time of christological reading, Jesus and his followers renewed the revelatory activity missing since the early Testament and put the material together into a unit that also added additional features and emphases to the portrait. Thus, we emphasize equally a contextual-canonical, messianic, and christological reading of the text. That means, we neither under estimate Jesus' connection with his Jewishness and/or his cultural understandings of "messiah" derived from the First Testament, nor do we simply make the conceptual connection of "Messiah" in the Old and New Testaments a mostly exclusive link. Herein lies the uniqueness of *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King*: we present a median approach to *discovering* who Jesus the Messiah is, and how Jesus himself, in the progress of revelation, fits together the pieces of God's messianic puzzle.

Although initially key elements about "messiah" were often present only *as the culminating part of a more comprehensive discussion* in the First Testament, some promises were seen more clearly by later interpreters as more revelation appeared. In addition, some later reflections and presentations of various elements of the end times and the messianic portraits generated during the second temple period were often valuable. As historical events unfolded, a look back on earlier texts of Hebrew Scripture provided fresh elements that could make more explicit what had been only implicit initially. With the coming of Jesus, the fulfillment of these promises became unified and clear. Authors of the Second Testament, influenced by their historical milieu, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, proclaimed these fulfillments. Consequently, the Second Testament does not say *less* than the First Testament did, but it certainly tells us more about God's promise of "Messiah." Yet God knew where these passages and patterns were going. As he revealed pieces of the messianic puzzle throughout history, God was well aware of how they would fit together. Our approach, therefore, represents a Threefold Hermeneutical Reading Strategy (periods of promise, expectations, coming). It takes into consideration First

Testament canonical texts and appropriate ancient Near Eastern material, second temple history, and Jewish literature of the period as well as involving Jesus and the Apostles.[16] The following chart visually presents our methodological approach.

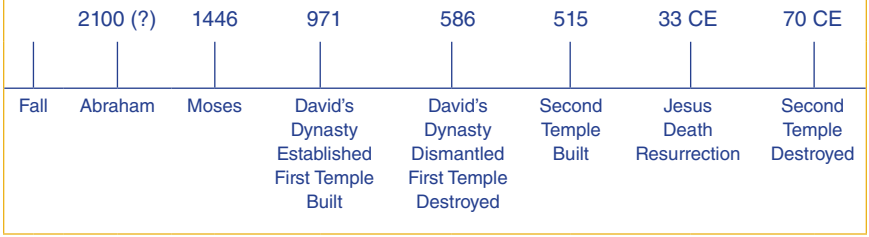

## OUR THREEFOLD APPROACH

We begin with an equal emphasis concerning the human author and the divine author. We focus on kingship because the anointed deliverer is tied to a kingdom and the rule of a king. To be sure, other topics, such as salvation and the eschaton also can and do have messianic meaning. However, the bulk of

16. This approach was initially described as "Jewish Background and Apostolic School" in "Dispensationalism Yesterday and Today," in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism,* 40–42.

the key features about Messiah surface in claims tied to kingship and kingdom. We intentionally restrict ourselves in this manner because to expand the consideration into additional areas risks making our study far too large. So, we purposely concentrate on kingship and covenant texts. (This also helps to explain why Genesis 3:15 is treated as an appendix).[17] What we find interesting is this: when we get to the time of Jesus and the early Christians, these other themes are often folded into the backdrop of kingship and Messiah, so not much is lost in our keeping this kingship as our primary focus. In our approach, dual authorships and their respective perspectives are important. On the one hand, the *human authors of Scripture record and disclose information about God within a context of human history*. The human authors have limited understanding of how God's ultimate goal will be played out (1 Peter 1:10–12; cp. Eph. 3:5–7). Thus when they discuss the issue of "messiah," they are not privy to nor are they presented with God's complete picture but merely pieces of it.

**HUMAN AUTHORS' RECORDINGS OF GOD'S INVOLVEMENT IN HISTORY**

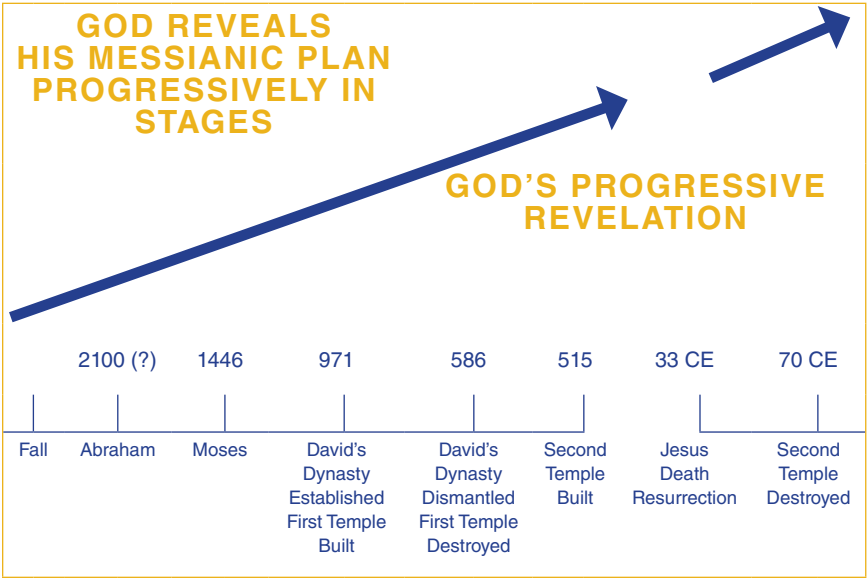



On the other hand, the divine author knows the beginning and end of the story. But like any good author, *God gradually, progressively, reveals his messianic picture and builds upon it one piece* (i.e., one revelatory message) *at a time*, until Jesus and the Holy Spirit comes and fits the puzzle pieces together. Thus God not only makes a promise, he progressively builds upon that promise, expanding and giving new information about it throughout the unfolding of Jewish history until it is eventually fulfilled through Jesus.

Therefore we trace God's progress of revelation through the writings of human authors, what God has told them, what they wrote, and what they understood. We do not collapse all of redemptive history into a single statement about Jesus the Messiah that does not appreciate the progressive nature of God's revelation. There is a relationship and connection to the concept of

17. See footnote 4 in this chapter.

Messiah in sacred scriptures while there is also development as Jewish history unfolds and God provides more and more pieces of his messianic puzzle. Thus methods for determining the multiple human authors' histories about a Messiah (i.e., historical-exegetical) as well as methods for coming to grips with the divine author's revelation about Messiah (i.e., theological-canonical) are embraced and employed throughout this work.




*Part One: Promises of Israel's King*
Johnston addresses the contextual and canonical introductory dimensions that are foundational for the Davidic dynasty of Israel. The contextual dimension focuses on the original historical exegetical meaning of key passages. The canonical dimensions identify trajectories that inner biblical development in later First Testament passages unpack. Contextual analysis indicates First Testament promises of royal dynasty and victory are clear—yet open enough to allow for later development of a diversity of eschatological messianic roles and expectations. Canonical analysis reveals how the ancient dynastic promises come to be interpreted. This canonical usage also provides the segue for the development of various forms of eschatological messianism evident in second temple literature and in the early church.

*Part Two: Expectations of Israel's King*
Bateman takes the second step in our threefold hermeneutic (contextual-canonical introductions, messianic reflections, and christological conclusions).

The move is made from historical, royal, dynastic promises of the First Testament to various portraits of eschatological messianic expectations evident in second temple literature. The discussion in this section is twofold. First, it identifies obstacles that hinder our ability to trace the history of ideas about eschatological messianism during this period: our limited resources, our blurred vision, and our lack of second temple historical and social sensitivities (ch. 8). Second, it isolates and illustrates from second temple literature epithets typically employed for speaking of expected messianic figures: "Messiah" (ch. 9), "Prince," "Branch" (ch. 10), and "Son" (ch. 11). Bateman identifies how a variety of messianic expectations arose from a combination of two factors: (1) the openness of First Testament promises and hopes concerning the restoration of David's dynasty as well as (2) the socio-historical dissatisfactions with current Judean leadership (e.g., Hasmonean dynasty).

