

McMaster Divinity College

Jesus, "Son of David" in Matthew's Gospel
and
The Messianic Background of Early Christology

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By

Richard Van Egmond

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AUTHOR: Richard Van Egmond

SUPERVISOR: Stanley Porter

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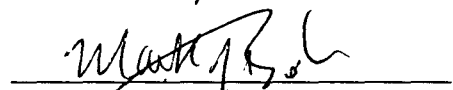
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First Reader and Advisor



Second Reader

External Reader



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1. Introduction

“Jesus the Messiah.” This common title for Jesus of Nazareth may at first glance seem to many to be uncontroversial and obvious in its meaning. Yet the title is nevertheless suggestive in many ways of the complexity of the situation in which it arose, as ongoing study of the historical setting of Jesus’ life continues to illustrate. In many other ways than might first be apparent, the title involves a more complicated assertion of identity and meaning. There are two aspects in the ongoing inquiry into the historical Jesus in particular which are significant in current study around the topics this description of Jesus suggests. One aspect of this inquiry is determining the contours of Jewish messianic belief during the time in which the life of Jesus took place and in which the early Christian church emerged. A second, and by no means unrelated issue, is the possibility of ascertaining Jesus’ sense of his own mission and task in terms of messianic categories.

Determining the relationship between these two concerns leads to at least two further questions. If Jewish messianism is, at the very least, an important part of the context within which many of the writings of the New Testament understand the teachings and actions of Jesus, how important a factor was messianism in providing a matrix for explicating Jesus’ identity and accomplishments for early Christians? A further question is also suggested: to what degree was messianism also a part of Jesus’ self- understanding and awareness of vocation?

Several new and important studies of the development and origins of Jewish messianism have emerged,¹ allowing for a much more nuanced reconstruction of this aspect of Judaism to emerge. This study will set out to determine to what degree a prominent element in the expectations of Judaism – that of a Davidic messianic figure—can be discerned in the depiction of Jesus of Nazareth in the Gospel of Matthew. It seems very likely that certain lines of continuity between the Judaism of the 1st century and the reflections of early Christians about Jesus are discernible.² The first Gospel, which bears many traces of being addressed to an audience made up at least partly of Jewish Christians, provides numerous resources for examining these two questions.

Here several initial observations should be made. While messianism³ is clearly a concern for Matthew, who introduces Jesus as the “the Christ, the son of David” at the outset of his gospel (Matthew 1:1) and portrays him as a royal Messiah throughout his work, it may of course be possible that the messianic presentation of Jesus is a Matthean depiction only. However, a number of recent studies suggest otherwise.⁴ The importance of Messianic perspectives in

¹ For a list of some of these titles, see Chapter 4, n. 378.

² Here I am indebted to the insight of N.T. Wright, who has argued that a “double similarity” is evident between the worldview of Judaism on the one hand, and the worldview of early Christianity on the other which is best explained by the person of Jesus. See his *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996).

³ A distinction should be noted between the broader expectation of a messianic figure (i.e. prophet, priest, king, heavenly being) who would emerge to lead Israel at the time of God’s salvation, and the expectation of a Messiah as a king in the Davidic line who would establish God’s kingdom and restore Israel. See Raymond E. Brown “A Brief History of the Development of a Royal Messianic Hope in Israel,” Appendix I, in *An Introduction to New Testament Christology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1994), 155.

⁴ Edward P. Meadors contends that the proposed source Q, one of Matthew’s primary resources which he apparently shares with Luke, presents Jesus with numerous messianic features. See

depicting Jesus by early followers suggests a dramatic tension, however. It is not at all obvious that the manner and time of his death conform very consistently with Messianic expectations which were current in the first century. While the death of the messiah was envisioned by at least one text (4 Ezra 7:29), Jesus' career appeared at least to some to have been interrupted before the requisite tasks and assignments of at least one dominant stream of Jewish messianic expectation could be accomplished.⁵ At the same time, Jesus' crucifixion as a messianic figure suggests that at least some observers of his actions saw implied messianic aspirations in what he was doing. If such conclusions were mistaken, why then does Davidic messianism emerge as so persistent a part of the early NT writings that Jesus was messiah, if other, much more obvious titles were at hand? Further, how is it that Davidic and messianic descriptions of Jesus are so early⁶ and persistent,⁷ given that in many ways, Jesus fails to meet the criteria for such a designation?

his "The 'Messianic' Implications of the Q Material," *JBL* 118.2 (1999): 253-277. Similarly, Matthew's special material (often dubbed "M" by scholars) much of which is found in the opening two chapters of his work, has messianism as a central concern. For more on this issue, refer to Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 133-163. Mark's gospel is also profoundly shaped by the problem of how Jesus' messianic death is related to the rest of his ministry. See D.H. Juel, "The Origin of Mark's Christology," in *The Messiah: Developments in Judaism and Earliest Christianity*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 449-460. To this, one could add David E. Aune's assessment that while the evidence is necessarily fragmentary, very early Christian prophetic speech and visionary materials preserved in the New Testament presented Jesus in messianic terms. Aune suggests that these prophetic texts may well be dated to the era between 30-50 A.D. See his essay "Christian Prophecy and the Messianic Status of Jesus," in *The Messiah: Developments in Judaism and Earliest Christianity*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., 404-422.

⁵ Aune, "Christian Prophecy," 411. Brown entitles his study, "The Death of the Messiah" and suggests that Jesus' messianic death is a central concern of the Gospels.

⁶ See John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, 3 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1991-2001), III: 218.

⁷ See for example such texts as the following: Matthew 1:1; Mark 11:35; Luke 1:32; John 7:41-44; Acts 2:36; Romans 1:3-4; Hebrews 1:5; Revelation 5:5.

Examining this problem involves working at a point where several lines of inquiry begin to converge. One such area of investigation involves a study of the nature of messianism and, specifically, its relationship to the Davidic covenant traditions of the Hebrew Bible. Closely connected with this study is the development and subsequent failure of kingship in Israel. With this background in view, it is somewhat easier to grasp some of the nuances in a particular work such as Matthew, where royal sonship, Davidic lineage and messianic identity converge around the figure of Jesus and particularly the circumstances surrounding his death.

With these questions in mind, the present study will proceed along the following lines. First, the importance of messianism in the Christology of Jesus and a number of early New Testament writings will be assessed. The second chapter continues by tracing the roots of kingship in the ancient Near East and its eventual adoption and modification in Israel. Here the close connection between the figure of the king and the nation over which he rules is of particular concern. While the practices of royal office are similar in some respects to sacral kingship in the wider Mediterranean and near eastern regions, there are also unique developments as kingship is brought within the context of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. Eventually, the historical dynasty and the nation are also impacted by the trauma of exile and conquest.

Against the background of ancient royal patterns, the third chapter examines the peculiar configuration of kingship in Israel in more detail, especially in terms of the Davidic charter on which it comes to be based. Here attention

will be given to how the Davidic covenant is integrally related to Israel's social and political life as a nation and even more importantly, its character as a religious community before Yahweh. Especially significant here is observing how the Davidic dynasty promises become a point of reference for the Biblical writers in their interpretation of the triumphs and struggles of Israel's covenant history with Yahweh.

The fourth chapter investigates the development of messianism in the texts of Jewish and biblical literature as a matrix of ideas distinct from, yet also often closely related to, the traditions surrounding the Davidic covenant. Through several comprehensive studies which have been done over the past two decades, it has become apparent that there are a much greater variety of streams with messianism than has often previously been acknowledged. At the same time, there may also be a larger coherence to this variegated set of traditions, in which the Davidic figure played a key role.

The culminating chapter approaches the gospel of Matthew to determine how one Jewish Christian text appropriated messianism and its motifs in order to present and interpret the life and death of Jesus. Because of its particular focus on the identity of Jesus as a royal, messianic son of David, the gospel provides a rich source of material for such a study. A study of Matthew may also provide interpretative clues for how messianic concerns were utilized in the other gospels.

Chapter 2

The Origins of Christology and Messianism

2.1 Historical Jesus Research

In Search of a Category: Proposals from Schweitzer to Allison

Marcus Borg has recently observed that one of the major shifts in historical Jesus research over the past 50 years is a growing consensus that firm historical statements can be actually be made about the life of Jesus.⁸ Almost a century ago, Albert Schweitzer's study posed the problem of the historical Jesus as essentially a choice between the two alternatives of either a "thoroughgoing skepticism" (following Wrede) or his own attempt at working out a "thoroughgoing" eschatology," in which Jesus' own messianic hopes were dashed but the greatness of his personality nevertheless triumphed.⁹ This

⁸ Marcus J. Borg, "Reflections on a Discipline: A North American Perspective" in Bruce Chilton and Craig Evans, ed., *Studying the Historical Jesus* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994), 27. Like others, Borg alludes to an historiographical schema that suggests the following, approximately dated fourfold paradigm for dividing the various phases of historical Jesus scholarship since Schweitzer: 19th century Quest/ /Post-Bultmannian "No Quest"/New Quest (1960-1980)/ Third Quest (1980 to present). While the chronology seems to be widely accepted, this terminology has the potential to obscure two important historical considerations. One is that like the quests of the past two centuries, attempts to relate Jesus as an historical figure to issues of theological and confessional significance have been happening since the early church. Another is that, even within the past century, there was a great deal of attention being paid by scholars to the "life of Jesus" in every decade, suggesting that beneath whatever distinctive phases there might be, an ongoing stream of scholarly attention to the questions of "the historical Jesus" continued. For a detailed and convincing assessment of this, see Stanley E. Porter, *The Criteria for Authenticity in the Jesus Debate* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 28-62. It is also worth noting that N.T. Wright, who is credited with coining the phrase "The Third Quest" in a work he co-authored with Stephen Neill (*The Interpretation of the New Testament 1861-1986* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988], 379-403) acknowledges some of this continuity and has actually downplayed the significance of such periods except as heuristic tools; see his *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 25.

⁹ Albert Schweitzer's work, originally entitled *Von Reimarus Zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte des Leben -Jesus-Forschung*, is referenced here in the English translation, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (London: A.C . Black, 1906), 329.

impasse has now been overcome. Schweitzer's contribution remains primarily one of posing the problem of the historical Jesus with a startling clarity, given the state of research at that time. While a recent study continues to advocate a return to some of his basic conclusions and suggests that Jesus be viewed primarily as an apocalyptic prophet of some kind,¹⁰ the inadequacy of such an approach is perhaps most evident in its inability to meaningfully explain the circumstances of one of the most widely established events of Jesus' career: his death as "King of the Jews."¹¹ In addition, and given the absence of any Jewish expectations of a resurrected messiah, it seems clear that Jesus' resurrection alone cannot account for the emergence of the use of this title by Christians to describe him afterwards. If the early association of the title of "Messiah" with Jesus by early Christians is taken into account,¹² it seems highly probable that

See also N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 3-27 for a brief historical overview of Schweitzer's subsequent impact on those who followed.

¹⁰See Dale C. Allison, *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998). Among the many strengths of the work is its recovery of the importance of the background of Jewish apocalyptic for understanding some of Jesus' actions and teachings. In this way he provides a needed corrective to Crossan (his primary conversation partner) and his attempt to explain Jesus as a peasant Cynic (1-95). A somewhat similar approach in terms of emphasizing the apocalyptic background is taken by Bart Ehrman, *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet of the New Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), but (among several other major differences with Allison) he deals more extensively with the relationship between Jesus' death and the probability that he viewed himself as having at least some kind of messianic role; cf. pp. 217-219.

¹¹ Both the synoptic tradition and John agree that this allegation was a central part of Jesus' trial and eventual death. Cf. Mark 15:26 and parallels; John 19:19. Given the highly public nature of Jesus' crucifixion, the historicity of this seems unquestionable. Allison makes only passing reference to it in *Jesus of Nazareth*, 218.

¹² Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 554-557. Wright argues since the shift to the use of the proper name "Christ" had occurred by the time of Paul (as is well established by the frequency of its use in his letters) it had already been a title (i.e. "Jesus the Messiah") that had gained wide acceptance by this time.

Jesus was viewed in some significant ways as “messiah” before his death.¹³

Without such a premise, the subsequent New Testament interpretation of his death as messianic is unintelligible and irrelevant.¹⁴

New Directions in Methodology: Crossan, Meier, Wright, Brown

Any attempt which focuses attention on the Messianic background of Jesus' death must face the fact that over the past two decades an array of varying and often discordant paradigms and categories for interpreting Jesus' career and mission have emerged, a fact lamented by John Crossan and taken as a central starting point for his ambitious and far ranging work.¹⁵ Crossan's own methodology involves a complex combination of three triads. The first combines various levels of analysis from within the field of social anthropology,

¹³ While Allison's study follows Schweitzer in his insistence that Jesus be seen primarily as an apocalyptic prophet, it does not address the importance that Jesus' death and its messianic overtones had for Schweitzer's interpretation. This creates numerous historical problems. “Against the view, since Wrede, of the unmessianic Jesus, it must be admitted that Jesus conducted himself with ‘messianic’ authority and was executed as a messianic pretender. Only thus are the accounts of post-Easter Christology, the accounts of his Passion, and his efficacy, historically comprehensible.” Elsewhere, he asserts, “The Passion narrative at the end of which is his crucifixion as ‘King of the Jews’, is only comprehensible if one presupposes his messianic authority, and the same is also true for large parts of his preaching and ministry.” See for example, Martin Hengel, *Studies in Early Christology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995), 71; 108. On this point Schweitzer argued in his conclusion that Jesus disclosed his messianic identity only to his disciples, entered Jerusalem in a self consciously messianic action which was opaque to everyone else, and saw his own death as part of the pre Messianic tribulation which would instigate the coming of the Kingdom. Yet in all this, his messianic mission was nevertheless a noble failure. (See *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 386-395.) Here however, it becomes difficult to understand the persistence of the early church to portray Jesus in messianic terms.

¹⁴ On this basis alone, the account of Luke 24:13-27 seems to me to preserve a remarkably plausible account of the disciples' early reaction to Jesus' crucifixion and Jesus' response to it. See *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 486-489.

¹⁵ A fact noted by Crossan, who suggests that the very variety of these portraits has become something of an embarrassment for the credibility of the area of historical Jesus research. See *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Jewish Mediterranean Peasant* (San Francisco: Harper, 1991), xxviii.

the constraints of Greco-Roman history and the literary sources for Jesus' actions and sayings. The second triad focuses specifically on the Jesus tradition itself, drawing together the inventory of all such traditions, stratifying it chronologically, and subjecting it to the criteria of multiple attestation. His final triad works through these sources in sequence of strata, ranks sources in terms of the number of independent attestations that can be securely located, and brackets any units of tradition that are singular in source.¹⁶ Of his determination to remedy the problem he identifies through adherence to a broadly based methodology there can be little doubt, yet his conclusions have little in common with the description we find in the early Christian movement. This again raises the question of how the earliest disciples could have so successfully produced a revised edition of Jesus and his mission in so short a time.¹⁷

An even more extensive and equally ambitious project from the standpoint of methodology may be found in John Paul Meier's still ongoing study.¹⁸ Meier works within the framework of five separate criteria (estimated at varying levels of

¹⁶ See Crossan, *The Historical Jesus*, xxx-xxxiv. The results of his methodology can be found in Appendix 1, 427-450.

¹⁷ Crossan sums up the creativity of the New Testament Gospels and other apocryphal accounts as "Hide the prophecy, tell the narrative, invent the history." See *The Historical Jesus*, 372; and also, more generally on the details of Jesus' passion, 367-392. While accepting the historicity of a crucifixion under the authority of Pontius Pilate, he sees most of the rest of the passion narratives as fictional creations of the writers based on prophetic traditions, motifs in the Psalms, and other Jewish literature of the period. Here we are essentially back at a position which finds little possibility for accessing history in the Gospel passion narratives. For an appreciative critique of Crossan's approach and some of his conclusions, see Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 44-65. Given the stress upon continuity in passing on tradition within Jewish religious culture, I find the conclusions of Birger Gerhardsson regarding the close connection between Jesus' own teaching and the further development of this by the earliest Christians after Easter a much more historically plausible scenario; *The Origins of the Gospel Traditions* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1977), 74-75.

¹⁸ *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* Vol. 1-3. A fourth and concluding volume is forthcoming but is not yet published at the time of writing.

reliability) by which he attempts to establish the historical value of tradition from a range of sources.¹⁹ It is significant that he includes “rejection and execution” (which judges material in terms of its value in explaining Jesus’ death by Jewish and Roman leaders) as one of the five most critical factors for establishing the historical likelihood of tradition. This point attaches further significance to the question of how Jesus’ death was related to his messianic status. In commenting on the theme of Jesus’ Davidic ancestry during his ministry, he makes the important point that later interpretation of Jesus’ resurrection as the enthroned “seed of David” of II Samuel 7:12-14 is very likely confirmation that attestation of Jesus as a Davidic descendant was early and widespread among his followers. While this does not prove Jesus was a biological “son of David,” it certainly answers the objection that such a title was a mere extension of later belief that he was “Messiah,” since Messiah and “son of David,” while often related, were no means inevitably linked in the first century.²⁰ Stressing similarities in Jesus’ ministry with Elijah and the eschatological prophet tradition,

¹⁹See *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, I, 166-184. What is important is that Meier divides them into two sets. In the first he places five primary criteria, which when used in an integrated way in connection with the other five can be used reliably: embarrassment, discontinuity, multiple attestation, coherence, and (rather interestingly and innovatively) rejection/execution. This final criterion has to do with words or deeds that help to explain Jesus’ violent death at the hands of Jewish and Roman officials. While Meier’s own treatment of the topic of Jesus’ death is planned for his forthcoming volume, the fact that he would include this as a criteria on its own lends support to the thesis that an explanation of Jesus’ death is an important consideration in assessing the importance of a messianic role in Jesus’ mission. In the second set, he places what he calls three secondary criteria: traces of Aramaic, Palestinian environment, and vividness of narration, each of which he sees as having relative but limited value in themselves. Finally, he adds two “dubious” tendencies: signs of the developing Synoptic tradition and historical presumption (*in dubio pro traditio*).

²⁰ Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, I, 218: “Hence, believing that Jesus was the Messiah did not necessitate seeing him as the Son of David. Indeed, such an interpretation of Jesus’ messiahship might expose early Christian Jews to easy rebuttal if it were known that Jesus was not of Davidic lineage.”

Meier sees little evidence that Jesus saw himself as a Davidic messiah until his entry into Jerusalem and subsequent “cleansing” of the Temple which apparently led to the arrest and trial. He cites the Qumran text 4Q521 as support that these two roles of Messiah and eschatological prophet, so significant in Jesus’ life, were closely related in the Essene sect, and quite possibly by others in Judaism as well.

Few scholars have done more to return needed attention to the significance of Jesus’ death for understanding the Gospels than Raymond Brown in his painstakingly detailed commentary.²¹ While the work is organized as a commentary and thus focuses primarily on the redaction of sources within the gospel tradition, each section of the narrative also receives treatment with respect to its historical veracity. One of Brown’s most important conclusions for the present study is his contention that Jesus’ own predictions of his death in the Gospel traditions accurately reflect dominical tradition.²² Perhaps more importantly, they also employ the language of one who views himself in ways that are profoundly shaped by Old Testament motifs with which we are now quite familiar.²³

In his own attempt to revisit the problems raised by Schweitzer and Bultmann (whom he credits for essentially shaping the terms of the “historical Jesus” inquiry to this day) N.T. Wright identifies the question “Why did Jesus

²¹ *Death of the Messiah*, 2 Vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

²² *Death of the Messiah*, 2, 1487-89.

²³ Among those mentioned by Brown are the Servant of Isaiah, the prophet Jeremiah, and the Danielic Son of Man.

die?" as one of the six interrelated issues that structure his own study of Jesus' career.²⁴ To sketch briefly what is a far more complex argument, Wright proposes that Jesus saw himself as having a vocation as a divinely appointed figure who would decisively make the promises of the Israel's Scriptures a reality.

He believed that Israel's destiny was reaching its fulfillment in his life, that he was to fight Israel's battles, and that he should summon Israel to regroup, and find new identity, around him. Israel's aspirations, that there would be no king but her own god, were coming to fulfillment, and the way Israelites would discover that fulfillment was in these summons to follow Jesus. This announcement, understood historically, opens up the clear possibility that the proclaimer might be claiming to be Israel's representative king.²⁵

In doing so, Jesus took on the role of prophet to be sure, but often did so in a way that indicated he was more than just one prophet among many others. The fact that the Gospels record persistent questions about Jesus' role and identity²⁶ suggests that he saw himself as a climactic prophet who would act out Israel's history in a dramatic way.²⁷ This sense of vocation was based in part on various texts within the Hebrew Bible. The most important examples include selections within the first three books of the Psalter, Daniel 7, Zechariah 9-14, and Isaiah 40-55, which yielded a programmatic framework within which other aspects of Jesus' own self understanding would be worked out.²⁸ This is not to say that

²⁴ *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 83-121 and especially 106-108.

²⁵ *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 531.

²⁶ Mark 2:12; 4:41; 8:27-29.

²⁷ *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 196-197. Helpful direction is also given in an older study by I.H. Marshall, *The Origins of Christology* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1975), 51-54. Marshall also addresses more directly than Wright the question of how the roles of prophet and messiah were related.

²⁸ *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 586-611.

Jesus' identified himself in some abstract way with "the son of Man" or the Isaianic "Servant," but that he reshaped these programmatic materials into an original, innovative interpretative outlook about the destiny of Israel and his own mission in relation to Israel. In turn, this outlook came into dynamic, organic expression in his varied actions of his ministry, not least of which his miracles and his stories.²⁹

Finally, by his decision to go to Jerusalem and confront the Jewish leadership in the Temple, he would dramatically enact the judgement that he saw befalling the Temple, the city and its leaders,³⁰ with the full awareness that this would very likely be a dangerous and possibly fatal undertaking.³¹ By willingly undergoing an undeserved suffering and wrongful death, he would carry out to the fullest extent Yahweh's mission as the messianic shepherd and king, accomplishing Israel's promised redemption as one in whom Israel's God was present.³² Such renewed attention to the connection between Jesus' messianic

²⁹ On Jesus' parables, see *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 179-182.

³⁰ *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 609. On the significance of the Temple cleansing as symbolic of its imminent destruction against the background of Jeremiah 7-8, see also earlier in the same work, 413-428 and Green, "The Death of Jesus and the Ways of God," 29.

³¹ *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 610. See also Green, "The Death of Jesus and the Ways of God," *Interpretation* 52.1 (1998), 34 who suggests that Jesus foresaw his death and reflected on its meaning in light of his mission to redeem Israel. He also points out that "Jesus was no masochist looking for an opportunity to suffer and die, but did see that his absolute commitment to the purpose of God might lead...to his death." His citation of Ben Meyer's dictum sums up the point here: "Jesus did not aim to be repudiated and killed; he aimed to charge with meaning his being repudiated and killed." Meyer's comment is taken from *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979), 218.

³² *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 651-653. Despite the promise of Wright's thesis, one aspect of Jesus' own mission that Wright does not address adequately is the precise relationship between the respective concepts of "eschatological prophet" and messiah. This will be addressed further below.

mission and his subsequent death merits further consideration. To begin with, this connection raises an important question: what is the relationship between Jesus' own sense of mission and the concept of messiah as it was understood in his time?

Jesus as Messiah

In an older study that is now dated in many of his conclusions, T.W. Manson nevertheless stressed a number of important aspects of Jesus' ministry that are significant for addressing this question.³³ Unlike Schweitzer, who saw in Jesus' death essentially a noble but desperate act of self-sacrifice given the failure of his messianic expectations,³⁴ Manson pointed out the probability lay in the other direction and stressed the essential continuity between Jesus' ongoing messianic work and his determination to go to Jerusalem and carry out his messianic task though fully aware of the risks and danger of doing so.³⁵ Jesus' own aims were closely bound up with the historical expectations of Israel as a people and their ongoing religious and political story. More recently, the study of

³³ *The Servant Messiah* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953). Manson adheres to the now problematic "corporate personality" concept (74) and tends to argue in terms of a single, normative Jewish Messianic paradigm (71). As has become evident, both positions have been overtaken by subsequent scholarship. Yet his overall emphasis on the close connection between Jesus' thinking about the kingship of God and the Kingdom of God, his own role as the Isaianic Servant and the passion as a culmination of the messianic task are essentially correct.

³⁴ Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 370-71.

³⁵ Manson, *The Servant Messiah*, 77. See also more recently, Ben Meyer's essay "Jesus' Ministry and Self Understanding," in *Studying the Historical Jesus*, eds. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (New York: E.J. Brill, 1994), 352. "*Jesus understood himself as the climactic and definitive fulfiller of the hopes of Israel. Were we to go beyond the ministry to Jesus' passion and death, we would be obliged to add that Jesus' understanding of his mission and his correlative self understanding included his response to rejection. The goal remained the same; the climactic and definitive salvation of Israel, together with the nations.*" The italics are Meyer's own.

Marshall already cited raised the issue “Did Jesus have a Christology?” and answered the question in the affirmative. Marshall followed Jeremias in arguing that Jesus’ use of such words as “*amen*” and “*abba*” were indirect but convincing “indications of Jesus’ consciousness of his unique position.”³⁶ He also drew attention to the unique authority Jesus claimed for himself in both heightening the demands of the Mosaic law in his preaching, and implicitly claiming to know the will and intention of God which lay behind the law.³⁷

Defining the Christology of Jesus

The task of further explicating what can be known about the “Christology of Jesus” was taken up in much greater detail by Ben Witherington, whose investigation drew several key conclusions. Witherington argued that both his deeds and his words suggest that Jesus intended to convey his task as that of a messianic figure, though not in line with that of a ‘national-political’ conception of “*Mashiach*,” which seems to have been prominent among various expectations surrounding this term in Jesus’ day.³⁸ He ascribes Jesus’ own reticence about using Messiah as a self-description to the typical Jewish pattern, discernible in other contemporary messiah figures, where external acclamation as “messiah” cannot be accepted by the messiah-designate until the messianic tasks are fully

³⁶ *The Origins of New Testament Christology*, 46. For Jeremias’ description of the importance of Jesus’ use of “*abba*,” see *Jesus and the Message of the New Testament*, ed. C.K. Hanson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 63-74.

³⁷ *The Origins of New Testament Christology*, 49.

³⁸ *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 176.

carried out.³⁹ He also builds significantly on the work of Marshall. In addition to the use of *abba* and *amen*, Witherington cites numerous other aspects of Jesus' words and actions which are indicative of a messianic self- understanding:

It appears to me that these factors are fully accounted for only if Jesus saw himself as God's *mashiach*, God's royal Son (at least as early as his baptism), that he acted throughout his ministry in the light of his belief that he was called to a messianic mission, and that he had been endowed with the necessary divine knowledge, power, and authority by God's Spirit to carry out that mission to Israel. In Jesus' view, Israel as a whole was lost, and it was his task to call his fellow Jews to repentance because judgement would soon befall the nation. Unlike the Baptist, Jesus offered both preparation for and a positive alternative to the wrath to come.⁴⁰

Moreover, Jesus' rejection of the traditional political Messiah paradigm leaves open the definite possibility that he adopted some of the other available messianic figures and models as appropriate: "Rather, he saw himself in the light of the shepherd king of Zechariah, the *bar enasha* of Daniel, and certain

³⁹ *The Christology of Jesus*, 267.

⁴⁰ *The Christology of Jesus*, 268. On the use of *abba* by Jesus, see also James D.G. Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 26-29. Brown draws the more cautious conclusion that because of the potential for misunderstanding the term, Jesus responded ambivalently to the actual term "messiah" and suggests that this reticence may flow from not knowing exactly what God would have in store for him (*The Death of the Messiah*, I: 479). Yet Brown admits it is "very likely" that some of his followers thought him to be the Messiah during his lifetime (478), and that Jesus probably never denied the term either, since it quite rightly grasped that "he was God's unique and final agent in establishing God's kingdom—a role of which he was totally convinced." What is striking in Brown's analysis is his apparent rejection of a Davidic messianic sense in Jesus' own view of mission (478, 480). Given the arguments advanced for the possibility that Matthew was drawing on an alternative Davidic messiah tradition (i.e. Psalm 72/Isaianic Servant/ Zechariah's shepherd king) to the merely "nationalistic/political" expectation, could this possibility not also exist for Jesus himself? Here Marcus Bockmuehl is quite right to point out that, while Jesus clearly falls short of the traditional political expectations for messiah in many respects, he does affirm the establishing of the messianic kingdom and the restoration of the Davidic throne as part of his expectations. Cf. *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1995), 54. Moreover, Jesus invites direct comparison between himself and his predecessor David (Matt. 12:1-8) and never rejects the acclamation "son of David" *per se* (Matt. 12:23; 20:30-31), alludes to the restored Israel in terms of the "twelve thrones" (Matt. 19:28) and in Matt. 21:15 quotes Ps. 8:2 in support of the children who use such a title in greeting him. Witherington (*The Christology of Jesus*, 264) also notes this occurrence in his consideration of the parallel in Mark 10:46ff, as evidence which makes Wrede's "messianic secret" thesis problematic.

royal psalms.”⁴¹ As has been argued, each of these was part of an emerging messianic narrative that owed much to the Davidic dynasty tradition, even while offering an alternative to the weaknesses of Davidic kings which led its historical demise.

According to Meyer, Jesus presented clues to the meaning of his own identity gradually and sequentially, as an invitation for his audience and followers to reflect on the meaning of his unfolding identity and consider an appeal to a “self committing act of faith.”⁴² This sometimes cryptic and open ended way of communication led to a range of responses by the crowds who heard Jesus preach as to his identity.⁴³ Wright has referred to some of Jesus’ final parables as the “riddles of return and exaltation.”⁴⁴

Though as Meyers and Wright suggest, there was something cryptic, incomplete about Jesus’ identity, there is also a progression. Towards the end of his life Jesus becomes more explicit and bold in his declaration. It is here being argued that central to this developing sense of identity was a conviction by which Jesus knew himself to be God’s anointed servant and royal son.⁴⁵ As Meyers puts it, this view of messianic kingship was crucial to Jesus’ awareness of his own mission:

⁴¹ *The Christology of Jesus*, 273. On for example, Zechariah 9 and the significance of the entry into Jerusalem for understanding Jesus’ messianic goals, see also Martin Hengel, *Studies in Christology*, 55-56.

⁴² Meyer, “Jesus’ Ministry and Self Understanding,” 350.

⁴³ Mark 8.27-28; also from John the Baptist, apparently in Matt. 11:2-5.

⁴⁴ Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 631. He borrows a phrase from Meier, *A Marginal Jew*, II, 453.

⁴⁵ Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, 32.

*“The key to Jesus’ view of ‘new covenant’, ‘new temple’ and ‘new cult’ was precisely his identity as ‘new king’. Why? We do not have, nor do we need to have an exactly detailed repertory of messianism in his time and place to know why. The primacy of messianism lay in its abundant power to legitimize the reality of Israel restored.”*⁴⁶

Meyer’s comment on the limits of our knowledge about first-century messianic figures is well taken. But interestingly, since he wrote this essay, a huge step towards a more comprehensive inventory of first-century messianism has in fact been made by Craig Evans in his study of *Jesus and His Contemporaries*.⁴⁷ The full length monograph attempts to study Jesus against the background of the more prominent and widely known messianic claimants and would be liberators in the first two centuries. Finding that aside from the deadly Roman reaction which each faced, few of the militant messiahs bear any other noticeable resemblance to Jesus, Evans concludes that parallels to Jesus’ pronouncements and activities can better be located in the careers of certain “oracular” prophetic messiah figures of the time.⁴⁸ Numerous descriptions of the Davidic messiah as a prophet in the Targums suggest that this prophetic designation may well have been part of Jesus’ own messianic self awareness.

Not only is it very probable that Jesus’ crucifixion at the hands of the Roman governor is in some sense the result of his proclamation of the kingdom of God, it is also probable that Jesus’ reputation as prophet and his criminal conviction as “king of the Jews” are not evidence of a

⁴⁶ “Jesus Ministry and Self Understanding”, 350; the italics are Meyer’s own.

⁴⁷ (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

⁴⁸ *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 466. Evans has elsewhere suggested that Jesus’ use of parables, ability to interpret the Torah with authority, and exorcisms are also part of this complex identity in which prophetic teaching and preaching was part of the expectation for a messianic Son of David. See his essay, “Parables in Early Judaism” in *The Challenge of Jesus’ Parables*, Richard J. Longenecker, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 73-74.

shift in Jesus' self understanding or a shift in how the public perceived him. These two identifications do not stand in tension but are two facets of a unified tradition, a tradition with which Jesus was familiar and by which he had been influenced. Jesus is the anointed son of David, whose anointing is prophetic and which not only authorizes Jesus to proclaim the presence of the kingdom but to demonstrate its presence through acts of healing, especially exorcisms.⁴⁹

Evans also sees very close parallels between the attributes given to the Danielic Son of Man and the promises of an eternal kingdom and dominion over the Gentiles given in the Davidic dynasty traditions (2 Samuel 7:12-16, Psalm 2, Isaiah 9:2-7; 11:1).⁵⁰

These exalted royal expectations stand in sharp contrast to Jesus' crucifixion and death. Yet paradoxically, as Jesus' words at the last Supper attest, his arrest and subsequent death were integral to this mission and in no way detracted from this overall objective of bringing restoration to Israel, as Meyer has quite correctly pointed out.⁵¹ Yet because this conclusion was by no means obvious to all observers of Jesus' life, the contention on the part of early Christians that Jesus' passion was not a contradiction of his messianic identity but an inherent and central part of its realization, requires further attention.