*Part Three: Coming of Israel's King*

Bock explains how the Second Testament builds upon and unifies the First Testament promise of messiah, adopts First Testament concepts about the messiah, and presents the First Testament idea of messiah due in part to first century reflections of the messiah figure revealed in Jesus and God's authentication of him. In this section, Bock works backwards from the epistles toward the gospels. This route is taken because (1) most of the texts he chooses, especially the ones he works with first, are not debated as to their messianic affirmation, in contrast to the texts in the promise section covering the First Testament and some of the texts to be treated in the gospels; (2) the gospels are complicated, working with two time frames (that of the Jesus event and the time frame of the evangelist); and (3) by working backwards we can retrace the development of the argument starting from the least debated texts. In this way, we can work back to the origins of the messianic concept in the activity of Jesus, something debated among Second Testament scholars, but something that can be contended for in part as a result of carefully studying what emerged in the later confession of the church. Thus, Bock intentionally alters his approach and thereby does not take a chronological tact in treating this material.

Here, he discusses the "already–not yet" developments in the fulfillments of what Messiah Jesus does, as Jesus presents a Messiah in two comings (suffering and then glory). He also shows how this portrait is presented gradually in the Synoptic Gospels, emphasizing four mysteries that both make the presentation possible and unify the portrait. In two chapters, "Jesus the Messiah in the Gospels" and "Jesus the Messiah in Acts and the Early Church," Bock first identifies how the kingdom of Jesus the Messiah grows. It is *not large all at once* but grows from small to large. Second, he shows that the major opponent is Satan, not political structures as such. Third, Gentiles will be present in a way equal to Jews and yet in a way that connects the covenant promise.

Finally, and most crucially for Jesus' *ultimate* messianic identity, is how he ties together the kingdom, his role, and identity with the figure of the son of man. This results in a unique combination of divine-human authority for the delivering figure than had been seen previously in Judaism. So we see how Jesus represented the concept of Messiah, or the core figure of the new era in ways that nuanced the older presentation by bringing certain distinct images more closely together.

Thus the Second Testament presents a coherent portrait of messiah, which addresses Jewish background and yet goes its own way due to the teachings of Jesus and the revelatory work of God and the Holy Spirit through Jesus. It is this combination of features that produces our hermeneutical proposal, which helps to draw on the key historical elements of Jewish background and the period of Jesus and the early church. The concluding chapter will provide a synthesis of the study, revealing the coherence of the canonical portrait in its historical context as a hermeneutical way to understand how God authenticated Jesus.

## OUR AUDIENCE

*Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King* is not intended to be an overly technical work. And though it addresses issues of interpretation, it is written for anyone seriously versed in Scripture. More specifically, it is written for all those who wrestle with how the messianic portrait and claims of Scripture for Jesus work within human history and divine revelation. It is intended to help those who fail to see any connection between promise in the First Testament and fulfillment in the Second Testament about messiah, as well as to nudge others to consider moving beyond the notion that all First Testament readings about "messiah" were fixed and only spoke directly about Jesus. Thus, we neither minimize or maximize the connection with the First Testament and/or first century Jewish cultural understanding of Messiah, but rather offer an approach somewhere in between the two.

Our book is not solely an historical sketching of facts; it is not solely a theological treatise; nor is it solely a literary appraisal of the Bible. It is, however, a work that wrestles with all three: history, theology, and literature. How has our God revealed his kingdom program to us in progressive stages? What exactly does God reveal and when does he reveal it over long periods of time via God's unfolding of world historical events that affect directly the Jewish people through whom God works out his kingdom program? How much of God's kingdom program do those inspired human authors know completely when they composed their unique contributions to Holy Scriptures? Ultimately, how is the first-century Jew any different from us today? Whereas they had one Testament to reflect upon, we have two. We twenty-first-century followers of Jesus, the one through whom God's kingdom program has been initiated, have far more revelation than people

of the first century, but do we have all the pieces of the messianic puzzle necessary to determine the consummation of God's kingdom program yet to come through the second coming of his anointed one, Jesus? Today, we may have a *more* complete canonical portrait, but we still do not have all the pieces of God's messianic puzzle. That's because ultimately *God wants us to trust him* for the time when he will complete his kingdom program.

Therefore it is our hope that readers will better comprehend and even more importantly appreciate the dynamics of messianic prophecy and fulfillment. These dynamics show that God not only made promises, he also progressively built upon those initial promises and eventually fulfilled them through Jesus, the inaugurator of God's kingdom program. And yet, the consummation of that kingdom is still to come. Scripture, early Christian preaching, and history point to Jesus as God's Messiah, Israel's king, who rules over and is worshiped by Jew and Gentile alike.

CHAPTER ONE

# MESSIANIC TRAJECTORIES IN GENESIS AND NUMBERS

As one reads through the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation, it becomes clearer at some point that God's redemptive plan for all eternity has always centered around and pointed to the coming of the Son of God. However, the person and work of the Messiah in the First Testament has always been the subject of much discussion. Most people reading the texts sense that there is much information regarding these passages on hope and promise, some of which cause the reader to pause about all that is being said. As we consider the foundational Messianic trajectories in the First Testament, we must explore the wording and scope of the earliest oracles in addressing issues in the near and far contexts. From that understanding we can celebrate the clarity with which the divinely inspired oracles ultimately pointed to, and spoke of the promised Messiah. Thus our discussion of the Hebrew Scriptures will unfold slowly in tracing this historical progress of revelation that ultimately leads to the final culminating revelation of God's program in the person of Jesus the Messiah. We will highlight key features even in the earliest oracles, which are recognized as ultimately prophetic about the Messiah from the very beginning.

## MESSIANIC TRAJECTORIES IN GOD'S PROMISES TO THE PATRIARCHS

The book of Genesis is a book of beginnings: the beginning of creation (1–2), the beginning of sin (3), the beginning of king (5–11), and yes, the beginning of God's redemptive program. The earliest revelation of God's redemptive program through an explicitly *royal* figure finds its genesis in his repeated covenant promise to the patriarchs that from them would emerge "kings" (Gen. 17:6, 16; 35:11). This is not to deny that earlier passages in the book of Genesis, such as Genesis 3:15, did not originally contain an implicit Messianic potential whose full meaning and significance would be

more clearly unpacked with the progress of revelation. Rather, it simply affirms that divine promises about God's redemptive program for Israel and the nations that would be mediated through a throne had not yet been made explicitly clear. A more comprehensive discussion of all the aspects associated with the culmination of God's redemptive program would need to take as its point of departure earlier passages in Genesis 1–11; namely, all the themes tied to the restoration of the rule of God in . This would add a host of texts and themes, making our study too large. So our discussion focuses on the First Testament foundation of the eschatological Messiah as a decidedly *regal* figure; clearly, the most central feature of this larger idea. The clearest starting point of the trajectory of royal promises leading to the eschatological Messiah as universal King was launched in God's promises to the patriarchs beginning in Genesis 12. These promises rotate around the term "seed," which has both corporate and individual features pointing to key individuals in the promise as well as to a line of descendants. Appreciating these features and how the promises unfold is important to grasping all that was promised.

### *God's Promise of a Plurality of Kings*

When God called Abraham to leave Ur, he promised him fertile land, numerous offspring and incomparable blessing (12:1–3). As time went on, God progressively developed each element of promise. Chief among these was the promise of offspring—an immediate son (15:4; 17:19–21; 18:10, 13–14), future descendants (12:7; 13:15–16; 15:5, 13–16, 18–21; 17:4–6; 18:17–19; 21:12; 22:17; 26:4, 24; 28:14; 35:11), as well as a royal ("kings," 17:6, 16; 35:11) who one day would rule over the nation in the land that God had promised the patriarchs.

The plurality of this royal promise was emphasized in each of the three occasions in which God revealed the initial phase of his royal program (Gen. 17:6, 16; 35:11). The rest of Scripture shows this culminating in the individual eschatological Messiah. In each case, God's promise of future "kings" was linked with his promise of a multitude of descendants that would form the burgeoning nation over whom these kings would rule in the promised land of Canaan. Thus, the initial historical fulfillment of God's covenant promises to the patriarchs would center around earthly kings. They would rule over the nation in the promised land as the channel of God's blessing to the nations (cf. Psalm 72:17 which links the benevolent rule of the Davidic king with God's foundational promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:3 that all nations would be blessed through his seed).

Although Scripture as a whole reveals God's eternal plan of redemption ultimately centered around the Messiah, God did not fully reveal to the patriarchs how his plan of redemption, like the pieces of a puzzle, would fit together. At the time of Genesis, God only revealed how the initial phase of his program would unfold through a line of historic earthly kings descending

from the patriarchs and ruling over the historic nation in the land of Canaan. More about this in Genesis 49:8-12 (see below).