⁴⁹ *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 451. Incidentally, Evans also refers to the *Davidssonfrage* of Mark 12 and Matthew 22 as modifying popular expectations, not rejecting Davidic messiahship.

⁵⁰ *Jesus and His Contemporaries*, 454. As well, a reference at Qumran (4Q161) which comments on Isaiah 11, speaks of the Messiah receiving a "throne of glory" in language that bears remarkable similarity to the explication of Daniel 7 in I Enoch 62:5, apparently raising the possibility that Davidic messianic traditions were being linked with the enthronement traditions of Daniel 7.

⁵¹ "The problem was the sunkenness in sin of Israel and the nations; the revealed solution, the death of the appointed messianic savior as ransom, expiatory and covenant sacrifice." Meyer, "Jesus Ministry and Self Understanding", 352.

2.2 Contemporary Assessments of the Origins of Christology

A Suffering Messiah, Atonement and Jesus' Self Understanding

In his study of early Christian interpretations of Jesus' death, *Jesus the Servant-Messiah*, Marinus DeJonge has made the following observation:

Jesus' life ended on the cross, a fact of crucial importance for early and present day Christian alike. The value and significance of the crucifixion are inextricably bound up with Jesus' person, with his intentions and his own understanding of his death as the consummation of his mission. Had Jesus not stood in a unique relationship with God and had he not been fully aware of everything this involved, the crucifixion would have been robbed of its dignity and its depth of meaning.⁵²

DeJonge goes on to consider three primary motifs concerning Jesus' death: the rejected prophetic envoy of God; the righteous servant; and finally, the martyr who dies for others. He finds that all three are present in various streams of early tradition and concludes that it is quite probable (though not certain) that each of these three reflects part of Jesus' own outlook about his own life and death.⁵³ However he thinks it unlikely that the "Suffering Servant" figure played a significant role in Jesus' own sense of mission. This point can be challenged, and in fact, others have taken a quite different approach to this question.⁵⁴

⁵² (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 32.

⁵³ *Jesus, the Servant-Messiah*, 54.

⁵⁴ While a detailed treatment of the debate over this issue is not possible here, a brief treatment must at least be offered. De Jonge's attempts to specifically exclude the Fourth Servant song (Is. 52:12-53:12) as having any significant influence on Jesus' own view of his death in the Gospels on the basis of previous work by Morna Hooker and C.K. Barrett are not convincing. In the first place, he fails to show why a first-century Jew such as Jesus or the Gospel writers would have isolated the Fourth Servant Song from the rest of Isaiah 40-55, as modern scholarship has only begun to do in the past century. This larger passage was clearly important for Jesus' mission in

Jeremias' conclusion is that Isaiah 53, together with the larger context of Isaiah 40-55, was crucial for shaping Jesus' sense of mission. Among numerous pieces of evidence cited by Jeremias are the use of *paradosthai* in the passion predictions, as well as *hyper pollōn* in the eucharistic words of Jesus, both of seem to part of very old verbal tradition going back to Jesus himself.⁵⁵ While there is no evidence to suggest that Jesus identified himself in terms of a narrow,

the Gospels. Nor does De Jonge deal with the extensive investigation of the messianic interpretation of Isaiah 42-53 in the Greek Old Testament and pre-Christian texts of later Judaism which Zimmerli and Jeremias, respectively, put forward; cf. *The Servant of God*, 37-44, 45-49. Finally, his citation of Hooker's work in support of his criticisms of Jeremias fails, since Jeremias rightly criticizes Hooker's unduly restrictive focus on explicit citations alone (*The Servant of God*, 88). I am doubtful if Hooker's thesis can be sustained, given this point alone. DeJonge's citations of C.K. Barrett are no more persuasive. The essay "The Background of Mark 10:45" (found in *New Testament Essays: Studies in Memory of Thomas Walter Manson* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959], 1-18) deals only with Mark 10:45 in a similar atomistic way, as if Mark were a modern preacher, employing proof texts.

DeJonge's other citation of C.K. Barrett is from *Jesus and the Gospel Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968) where the issue of the Isaianic Servant relies on the similarly atomistic methodology employed by Hooker's study. Here one could consult the comments of Richard Longenecker's *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 90. Similar reservations about the larger conclusions of Hooker's *Jesus and the Servant* have also been expressed by Longenecker elsewhere (*The Christology of Early Jewish Christianity*, [London: SCM Press, 1970], 104. Further analysis has been done by Otto Betz, "Jesus and Isaiah 53," *Jesus and the Suffering Servant*, 70-87. While granting some of Hooker's specific findings, he finds extensive evidence for the influence of Isaiah 43:23 ff. and 53:1-12 on Mark 10:45 and 14:22-24. Rikki Watts presents further revisions to Hooker's work in a further essay in the same volume ("Jesus' Death, Isaiah 53 and Mark 10:45: A Crux Revisited," 125-151. Given all of this, I find the unqualified citation of Hooker's thesis by De Jonge puzzling to say the least.

Nevertheless, it should be said that Hooker rightly cautions against taking the Servant to refer to an independent designation (*Jesus and the Servant*, 156) and draws proper attention to the qualities of a servant of Yahweh as being more prominent than the specific identity of the Servant. However, her study does not recognize it was precisely through these qualities that the Isaianic Servant material influenced messianic expectation. For example, one could cite the messianizing influence of Isaiah 53 on texts such as Zechariah 9:9,10, creating a strong possibility that Jesus was drawing on a preexisting tradition where such influence of the Servant on conceptions of royal messianology had already begun to take place. See Rex Mason, "The Use of Earlier Biblical Material in Zechariah 9-14: A Study in Inner Biblical Exegesis," in *Bringing Out the Treasure*, 42, and Wright, *The Victory of God*, 589-590. Oscar Cullmann also observes the influence of the Servant (*ebed*) figure on pre-Christian messianic expectation in the Septuagint, though rightly points out that in that particular case the "suffering" of such a figure is not attested. Cf. *Christology of the New Testament*, rev. ed., Trans. S. Guthrie & C. Hall (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 56.

⁵⁵ Cf. *The Servant of God*, 99-106, for the fuller discussion.

“one for one” equivalency with the Isaianic servant, let alone as the “Suffering Servant” as a figure isolated from the rest of the Servant material, it is also clear that this portrayal in Isaiah 40-55 was greatly influential in Jesus’ understanding of what it meant to be Israel’s Messiah, also in his death.⁵⁶

Convinced as they were that Jesus’ death was an integral part of his mission, early Christians took up the challenging task of making this singularly important soteriological event known to others. The work of Martin Hengel in particular has helped to bring to light a number of accounts of heroic or mythical individuals whose death had taken place in a sacrificial or atoning way.⁵⁷ He notes a number of parallels with Greco Roman stories of dying heroes, individuals who were sacrificed to save a city or friends, and even deaths in antiquity that were regarded as having a limited atoning value. Yet he also points

⁵⁶ See Wright, *The Victory of God*. “There was no such thing as a straightforward pre-Christian Jewish belief in an Isaianic ‘servant of YHWH’ who, perhaps as Messiah, would suffer and die to make atonement and for the world. But there was something else, which literally dozens of texts attest: a large-scale and widespread belief, to which Isaiah 40-55 made a substantial contribution, that Israel’s present state of suffering was somehow held within the ongoing divine purpose; that in due time this period of woe would come to an end, with divine wrath falling instead on the pagan nations that had oppressed Israel (and perhaps on renegades within Israel herself); that the explanation for the present state of affairs had to do with Israel’s own sin, for which either she, or in some cases, her righteous representatives were being punished...” (591). Wright also points out that it is unlikely that Jesus “regarded himself as ‘the servant,’ as though second-Temple Jews had anticipated modern criticisms in separating out the ‘servant songs’ from the rest of Isaiah 40-55, or as though Jesus had created a ‘role’ for himself out of a few texts taken out of context...” But he argues that Jesus was nevertheless greatly influenced by the portrait of the Servant of Yahweh. “This is not a matter of assuming ‘the influence of the servant’ and then finding ‘passages which appear to support it’. It is a matter of understanding Jesus’ whole kingdom announcement in the light of several major themes from the Jewish Scriptures, and showing that it is absurd, granted the whole picture to disallow reference, allusion and echo to Isaiah 40-55 in particular and Isaiah 52.13 –53:12 in particular.” Cf. Wright, 603, (*contra* Hooker’s conclusions) and Cullmann, *Christology of the New Testament*, (66-69) which argues that this awareness of being Yahweh’s *ebed* can be traced back at least to the baptism of Jesus.

⁵⁷ He raises the vital question, “How was it that this infamous death could so quickly be interpreted as a representative, atoning death, and in what interpretative framework was such and understanding possible at all?” *The Atonement*, Trans. John Bowden, in *The Cross of the Son of God* (London: SCM Press, 1986), 189.

out that even so, the primitive Christian preaching of crucified divinity would have seemed repulsive and superstitious.⁵⁸

At the same time, the gospel proclamation also marked a significant parting of ways with even the closest analogies in the wider culture. The decisive break with any Hellenistic parallels was the contention that this one death was a universal atonement and an act of divine grace in delivering Jesus to a death that would benefit many. Moreover, it was a death imbued with finality and a certain eschatological significance, and much more than just the heroic act of a single, noble human individual.

Hengel traces the emergence of this message against its Hellenistic Jewish background,⁵⁹ from the composition of the New Testament texts to its earliest formulations in pre-Pauline preaching and teaching to the initial stages of the Christian community in Jerusalem. He concludes that “the vicarious atoning effect of the death or even the suffering of a righteous man was not unknown in the Palestinian Judaism of the first century AD, independently of the question of terminology.” Further, “There is nothing from a historical or traditio-historical point of view which stands in the way of our deriving it from the earliest community and quite possibly even from Jesus himself.”⁶⁰ With this observation

⁵⁸ Hengel, *The Atonement*, 219.

⁵⁹ Including material from the Hebrew Bible, the Greek text, the apocrypha and even the rabbinic literature, though some of the latter texts may be later than the first century while reflecting older tradition.

⁶⁰ *The Atonement*, 252. For a discussion which accepts Hengel's basic conclusion but argues that it is too narrowly focused on atonement alone as the interpretative schema for the meaning of Jesus' death, see “The Death of Jesus and the Ways of God,” 24-35.

comes further confirmation that the notion of an atoning death derives from the earliest sources of the Christian church, and may with a strong measure of probability find its origin in the teaching of Jesus to his disciples. This became particularly true as his heightening conflict with the Jewish leadership and their own intentions towards him increased the likelihood of his own death to such a point, that it eventually came to form part of his larger messianic mission.⁶¹

The Beginnings of Christology

Even among scholars who agree that Jesus' work should be interpreted in messianic categories, there have sometimes still been those who have expressed caution about our ability to establish Jesus' self understanding with any degree of certainty.⁶² While a careful approach is warranted, evidence considered to this point suggests that a description of Jesus' own awareness of messianic mission is possible, and even in some important respects, historically necessary. Joseph Klausner argued this point some years ago⁶³ and Martin

⁶¹ Wright, *The Victory of God*, 651.

⁶² See N.A. Dahl's comment in the *The Messiah*, "Messianic Ideas and the Crucifixion of Jesus," 403. "The historian can only know anything about Jesus' intentions to the degree that they correspond to his actions, words, and experiences. Thus the question of whether or not Jesus had a messianic self consciousness will, of necessity, elude the historian. "

⁶³ "A theory has been put forward that Jesus never regarded himself as the Messiah and only after his death was he acclaimed as Messiah by his disciples. But had this been true it would never have occurred to his disciples (simple-minded Jews) that one who suffered crucifixion ('a curse of God is he that is hanged') could be the Messiah; and the messianic idea meant nothing to Gentile converts. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*; when we see that Jesus' messianic claims became a fundamental principle of Christianity soon after his crucifixion, this is a standing proof that even in his lifetime Jesus regarded himself as Messiah." Cf. *Jesus of Nazareth*, tr. Herbert Danby (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 255-256. While some finer points of this quotation may require refinement given the progress of scholarship, the central point here can be sustained despite the passage of almost 80 years.

Hengel has stressed the same consideration more recently,⁶⁴ together with Craig Evans⁶⁵ and Christopher Rowland.⁶⁶

James Dunn has touched on this issue in an overview of the issue of Jesus' self-consciousness in the history of Christology over the past two centuries. In sketching briefly this debate over the precise contours of Jesus' sense of divine sonship, he suggests notes that in the latter decades of the nineteenth century and early decades of the twentieth, there was a well established consensus that "affirmed Jesus' messianic self consciousness with confidence."⁶⁷ Dunn describes a subsequent period of several decades of retreat, in which the rise of form criticism led to a more tentative appraisal of the reliability of the Gospel sources (especially Mark) and an uneasiness emerged about reconstructing an individual's self consciousness from such a great

⁶⁴"If Jesus never possessed a messianic consciousness of divine mission, nor spoke of the coming, or present, 'Son of Man,' nor was executed as a messianic pretender -- as is maintained by radical criticism untroubled by historical arguments -- then the emergence of Christology, indeed, the entire early history of primitive Christianity, is incomprehensible." See his essay "Jesus, The Messiah of Israel: The Debate About the Messianic Mission of Jesus" in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, Ed. Bruce Chilton & Craig A. Evans (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2002), 327.

⁶⁵ "The widespread understanding of Jesus as Israel's Messiah, and therefore God's "Son" (in keeping with Psalm 2 and 2 Samuel 7 -- all part of the Davidic royal tradition), strongly recommends a messianic element that reaches back to Jesus' ministry. If nothing messianic was present in Jesus' ministry, if only primarily implicit, this widespread understanding of Jesus is hard to explain. After all, there appears to have been no competing interpretations of Jesus among his followers, that is, some messianic, and others non-messianic." See his article "Authenticating the Activities of Jesus" in *Authenticating the Activities of Jesus*, 25.

⁶⁶ *Christian Origins: The Setting and Character of the Most Important Messianic Sect in Judaism* 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 2002), 177. Rowland, however, urges that Jesus expressly repudiated the Davidic associations of Messiah on the basis of Mark 12:35, a position which is here being challenged as overstating something much more subtle and complex. Cf. E. Lohse, "huious David," in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 1224. See also Oscar Cullmann's careful treatment, which leaves open the possibility that Jesus intended to exercise Davidic kingship in a new and innovative way, rather than repudiate it. See his *Christology of the New Testament*, 133.

⁶⁷ See his *Christology in the Making*, 23.

historical distance. This was followed by the work of Jeremias and others, which has marked a return to the investigation of Jesus' self understanding.⁶⁸

The significance of this becomes especially apparent when the origins of Christology in early Christian communities are carefully investigated. The observations of several recent scholars illustrates this clearly. In concluding this study, the work of three writers in particular will be considered: Larry Hurtado, Martin Hengel, and Timo Eskola.

Hurtado's work has dealt extensively with the origins of Christology against a Jewish monotheistic background. He sets out to examine a number of possible explanations for how the rapid accommodation of Jesus as a venerated, divine figure within the strongly monotheistic traditions of Judaism by early Jewish Christians could have occurred.⁶⁹ His study considers the range of divine agents that were thought to act on God's behalf in Second Temple Judaism, such as personified divine attributes, angels and exalted patriarchs and finds each one inadequate as a precedent.

He argues instead that Jesus' own ministry initiated the conviction that he represented God in an unprecedented way. This conviction was maintained and intensified by the resurrection event. Soon after Jesus' death, it was the visionary and devotional experiences of his followers which led to a reflective, deliberate

⁶⁸ Dunn himself argues that we can recover from the Gospels that Jesus possessed a unique and distinctive sense of sonship. "Nevertheless, the Christology of a sonship distinctive in its sense of intimacy and unique in its consciousness of eschatological significance and of the dependency of others on it, that can only be called a *high Christology*—higher certainly than a Christology of a righteous man or a charismatic exorcist, higher perhaps than a Davidic Messiah, though, if so, how much higher we cannot say." *Christology in the Making*, 33.

⁶⁹ Larry Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism* 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T.T. Clark, 1998), 2.

and highly innovative appropriation of the possibilities offered by Jewish divine agency categories. According to Hurtado, the risen Jesus came to be viewed in such close proximity to God, that he began to share a number of divine attributes in the practice of Christian worship.⁷⁰

Hurtado's thesis provides an intriguing assessment of the shape of the dramatic transition to what he calls the "binatarian" devotion of early Jewish Christians. Yet his study does not give sufficient attention to Jesus messianic mission and its subsequent importance in the development of Christology. As a result, the early devotional and visionary experiences of the early Christians to which he attributes so much formative influence are not sufficiently linked to the identity of Jesus in his ministry prior to the crucifixion. Because Hurtado does not account for messianic categories,⁷¹ he overlooks the significance of Jesus' actions and aims as Messiah, which would become so important in the period following the resurrection. More attention will be given to the consequences of this shortcoming in due course.