### *God's Promise of Singular Seed*

Although God initially spoke of the inaugural phase of his redemptive program being mediated through the blessed rule of the future "kings" of Israel, he also repeatedly promised to the patriarchs a coming "seed" (Gen. 12:7; 13:15, 16; 15; 15:5, 13, 18; 16:10; 17:7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 19; 21:12; 22:17, 18; 24:7, 60; 26:3, 4, 24; 28:4, 13, 14; 32:12; 35:12; 48:4, 19).

The singular form of the term "seed" (זֶרַע) is crucial to a proper interpretation of the initial as well as the ultimate manner in which God's promise would be fulfilled. This Hebrew word belongs to a unique class of terms that always appear in singular form but refers to more than one category, depending on how the term is used or intended: (1) singular of number: singular descendant (e.g., Gen. 4:25, referring to Seth); and (2) collective singular: multiple descendants (e.g., Gen. 9:9, referring to Noah's future descendants). In some cases, however, we must acknowledge the possibility of the presence of *double entendre* (a word capable of conveying two distinct meanings). The term may refer to both multiple descendants as well as a specific single descendant at one and the same time (e.g., 2 Sam. 7:12, applied to Solomon as the initial descendant of David to sit upon his throne, as well as his future royal descendants, but also culminating in the final descendant of David, that is, the Messiah).

In Genesis, the term "seed" was sometimes explicitly used to refer to the future multiple descendants of the patriarchs. For example, the collective sense is clear in promises to multiply Abraham's seed and to make his seed as innumerable as stars in the sky and sand on the seashore (Gen. 13:16; 15:5; 16:10; 22:17; 26:4, 24; 28:14; 32:12 [13]). In these cases, we are justified in understanding "seed" in terms of "descendants" (plural).[1] In the light of such clear collective uses, it is possible to explain the otherwise unqualified uses (12:7; 13:15; 15:18; 22:18; 24:7, 60; 26:3; 28:4, 13; 35:12; 48:4) in this sense as well, in the light of the principle of contextual interpretation.

However, the principle of contextual interpretation also must include the overall context of Scripture as a whole, allowing for an ultimate messianic referent. It is legitimate to recognize that the otherwise unqualified uses of the term also could be understood as allowing for an individual sense as well. For example, this is clearly the case in which "seed" refers to an individual son

1. This is also the case in which the term appears in reference to circumcision on the eighth day of Abraham's seed, which is explained as every future physical male descendant of Abraham (Gen. 17:7–10, 12; cf. 17:13–14, 23–27; 21:4; Exod. 12:48; Lev. 12:3). In one case, the term clearly refers to the Hebrews during their sojourn in Egypt: "Know for certain that your seed will be strangers in a foreign country, where they will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years" (Gen. 15:13; cf. Exod. 12:40).

of a patriarch, who as a descendant, would become the first of many future descendants of that patriarch (e.g., Gen. 15:3; 17:7; 21:2, 13; Josh. 24:3; cf. Gen. 38:8). Of course, as Paul makes clear, God's promise of seed to Abraham would find its ultimate culmination in the Messiah as his descendant *par excellence*, the One through whom God's covenant program would reach its decisive fulfillment.[2]

In the light of this wide range of meanings for "seed," it is easy to understand how it could embody an original to multiple applications and referents at one and the same time. The singular and collective meaning of God's promise of "seed" is not a matter of "either/or" but rather "both/end." On the one hand, God's promise of seed found its initial fulfillment in the birth of Isaac and the subsequent promulgation of the descendants of Abraham, Isaac,and Jacob (e.g., Deut. 1:8, 10; 4:37; 10:15; 34:4; Josh. 24:3; Neh. 9:7–8). On the other hand, the promise of seed also finds its ultimate fulfillment in the Messiah (see note 2). Hence, when promising seed to the patriarchs, God had both near as well as far fulfillments in view. God inaugurated the fulfillment of his promise through Isaac, continued the subsequent historic fulfillment through multiple descendants in subsequent generations of Israelites, and brought about its climatic fulfillment in the Messiah. All of these were wrapped up in the original promise.

## MESSIANIC TRAJECTORIES IN JACOB'S TESTAMENT (GENESIS 49:8–12)

As Genesis unfolds, its narrative strategy leads the reader to wonder how God would begin to fulfill his promise of a royal dynasty of "kings" (Gen. 17:6, 11; 35:11). After all, the narrator piques the reader's interest by closing the Isaac narrative with a genealogy of his son Esau, highlighting the first Edomite kings who reigned before any king ruled over Israel (Gen. 36:31–43). So as the reader turns to the closing section of the book in Genesis 37–50, he is poised to learn how God would begin to initially fulfill his promise to establish a dynasty of kings for Israel as well.

Viewed in this light, Genesis 37–50 reaches its climax in Jacob's oracle of a coming ruler from the tribe of Judah in 49:8–12. Since God promised that "kings" would emerge from Abraham's descendants, the reader has been conditioned to view Jacob's oracle as a prediction of the future rise of the royal dynasty promised to Abraham. However, by divine design this enigmatically worded oracle speaks not only of the rise of the first historical king from the

2. Paul explained that God's promise of "seed" (singular) also included and ultimately pointed to Messiah (Gal. 3:16; cf. 3:19). At the same time, Paul did not exclude the collective sense, since he included believing Jews and Gentiles in the seed of Abraham in the light of the inclusion of both peoples in the new covenant community (Gal. 3:29; 4:4).

tribe of Judah (David), but also the ultimate eschatological King (Jesus, who is the Christ).

### *The Future of Jacob's Sons as the Tribes of Israel*

In a deathbed speech, Jacob bestowed paternal blessings on his sons (49:1–28). Often dubbed the blessing of Jacob, it is more aptly called Jacob's testament, since his last words include curses (vv. 3–7), blessings (vv. 8–12, 22–27), and neutral predictions (vv. 13–21). As the epilogue reveals, Jacob's pronouncements set the destiny of the tribes that would descend from his sons: "These are the twelve tribes of Israel" (v. 28). For example, the blessing on his son Dan concerned his future tribe: "Dan will judge his people as *one of the tribes of Israel*" (v. 16).

The individual pronouncements in Jacob's testament envisioned the coming era of the conquest and settlement before the individual tribal distinctions began to wane in the monarchy period. This is suggested by the reduced status of the tribe of Reuben (vv. 3–4), the scattering of the tribes of Simeon and Levi (vv. 5–7), the location of land allotments of the tribes of Zebulun (v. 13) and Issachar (vv. 14–15), and the preeminence of the tribes of Judah (vv. 8–12) and Joseph/Ephraim (vv. 22–26). Since these oracles found some initial fulfillment in the conquest and settlement period, it is difficult—if not impossible—to argue that Jacob's blessing of Judah (vv. 8–12) was an exclusive direct prophecy of the eschatological Messiah. Rather, it initially conceived the role the tribe of Judah would play in the conquest and settlement of Canaan to fulfill God's ancient promise. Yet this oracle was divinely inspired in such a way that it also contained a messianic potential, whose full meaning would eventually become more clear as Scripture continued to unfold. The rule that came to Judah would reside there until God brought the full blessing he had promised to Abraham and his seed in Genesis 12.

### *The Future as Both Near and Far*

The prologue emphasized that Jacob spoke of the future: "I will tell what will happen to you in the future" (v. 1). The expression "in the future" (lit. "in the backside of days") may refer to the near historical as well as distant eschatological future. Elsewhere in the Pentateuch, it refers to the near future (Deut. 4:30; 31:29), as well as distant future (Num. 24:14). In the Prophets, it is a technical expression for the eschatological future (Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1; Ezek. 38:16; Dan. 2:28; 10:14). Here in Genesis, it may refer to the initial historical dimension of Jacob's words, which foresaw the near future when the twelve tribes of Israel would begin to settle in the land of Canaan leading up to the early monarchy. Yet the words can also refer to a distant, future dimension of the eschatological days of the Messiah. There is an inherent openness in the expression, allowing it to convey both a historical and eschatological meaning. Thus, Jacob's declaration, "The scepter will not depart from Judah

. . . until he comes to whom it belongs" (49:10), not only pointed to the initial historical fulfillment in the coming of the first historical king of Judah (David), but also the ultimate eschatological fulfillment in the coming of the ultimate King of Judah (Messiah). The expression allows for a "both/and" fulfillment.

### *Literary Structure of Jacob's Testament*

Jacob's blessings are arranged in the birth order of Jacob's sons (29:32–30:24; 35:18), but according to their mothers: the six sons of Leah are addressed first and the two sons of Rachel last, sandwiching the four sons of Zilpah and Bilhah, the two handmaidens of Leah and Rachel, respectively. The literary structure of the oracle is arranged in an ABBA chiasm: LEAH, Bilhah-Zilpah, Zilpah-Bilhah, RACHEL. Each group is addressed in descending birth order with two slight variations. The order of Leah's sons Zebulun and Issachar is reversed (30:17–20), possibly because the destiny of the former would be better than the latter (49:13, 14–15). The order of the four sons of the two handmaidens differs from their birth order (30:5–13), perhaps for the sake of chiastic structure or to reflect their geographical locations in the land from south to north: Dan (Josh. 19:40–48), Gad (Num. 32:33–36), Asher (Josh. 19:24–31), Naphtali (Josh. 19:32–39).

**JACOB'S PRONOUNCEMENTS ON THE TWELVE SONS/TRIBES OF ISRAEL (GENESIS 49:3–27)**

| Six Sons of Leah, Jacob's First Wife | Four Sons of Zilpah and Bilhah, Handmaids of Leah and Rachel | Two Sons of Rachel, Jacob's Second Wife |
|---|---|---|
| Reuben (Gen. 49:3–4)<br>Simeon (Gen. 49:4–7)<br>Levi (Gen. 49:4–7)<br>Judah (Gen. 49:8–12)<br>Zebulun (Gen. 49:13)<br>Issachar (Gen. 49:14–15) | Dan (Gen. 49:16–18)<br>Gad (Gen. 49:19)<br>Asher (Gen. 49:20)<br>Naphtali (Gen. 49:21) | Joseph (Gen. 49:22–26)<br>Benjamin (Gen. 49:27) |

Since the order of Jacob's pronouncements is largely based on birth, the blessings of Judah and Joseph do not stand out in the literary structure. Nevertheless, Judah and Joseph are singled out from the others. Judah and Joseph receive the longest, and preeminent blessings. No fewer than ten of the twenty-five verses in the oracle are devoted to the two. While five verses are devoted to each Judah and Joseph, no other tribe merits more

than two or three verses, most receiving only one. This mirrors chapters 37–50, where Joseph is destined to rule over his brothers and given preferential treatment by Jacob (37:3–4, 5–11, 34–35; 48:1–22), while Judah emerges as the leader among Jacob's other sons (37:26–27; 38:1–26; 43:3–10; 44:14–34; 46:28).

The preeminence of Judah and Joseph in Jacob's oracle foreshadows the leadership of the two tribes in the early history of Israel (cf. Josh. 18:5). In predicting the "scepter" would not depart from Judah (49:10) and designating Joseph "prince" over his brothers (49:26), Jacob foresaw the rise of the two prominent tribes of the north and south (cf. Pss. 60:7[9]; 108:8[9]). However, as Jacob's testament intimates and the rest of Scriptures explicates, the tribe from which both the initial conquering king and ultimate conquering King would arise was Judah. Therefore, our discussion of Messianic trajectories will focus on Jacob's blessing on Judah.

### *Contextual Reading of Genesis 49:8–12*

In verses 8–12, Jacob pronounced the destiny of Judah/Judahites during the coming conquest and settlement period. He foresaw that the Judahites would exercise leadership until the tribal confederation would become a charter nation. He also foresaw a coming king who would arise from the tribe of Judah to subjugate all nations and reign over an ideal future period of virtual paradisiacal prosperity, effectively restoring the original fertility of Genesis 1–2. Here is the place where kingship and restoration of what was lost in Eden come together.

#### *Judah Would Gain Ascendancy (49:8)*

After denouncing his three oldest sons (Reuben, Simeon, Levi) in verses 2–7, Jacob at long last addressed one whom he could praise. Although Judah was not without his faults (37:26–27; 38:1–30), his willingness to sacrifice himself in the end (44:18–34) won a twofold blessing. Jacob pronounced that Judah would ascend over his brothers: "Your brothers will praise you . . . your father's sons will bow down before you" (v. 8a, c). Jacob also foresaw Judah's conquest of the Canaanites in the future conquest: "Your hand will be on the nape of your enemies" (v. 8b). Seizing one's fleeing enemy by the nape of the neck is a symbol of military conquest (Exod. 23:27; 1 Sam. 18:7; 2 Sam. 22:41). The term "enemies" occurs twice elsewhere in Genesis in God's promise that Abraham's descendants would take possession of the land by conquering the Canaanites: "Your descendants will conquer the strongholds of their enemies" (22:17; 24:60).

Jacob's prophecy found initial historical fulfillment in several stages. This began with the leading role that Judah played from the departure of Israel from Egypt through the conquest and settlement periods. In the wilderness, Judah was by far the largest tribe (Num. 23:3–4; 10:14) and led the Israelite

march. Moses blessed Judah with great power for the conquest (Deut. 33:7–11), and Judah was the first tribe to whom land was allotted by Joshua (Josh. 15:1). Yahweh designated Judah to take the lead in the conquest of Canaan (Judg. 1:2–4) and the civil war with Benjamin (20:18). In the final unfolding of the initial historical fulfillment, Judah exercised hegemony over all tribes in David's enthronement over all Israel (2 Sam. 5:1–5). Yet these initial phases of historical fulfillment did not exhaust all that would be wrapped up in the fulfillment.[3]

### *The Lion of Judah Would Conquer His Enemies (49:9)*

In verse 9, Jacob depicted Judah as a raging lion, which has devoured its prey. Lion imagery often depicts victorious warriors and/or conquering kings (2 Sam. 1:23; 1 Chron. 12:8; Pss. 57:4; 58:6; 91:13; Isa. 5:29; 15:9; Ezek. 32:2; Jer. 2:15; 4:7; 50:17; Hos. 5:14–15; 13:7–8; Nah. 2:11–13). The lion image (verse 9) created a segue between the predictions of Judah's leadership in the conquest period (verse 8), the following prophecy of Judah's tribal leadership (verse 10a), and the prediction of the coming ruler (verse 10b).

### *Judah Would Exercise Tribal Leadership (49:10a)*

Verse 10a predicted Judah exercising tribal authority and leadership. Jacob envisioned the tribe as a mighty warrior/ruler wielding traditional weapons of war and emblems of authority. The first instrument mentioned is a term (שֵׁבֶט) with a wide range of meanings: (1) "club," used by a warrior to strike his foe in battle; (2) "rod," used by a father to strike a rebellious son in corporeal discipline; (3) "flail," used by a harvester to beat out grain; (4) "staff," used by a shepherd to strike or guide sheep; and (5) "scepter," used by a king as emblem of authority.[4] The context of verse 10 suggests a warrior's club as weapon of war or a king's scepter as emblem of royal authority. Quite possibly both are implied by metonymy of cause for effect: the mighty warrior

3. As we know now, God had more in mind than simply the kingship of David, as the Davidic covenant and all the prophecies associated with the future of Davidic kingship would make clear. The prophecy finds ultimate fulfillment in the Messiah who is not only identified as descending from the Judah (Heb. 7:14), but also pictured as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Rev. 5:5). Both Second Testament statements are clear links to Genesis 49:8–12, highlighting the robust messianic meaning and ultimate significance of Jacob's oracle.

4. The term שֵׁבֶט has a fivefold range of meanings: (1) "club" of warrior to strike foe (Num. 24:17; Judg. 5:14; 2 Sam. 18:14; 23:21; 1 Chron. 11:23; Isa. 9:4; 10:5, 15, 24; 14:5); (2) "rod" of father or master to strike rebellious son or servant (Exod. 21:20; 2 Sam. 7:14; Pss. 2:9; 89:32[33]; Job 9:34; 21:9; 37:13; Prov. 10:13; 13:24; 22:8, 15; 23:13–14; 26:3; 29:15; Lam. 3:1; Isa. 11:4; 14:29; 30:31; Ezek. 21:10, 13; Mic. 5:1); (3) "flail" of harvester to beat grain (Isa. 28:27); (4) "staff" of shepherd to strike sheep (Ps. 23:4; Ezek. 20:37; Mic. 7:14); (5) "scepter" of king as emblem of royal authority (Ps. 45:6[7]; Isa. 14:5; Ezek. 19:11, 14; Amos 1:5, 8; Zech. 10:11).

wields his weapon victoriously and so also holds his scepter as he exercises kingship. It is unnecessary to force an interpretive decision between the two; in the ancient world the mighty warrior and powerful king were often one and the same.