Hurtado does however make important reference to one specific aspect of the visionary experiences referred to in the New Testament, drawing attention to the importance which New Testament texts attach to depictions of Jesus in his heavenly glory. Such depictions positioned Jesus either in close connection with

⁷⁰ *One God, One Lord*, 117-124.

⁷¹ A point to which Collins draws attention in *The Scepter and The Star* (214, n. 80) when commenting on Hurtado's initial edition of *One God, One Lord*. Hurtado responds to Collins in his preface to the 2nd ed. (xvii), arguing that because his study is restricted to heavenly figures, and messiahs are primarily earthly and this worldly in orientation, he does not deal with messianic divine agents.

God or a symbol of God's kingly authority such as the divine throne.⁷² This observation leads to the work of two further scholars who have examined this more topic more closely.

Martin Hengel: The Enthronement of the Messiah

Among symbols of God's royal authority in the Old Testament, the throne is perhaps the most closely linked to the rule of Yahweh over the world.⁷³ While his eternal throne is in heaven,⁷⁴ God's royal authority comes to expression in the rule of Israel's king, so that Yahweh rules through the obedience of his appointed monarch.⁷⁵ This relationship between Yahweh and the king is so close that sometimes the language referring to God's throne and the king's throne seem to overlap.⁷⁶ This close connection between Yahweh's transcendent throne and Israel's earthly throne is particularly emphasized in reference to the Davidic dynasty on the basis of the royal covenant which offers an enduring throne (II Sam. 7:16) that is celebrated in the Psalms and

⁷² *One God, One Lord*, 121-122.

⁷³ Meyers, "Kinship and Kingship," 262, arguing that this due to the aniconographic stance of Israel's traditions. See also O. Schmitz, "thronos", in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 338; "Throne/Thrones," in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* CD ROM, Ed. Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit, Tremper Longman III (Downers Grove, InterVarsity Press, 2000).

⁷⁴ Ps. 9:4,7; 11:4; 47:8; 103:19.

⁷⁵ I Kings 10:9, where the Queen of Sheba (a foreign monarch) tells Solomon, "Blessed be the Lord your God who has delighted in you and set you on the throne of Israel! Because the Lord loved Israel for ever, he has made you king to execute justice and righteousness." Cf. also Isaiah 16:5, which prophesies that following the destruction of Moab, "a throne shall be established in steadfast love, in the tent of David, and on it shall sit in faithfulness a ruler who seeks justice and is swift to do what is right."

⁷⁶ Ps. 45:6; 89:4, 14, 29, 36.

elsewhere.⁷⁷ The singular importance of this promise has already been stressed and its relevance for at least one central strand of messianic expectation is difficult to overstate.⁷⁸

In an essay published in 1995, Martin Hengel gave extensive consideration to the use of Psalm 110:1 in early Christianity.⁷⁹ He noted the wide distribution of references to this text across the New Testament, and concluded that it was crucial to the early Christian claim that Jesus, following his resurrection, had now taken a place beside God himself.⁸⁰ Hengel surveyed a wide number of examples in the ongoing tradition of Jewish exegesis of this text and its enthronement motif and concluded that the Christian use of Ps. 110:1 as referring to a continuing enthronement at the right hand of the deity, is unparalleled in Judaism:

It is, therefore, all the more significant that the disciples of Jesus could claim that a historical person, who was put to death in a disgraceful fashion in Jerusalem as the leader of the people, was enthroned as a companion of God on the throne in accordance with Psalm 110:1. Here lies the greatest mystery of the origin of earliest Christology. Doesn't this

⁷⁷ Ps. 89:4, 14, 29, 36; 122:5; 132:11, 12. Cf. also I Chron. 28:5, where Solomon sits on the "throne of the Kingdom of the Lord over Israel."

⁷⁸ Refer to Section 2 above. See also Isaiah 16:5 and 9:7. Such prophecies look beyond the historical collapse of the Davidic line during the exile to an eschatological restoration. See also Jer. 33:17-21 in connection with the judgement oracles against the contemporary Davidic incumbent in Jer. 22:30 and 36:30.

⁷⁹ " 'Sit at My Right Hand!' " The Enthronement of Christ at the Right Hand of God and Psalm 110:1," in *Studies in Christology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark), 119-227.

⁸⁰ His way of putting the issue is similar in some important respects to Hurtado, though importantly, he draws attention to Jesus as a crucified *Messiah*. "My question is how the earliest congregation could persistently venture to make the *unheard of* claim that Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified Messiah, not only was resurrected from the dead by God –there were occasional reports of the resurrection of individuals in late antiquity—but also that he was exalted to the right hand, that is to become his companion on the throne." Cf. 'Sit at My Right Hand!', 134; the italics are Hengel's.

remarkably audacious and at the same time provocative step necessarily have a basis in the teaching and the bearing of Jesus himself?⁸¹

Hengel's attempt to answer this question follows the following lines, which I will briefly attempt to sketch, though at some risk of oversimplification. He begins with the assertion that the Christological use of Psalm 110:1 of necessity assumes an eschatological messianic emphasis in his pre-resurrection ministry and mission. The unique positioning of Jesus and the giving of divine power to him attested in the New Testament sources is unlike any other reward given to a suffering martyr or righteous figure upon death. Led by the outpoured Spirit, early believers brought the message of the resurrected Jesus to the Jews of Jewish Palestine, emphasizing the present experience of Jesus' appearances to them, the memory of his messianic claim and message, and the eschatological messianic quotations of the Hebrew scriptures (particularly the psalms) which they knew from memory, some of which passed on into early Christian hymns. This Spirit-led reinterpretation of crucial Psalms became central to early Christian kerygma and teaching:

"The enthronement of Jesus, the crucified Messiah, as the 'Son' with the Father 'through the resurrection from the dead' belongs to the oldest message which all of the missionaries proclaimed in common; it was with this proclamation that the 'messengers of the Messiah' summoned their own people to repentance and faith in the 'Messiah of Israel,' who had been crucified and resurrected by God to his right hand."⁸²

⁸¹" 'Sit at My Right Hand!' ", 203.

⁸² Cf. Hengel, " 'Sit at My Right Hand!' ", 221.

Tomi Eskola: *Messiah and Throne*

Following Hengel, a further and important step has been taken by Tomi Eskola, in his study *Messiah and the Throne*. Assessing a number of previous attempts to explain the relationship between the Second Temple Jewish mystical tradition and early Christology by Segal, Rowland, Bauckham and Hurtado, he has put forward the proposal that the Jewish *merkabah* tradition, with its emphasis on the enthronement of God, exercised a profound influence on the development of early New Testament exaltation Christology, which described the enthronement of Christ.⁸³ In general terms, his study suggests that the *merkabah* tradition, found in a wide range of Jewish texts, provided a number of resources available for initial Christian attempts to describe what happened in Jesus' exaltation including a description of Jesus' new heavenly status, his soteriological status, and his coming eschatological arrival as judge.⁸⁴ What enabled early Christians to utilize some of the patterns of *merkabah* traditions was the symbolic universe which early Christology and the *merkabah* writings in the Old Testament and other Jewish texts largely share.

Eskola finds four major and distinctive types of "Christological discourse" in New Testament texts that pertain to Jesus' enthronement. Three are linked closely with Christ's resurrection, while the fourth emphasizes the judicial aspect of the enthronement.

⁸³ *Messiah and Throne* ([Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament Reihe 2, 142] Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 17.

⁸⁴ Eskola, *Messiah and Throne*, 155-157. Particularly interesting is the reference to the enthronement of the Davidic Messiah in 4Q161 at Qumran in language that loosely evokes Is. 11.

The first type relies heavily on Psalm 110 and finds intensive and varied development in the theology of Acts, Paul, Hebrews and Revelation.⁸⁵ This can be seen for example in Acts 2. Here Eskola suggests that the Davidic dynastic promise of II Sam. 7:12 and the cluster of texts which explicate this promise (Ps. 2, 89, 132) became the background for a wordplay relating the resurrection of Jesus with the enthronement of the Davidic “seed/offspring” promised by Nathan based on the Greek verb *anistēmi*.⁸⁶ This term, which in an Old Testament context referred to the enthronement of a Davidic descendant is now employed and reinterpreted as a prophecy of the resurrection and exaltation of Jesus.⁸⁷ From the Davidic tradition, Psalm 16:8-11 and Psalm 110:1 are also both cited in support of Jesus’ exaltation at the “right hand” of God.⁸⁸ Yet while the conceptual underpinnings are rooted firmly in the Davidic tradition, the uniqueness of Jesus’ exaltation is simultaneously stressed, for David himself did not ascend to the heavens.⁸⁹ Despite the prophecies and precedents, Jesus’ resurrection is

⁸⁵ Citing Acts 2:22-36; 5:30-31, I Cor. 15:24-25, Rom. 8:34; 2 Cor. 12:1-5, Heb. 1:3,4; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; Rev. 3:21; 4:1-9; 5:5-6. Cf. *Messiah and Throne*, 167.

⁸⁶ Acts 2:24, 32 (*anistēsen*); reading *anastēso to sperma sou meta se* for 2 Sam. 7:12 in the LXX. Eskola finds support for this in the Hebrew/Aramaic tradition based on *qum*, which also comes to have special significance in the Old Testament kingship tradition of the enthronement of a Davidic king (e.g. Jer. 23.5, Ezek. 34:23, and at Qumran in 4Q174 Col. 4, where *qum* has replaced another word in a citation paralleling Amos 9:11 and 2 Sam. 7:12-14.)

⁸⁷ Cf. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, I, 218: “If certain followers of during the public ministry already spoke of Jesus as a son of David, then their interpretation of the resurrection as the royal enthronement of the seed of David in keeping with the promise made in II Samuel 7:14-16 makes sense. Viewed from this angle, the resurrection was not the catalyst for the idea of Davidic descent; Davidic descent was the catalyst for a particular interpretation of the resurrection.

⁸⁸ The ambiguity of the exchange recorded in Mark 12:35-36 and parallels in Jesus’ own words apparently allows for this subtle shift in the interpretation of Ps. 110:1.

⁸⁹ Eskola, *Messiah and Throne*, 168; Acts 2:34.

unprecedented. What is especially striking -- given that Psalm 110 contains no obvious messianic associations -- is the innovative use of texts in this presentation. As Eskola notes:

In Christian enthronement discourse the enthroned one is the Davidide, and the resurrection was considered the enthronement of the Davidide. Therefore, when the first Christians refer to Psalm 110 and state that Jesus has been “made” the Messiah, this means his installation to a heavenly kingship. Resurrection day becomes coronation day.⁹⁰

Within a range of specific expressions, Eskola finds a common structure represented across these texts that demonstrates that “the character of the Davidic Messiah and the metaphor of throne are essential in early Christian enthronement discourse.”⁹¹ Further, “Early Christology appears to be based on an ascent structure where the basic scene is similar to Second Temple Jewish mysticism. Christ’s exaltation is considered royal enthronement on a heavenly throne.”⁹² This borrowing of a traditional structure notwithstanding, early Christology transcended and transformed the *merkabah* structure with its insistence that Jesus’ enthronement took place at the resurrection.⁹³

While it is attested only in one text, Eskola identifies a second unique type of Christological discourse centered on the resurrection in Romans 1:3-4. Based on a detailed exegesis of the passage, he draws the conclusion that in this formulaic text Jesus is portrayed as the promised Davidic Messiah and Son of

⁹⁰ Eskola, *Messiah and Throne*, 170; Ps. 2:2 and 132:10, 17 also appear to be part of the background.

⁹¹ Eskola, *Messiah and Throne*, 215.

⁹² Eskola, *Messiah and Throne*, 215.

⁹³ Eskola, *Messiah and Throne*, 216.

God, whose resurrection fulfills Scriptural expectation, and is the first fruits of the eschatological resurrection of the dead.⁹⁴ Here again he finds close connections between the *merkabah* tradition and early Christology evident in the way Jesus is presented as taking his place as a heavenly king by means of his resurrection.

The final conclusion from these details is that the formula in Romans 1:3-4 belongs indeed to the context of early Christology that has exploited *merkabah* mysticism and which is constructed on the world view and symbolic world of Jewish mysticism. In this early formula we find a description of an ascension in the eschatological resurrection and an enthronement of the Davidide as the Son of God in *power*.⁹⁵

Eskola's study produces two further examples of the influence of *merkabah* mysticism and its conflation with the Davidic stream of messianic expectation evident in New Testament enthronement language. One of these is found in the letter addressed to the Hebrews where the heavenly throne of God is envisioned as the mercy seat and the focus shifts to the cultic provision of atonement. Here the vision of a heavenly Temple is employed in two ways. On the one hand, it is used to depict an actual heavenly Temple similar to the apocalyptic pattern found in the *Testament of Levi*.⁹⁶ On the other hand, all of heaven itself is equated with a Temple. Important here is the apparent flexibility of the Davidic tradition interpreted in terms of Psalm 110, as it was utilized in the Christology of Hebrews, where now it is the priestly work of Christ that receives

⁹⁴ Eskola, *Messiah and Throne*, 242.

⁹⁵ Eskola, *Messiah and Throne*, 250.

⁹⁶ Eskola, *Messiah and Throne*, 78; 252. See Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* I, 789, where "In the uppermost heaven of all dwells the Great Glory in the Holy of Holies superior to all holiness," and sacrifices are presented by the angels on behalf of the righteous ones. Cf. Heb. 8:2.

primary emphasis. Here ancient traditions close to the emergence of David's appropriation of even older priest-king tradition are evoked to give expression to what has taken place.⁹⁷

In cultic discourse, Christ's exaltation is presented as a cultic act. Christ himself is a high priest who in his resurrection is exalted to God's heavenly shrine. As a king-priest he performs sacrificial ritual in the Holy of Holies. Therefore, also in the context of this discourse, we still have both the Davidic Messiah and the heavenly throne, but they are both given new meanings. The throne is God's ark in the Holy of Holies, and the heavenly Davidide is a heavenly high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.⁹⁸

The final example of "enthronement discourse" cited by Eskola is expressed in judicial terms. Here the Messiah is envisioned in terms of the Danielic Son of Man. The resurrection fades into the background and the focus is on the heavenly status of one who comes to judge the world at the time of the final restoration of all things and the establishment of eternal righteousness.⁹⁹ The focus here is on the final rendering of God's justice by the enthroned Christ.¹⁰⁰ He concludes his work by going on to explore the deficiencies of attempts to account for early Christology in terms of angelology, adoptionism, or other types of Old Testament typological analogies.

⁹⁷ See the previous discussion this in part I above, "The Cultic Role of the Israelite King" in reference to the thesis of John Day.

⁹⁸ Eskola, *Messiah and Throne*, 269. The apparent resonance of the Melchizedek tradition for the writer rests on its support for a non-Aaronic priest who could be appointed by God's prerogative in special circumstances. See also the development of this discussion on 261. "According to the story [of Hebrews], the Davidic priest-king enters the heavenly Temple as a high priest *par excellence*. He offers a sacrifice for sins and sprinkles blood on the mercy seat. After this the high priest is enthroned on the very same seat, God's throne of Glory in the heavenly Holy of Holies."

⁹⁹ Cf. Matt. 19:28; 25:31-32; Mark 13:26-27.

¹⁰⁰ Eskola, *Messiah and Throne*, 283.

Eskola's contributions to the development of early Christology are significant. To begin with, he extends Hurtado's inquiry into the background for early Christian portrayal of the enthroned Messiah and provides a basis for greater specificity about the character of early Christology. He does this by examining the transformation of the messianic tradition in terms of the symbolic paradigms of the Jewish *merkabah* background. In contrast to Hurtado, he takes seriously the inherently messianic character of early Christology. In this way, his approach has decided advantages over Hurtado's.¹⁰¹

Secondly, by noting the significance of the kingly motifs and especially the prominence of the throne motif in early Christology, Eskola is able to provide a coherent conceptual framework for connecting three very different streams of messianic description which nevertheless all figure prominently in early Christological description: the enthroned and eschatological Davidide, the heavenly high priest Melchizedek and the heavenly Son of Man. In terms of providing a model for how the variety of messianic motifs available to early Christians might have been integrated, this constitutes a significant advance.¹⁰² While the throne is given a very different meaning in each of these, it appears significant in all them,¹⁰³ suggesting strongly that royal and messianic categories were an important part of the basis for early Christian thought about the place of

¹⁰¹ *Messiah and Throne*, 323-25.

¹⁰² In this regard he extends the findings of Collins' study. Despite the breadth of his analysis, Collins stops short of explaining how the Davidic messianic stream (which he agrees is the most prevalent) was related to and integrated with what he calls the "minor strands" such as "anointed prophet" or "Son of Man" within early Christianity; cf. Collins, *The Sceptre and the Throne*, 209-210. Eskola seems to have offered a viable proposal for how this was done.