The parallel term (מְחֹקֵק) also has a range of meanings: (1) "club, mace," used by a warrior as a weapon, and (2) "staff," used as a tribal chieftain's emblem of authority.[5] In the only other passage in which the parallel terms in verse 10a occur together (Judg. 5:14), they depict tribal chieftains wielding weapons in battle, conveying both tribal leadership and military might:

> The survivors of the mighty ones came down;
> the Lord's people came down as warriors.
> They came down from Ephraim, who uprooted Amalek,
> they follow after you, Benjamin, with your warriors.
> Commanders (מְחֹקְקִים) came to battle from Makir,
> those wielding the staff (שֵׁבֶט) of an officer came from Zebulun.
> Issachar's leaders were with Deborah,
> the men of Issachar supported Barak,
> into the valley they were sent under Barak's command
> (Judg. 5:13–15c)

The evidence suggests that verse 10a pictures the tribe of Judah as a mighty warrior victoriously wielding a weapon of war, but also as a powerful ruler holding an emblem of his political and military authority, which he mustered as a result of military victory.

The initial historical fulfillment of this prediction was inaugurated in the events at the invasion of Canaan and in the early settlement period in which the tribe of Judah played a leading role. Yet Jacob's testament concerned not only the near future but also the distant future; the former foreshadowed the latter in terms of pattern prediction. The ultimate eschatological fulfillment will be inaugurated when the tribe of Judah, embodied by the Messiah Jesus who is called the Lion of the Tribe of Judah (Rev. 5:5), brings about ultimate victory over cosmic enemies and establishes his eternal kingdom. The dual nature of this prophecy allows both. The pattern introduces a feature we shall see often in this kind of fulfillment. What happens in a limited way in the initial presence of the pattern will happen more comprehensively, and in an escalated manner in its ultimate realization. In this case we move from earthly victory to cosmic triumph.

5. The term מְחֹקֵק has two basic meanings: (1) "mace, club," as a warrior's weapon (Pss. 60:7[9]; 108:8[9]); and (2) "staff," as an emblem of a tribal chieftain's authority (Num. 21:18; cf. Deut. 33:21; Judg. 5:9, 14; Isa. 33:22).

### *A Ruler Would Come from Judah (49:10b)*

Verse 10b is traditionally interpreted as a prediction of a ruler who would arise from the tribe of Judah to become king over the Israelite tribes as well as conquered nations. Yet this is one of the most cryptic lines of Hebrew poetry in Scripture. The interpretive challenge centers around the term (שִׁילֹה) (traditionally translated "Shiloh" cf. KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, NCV), which is textually uncertain, syntactically debated, morphologically unusual, and semantically ambiguous.


Depending on how one takes this one term, verse 10b may be nuanced in six ways: (1) "until he comes *to Shiloh*," (2) "until *Shiloh* comes," (3) "until *a ruler* comes," (4) "until *his ruler* comes," (5) "until *to him tribute* comes," or (6) "until he comes *to whom it* [= the scepter] *belongs*." It seems the best way to render verse 10 is thus: "The scepter will not depart from Judah or the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs; even the obedience of the nations will be his" (cf. RSV, NIV, TNIV, NLT, cf. NET, NIRV, HCSB).[6] Understood this way, verse 10b pictures an unidentified figure arising upon the scene of history to whom

6. For discussion of the interpretive options and exegetical issues of Genesis 49:10b, see Raymond de Hoop, *Genesis 49 in its Literary and Historical Context*, Oudtestamentische Studiën, Deel XXIX (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 1999), 122–39.

the weapons of military victory and the emblems of royal authority belong. He will triumph over his foes as a mighty warrior and then assume his rule as king over the nations who will be subject to him.

*Initial Historical Fulfillment in David's Rise to Kingship.*
Considered from the perspective of its initial historical fulfillment, it is likely that verse 10 predicted the leading role the tribe of Judah would play in the conquest and early settlement period running up to the rise of the early Israelite monarchy when the surrounding nations were originally subjugated by David, the nation's first king from Judah (cf. 2 Sam. 8:1–14; 1 Chron. 14:17; 18:11). Several factors suggest this. First, later inner-biblical interpretation understood Genesis 49:10 as finding initial historical fulfillment in the Israelite monarchy in general (Num. 24:9, 17–19; Ezek. 19:1–14; 21:32),[7] and the kingship of David in particular (1 Chron. 5:1–2).[8] Second, the historical events predicted in Jacob's oracle about his other sons seem to have been realized (at least initially) during the conquest and settlement period, as well as Israel's early monarchy.[9] Third, the strategy of the patriarchal

7. For Numbers 24:9 and verses 17–19, in terms of its initial historical meaning/fulfillment, as well as its ultimate messianic meaning/fulfillment, see the next section of this chapter, "Messianic Trajectories in Balaam's Oracles."
8. First Chronicles 5:1–2 provides inner-biblical evidence of how Genesis 49:10 was understood in the postexilic era. This passage is a parenthetical comment in the genealogical lists of the twelve tribes (1 Chron. 2–9). The Chronicler explains that Jacob withdrew the firstborn's right from Reuben for his indiscretion and transferred it to Joseph—despite the fact that Judah was the strongest tribe and that a leader would descend from him: "Now Reuben was the firstborn, but when he defiled his father's bed, his rights as firstborn were given to the sons of Joseph, the son of Israel. So Reuben is not listed as firstborn in the genealogical records. Although Judah was the strongest among his brothers and a leader would descend from him, the right of the firstborn belonged to Joseph" (1 Chron. 5:1b–2). The Chronicler's comment about Judah alludes to two elements of Jacob's blessing in Genesis 49:8–12. First, his statement, "Judah was strongest of his brothers," reflects Jacob's depiction of Judah as a mighty lion before whom siblings and foes bow in submission (Gen. 49:8–9). Second, the statement, "a ruler (נָגִיד) would descend from him," alludes to Jacob's declaration, "the scepter will not depart from Judah . . . until a ruler (שִׁילֹה) comes" (Gen. 49:10). The Chronicler's choice of the term "ruler" (נָגִיד), equivalent to "king" (מֶלֶךְ), is a patent reference to king David, elsewhere designated the "ruler" *par excellence* (1 Sam. 13:14; 25:30; 2 Sam. 5:2; 6:21; 7:8; 1 Chron. 11:2; 17:7; 28:4). Thus, the Chronicler understood Genesis 49:10 as predicting David's kingship (cf. 1 Chron. 3:1–24).
9. This is clear in Jacob's predictions of the reduction of the status of Reuben (vv. 3–4), as well as the scattering of Simon and Levi (vv. 5–7): (1) The demotion of Reuben began in the wilderness era in its subordination to Judah in the order of march (Num. 2:16). By the second census, the population of Reuben already had dropped considerably (Num. 26:7; cf. Deut. 33:6). After settling in Gilead (Num. 32:1–42; 34:14; Deut. 3:12–17; 4:43; 29:8; Josh. 12:6; 13:8–23), Reuben became disconnected from the tribes west of the Jordan (Josh. 22:1–34) and no longer participated in national life (Judg. 5:15–16).

narratives (Gen. 12–50) has been pointing toward the initial historical fulfillment of God's promise to establish the descendants of Abraham as a nation in the land of Canaan under the sway of a royal dynasty of kings through whom the nations would be blessed. Understanding Genesis 49:10 as pointing to the initial historical fulfillment of the royal aspects of God's promises to the patriarchs rounds off the overarching narrative plot, as the story of the patriarchs reaches its conclusion in the next chapter. Yet it is crucial to emphasize that this initial historical fulfillment did not exhaust the original meaning and divinely intended prophetic significance of verse 10. Although this kind of initial historical fulfillment in David's rule means Genesis 49:10 was not an exclusive, direct messianic prophecy, this does not rule out its equally robust nature as ultimately being a messianic prophecy. In the divinely designed pattern comes the culminating messianic connection. As it was initially, so it will be in the end; only more so.

*Ultimate Eschatological Fulfillment in Messiah's Kingship.*
Considered from the perspective of its decisive eschatological fulfillment, it is likely that verse 10b also predicted the coming of the Messiah on the scene of human history. The Second Testament linkage of Genesis 49:8–9 (opening lines of the oracle) with the messianic moniker "the Lion of Judah" (Rev. 5:5) assures us that Genesis 49:10–12 (closing lines) also was certainly divinely inspired as prophetic of the Messiah, albeit in a final decisive sense. Understood in this sense, Jacob foresaw not simply David as Judah's first king in the initial historical stage of implementation of God's program of redemption, but also the Messiah Jesus as Judah's final and ultimate King through whom God's plan of the ages would reach its climactic culmination. As God had promised Abraham, Jacob declared that through this institution, victory would come through the seed and through this tribe.

Jacob's oracle identified the tribal origin of the ultimate King as Judah (cf. Mic. 5:2[1]), where he is described as hailing from Bethlehem, (the ancestral home of David). He is also pictured as both Warrior and King, two roles which find elaboration in apocalyptic visions of the eschatological coming

Reuben was subordinated under Judah in David's administrative structure (1 Chron. 26:32). From this point, the Reubenites fade out of national history. (2) The decline of Simeon began in the wilderness when the tribe was reduced by two-thirds (Num. 1:23; 26:14). Neither the Blessing of Moses (Deut. 33) nor Song of Deborah (Judg. 5) mention Simeon—a sign of its decline. In the settlement, Simeon was allocated a mere enclave in Judah (Josh. 19:1–9; 15:32–42). Eventually, Judah swallowed up Simeon. Simeon eventually lost its status as a tribal entity and its territory long remained unsettled (1 Chron. 4:38–42; 2 Chron. 15:9, 34:6). (3) The decline of Levi began when Moses withheld territorial allotment and dispersed the tribe among forty-eight cities scattered throughout Israel (Num. 35:1–8; Josh. 14:4; 21:41–42). Moses foresaw this would mean the Levites would be among the economically depressed social classes within Israel (Deut. 12:12; 14:27–29).

of Messiah (e.g., Rev. 19:11–16). Rather than simply functioning as a synecdoche of part for the whole (as it would be understood in terms of its initial historical fulfillment in the reign of David), the prediction, "the obedience of the nations will be his" (verse 10b) conveys its most robust sense as a declaration of his universal dominion (e.g., Pss. 2:8–10; 72:8–11; 89:25–27 [26–28]; 110:1–2, 5–6; Isa. 9:7 [6]; Mic. 5:4–6 [3–5]).

It is also important to note that Jacob spoke in terms of a single individual. Admittedly, the singular figure in verses 8–10 could be understood in a collective sense for the Davidic kings as a whole who traced their descent from Judah. Yet the divinely inspired portrayal of a singular figure certainly points to David as the initial historical king of Judah, but also particularly to the Messiah as the final and ultimate king of Judah. This is also supported by the literary portrait of the nations being in subjugation to this king in a manner presented as seemingly without end. Likewise, the idyllic portrait of this king in seemingly paradisiacal terms in verses 11–12 is reminiscent of the image of the garden paradise in Genesis 2, which was lost in the fall. In fact, it might be suggested that the imagery in verses 11–12, taken in its most literal sense, point to a restoration of the paradise which was lost in the fall.

*Blessing and Prosperity in the Promised Land (11–12)*

Using extravagant imagery, Jacob envisioned the coming initial settlement of Canaan as an era of virtual paradisiacal prosperity. To convey the fullness of blessing, he pictured an idealized individual enjoying the land's bounty: "He will bind his donkey to the vine, his foal of an ass to the choicest vine; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes; his eyes will be red from wine, his teeth white from milk." This highlights the superabundance of the land in three ways. First, grapevines would be so plentiful that a viticulturalist could tether his beast to his choicest vine without caring that the animal would ruin the plant. Second, wine would be so abundant it could be used for mundane tasks such as washing clothing. Third, wine and milk would be imbibed in such quantities that his eyes and teeth would be discolored by consumption. This harmonizes with later descriptions of Canaan as a land flowing with milk and honey. This effectively rounds off the future expectation of the patriarchs by picturing Judah and her king in the promised land enjoying the covenant blessings lavished by Yahweh.

Our discussion of verse 10 introduced the "both/and" approach to this passage as finding fulfillment not only initially in the days of David, but also ultimately in the days of the Messiah. It is easy to understand therefore how the extravagant imagery in verses 11–12 naturally lends itself to being prophetic of the eschatological kingdom of the Messiah. While the fulfillment of the promise of the land flowing with milk and honey would be inaugurated with Joshua and later enjoyed more fully by David, God's restoration of his creation blessing of the land of Canaan as well as the world as a whole will

transpire in the eschatological kingdom of Messiah (cf. Isa. 11:6–9; 65:17–25; Amos 9:13–15). Indeed, the lush imagery of abundant agricultural fertility is reminiscent of the bounty of the garden of God that was lost in the fall but to be restored in the age of redemption (cf. Rev. 21–22).

Finally, mention of the purebred donkey of the ideal figure in verse 11 also has clear royal connotations. Although it might strike a modern reader as odd, the purebred donkey was the stereotypical mount of royalty in the ancient Near East. A poetic text from Mari suggested it was more appropriate for a king to ride a donkey than a horse: "My lord should not ride a horse, let my lord ride in a chariot or a mule, and he will thereby honor his royal head." The purebred ass also was the preferred mount of premonarchial chieftains (Judg. 5:10; 10:4; 12:14; 21:19–21; 1 Sam. 3:22) and monarchial era royalty (2 Sam. 13:29; 16:1–2; 18:9; 19:26[27]; 1 Kings 1:33, 38, 44). Furthermore, in the literature of Mari and Ugarit, the donkey was the animal on which a deity may ride. Zechariah likely picked up on this royal imagery in Genesis 49:11 in his portrait of the Divine Warrior making his royal entrance into Jerusalem as its coming King mounted on a purebred donkey (Zech. 9:9), having subjugated all nations (Zech. 9:1–8). This motif resurfaces one final and climactic time at the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem where he is mounted on a purebred donkey as a patent intimation of his royalty as well as his deity (Matt. 21:5).[10] As we shall see, this kind of intertextual linking is a common literary technique, which later biblical passages employ to unpack the full messianic potential of earlier biblical passages.

### *Canonical Reading of Genesis 49:8–12*

Although Genesis 49:8–12 found initial historical fulfillment in the rise of kingship from the tribe of Judah through David's ascent, this did not exhaust the oracle's ultimate messianic potential whose fuller meaning and significance was equally inspired. Several later passages provide expositions that reuse the imagery and develop the central themes of Genesis 49:8–12. The inner-biblical exposition of Jacob's blessing of Judah is instructive, developing a trajectory that follows the ebb and flow of redemptive history. The visions of Balaam, for example, expand upon Jacob's portrait of Judah as a mighty lion (Num. 24:9, cf. Gen. 49:8–9) and expectation of a coming victorious king (Num. 24:7, 17–19, cf. Gen. 49:10). The seer's depiction of a "scepter"

10. In making these series of allusions in linking Genesis 49:11 to Zechariah 9:9 to Matthew 21:5, the referent is complex. Nevertheless, the inner-biblical development of this royal motif clearly leads the reader to associate the coming king of Judah (Gen. 49:10–12) with the Divine Warrior (Zech. 9:9) who is ultimately identified as Jesus the Messiah (Matt. 21:5). These intertextual links demonstrate that Zechariah (and likely Matthew, although his point of departure was the Zechariah passage) understood Genesis 49:8–12 as ultimately messianic.

arising from Judah recalls Jacob's prediction of the "scepter" not departing from Judah until a ruler would come upon the scene (Gen. 49:10–12). Allusions to Genesis 49:8–12 in several royal psalms suggest this expectation was realized in the reign of David and the founding of his dynasty (Pss. 2:9; 45:6; 60:7[9]; 108:8[9]; 110:2, 6). In Ezekiel 19, however, the patriarchal blessing is reversed and turned into a prophetic curse due to royal sin: the mighty lion of the royal house of Judah is captured and carried away into exile (vv. 1–9, contra 49:8–9), his vines plucked up (vv. 10–14a, contra 49:11–12) and the royal scepter taken away (v. 14b, contra 49:10). Ezekiel 21:32 may feature an even more dramatic reversal: the blessing of a coming ruler (David) in Genesis 49:10 is turned into a curse (i.e., the coming of another king, Nebuchadnezzar), who would terminate the monarchy and inaugurate an era of judgment. But this would not be the end of the prophecy's life cycle. In the postexilic era, God breathed new life into the old oracle. Zechariah 9:9–10 clarified Jacob's prediction of the coming king from Judah by placing it into a clear eschatological context as a prophetic vision of the coming of the ultimate King (Yahweh). The eschatological realization of Genesis 49:8–12 was facilitated by the prose frame of Jacob's testament, in which the formula, "in future days" (49:1), which carried clear eschatological connotations (i.e., "in the last days") in the time of Zechariah.