¹⁰³ *Messiah and Throne*, 339.

Christ. It provided the opportunity for an early Jewish Christian innovation, which involved a uniquely Christological transformation of the patterns of enthronement discourse that were found in traditional Second Temple literature.

In pursuing this line of explanation, Eskola also avoids two potential errors. One is the problematic methodology of attempting to trace a gradual path from a series of Old Testament typologies which find their supposed completion in Christology.¹⁰⁴ The other is the difficulty of working within merely adoptionistic categories.¹⁰⁵

At the same time, Eskola also identifies the central importance of the Davidic stream of messianic portrayal which of course was only one of a cluster of varying and interrelated messianic descriptions which was available. This is consistent with the findings of the earlier review in this study of both the background of Messianism in Judaism¹⁰⁶ and the portrayal of Jesus in the Passion narrative of Matthew's Gospel. Both studies showed that the Davidic covenant formed the basis for an ongoing appropriation of Davidic motifs in which these motifs were transformed and modified in the course of historical events. If Eskola's central argument is correct, than this was also true in early

¹⁰⁴ *Messiah and Throne*, 332-333.

¹⁰⁵ *Messiah and Throne*, 321. See also Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 733.

¹⁰⁶ In the texts extant in first century Judaism, the actual link between heavenly enthronement and the exaltation of a Davidic Messiah is perhaps most clearly evident in the Qumran Isaiah commentary 4Q161. Following a citation of Isaiah 11:1-5: "[This saying refers to the Branch of] David, who will appear in the Las[t Days,...] [...] his enemies; and God will support him with [a spirit of] strength [...] [and God will give him] a glorious throne, [a sacred] crown, and elegant garments. [...He will put a] scepter in his hand, and he will rule over all the G[enti]les..." (cf. *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 211). See also Eskola, *Messiah and Throne*, 132.

Christology,¹⁰⁷ where Davidic messianism was expressed in terms of a narrative structure in which the shape of the messianic enthronement story implied the divine qualities of its central character. This took place through the juxtaposition of several key motifs within Second Temple Jewish literature:

According to the story, the Davidic prince in his transcendent post-resurrection enthronement, has become *kurios* on the throne of Glory. Now he reigns in the kingdom of God as a Lord. Faith in him means confessing him as Lord and in this way he is proven to be the object of faith. The Lordship of Christ became thus a principle according to which the whole Temple cult and also the idea of theocracy were reinterpreted. The kingship of YHWH was seen to be realized and fulfilled by in the Lordship of Christ who sits on the throne of Glory... In the New Testament, theocracy becomes Christocracy. This is where we see intertextuality in its full force. The confessing of Christ as Lord realizes simultaneously the core of traditional Jewish devotion—faith in and faithfulness to God as heavenly King.¹⁰⁸

Eskola believes these enthronement narratives which he has detected are independent of the traditional sources from which they were created, and thus entirely reflective of the convictions of the post Easter Christian community.¹⁰⁹ Yet at the same time, based on the examination of the Gospel materials, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that these narratives were nonetheless based on initial interpretative uses of these traditions of Judaism signaled by the words and actions of Jesus himself. Given the very early roots of these traditions,¹¹⁰ it must

¹⁰⁷ “In the symbolic world of the first Christians Christ was first and foremost an enthroned Davidide. He was depicted as a kingly Messiah. The content of Christology was constructed on this basis.” *Messiah and Throne*, 343.

¹⁰⁸ *Messiah and Throne*, 389. See also the further development of this early Christian conviction in *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 726-733.

¹⁰⁹ *Messiah and Throne*, 389.

¹¹⁰ Eskola maintains that Romans 1:3,4 and the enthronement Christology of the letter to the Hebrews both reflect traditional formulations, which, together with Acts 2:22-36, go back to the early Jerusalem community. See *Messiah and Throne*, 202; 227.

be suggested that such interpretative narratives may well have been instigated by the very one to whom they referred.¹¹¹

Given the significance of the categories of Davidic messianism for Eskola's own conclusions, it seems difficult to imagine that such an enthronement discourse could have arisen so quickly without at least some prior initiation in the life of the historical Jesus. Although it does seem evident that he was concerned that his mission was not understood as a merely political restoration of the Davidic kingdom, but as something much more far reaching and transformative, it is certainly out of the question that Jesus intended to repudiate all connection with the Davidic dynasty for his own mission.

Conclusion

This chapter proposes that with a return of attention to the historical Jesus, and a renewed attention to the messianic background of the Gospels and other New Testament writings, a possible route is open to connecting Jesus' own messianic self-understanding with recent developments in the study of early Christology. This analysis can also potentially shed important light on the initial development of Christology and its innovative extension of the Davidic tradition. This is particularly evident in the way the resurrected Jesus was portrayed as an enthroned Davidic king whose exalted status formed the basis for early Christian

¹¹¹ Jesus' own cryptic use of Ps. 110 (in Mark 12:36, Matt. 22:44 and Luke 22:42) to highlight his own status as one both a Son of David and yet much more than that, is a case in point. See Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period*, 73; also his *New Wine into Fresh Wineskins: Contextualizing the Early Christian Confessions* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 84.

worship and devotion as one who could be named the Son of God, Messiah, Lord, and God.¹¹² This Christological development arose out of the life, activity and teaching of Jesus,¹¹³ who carried out a divinely appointed mission as the Servant of Yahweh, sent to redeem his people Israel, and who viewed this mission in large part as the fulfillment of the promise for an enduring Davidic dynasty, and himself as taking office as its final, faithful king.

Even if it is correct to view Davidic messianism as significant for both early Christian texts as well as for Jesus' own sense of vocation and mission, it still remains to be seen how this particular concept of messianism is related to the longstanding traditions that developed over the course of Israel's life as a nation. This involves both an inquiry into the place of kingship in the Old Testament as well as a consideration of how kingship was shaped by the parameters of the Davidic covenant, as will become apparent in what follows.

¹¹² Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*, 736.

¹¹³ Walter Brueggeman contends because of its initial placement in David's royal court, the Davidic covenant is inescapably and permanently bound up with ideological concerns of legitimating power and privilege, so that quite unavoidably, "evangelical faith comes in the form of royal ideology;" *First and Second Samuel*, 258. Those who see Jesus rejecting all Davidic associations in his actions would probably agree with his point. The reality is however, apparently more complex. I would argue that the historical experiences of the exile and the collapse of the Davidic line shaped the Davidic covenant in profound ways. Examples such as Haggai 2:21-23, Zechariah's prophecies (esp. 9:9,10, 12:10, and 13:1) and the influence of Isaiah 40-55 (and especially 52:13-53:12) on messianic interpretation, suggest that the Davidic covenant was reappropriated and recast within a context where some of the humbling lessons of exile had been learned and royalist hopes revised. This would appear to begin in the early chapters of Isaiah; cf. J.J. M. Roberts, "The Old Testament's Contributions to Messianic Expectations," in *The Messiah*, James H. Charlesworth, ed., 45. That these texts were important for Jesus' own understanding of his messianic mission is especially evident in the events of his arrest and trial. While Brueggeman's point -- that religious authority and power can still potentially be abused for political gain and ideological leverage -- is well taken, a potent Biblical critique of such misuse can be found in the development of the Davidic dynasty itself. Here Brueggeman's conception of the Davidic covenant may well be too static.

Chapter 3

Sacral Kingship in the Ancient Near East and Israel

The Religious Function and Cultic Role of Kings in the ANE

Several recent studies of the origins of kingship in ancient Israel have situated this problem within the larger context of kingship in the ancient world, especially in the ancient Near East.¹¹⁴ While the practice of kingship varied considerably across ancient cultures, several common considerations can be adduced. In particular, numerous ancient cultures viewed their king as an intermediary between the divine and mundane worlds, a function sometimes termed "sacral kingship." While the complexity of sacral kingship makes precise categories difficult to draw, several broad typologies have been identified which can be located with some frequency.¹¹⁵ Sacral kingship in several of these forms was also common among nations which surrounded Israel and, to varying degrees, influenced the development of monarchy there.

Though the institution of kingship was such an established entity in the ancient Near East that it predates many written records,¹¹⁶ the structure of kingship in the nations around Israel was by no means uniform. While influences

¹¹⁴See Carol Meyers, "Kinship and Kingship: The Early Monarchy," in *The Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 221-272; Henri Cazelles, "Sacral Kingship," *ABD CD ROM* (New York: Doubleday, 1992); Baruch Halpern, "Kingship and Monarchy," *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 413-416.

¹¹⁵ "Kingship, Sacred." *Harper Collins Dictionary of Religion* (on line) (Belief Net, <<http://www.beliefnet.com/glossary.entry>>.) See also Claus Westerman, "Sacred Kingship," *Encyclopedia Britannica 2003 CD ROM*.

¹¹⁶Baruch Halpern. "Kingship and Monarchy," 413-416.

from a number of sources can be detected, historical circumstances and pressures which accelerated Israel's evolution from a nomadic to sedentary civilization seem to have dictated that Israel's initial model of kingship resembled that of national monarchies of the local Transjordan peoples most closely.¹¹⁷ The reign of Saul, Israel's first king, represents a transitional phase that moves Israel towards this type of nationally based, military leadership which is even more clearly evident in the accounts of the reign of David. In addition to the military and judicial duties of kingship, there was a third important dimension to kingship. The fact that the selection of Saul took place by divine anointing draws attention to the deeply religious aspect of Israel's kingship from the beginning. Like the kingships of most of its neighbors, Israel's monarchy was also a sacred institution.¹¹⁸ Here brief consideration must be given to how sacral kingship functioned in the larger religious environment of neighboring peoples. While evidence in each case is admittedly fragmentary, and shows variety and development over time, some general aspects of kingship and its function in society can be observed.

¹¹⁷S. Szikszai, "King," *IDB*: 3, 11-17. Szikszai identifies three main patterns: Palestinian/Canaanite, Egyptian/Mesopotamian, Transjordanian. Keith Whitlam attributes a similar suggestion to Alt, who argues that Israel's kingship is closely related to that of Edom, Moab and Ammon. Cf. his article "King and Kingship," *ABD CD ROM* (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

¹¹⁸Szikszai, "King," 14.

Egyptian Views of Kingship

Egyptian conceptions of kingship reflected the unitary way in which religion, society and the political order were viewed in that culture.¹¹⁹ Kingship was embedded as part of the given order. Egyptian kings, together with the gods, had a key role to play in ensuring that order would be sustained in the cosmos. Evidence from temple reliefs throughout several periods of Egyptian history portrays the king as the sole human intermediary with the divine world.¹²⁰ His most significant action in this regard was the making of offerings to the gods, in response to which they would endow him with life and the capability to subdue the forces that threaten cosmic stability.¹²¹ These close interactions with the gods did entail shared divine status for the Pharaoh, even though it was consistently as that of a “minor” god and subservient order of deity and not one equivalent to those in the Egyptian pantheon *per se*.¹²² While such a framework allowed for the king to attain elements of divine status, it does not appear that this stature was claimed by all kings of Egypt.¹²³ While there is some evidence that attests to Egyptian kings being deified upon death and even some who claimed this status while alive, the very fact that these declarations were made

¹¹⁹John Baines, “Ancient Egyptian Kingship,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day JSOT Sup 270 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 46.

¹²⁰Baines, “Ancient Egyptian Kingship,” 28.

¹²¹Baines, “Ancient Egyptian Kingship,” 27, 44-45.

¹²²Baines, “Ancient Egyptian Kingship,” 21.

¹²³This would serve to qualify the commonly argued point that Egyptian culture deified the Pharaoh, as for example in Szikszai, “King,” 14. Actual literary evidence requires a more nuanced view of Egyptian royal ideology.

implies the possibility that kings were not automatically regarded as divine.¹²⁴ Moreover, Baines has demonstrated that several of the instances where such divine claims are attested in literary works are highly rhetorical in character and are found in contexts where the dependence of the Pharaoh on the gods and the attaining of their favour through devout worship is stressed with even greater frequency.¹²⁵ This having been said, it nevertheless remains true that Egypt placed much more emphasis on the divinity of the individual king than did other nations in this locality, who tended to be more concerned with the divinely ordained character of the institution of kingship and the king as an agent of divine rule.

Several important aspects of the relationship between Egyptian and Israelite kingship require elaboration. The first of these is the Egyptian concept of divine kingship, which was often expressed in terms of divine sonship in titles such as "son of Re."¹²⁶ Since the "divine sonship" concept can also be found in royal texts in Israel,¹²⁷ a possibility of Egyptian influence in Israel's use of this term has been suggested.¹²⁸ What is especially significant, however, is the very

¹²⁴Baines, "Ancient Egyptian Kingship," 28.

¹²⁵Baines, "Ancient Egyptian Kingship," 31-39.

¹²⁶Baines, "Ancient Egyptian Kingship," 19-21.

¹²⁷Cf. Ps. 2:7-12; 89:27. 110:3. John Day also sees the possibility of such a reference in the vocative mood of Ps. 45.6 and in the reference to a future king in Is. 9:6, though he argues that it is more the superhuman power of the warrior king, not divine status *per se* that is being referred to. Cf. John Day, "The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy," *King and Messiah in the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day, 81-85.

¹²⁸Tryggve Mettinger, *King and Messiah: The Civil and Sacral Legitimation of the Israelite Kings* (Lund: Wallin & Dalholm, 1976), 273-274. F.M. Cross argued that evidence is mounting in favour of a specifically Canaanite background for "son of God," though he cites no specific examples; cf. *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 247.

distinctive way in which this relationship is expressed. In contrast to Egyptian presentations, which were based on mythological descent, Israelite expressions of divine kingship consistently stress that the king becomes a divine son at a definite historical point in time as a result of a divine declaration.¹²⁹

A second contrast is also evident. Despite the centrality of the Pharaoh's role, traditional Egyptian religious literature never developed anything like the messianic motif of later Hebraic thought during its times of crisis. The goal of statecraft was envisaged in terms of restoring a lost era when gods ruled the earth directly. This objective was thought to have been attained during certain eras only to have been lost again.¹³⁰ Because the role of the king was so strongly taken for granted and rarely subjected to criticism or reevaluation, concepts of royalty remained much more constrained and limited in comparison to other cultures such as Israel's. Perhaps even more importantly, the divinity of the Pharaoh meant that subjects owed their leader unconditional obedience, without thought of a corresponding obligation by the Pharaoh to his subjects. In contrast, Syro-Palestinian and Mesopotamian royal ideology was based on a contractual relationship in which the ruled could expect certain compensation,

¹²⁹As in Mettinger, 265: "The filial relationship between the Egyptian king and the god was conceived in mythological categories with the emphasis on the physical descent of the king from the god who begat him. It is important to note that it is not in this mythological form that we find the conception of divine sonship in the Israelite texts. Divine sonship has been subjected to an *interpretatio israelitica*. Indeed, it does not seem to be out of place to interpret this process as a case of de-mythologization." See also Meyers, "Kinship and Kingship," 262. For a view that allows for some similarity between Egyptian and Israelite views, refer to Jarl Fossum, "Son of God," *ABD CD ROM*.

¹³⁰Baines, 49-50. Pharaohs played a limited role in this cyclical drama where order again and again contained the forces of cosmic chaos, but where no decisive, permanent or enduring resolution between these two entities was envisioned.

such as protection and loyalty from the sovereign.¹³¹ As will be discussed in more detail below, it is not hard to see that of these two paradigms, Israelite perspectives were far more similar to the latter than the former.

Both Egyptian and Israelite kingship texts stress the connection between the king's role as representative of the deity and territorial security for the nation. In Egypt, the king's responsibility entailed that he could act in whatever ways were deemed necessary to preserve this cosmic order (*ma'at*). This included such acts as the pronouncement of execratory curses in which the names of enemies were written on clay pots which were then smashed with the royal mace, language which can be found in Old Testament texts as well.¹³²

Kingship in Mesopotamian and Ugaritic Sources

Mesopotamian views of kingship show some traces of development in terms of the divine status of the king. Some kings were also designated as priests, and were regarded as recipients of the trappings of kingship from the national gods.¹³³ While earlier Sumerian cultures typically regarded the king as a human vice regent for the gods, early Babylonian royal titles freely incorporated allusions to deity.¹³⁴ However, such references typically stop short of calling for

¹³¹Allen Rosengren Peterson, *The Royal God: Enthronement Festivals in Ancient Israel and Ugarit?* JSOT Sup 259 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 100-101.

¹³² See also "Egyptian Execration Texts," in *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, ed. James B. Pritchard (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 225; for evidence of similar phrasing in Israelite literature such as Ps. 2:9, see *The IVP Background Commentary*, ed. J. Walton, V. Matthews, & M. Chavalas (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 519.

¹³³Cazelles, "Sacral Kingship."

¹³⁴Szikszai, "King", 15.

the worship of the king. Unlike Egyptian kings, Babylonian kings conceived of divine “sonship” in terms of adoption and emphasized a functional rather than a metaphysical divinity. Other cultures, such as the Hittite civilizations, also granted divine status to their royal leaders but only after death.¹³⁵

Expressions of the authority and sacral status of Mesopotamian kings came in several forms. As in Egypt, the king’s obligation to his divine patrons to practice effectively was of paramount importance in Assyria, Babylonia and Sumer.¹³⁶ This alone would ensure the security and well-being of the nation. Literary evidence that depicts the king’s participation in the New Year festival of Babylon reinforces the dependence of the king on divine legitimation and approval and emphasizes royal accountability to the gods.¹³⁷ In one account, after entering Esagil, the temple of Marduk, the king surrenders the trappings of royalty (scepter, circlet and mace) to the priest, who then ritually slaps him on the cheek, forces him to kneel in the presence of Bel, and hears his royal profession of innocence with respect to wrongdoing. After a second ritual slap of the cheeks, he is reinstated and ordered to rule effectively, reassured of the blessing of the gods if he does so. While such a ritual may well have been a reenactment of Marduk’s primeval humiliation by the forces of chaos, it also establishes clearly the subservience of the king to the local patron god.

¹³⁵See Cazelles, “Sacral Kingship.” See also Szikszai, “King,” 15.

¹³⁶ W.G. Lambert, “Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *King and Messiah in the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day, 55.

¹³⁷Lambert, “Kingship in Ancient Mesopotamia,” 64 -65. See also Szikszai, “King,” 15.

Evidence from Ugaritic sources attests to a parallel New Year's Festival in Canaanite circles in which the king also played a central role which included purification, the offerings of sacrifices, and prayer for the prosperity of Ugarit for the year to follow.¹³⁸ The festival enacted the annual return from the Nether World and coming to life of Baal, an event which was integral to the annual cycle of growth, harvest and dormancy in nature. In a sense, Baal would be enthroned anew each autumn.¹³⁹

At the conclusion of the feast, the king took part in a sacred marriage rite in which he represented the chief Canaanite deity, Ilu, together with his queen, who acted as Atiratu, Ilu's consort.¹⁴⁰ The ritual included a number of preparatory actions and culminated in cultic sexual intercourse.¹⁴¹ Here the Canaanite temple in effect became the meeting place for the divine and mundane worlds, through the mediation of the king in his cultic role as a divine son who reenacted the mythical victory over the powers of creation.¹⁴²

¹³⁸Johannes C. DeMoor, *New Year with the Canaanites and the Israelites I: Description* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1972), 6. For the text of what appears to be a script for such a ritual, see DeMoor's second volume *New Year with the Canaanites and the Israelites II: The Canaanite Sources* (Kampen: J.H. Kok, 1972), 12-17.

¹³⁹ It is not clear whether the king would also be reaffirmed as king each year. See DeMoor, *New Year with the Canaanites and the Israelites I*, 6.

¹⁴⁰DeMoor, *New Year with the Canaanites and the Israelites I*, 6-7.

¹⁴¹Refer to De Moor, *New Year with the Canaanites and the Israelites II*, 12-17.

¹⁴² By the post exilic period, many Jewish texts portray the Temple (by virtue of its location on Zion, the sacred mountain) in similar terms as the center of the universe and the point of contact between heaven and earth. Much of the language is suggestive of parallels to and influence from Near Eastern myth, although the extent of both is debated. See Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion* (New York: Winston Press, 1985), 107-110; 120-126; also Halpern, "Kingship and Monarchy," 414. This recognition of the Temple as sacred is set within a distinctive vision that is closely linked to the historical beginnings of kingship in Israel. Here, in contrast to the common mythological origins of temples as divine dwellings, in Near Eastern conceptions, the Temple becomes Yahweh's dwelling as a result of the appointment of the Davidic king as God's own

It seems clear that sacral kingship was an integral part of the broader religious environment of the ancient Near East. The particular development of sacral kingship in Israel and an assessment of the extent to which it was influenced by this larger environment are questions to which we turn.

Early Stages in the Development of Sacral Kingship in Israel

Unlike most, if not all, of its neighbors, Israel may well be the only culture in the ancient Near East to record a developed and fairly detailed pre-monarchical memory.¹⁴³ More importantly, Israel's existence as a religious community preceded Israel's growth as a political state. The priority of the Sinai covenant associated with Moses as a formative corpus exerts itself in an ongoing tension with Israel's later development into a political state governed by a dynasty.¹⁴⁴ On several occasions when the possibility of adopting a king is broached within the Deuteronomic history,¹⁴⁵ it is met with opposition, some of

"anointed" at a specific point in time (Cf. Psalm 132). See Bernard Anderson, *Understanding The Old Testament*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998), 210-211; cf. also Meyers, "Kinship and Kingship," 262-264.

¹⁴³Refer to the following comment in Halpern, "Kingship and Monarchy," 414: "...Israel is the only ancient Near Eastern culture to have preserved written memories of a time before the evolution of kingship or to have constructed any account of a transition from what later tradition would construe as a theocracy to monarchic organization."

¹⁴⁴Levenson, *Sinai and Covenant*, 74-75. This issue emerges both in the process of transition in I Samuel 8-12, but also in the Davidic covenant itself, where it appears in the reluctance of Yahweh to have a permanent "house"/temple.

¹⁴⁵The term "Deuteronomic History" has become a conventional description for the books from Deuteronomy to II Kings. Similarities of style, perspective and outlook have been recognized in these works since these were pointed out by Martin Noth. These features have led many to conclude that the final form of these books can be dated to the 7th/6th century, though the possibility that the source materials originate at an earlier date remains very much an open question, as Anderson points out, in *Understanding the Old Testament 2nd ed.* 188-189. For recent summaries of scholarly opinion about this material, see Russell Fuller, "Deuteronomic

which seems to arise from a fear that the uniqueness of Yahweh's kingship would be eclipsed by the anointing of a human king.¹⁴⁶ While the common tendency of ancient Near Eastern cultures to designate their king as "god" is only rarely if ever attested in Israel,¹⁴⁷ there is clearly the fear that the existence of the kingship itself might compete with the singular place of Yahweh in the life of the nation.¹⁴⁸ The theocratic rule of Yahweh over his people in the years before their entry into Canaan was a central tenet of Israel's identity and continued to function into the post-exilic era as an important lens through which the relationship between Israel and God was viewed.

History," in *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan, 163-164; B.W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999), 165-170; and also Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 170-171.

¹⁴⁶Cf. the reply of Gideon in Jdg. 8:23; see also I Sam. 8:6 ff. It should be noted here that in the period of Judges such a king would at best have been a local tribal chieftain, supported by perhaps one or more tribes of the confederacy, with an understanding of dynastic succession of some type. Levenson refers to this aversion to human kingship in terms of the tension between two views of kingship in Israel. In one perspective, God was seen as a king allowing for the legitimacy of human kingship, and a non-competitive relationship between king and Yahweh. In the other view, Yahweh is a suzerain, in which he is the covenantal Lord of Israel who demands total loyalty from his vassal, the people of Israel. Here there is no room for a king as a divine representative. While this proposal has some merits, both views are portrayed side by side within the canon, providing caution in drawing the lines between them too strongly, since at times they appear to merge. What makes Levenson's proposal difficult to sustain consistently (as he acknowledges) is the fact that both suzerain and sovereign can be designated by the same Hebrew word *mlk*. See Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, 70-74.

¹⁴⁷The most plausible instance is found in Ps. 45:6, and the translation of this verse has been debated. Beginning with the initial verses, the entire psalm clearly addresses the king directly (45:1, 2). It would seem that "Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever" also addresses the king. As John Day suggests, this is best taken as an example of superlative language similar to that found in Is. 9:6. See his essay "The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy," 84-85.

¹⁴⁸M. Tsevat, "King, God As," *IDB Sup*, 515-16; also Sziksai, "King," 14.

While the corruption of Samuel's sons is cited as a decisive motivation for Israel's elders to demand that Samuel appoint a king,¹⁴⁹ other sociological developments may have been at work as well.¹⁵⁰ For example, strategic considerations resulting from ongoing conflict with the Philistines and other enemies seem to have been part of a sense of vulnerability that necessitated stronger centralized political leadership.¹⁵¹ In any event, a number of circumstances seem to have converged in making the adoption of kingship an attractive proposal.¹⁵²

Nevertheless, the animosity towards kingship persisted. The text of the Jewish scriptures¹⁵³ records several examples in which the institution of kingship was viewed with some ambivalence. In fact, ancient Israel's adoption of kingship is a central concern within the canon of the Hebrew Bible.¹⁵⁴ The central historical core of these writings traces the key moments in the process through which Israel goes from a tribal confederacy to a monarchy, and it is clear from

¹⁴⁹I Sam. 8:1-4.

¹⁵⁰See Szikszai, "King," 12. Meyers, cites population increase, shifting settlement patterns and increased demand for stable trade arrangements in such commodities as iron ore as possible economic and social factors which created the need for Israel to adopt a state system; cf. "Kinship and Kingship," 237-243. In addition, see J.W. Rogerson, "Cultural Anthropology and the Hebrew Bible" in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Michael D. Coogan, 703; and Day, "The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy," 72, who rightly points out that kingship in Israel emerged at approximately the same period as it did in other Transjordan states, suggesting that some wider social and political factors were at work.

¹⁵¹Cf. Szikszai, "King," 12. Refer also to I Sam. 11:1-2; 13: 19-21. 14:48.

¹⁵²See Szikszai, 12. "The breakdown of authority based on kinship and tribal structure, together with external threats, created a situation where kingship became a "historical necessity."

¹⁵³The use of this term follows the discussion of Bernard Anderson in *Contours of Old Testament Theology*.

¹⁵⁴ See Whitelam, "King and Kingship."

the narration of these events that this transition was an ongoing matter of some tension and debate.¹⁵⁵ The adoption of kingship and its corollary, the replacing of the theocratic rule of Yahweh which existed during the period of the judges, is identified as an ongoing source of difficulty for the relationship between Israel and God which continues to the period of the Judean exile.¹⁵⁶

Yet at the same time, the narrative is also clear in relating a number of significant ways in which kingship becomes an integral part of the fabric of Israel's religious identity. Despite the fact that kingship initially entered Israel as a foreign innovation,¹⁵⁷ it does appear to have been accommodated within that identity with a great degree of success.¹⁵⁸ The details of this process are not necessarily easy to reconstruct, although it has been suggested that influential prophetic figures such as Nathan may have played a key role, insisting that the older Mosaic traditions shape the Israelite kingship during this transitional

¹⁵⁵Tsevat, M. "Samuel, I and II." *IDB Sup* 777-781. While some would argue that the differing evaluations of the monarchy can be attributed to a variety of sources, this solution may be overly simplistic. Such theorized sources are virtually impossible to isolate on the basis of their view of the monarchy alone. It seems more probable that the narrative is reflective of the ongoing reflections about this debate that continued to the time of the writing of these works. See also a more recent appraisal by Whitelam, "King and Kingship," who suggests that I Kings 11 is actually the most historically reliable account of the adoption of Israelite monarchy but also notes an emerging consensus that regardless of the dating of other accounts such as those in I Samuel 8-15, the narrative reflects concerns that arose during the initial period of transition.

¹⁵⁶I Sam. 8:5-7; 10:17-19. Hos. 13:9-11 (though compare the restoration of Davidic kingship in Hos. 3:4-5). In the restoration chapters of Ezek. 40-48, the writer portrays a strikingly muted role for the king in restored Jerusalem.

¹⁵⁷ See, for example, Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956), 21-22.

¹⁵⁸ The Deuteronomistic history incorporates a strong criticism of Israel's request for a king as evil (I Samuel 12:17, 20) but also portrays Yahweh as being willing to work through the kingship. See Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 250.

period.¹⁵⁹ It seems clear that while many of the traditions and practices of sacral kingship were initially adopted from Israel's neighbours, these forms were now adapted and modified within a new Yahwistic context in profound ways.¹⁶⁰

The Transition to Kingship In Israel

The structure of kingship in Israel developed over several stages which can be briefly sketched. The initial stage begins with the investiture of the first king, Saul, who exhibits the type of charismatic leadership evident in the period of the Judges, before any concepts of hereditary succession have been adopted.¹⁶¹ In two parallel accounts (which many scholars see as originally coming from two separate sources),¹⁶² Saul becomes king through a process which begins with anointing and possession of the Spirit of Yahweh, continues with a decisive military victory which confirms his divine appointment and ends with a public affirmation and celebration of his kingship.¹⁶³ Saul's kingship is based primarily on the ability to provide military leadership for the tribal confederacy during a period of increasing crisis, and lacked most other trappings

¹⁵⁹G.E. Mendenhall, "Government, Israelite" in *IDB Sup*, 372-373. For further discussion, see Chapter 4 below.

¹⁶⁰ This point was stressed already by Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 57-75.

¹⁶¹Szikssai, "King," 12. See also Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 219-220; Meyers, *Kinship and Kingship*, 243.

¹⁶²1 Sam. 8; 10:17-27; 11; 12; and 1 Sam. 9.1-10.16; 13; 14; Halpern, "Kingship and Monarchy," 414.

¹⁶³Halpern, "Kingship and Monarchy," 414.

of royalty. While the commonly used Hebrew royal terms *ngd* and *mlk* are both used of Saul, it is possible to argue that he serves as a transitional figure in many respects.¹⁶⁴ In effect, he exercises a reign which has the marks of a 'chiefdom' as opposed to a full fledged monarchy (including a standing army, court and capital city) which takes roughly a century in order to emerge in Israel. While chiefdom as a social and political structure can be clearly distinguished from the tribal, segmentary society of the judges era, some of its features were carried over into the era of the monarchy in a transitional period that was fully completed by the time of Solomon.¹⁶⁵

According to the narrative, David's rise to power from a local military leader to national king begins with an anointing at Hebron by the leaders of Judah and assumption of kingship over both Judah¹⁶⁶ and, subsequently, the rest of the tribes of Israel.¹⁶⁷ With the conquest of Jerusalem and its establishment as a national capital, he continued the gradual shift away from Israel's traditional political authority, which was based on a tribal and agricultural society, and gave his kingship a clearly urban character.¹⁶⁸ By bringing the primary cultic icon of the tribal confederacy from Shiloh to Jerusalem, David was able to ensure that his capital would now be regarded as both the political and religious center of his

¹⁶⁴ Meyers, "Kinship and Kingship," 236.

¹⁶⁵ See Jo Ann Hackett, "There Was No King in Israel," in *Oxford History of the Biblical World*, ed. Michael D. Coogan, 197-201.

¹⁶⁶ 2 Sam. 2:1-7.

¹⁶⁷ 2 Sam. 5:1-5.

¹⁶⁸ Halpern, "Kingship and Monarchy," 413.

state.¹⁶⁹ By the completion of Israel's temple, Solomon would complete the work of his father David in ensuring the central importance of Jerusalem. The significance of the Solomonic temple as an expression of the newly established and divinely sanctioned Davidic dynasty is perhaps nowhere as evident as in the haste of Jereboam to replicate it, by the construction of his own cultic centers in the Northern kingdom at Bethel and Dan, following the secession.¹⁷⁰ This tendency in the North would culminate in Ahab's decision to erect a temple in his capital of Samaria in the 9th century.

What this brief survey makes especially clear is that what has already been illustrated in Israel's neighbours, was also clearly the case in Israel: the office of kingship had an intrinsically cultic dimension. Israel's view of kingship was closely linked with the worship of Yahweh in at least two important ways. First, Israelitic kingship closely related the king's power to the fact that he was the servant of Israel's God, and secondly, it employed the imagery of kingship to describe Yahweh's divine rule.¹⁷¹ This latter use of kingship imagery for Yahweh can be found not only in Yahweh's kingly rule over the rest of the

¹⁶⁹Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 230-231.

¹⁷⁰Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 279; Halpern, "Kingship and Monarchy," 415.