Several crucial hermeneutical principles, which are relevant to messianic prophecy and interpretation, emerge from the inner-biblical development of Genesis 49:8–12. First, progressive revelation of an early prophetic oracle by later writers expounds its original meaning and may expand its original scope. Second, although ancient Hebrew oracles were irrevocable in their final fulfillment, they also were implicitly contingent in any given period on the faithfulness of the recipients from generation to generation. God could and did discipline the nation and the line from time to time in ways that sometimes looked as if the promise might be placed in jeopardy. Yet the nature of the promise and God's grace meant that any discipline for unfaithfulness was temporary. The promise made would be a promise completed. So third, even if a particular generation forfeited the promised blessing due to its sin, God remained faithful to his eternal purpose and could renew ancient promises in future generations. Fourth, later inner-biblical use of ancient oracles may involve interim developments that temporarily take the original language and motifs in new directions, yet without jeopardizing the originally intended ultimate future fulfillment. Finally, ancient Hebrew royal/messianic prophecy was not always static but dynamic in its inner-biblical development in the progress of revelation from the initial fulfillment in the historical monarchy to ultimate fulfillment in the eschatological Messiah. This means these texts often had stages of realization and fulfillment as opposed to simply being about the end result. Our study throughout this book is designed to show this dimension in some detail. Seeing the patterns and appreciating how God

built the portrait actually adds depth and appreciation for where the story ends up, as well as explaining how the individual texts work.

## MESSIANIC TRAJECTORIES IN BALAAM'S VISIONS (NUMBERS 24)

The next major stage in our revelatory trajectory appears in the visions of Balaam. Hired by Balak king of Moab to curse the Israelites as they passed through his land, the Aramean prophet was faithful to the God who spoke through him. To the chagrin of Balak, he blessed Israel (23:7–10, 18–24; 24:3–9, 15–19) but cursed Moab (24:20, 21–22, 23–24). In two of his four prophecies, Balaam foresaw the coming of a mighty king from Israel who would conquer the Transjordanian nations (24:3–9, 14–19). In one vision, he identifies the coming figure as Israel's "king" (24:7). In the other, he describes him as a rising "star" and conquering "scepter" (24:17).

Numbers 24:3–9 and 14–19 are similar to Jacob's blessing of Judah (Gen. 49:8–12) since both envision a "scepter" smiting the enemies of Israel (Gen. 49:10; Num. 24:17). Yet there are differences. Jacob described this coming "scepter" as a mighty warrior who would conquer his foes (Gen. 49:8–10) then prosper as a viticulturalist in the land of Canaan (49:11–12). Balaam envisioned the coming "scepter" in royal terms only; he would conquer the Transjordanian nations and then rule them as king (Num. 24:17–19; cf. 24:7). Whereas Jacob's oracle found its initial historical fulfillment in the Israelite subjugation of the land of Canaan led by the tribe of Judah during the conquest and settlement period leading up to the rise of David to kingship, the initial historical fulfillment of Balaam's visions came to pass in the hegemony of the fledgling Israelite monarchy under its early kings, whether Saul or David. In both cases, however, the ultimate future fulfillment will come to pass in the eschatological triumph of the Messiah over his enemies and his resultant enthronement as the universal King over all nations.

### *Contextual Reading of Numbers 24:3–9*

Perched atop Mount Peor (24:1–2), Balaam delivered his third oracle from the God who opened his eyes and spoke in his ears (24:3–4). As he beheld the Israelite encampment sprawled out and filling the valley below, Balaam saw a portent of things to come (24:5). The Israelites would be like valleys spreading out in all directions, thriving like gardens, watered by streams of water, and standing sturdy like cedars planted beside a river (24:6). Israel would be like a well-watered land; its descendants would multiply like flowing water to become a fledgling kingdom under a great king (24:7). Blessed by the God who rescued them out of Egypt, the Israelites would trample hostile nations like a virile bull and devour its prey like a ravenous lion (24:8–9).

As Balaam saw it, following the conquest (24:5–7a, 8–9), a king would emerge to rule over his kingdom (24:7b). Given the historical context, the

initial historical fulfillment can only refer to the establishment of the Israelite monarchy. The seer foresaw that Israel's king would trump Agag the king of Amalek: "his [=Israel's] king will be greater than Agag, and his kingdom will be elevated." The rise of Israel would spell the demise of Amalek, the traditional archenemy of Israel (Exod. 17:8–16; Deut. 25:17–19), as well as all other nations (24:7–8, cf. 17–19, 20).

Balaam's vision was initially fulfilled in the early days of the fledgling monarchy in the reigns of Saul and David. Although the judges temporarily delivered Israel from Amalekite oppression,[11] the decisive subjugation of Amalek was a divine commission reserved for Israel's first king (1 Sam. 14:48). When God commanded Saul to exterminate the Amalekites (1 Sam. 15:1–3), he smote the Amalekite army (1 Sam. 14:48) but spared king Agag (1 Sam. 15:2–8, 18–20), disobeying God (1 Sam. 28:18). It was left to David to decisively defeat and subjugate Amalek (1 Sam. 30:18; 2 Sam. 1:1; 8:12; 1 Chron. 18:11). Saul inaugurated fulfillment of Balaam's oracle, but his failure to obey God resulted in the premature demise of his kingdom and transfer of his throne to David, who brought this prophecy to actual fulfillment. In fact, the chronicler's notice, "His kingdom was elevated" (1 Chron. 14:2; cf. 2 Sam. 5:12), is reminiscent of Balaam's oracle, "His kingdom will be elevated" (Num. 24:7). Yet the historical kingship of Saul and David did not exhaust the prophecy that envisioned the total triumph of the king of Israel over all his enemies. The reigns of Saul and David were therefore a pattern of the reign of One greater to come who would triumph over all hostile nations after the pattern of Amalek.

### *Contextual Meaning of Numbers 24:14–19*

In his fourth vision (24:14–16), Balaam foresaw the coming of the mighty Israelite king who would establish his rule and conquer the Transjordanian nations of Moab, Ammon, and Edom (24:17–19). In verse 14, Balaam introduced his oracle to Balak with an explanation: "Let me tell you what this people (=Israel) will do to your people (=Moab) in the future." The phrase "in the future" (lit. "in the backside of the days" ) typically refers to some decisive change at an indeterminate future point. The precise point, however, is linguistically open as it may refer to the near or distance future; the context always determinative. In the Pentateuch, this expression refers to a time in the relatively near future (Deut. 4:30; 31:29), but also in a "both/and"

11. The oppression experienced by the Israelites at the hands of the Amalekites is ancient. The Amalekites were one of the many descendents of Esau (Gen. 36). In fact Amalek was the grandson of Esau (Gen. 36:11, 12; cf. 1 Chron. 1:36). Although linked with the land of Edom (Gen. 36:16), they were nomadic or semi-nomadic people who roamed the regions of the Sinai and Negev (Num. 13:29, 1 Sam. 15:7). Conflict between the Amalekites and Israelites is first noted in Exodus 17:8–13 but continues throughout the period of the Judges (Judg. 3:13; 5:14; 6:3, 33; 7:12; 10:12).

sense to refer to the near historical future as well as far eschatological future (Gen. 49:1). In the Classical Prophets, it is used almost exclusively in a more technical sense for the eschatological future (Isa. 2:2; Mic. 4:1; Ezek. 38:16; Dan. 2:28; 10:14). We have already seen that royal/messianic prophecy often features some kind of *double entendre*, which is likely the case here. In other words, Balaam's vision dealt with both the historical future as well as the eschatological future.

Balaam's vision opens with a mysterious figure arising in the indefinite future: "I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near" (v. 17a). It was unclear to Balaam precisely when this mysterious figure would come upon the scene, but it would not be in the immediate future. Whether he would arise in a few generations, after many centuries, or both in a pattern was unclear to him. What he did know was that when he came, victory would come.