¹⁷¹See for example Meyers, "Kinship and Kingship," 261; Szikszai, "King," 15; Cazelles, "Sacral Kingship." Levenson proposes that Yahweh's kingly role is expressed in two different ways. As a *sovereign*, Yahweh delegates Israel's king as his earthly representative who is to rule on his behalf. As a *suzerain*, Yahweh is Israel's covenant partner; the entire nation (both collectively and as individuals) stands in the position of vassal and owes Yahweh ultimate allegiance, leaving no room for an earthly king with whom Yahweh can share their obedience. While the first view poses no threat to human kingship of the kind Israel adopted after the judges, it is the second view which serves as the perpetual critique of kingship from the time of Samuel (I Sam. 8) to prophets such as Hosea who are equally critical of the kingship *per se* (Ex. 19:5-6, Hos. 7:10-13). While this tension should not be exaggerated, neither should it be ignored, especially in view of the fact that both are well attested in the canon. See Levenson, *Zion and Sinai*, 70-75.

cosmos (including all other gods and powers of nature)¹⁷² but more specifically in Yahweh's royal rule over his people Israel, which becomes an even more persistent and central motif in Israel than elsewhere in the ancient Near East.¹⁷³ As one detailed study of how this term functioned within a specifically Israelite context has shown, the metaphor of "God as king" was employed primarily to express the utter incomparability of Yahweh, especially in relation to human kings and all other figures of deity.¹⁷⁴

While the anointing of kings is of central importance for conferring Yahweh's blessing and seal of legitimacy upon the new ruler,¹⁷⁵ this visible ritual of accession was equally important in Israel for designating the king as a servant of God, dependent on the divine high King for strength and health and obligated to careful obedience of divine statutes.¹⁷⁶ Due to his close relationship with Yahweh, the king became a source of divine blessing for his people, conveyed in such tangible realities as fertility and prosperity.¹⁷⁷ Perhaps nowhere is the intimacy of this divine-royal relationship more vividly expressed than in the

¹⁷²For this distinction, see Tsevat, "King, God as." 515-16. Cf. Ps. 95:3; 96:4,5; 98:8,9; 89:5-10, 103:19-22.

¹⁷³Tsevat argues that portrayal of Yahweh as Israel's king in this second sense can be traced to an early period in life of the nation. He also suggests that these two ways of expressing kingship (the universal/mythical and the concrete/societal) eventually converge in such texts as Is. 24:21-23; 41:17-24; 44:6-7, where the king over the cosmos rules also in Zion and over his people Israel. Cf. Ex. 15:18, Num. 23:21, Jdg. 8:23, I Sam. 8:7; 10:19; 12:12..

¹⁷⁴See the work of Marc Zvi Brettler, *God is King: Understanding and Israelite Metaphor*, JSOT Sup 76 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 160-166.

¹⁷⁵This point was made already by Mowinckel; *He That Cometh*, 63-66.

¹⁷⁶Cf. Cazelles, "Kingship and Monarchy.

¹⁷⁷Ps. 72.3,16.

Davidic covenant formulation expressed in II Samuel 7 and its echoes elsewhere in the Old Testament.¹⁷⁸ Here the close relationship between Yahweh and the king, expressed within a uniquely Israelite formulation, finds its most vivid expression.

The Israelite New Year's Festival and the Role of the King

It is clear from evidence around the ancient Near East that the king played a key role in the cultic life of the nation. This raises a key issue relevant to the discussion of Israelite kingship, namely the extent to which Israel's kingship adopted and transplanted the specific cultic traditions that were associated with kingship elsewhere. Perhaps the most widely considered topic in this regard concerns the celebration of the Israelite New Year and its possible similarity to New Year's festivals in Babylon and Canaan. This question is complex and of necessity we will consider only two pertinent aspects of the problem here. The first is the evidence concerning Israel's celebration of a New Year's festival and the second deals with the likely role of the king in such celebrations.

It is now widely recognized that a number of Psalms (29, 47, 74, 93, 97) incorporate allusions to the myths of Canaan and Babylon in which characteristics of foreign deities are instead ascribed to Yahweh.¹⁷⁹ While this literary influence is clear, some scholars have gone further and suggested that a number of Psalms were used liturgically in Israel to celebrate the kingship of Yahweh on a yearly basis, just as the Babylonians and Canaanites also celebrated the reinvestiture of their own king and reenacted the mythic battles of

¹⁷⁸See Chapter 2 below.

¹⁷⁹ See Walton, Matthews & Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 541, 547-549.

Marduk and Baal. There have been a wide variety of scholarly attempts to reconstruct the shape of the New Year's festival in Israel. One of the most influential of these proposals was made by Sigmund Mowinckel. Mowinckel noted that there were a number of Psalms which focused specifically on the theme of Yahweh's kingship and royal rule.¹⁸⁰ He argued that these Psalms could be best understood as originating in a yearly celebration of Yahweh's triumphant victory over the waters of chaos at the creation which is alluded to throughout the Psalter.¹⁸¹ While the New Year's festival of Babylon did provide him with an analogy, Mowinckel's main argument also rested on the need to provide a setting for the texts of the Psalms themselves,¹⁸² particularly the phrase "The LORD reigns" (*YHWH mālak*),¹⁸³ which he took as a contemporaneous pronouncement of Yahweh's inaugurated kingship. He went on to argue that this enthronement festival was not a separate feast apart from those mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, but became attached to the annual autumn harvest celebrations of the feast of Tabernacles.¹⁸⁴ Mowinckel maintained that the Israelite version of this festival could be specifically distinguished from those of its neighbours in a number of ways¹⁸⁵ and perhaps especially for its distinctive

¹⁸⁰Ps. 47, 93, 96-99. He went on to associate close to 40 other Psalms with this enthronement festival.

¹⁸¹ Gen. 1:6-10; Ps. 29:3-11, 65:7, 74:13-14, 93:3-4, 95:5, 104: 7-9. While not all of these come from the enthronement Psalms, they illustrate a common theme in Israel's worship. Mowinckel's discussion can be found in *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, trans. D.R. Ap-Thomas, 2 vol. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1962; reprinted Nashville: Abingdon, 1967) 106-189.

¹⁸²See Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, 109-116 and Day's comment in *The Psalms* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 69.

¹⁸³ Ps. 47:8; 93:1, 96:10; 97:1; 98:6 and 99:1.

¹⁸⁴Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I 121.

¹⁸⁵ The numerous Ugaritic texts discovered by Schaeffer at Ras Shamra contained a number of tablets in which Canaanite cultic myths were told. See R.K. Harrison, "Ugarit," in *New International Dictionary of Archaeology*, ed. R.K. Harrison (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 460. Such mythic stories can also be found in Babylonian accounts of Marduk's victory over

insistence that creation and the salvific acts of Yahweh could be located in history.¹⁸⁶ While the number of specifically designated ‘enthronement’ Psalms was small in number, he also attempted to connect various other Psalms into a description of rites that may have been part of this festival at different times in Israel’s history.¹⁸⁷

While Mowinckel’s proposals represent a serious and sophisticated attempt to provide a plausible context for reading a number of Psalms, they have been criticized.¹⁸⁸ Some argue that the evidence that Israel commemorated the enthronement of Yahweh each year during the ingathering is too circumstantial, and thus still inconclusive.¹⁸⁹ Others go still further, and argue that texts such as these Psalms cannot be used to reconstruct liturgical ritual.¹⁹⁰ Other criticisms have also been raised about whether the phrase “YHWH malak” should best be

Tiamat in the *Enuma Elish*; cf. Dennis Bratcher, ed. “The Enumah Elish,” <<http://www.cresourcei.org/enumaelish.html>>, November, 2003.

¹⁸⁶Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, I, 139-140.

¹⁸⁷Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, I, 169-182.

¹⁸⁸ See the literature mentioned in Day, *The Psalms* 85-87, and Mowinckel’s discussion of scholars who are critical of his thesis, in *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*,

¹⁸⁹ See Roland E. Murphy, “Psalms, The Book of,” in *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. Bruce Metzger, 628; also Walton, Matthews & Chavalas, *IVP Bible Background Commentary*, 529.

¹⁹⁰ T. H. Gaster “Myth, Mythology.” *IDB* 3, 485. See also Petersen, *The Royal God*, 15-25, 89-91. Petersen like Gaster, argues that many the texts of the Baal cycle from Ras Shamra (KTU 1.1; 1.2; 1.3; 1.4; 1.5; 1.6) were mistakenly seen as the script or *libretto* for a dramatic reenactment which took place during the New Year’s Festival of Ugarit. While he allows that such texts may have been read or recited during such cultic occasions as *Enuma Elish* was, the form of the texts themselves give no indication that any ritual reenactment or dramatic performance ever took place. In short, he proposes that there was no Canaanite New Year’s enthronement festival for the Israelites to copy. This argument is most effective against scholars who argue on the basis of “myth and ritual” parallels alone.

interpreted “Yahweh has become King,” as Mowinckel did,¹⁹¹ or as “Yahweh reigns,” a pronouncement that challenges the claims of other deities.

Mowinckel’s position has recently been defended by John Day, who points out that the theme of Yahweh’s kingship and enthronement was associated with the feast of Tabernacles in later Judaism in a number of texts that likely reflect earlier worship.¹⁹² He goes on to trace a number of significant pieces of evidence which link the theme of Yahweh’s kingship with the New Year’s/Tabernacle feast in the pre exilic period as well, arguing that such an explanation is still the most convincing setting for the enthronement psalms in question.¹⁹³ Mowinckel can certainly be credited with drawing attention to the numerous themes which are shared by these royal psalms and for stressing the central importance of Yahweh’s divine kingship in the life of Israel’s communal worship. Nevertheless, the wide range of criticisms has led to a decisive modification of particular details of Mowinckel’s position. This is largely true even among scholars who accept that the Psalter’s emphasis on the kingship and enthronement of Yahweh does indicate the influence of Near Eastern myths and cultic texts which found their way into liturgical use in such Israelite writings.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹¹See Mowinckel’s discussion of this in *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, I 109-116. This criticism has been made again recently by Marc Zvi Brettler, *God is King: Understanding and Israelite Metaphor*, 167. Brettler transfers the contemporaneous sense of “Yahweh has become King” as newly enthroned to the nations, who newly recognize his kingship. This explains how the implication of Yahweh’s kingship might function on a metaphorical level in a particular text where the nations are alluded to, but his objection doesn’t deal with the more specific grammatical issues. See also Mowinckel, II, 222-224, where he attempts to answer a number of criticisms made of this interpretation on grammatical and linguistic grounds. This question is also taken up in Day, *The Psalms*, 75-82. At this point the debate seems inconclusive.

¹⁹²Day, *The Psalms*, 70-71. Mowinckel also made this point. See *The Psalms in Israel’s Worship*, I, 118-130.

¹⁹³Day, *The Psalms*, 73-75.

¹⁹⁴Anderson provides a balanced and moderate affirmation of Mowinckel’s position, though he too favours the phrase “Yahweh is king” for theological reasons, suggesting that “Yahweh has now become king” is too reliant on the underlying mythical worldview. Cf. his comments in *Understanding the Old Testament*, 504-506. It is not clear that Mowinckel’s translation would

Other scholars have searched for further evidence of an Israelite New Year's festival outside the Psalms. DeMoor's work, for example, attempted to show that the Israelite celebration of this annual festival could be traced with some success from the period of the judges onwards (where a yearly feast held at Shiloh is described in connection with the annual fall wine harvest)¹⁹⁵ and with increasing certainty through the period of the kings, past the Babylonian exile to the time of Ezra.¹⁹⁶ DeMoor provides a detailed and careful summary of the relevant Israelite and Canaanite texts. He shows that an autumnal harvest festival of some kind was celebrated at various points over this time span, that it bore certain superficial resemblance to what we know of the Canaanite festivities, and that various kings such as Jereboam appear to have taken part in it.

Defining the role of the king in the rituals of the Israelite New Year's festival is a challenging task. Mowinckel admitted that a detailed description of the rituals themselves is difficult to ascertain due to a paucity of biblical evidence,¹⁹⁷ though he did attempt to describe the festival in some detail nevertheless. Other scholars, seeing essential continuity between the "myth and ritual" of Israel and the larger Near Eastern religious environment, have gone back to the original Babylonian texts of the Akitu,¹⁹⁸ and suggested that Israelite

necessarily create a problematic tension between the celebration of Yahweh's enthronement and Yahweh's eternal and historical kingship, which is clearly affirmed in the same Psalter (93:2,5; 95:5; 145:13). For a parallel in the New Testament, see Rev. 11:15-17; 12:10 where both the eternal and contemporaneous dimensions of divine kingship are also in view side by side.

¹⁹⁵DeMoor, "New Year with the Canaanites and the Israelites I," 12.

¹⁹⁶DeMoor, "New Year with the Canaanites and the Israelites I," 13-25.

¹⁹⁷ See Mowinckel, *The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, I, 169-182.

¹⁹⁸ See Jacob Klein, "Akitu," in *ABD CD ROM*.

kings also took part in similarly elaborate rites, which reenacted the primordial battle of Yahweh and the forces of chaos or paralleled the apparent ritual humiliation and reinstatement of the king found elsewhere.¹⁹⁹ Even those proposals that avoid the obvious pitfalls of transferring the Akitu rituals into Israel in a wholesale fashion²⁰⁰ appear to be on quite tenuous ground. In addition to the highly speculative quality of this type of historical reconstruction, such parallels rest too heavily on the assumption that Israel adopted the practices of Babylonian sacral kingship in order to explain texts that can be explained in much more obvious ways.²⁰¹

An even more trenchant criticism of attempts to reconstruct Israelite rituals on the basis of ancient Near Eastern myths is provided by John Rogerson, who traced the origins of the ritual theory of myth and the particular way in which early proponents of this theory chose to interpret (what were then) the newly discovered Babylonian and Assyrian texts.²⁰² Examining in particular the work of S. H. Hooke (a prominent scholar for the “myth and ritual” position) he argues

¹⁹⁹ A. R. Johnson, *Sacral Kingship in Ancient Israel*, 2nd Ed. (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1967).

²⁰⁰ For example, by suggesting that the Israelite king played the role of Yahweh as the Babylonian king did for Marduk. Here Mettinger's assessment is decisive. “Some scholars cling to the idea that that the king enacted the role of YHWH. But a more attractive assumption is the one propounded by Mowinckel, that the king had the role of David, while YHWH was represented by the ark, his words being spoken by a cultic prophet. If this is correct it becomes impossible to speak of cultic identification of the king with God.” See *King and Messiah*, 306, citing Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 82-84 and “General Oriental and Specific Israelite Elements in the Israelite Conception of the Sacral Kingdom,” in *La Regalia Sacra* (Leiden: Brill, 1959), 291.

²⁰¹ Day, *The Psalms*, 105-106, Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 305-306. See also Szikszai, “King,” 16.

²⁰² J. W. Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation* (New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1974), 66-84.

that there two fundamental flaws in Hooke's work. First, he failed to provide a consistent and coherent explanation of how the Akitu festival made its way from Babylon to Israel and Canaan. While initially he proposed a fragmentation of the largely uniform Babylonian pattern among the decentralized cities of Canaan which resulted in a host of divergent local practices, he later appeared to argue that some Akitu rituals were adopted in Jerusalem intact.²⁰³ Rogerson also finds that Hooke fails to substantiate his claim that the rituals of Babylon were adopted in Israel, and why the parallels in Old Testament traditions could not simply be merely literary survivals.²⁰⁴ Rogerson also cites the work of Kirk²⁰⁵ whose work with Greek myths had led to the conclusion that the link between ritual and myth was much less direct than Hooke and others who followed the "myth and ritual" position had supposed. In other words, it is extremely difficult to deduce the existence of a ritual on the basis of a surviving myth alone,²⁰⁶ and we simply

²⁰³ Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation*, 78-79. Hooke provided no explanation for why one urban center such as Jerusalem adopted the Akitu festival intact, while other developed states such as the Ugarit did not, and adopted a localized remnant of a fragmented original instead.

²⁰⁴ Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation*, 79.

²⁰⁵ G.S. Kirk, *Myth: Its Meaning and Function in Ancient and Other Cultures* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

²⁰⁶ "Again, when we remember the extent to which Hooke's position depends *ex hypothesi* on the deduction of rituals from myths in the case of the Ras Shamra material, and myths from rituals in the case of Israelite religion, we see, in the light of Kirk's conclusion, what great weight has been placed on the comparatively few Babylonian myths which have a demonstrably ritual connection. We must conclude that the attack on the particular form of the ritual theory of myth used by Hooke is damaging to his position in general." Cf. Rogerson, *Myth in Old Testament Interpretation*, 81. Rogerson's own assessment of the evidence for proven Near Eastern parallels in Israel is quite modest: "It remains that there was a new year festival at Babylon, that Canaanite religion was in some way connected with fertility, that Hebrew religion in its prophetic form was a reaction against this, and that the king did play some central role in the Jerusalem cultus... But the interpretation of these facts must be reconsidered," 83. Peterson, *The Royal God*, 89-91 makes a similar point in his review of Ugaritic materials.

cannot claim to know very much about the actual role of the king in such specific cultic celebrations and situations.²⁰⁷

The Cultic Role of the Israelite King

Even though a number of particular parallels between sacral kingship in Israel and the ancient Near Eastern New Year's festival have been overstated, this is not to say that Israelite kingship developed independently of external influences or that impact from Canaanite and other local cultures cannot be detected at all. The opposite situation seems more likely to be the case in both respects. One aspect that clearly suggests such similarities and influences can be found in the Old Testament texts which show that the anointed Israelite king, like his Canaanite and other Near Eastern counterparts, did play a significant role in the cult.²⁰⁸ That he acted as an intermediary between Yahweh and the

²⁰⁷A conclusion also drawn by Whitelam during his discussion in "King, Kingship."