Balaam pictured him in decidedly royal terms: "a star will march forth from Jacob, a scepter will arise from Israel" (v. 17b). Stars were viewed as ruling the night (Gen. 1:16; Ps. 136:9) and associated with the heavenly throne (Isa. 14:13), thus the astral metaphor was a royal image (Isa. 14:12). Yet this royal star does not rise on the horizon, but marches forth to battle; the verb "will come" (דָּרַךְ) is often used of a warrior: "march forth" (Amos 4:13; Mic. 5:5–6 [4–5]).

The image of royal warrior is reinforced by referring to a royal object of antiquity and its twofold range of meanings: (1) "scepter," metonymic for a king's rule (Judg. 5:14; Ezek. 19:11, 14; Amos 1:5, 8; Zech. 10:11; Ps. 45:6), and (2) "war club," wielded by royal warriors (Isa. 10:15; 14:5; Mic. 5:1; Pss. 2:9; 125:3). The term represents two kinds of royal objects wielded by ancient Near Eastern rulers: the long slender ornamented ceremonial staff whose function was symbolic, and the shorter heavy mace, which had military function. Since verse 18 envisions this royal warrior shattering the skulls of his foes in battle, the war club is probably in view.

Verse 19 merges the royal and martial imagery: "He will rule from Jacob and destroy survivors of Ar." The verb "to rule" may refer to military subjugation of one's foreign enemies (Lev. 26:17; Isa. 14:12); political control of other nations (1 Kings 4:24; Ezek. 29:15; Ps. 68:27); or political control due to military subjugation (Pss. 72:8; 110:2; Isa. 14:6; Neh. 9:28). The coming Israelite king would defeat his enemies then execute all who had survived the battle.

In verses 17–19, Balaam identified three peoples whom the coming Israelite king would conquer: the Moabites, Edomites, and Canaanites. In the case of Moab and Edom, this would be retribution for the opposition of Moab and Edom against Israel during its trek through the Transjordan. Previously, Moses predicted God would subdue the nations of Transjordan (Moab, Edom) and Cisjordan (Canaan, Philistia) (Exod. 15:15). However, Israel failed to conquer Moab and Edom due to its apostasy at Baal-Peor (Num. 25:1–16). Worse yet, Israel was subjugated

to Moab as punishment for departing from Yahweh (Judg. 3:12–30; cf. 1 Sam. 12:9). Eventually, Saul defeated Moab and Edom (1 Sam. 14:47), while David annexed them into his empire. David later annexed Moab and Edom (2 Sam. 8:2, 12, 14; cf. Pss. 60:8[10]; 108:9[10]). So Balaam's vision of the subjugation of Moab and Edom found its initial historical realization in the reigns of Israel's first two kings, Saul and David. Yet this would not exhaust its fulfillment since these nations did not remain subject to the Israelite kings. Balaam pictured a total and lasting triumph.

Considered from its initial historical fulfillment, Numbers 24:17–19 envisioned the rise of the early Israelite monarchy and its conquest of surrounding nations in the tenth century BCE. Although Saul inaugurated the historical fulfillment of Balaam's vision, victory over these enemies was not brought to pass until David's reign. Balaam's prophecy of the coming "star" and "scepter" was initially fulfilled by David, who struck down the Moabites and Edomites, and subjugated the other peoples (2 Sam. 8:2, 6; 13–14; 1 Kings 11:15–16; 1 Chron. 18:12–13).

This initial historical fulfillment in the time of David did not, however, constitute the complete fulfillment of Balaam's vision. The Moabite prophet had envisioned total triumph over Moab and Edom with no survivors left. While David initially fulfilled Balaam's expectation when he conquered Moab and Edom, their subjugation was not permanent. During the divided monarchy, Edom freed itself from Judah (2 Kings 8:20–22). Moab also broke free (2 Kings 1:1; 3:4–5) and even successfully invaded Israel (2 Kings 13:20) and Judah (2 Kings 24:2; 2 Chron. 20:1; cf. Ps. 83:1–8). Although David subjugated Moab and Edom, Moab was never permanently subjugated to Israel. So it is clear that David did not fully subjugate the Edomites, for at many points in Israel's history they rose up against her (1 Kings 11:14; 2 Kings 8:20, 14:7; 2 Chron. 28:17). Therefore, Balaam's vision of the total triumph of Israel's king over Moab and Edom was not fully fulfilled in the history of the monarchy. As later biblical writers would make clear, this total victory ultimately would be wrought by the eschatological Messiah (see below).

### *Canonical Reading of Numbers 24:9, 17–19*

Later passages develop several themes in Balaam's vision of the rise of the early monarchy and the coming of its king. The inner-biblical exposition of Numbers 24:9, 17–19 supports our thesis that Balaam initially foresaw the reign of David, the first illustrious king of Israel. The inner-biblical exposition also traces the rising and falling fortunes of the Davidic empire, not only celebrating the fulfillment of Balaam's prophecies in the reign of David, but their tragic undoing during the subsequent reigns of his wicked descendants. This means that Balaam's oracle was still looking for final resolution.

We have already mentioned that Balaam's vision of the Israelite king's total victory over Moab and Edom was not fully fulfilled historically. The

pre-exilic prophets revived the ancient oracles of Moses (Exod. 15:15) and Balaam (Num. 24:17–19), announcing that Israel and its future king would permanently subjugate or totally destroy Moab and Edom. In some cases, the prophets had Moab specifically in mind, but in other cases, Moab stood as an

archetype for all hostile Gentile nations (Isa. 11:14; 15:1–9; 16:2–14; 25:10; Jer. 9:26; 48:1–47; Ezek. 25:8–11; Amos 2:1–3; Zeph. 2:8–11). The prophets likewise pictured the future destruction of Edom, sometimes focusing on the specific nation itself, but other times as an archetype for all nations as well (Isa. 34:5–8; 63:1; Jer. 49:7–22; Ezek. 25:12–14; 32:29; 35:15; 36:5; Joel 3:19; Amos 1:6–11; 9:11–12; Obad. 1:8; Mal. 1:4). In several cases, the total defeat of Moab and Edom is directly linked to the eschatological triumph of the Messiah. For example, Isaiah 11:10–16 and 16:2–14 alluded to Numbers 24:17–19, linking the ultimate conquest of Moab to the future ideal Davidic king (Isa. 11:10; 16:5). This kind of inner-biblical development of Balaam's vision draws attention to the total triumph the prophet had pictured as well as ultimately pointing to the eschatological intervention of Messiah as the Divine Warrior who will wreak utter havoc on all of God's enemies, triumphing as well over sin and death itself. Thus, in the progress of divine revelation, it became clear that God had more in mind from the very beginning than simply the first king of Israel.

The language and imagery of Balaam's visions are picked up in later biblical texts that develop the royal themes and develop them in ways that even more clearly bring out their initial Davidic as well as ultimate messianic connotations. For example, Psalms 72 and 110, two royal coronation psalms, both reflect the distinctive vocabulary and royal themes of Numbers 24:17–19. First, the language of Numbers 24:17, "He will rule from Jacob," is echoed in Psalm 72:8, "May he rule from sea to sea, from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth," and in Psalm 110:2, "May the LORD extend your dominion from Zion, so that you may rule in the midst of your enemies." Whereas Balaam predicted that Israel's future king one day would extend his rule over other nations, the royal coronation psalms invoked God to bless the newly enthroned king so that his rule would extend over other nations. But while Balaam foresaw that the coming king would rule over the Transjordanian nations of Moab and Edom, Psalm 72 extended this expectation over all nations. Second, Psalm 110 echoes the language of conquest from Balaam's fourth vision. The prediction, "He will shatter the skulls of Moab, the heads of all the sons of Sheth" (Num. 24:17), is echoed in Psalm 110:6, "He will shatter their heads on the vast battlefield." Balaam's prophecy of military victory of the coming Israelite king came to be expressed as a divine oracle promising victory to the newly enthroned Davidic king.

## CONCLUSION

The earliest future royal expectations of ancient Israel appear in God's promises to the patriarchs of "kings" (Gen. 17:6, 16; 35:11), Jacob's oracle of a coming king to inherit Judah's "scepter" (Gen. 49:8–12), and Balaam's vision about a coming "scepter" and rising "star" (Num. 24:14–19). Although not exclusively and directly prophetic of the eschatological Messiah, they

were ultimately prophetic about the One to come, culminating in him. Each promise ultimately pointed to a day when God would provide ideal kingship for his people through the eschatological Messiah, who himself would bring victory and peace to the world.