²⁰⁸I am aware of the position taken by some recent scholars who argue that there is little if any reliable historical quality in the Deuteronomistic History, including some who question the probability that these accounts accurately depict David and Solomon as actual historical figures or Israel as a political entity. This kind of skepticism has not gone unchallenged, and the ensuing debate has taken place chiefly over the relationship between archaeological evidence and the kind of historical writing we find in the Hebrew Bible. Briefly put, while the biblical writers write with a particular historiographical purpose, I am not persuaded that the essential historicity of their accounts has been successfully challenged. For an example of a critical appraisal, see Thomas L. Thompson, "Historiography of Ancient Palestine and Early Jewish Historiography: W.G. Dever and the Not So New Biblical Archaeology," in *The Origins of Ancient Israelite States*; JSOT Sup 228, ed. Volkmar Fritz and Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996) 26-43. For a more moderate position, see two other essays in the same volume: Baruch Halpern, "The Construction of the Davidic State: An Exercise in Historiography," 44-77 and also Christa Schafer-Lichtenberger's consideration of the relationship between recent sociological studies of state development and the evidence of the biblical texts, "Sociological and Biblical Views of the Early State," 78-105, which finds a fair amount of the biblical evidence corroborates what we would expect to find in an ancient monarchy at this particular point in the growth of the Israelite state. For an earlier and more critical appraisal of attempts to view the books of Samuel as primarily inventive propaganda, see Siegfried Herrmann, "King David's State," in *In the Shelter of Elyon: Essays on Ancient Palestinian Life and Literature in Honor of G.W. Ahlstrom*; JSOT Sup 31, ed. W. Boyd Barrick and John R. Spencer (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 261-275.

people is evident from references to royal prayer and involvement in temple sacrifice.²⁰⁹ At times individual kings acted to supervise and even reform the cultic life of Israel.²¹⁰ There are also instances where kingly authority included the power to appoint priests and in some cases remove priests from office as well.²¹¹ This high degree of involvement in the formal worship of Israel and Judah suggests that together with their Near Eastern counterparts, Israel's kings (beginning with David) were also regarded as the religious head of the nation,²¹² a role which in daily Temple functions was later delegated to the high priest, who acted *in loco regis*.²¹³

The possible sources of this priest-king concept and the larger question of Canaanite influence on Israel's royal ideology have been recently explored by John Day.²¹⁴ He finds evidence that this early influence may well have taken

²⁰⁹For more expanded treatment of the evidence, cf. Cazelles, "Kingship and Monarchy," and Szikszai, "King," 16. For examples of kingly prayer see I Kgs. 8:22-53, 19:14-19, and kingly blessing on the nation, II Sam. 6:18 and I Kgs. 8:14., and exhortation, 8:56-61. For kingly sacrifices see I Sam. 13:10; II Sam. 6:13, II Sam. 24:21; II Kgs. 16:10-18, II Sam. 15:12, and I Kgs. 1:9, 12:32, 13:1; II Kgs. 10:24.

²¹⁰I Sam. 22:11-18, I Kgs 2:26-27, I Kgs 15:12-15, 18:1-7, 22:3-23:23; see also I Chr. 22, 25 and II Kgs. 16:12-18 where Ahaz is directly involved in revising cultic procedures, and I Kings 12:31-33, where Jereboam initiates a new cultic festival in Israel, though the author of I Kings makes it clear that this is action has neither divine sanction nor approval.

²¹¹2 Sam 8:18; 1 Kgs. 12:31.

²¹²Cf. Cazelles, "Kingship and Monarchy." Cazelles suggests that this royal priesthood was distinct from the Levitical priesthood which is described in the Torah and predates the monarchy. See Exodus 40:1-16, Leviticus 8, 9.

²¹³See Deborah W. Rooke, "Kingship as Priesthood: The Relationship Between the High Priesthood and the Monarchy," in *King and Messiah*, ed. John Day, 195.

²¹⁴Cf. John Day, "The Canaanite inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy," 72-90. Rooke draws similar conclusions in her essay, "Kingship as Priesthood," 197-198. See for example the actions of Ahaz in II Kings 16:12-16.

place during the Davidic conquest of Jerusalem, the center of the Jebusites and the home of Melchizedek, the priest king who is depicted as encountering Abraham in Genesis 14 and mentioned as well in Psalm 110:4 in reference to the king.²¹⁵ If Day is correct, this provides both a plausible explanation of the status of Israel's kings as non-Aaronite priests, and an explanation for the explicit references to cultic roles performed by David and his successors.²¹⁶ Even more importantly, the Genesis account of Melchizedek mentions his god as El-Elyon ("God most high," Gen. 14:19), the "creator of heaven and earth."²¹⁷ It could well be that the close connection between El Elyon²¹⁸ and Mt. Zion²¹⁹ is an indication that these Jebusite traditions were first appropriated and then adapted in the development of the Zion motif, which is such a central part of royal Davidic

²¹⁵While the dating of Psalm 110 is debated, it nevertheless clearly shows the merging of the priestly and kingly roles on the basis of the Melchizedek tradition, in Israelite conceptions of royalty.

²¹⁶While Saul does appear to have the right to perform offerings as king in principle, it is striking that whenever Saul actually performs sacrifices, he often gets into trouble. On at least two occasions his sacrifices meet with both prophetic and divine rebuke. In one instance he fails to wait for Samuel and instead performs the offering prematurely, perhaps usurping Samuel's role (I Sam. 13:8-15), and on another occasion, where he attempts to legitimize disobedience to the ban edict by performing a sacrifice with some of the booty he again angers Yahweh (I Sam. 15:1-35). In both cases, the divine response is rejection of his kingship. On the other hand, David's wearing of a priestly linen ephod, his decision to transport the Ark to Jerusalem and his performance of several burnt offerings all meet with no such disapproval (II Sam. 6:12-20.). While this variation may be partly due to the fact that David clearly meets with greater divine approval generally, there also appears to be some innovative development of the kingly role, which in David's time takes in some priestly and other cultic prerogatives which Saul did not enjoy.

²¹⁷As is common elsewhere in the biblical text, Abraham identifies El Elyon with Yahweh. See especially such poetic and liturgical passages as Num. 24:16; Deut. 32: 8,9, II Sam. 22:14, Ps. 7:17, 9:2, 21:7, 46:4. El Elyon is also used frequently in the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings. See Bernard W. Anderson, "God, Names of," *IDB*: 2, 412.

²¹⁸This connection with Zion is also eventually ascribed to Yahweh; cf. Is. 60:14, 62:11, 66:10-13, 20.

²¹⁹This association is paralleled in Ugaritic texts by the association of Baal and Mt. Zaphon. See James B. Pritchard, "Poems about Baal and Anath," in *The Ancient Near East: An Anthology of Texts and Pictures*, I, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958) I AB.11, 110.

depictions in the Old Testament and also closely tied to the presence of the Temple, Yahweh's dwelling on the same location.²²⁰

At the same time, the cultic function of the king is closely related to his role in the maintaining proper political and social order in which society could flourish. It is striking that Psalm 110 also emphasizes the extension of Yahweh's power to the king, enabling him to rule over his enemies and pronounce judgement on the nations who had incurred Yahweh's wrath. In addition to his specifically cultic roles and perhaps as a corollary of his close proximity to Yahweh, the king in Israel also occupied a key function in ensuring the well being of the nation generally. He was seen as a source of life, protection and fertility, with the power to provide justice in his domain and security from enemies.²²¹ As in Egypt, Babylon and Mesopotamia, the Israelite king was the channel of blessing through which the divine purposes were realized.

Desacralization, Corporate Responsibility and Israelite Kingship

One further aspect of the development of royal theology in Israel requires examination. To this point the focus of attention has been directed towards

²²⁰Cf. Ps. 46:5, 48:3; as Day points out, both Psalms deal with the inviolability of Zion. See also Is. 14:13-14. On the development of Zion as a prominent motif in Old Testament theology, see Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 208-212, and the extensive discussion by Levenson, *Zion and Sinai*, 89-217. This connection between Zion, the Temple and the Davidic dynasty comes to its fullest expression in the Davidic covenant references which will be given greater attention below. It is also quite possible that this Davidic-Zion tradition came to be linked with the fall festival of Yahweh's enthronement, especially in Judah. Cf. Anderson, 500 ff.; Ps. 78; 132:8-14.

²²¹ Sziksai, "King," 15; Lam. 4:20; Ps. 89:18; 21:10-12; 45:4,5; 72:1-4, 16. See also Whitelam, "King and Kingship," who points out that the king's responsibility for providing social order was an extension of his cultic identity in ways quite similar to that of kings elsewhere at this time.

tracing the form in which sacral kingship was adopted by Israel in comparison to that of other nations. It has become evident that Israel also altered these borrowed forms of kingship in dramatic ways in the course of implementing them. Not surprisingly, one prominent example of the revision of sacral kingship is evident from the ongoing critique of kingship throughout the canon of the Hebrew Bible. While concern over the acquisitiveness and potential abuse of royal authority is part of this critique, there is also the contention that kingship as such threatens Yahweh's unique sovereignty in Israel in the covenant relationship with his people. Kingship has the potential to strain this relationship both on the individual and corporate level.²²²

In many instances, this critique takes the form of accounts which demystify the king as an individual.²²³ Not even David was exempt from such implicit critique. Depictions of his declining physical condition, and even more embarrassingly, his moral failures, make this clear.²²⁴ Sacral kingship in Israel's history is portrayed within a larger context of moral and religious accountability which serves in effect to partially "desacralize" it.²²⁵ The account of Solomon contains effusive praise for wisdom and knowledge, but also blunt criticism of his

²²²See Levenson, *Sinai and Zion*, and references quoted in n. 31 above.

²²³A key text in which the king is subordinated to the law can be found in Deuteronomy 17:14-20.

²²⁴See J.G. McConville, who concludes (*contra* F.M. Cross and others) that Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History challenge oriental royal conventions and contribute to the demythologization of oriental kingship. See "King and Messiah in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History," in *King and Messiah*, ed. John Day, 290. See, for example, II Kgs. 1:1,2; II Sam. 11-12.

²²⁵Cazelles, "Kingship and Monarchy," notes that prophets such as Isaiah are unhesitating in their criticism of kings such as Ahaz (Is. 7:13) and even Hezekiah (10:1-4). See also Jeremiah 22:10-30, Micah 3:9-12.

shortcomings in terms of spiritual loyalty to Yahweh.²²⁶ On some occasions the kings are portrayed as blatantly misleading the people, and on other occasions they appear to be at least partly responsible for divine punishment which results in the eventual destruction of the nation.²²⁷ In addition to a number of prophetic interventions in the reigns of recalcitrant kings which are mentioned in the narrative materials, the prophetic books themselves include comments that further develop this critical appraisal of kingship.²²⁸

The close linkage between the actions of the king and the consequences for the nation which underlie these critical views of kingship have been treated extensively by scholars. An initial and influential attempt to explain this apparent identification of the individual and the community was put forward by H. Wheeler Robinson in the early part of the 20th century. Robinson found pervasive evidence that early Israelite thought was shaped by a concept of “corporate personality,” in which the individual was essentially equated with the larger societal entity of which he or she was a member.²²⁹ On this basis he argued that

²²⁶See I Kgs. 8:1 - 11:13.

²²⁷See I Kgs. 14:16, 15:30, II Kgs 3:3, 21:11, 16; 23:15.

²²⁸It seems that as far as Hosea is concerned, sacral kingship no longer has a place in N. Israel. The kings are victims of the court (7:3–7). The Israelites “set up kings without my consent” (8:4). They say: “We have no king because we didn’t revere YHWH; but even if we had a king, what could he do for us?” (10:3). Then comes the word of God: “Where is your king that he may save you? Where are your rulers in all your towns of whom you said: ‘Give me a king and princes’? So in my anger I gave you a king, and in my wrath I took him away” (13:10–11). At the same time, in Bethel, Amos had condemned the “house of Jeroboam” (7:9, 11). See also Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 267–268, who notes the parallel democratization of the royal term “son of God” in some of the same literature which is sharply critical of kingship; cf. Hos. 2:1, 11:1.

²²⁹The concept can be traced throughout his writings. A representative comment can be found in *The Religious Ideas of the Old Testament* (London: Duckworth, 1913; reprinted 1949), 87: “Much that is strange to us in ancient thought is due to what we may best call the sense of ‘corporate personality’. The unit for morality and religion is not so much the individual as the

Hebrew thought (and thus biblical texts) could easily oscillate between speaking of the individual and the community, since one was thought of in terms of the other. Robinson was followed by later writers such as Aubrey Johnson, who argued that “corporate personality” found frequent expression in biblical texts in the Jewish scriptures.²³⁰ Over time, Robinson’s view of “corporate personality” was subjected to several considerable and pertinent criticisms, criticisms to which it has nonetheless proven surprisingly impervious, as Stanley Porter has shown.²³¹ First to do so was J.R. Porter, whose article challenged only the legal use of “corporate personality” by Robinson and his followers. In a journal article published in 1970, John Rogerson initiated a broader and more comprehensive reconsideration of the term, pointing out that Robinson’s use of the concept actually blurred two separate terms into one: corporate responsibility and corporate representation, and challenging whether something so tangible as a “primitive mentality” could actually be identified conclusively.²³² In conclusion, Rogerson did allow for the concept of “corporate representation” insofar as one

group to which he belongs, whether this be, for particular purposes, the family, the local community, or the nation.” See also *Redemption and Revelation* (London: Nisbet and Co., 1944), 149 ff., 258 ff.; and *The Old Testament: Its Meaning and Making* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1937), 77 ff.

²³⁰A.R. Johnson, *The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1942), 5-17.

²³¹ See Stanley E. Porter, “Two Myths: Corporate Personality and Language/Mentality Determinism,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 43 (1990), 289-307.

²³² John Rogerson, “The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality: A Re-Examination,” *Journal of Theological Studies* NS 21 (1970), 1-16, cited in Rogerson, *Anthropology and the Old Testament*, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1979), 55–65. Rogerson traced the influence of the French sociologist L. Levy-Bruhl on both Robinson and subsequently Johnson, and argued that Levy-Bruhl had overstated the contrast between so-called “primitive” and modern ways of thinking, a flaw which was built into the concept of “corporate personality” which both Robinson had adopted.

could identify this in contemporary life without diminishing the place of the individual, but he rejected outright the usefulness of the term “corporate personality.”

More recently, Joel Kaminsky has revisited this discussion.²³³ He concurs with the findings of both Porter and Rogerson in their criticisms of Robinson, though he is critical of Porter’s tendency to draw too sharp a line between the religious domain in Israel where less developed (and in his view, less equitable) communal notions such as blood guilt and sin were dominant, and the legal realm in which more individualistic ideas prevailed.²³⁴ In contrast, Kaminsky stresses the unity between the religious and legal spheres within Israelite life, and stresses that corporate ideas and concepts do play a significant role in the Jewish Scriptures, especially in areas of divine punishment, retribution and forgiveness.²³⁵ What is especially important for the present discussion of kingship is that Kaminsky sees these concepts (which he terms together as denoting a form of “corporate responsibility”) as especially prominent in the Deuteronomic history, something he attributes to the interplay between the Sinaitic and Davidic covenants. While Kaminsky does use the terms “conditional” and “unconditional” for these two covenants respectively, he also points out that

²³³ See Joel S. Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility in the Hebrew Bible*; JSOT Sup 196 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 16-29.

²³⁴ Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 20-21.

²³⁵ Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 54, 62-63.

this conventional usage needs to be heavily qualified due to the more complex character of both covenants.²³⁶

All of this serves to highlight that the sacral status of the king in Israel coexists with the prior moral and religious accountability of the people to Yahweh collectively. Royal disobedience to Yahweh had consequences for the nation as a whole:

The king was no ordinary individual but was God's vicar on earth, the single most important mediator between the people and their God. If the king sinned, he endangered the welfare of the populace in two ways. First of all this sin was done by the nation's representative before God and thus the monarch never truly acts only on his own behalf. Secondly, the king set the tone of official state worship and thus automatically implicated the people in any cultic sins that he committed because they were bound to follow his lead in cultic matters.²³⁷

This relationship between the king and Israel can be traced in part to coalescing of the Sinaitic and Davidic covenants, the former highlighting that obedience to the ethical demands of Israel's God was a precondition for divine blessing, the latter stressing God's enduring promise to David²³⁸ as a basis for hope despite the failures of individual kings. For the Deuteronomic author, this interaction had the effect of "making the promise of dynastic continuance contingent upon the

²³⁶ Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 50-51, and especially n. 48.

²³⁷ Kaminsky *Corporate Responsibility*, 52. One of the clearest examples of this is the close connection between Manasseh's misdeeds and Judah's subsequent exile in II Kgs. 21:1-18.

²³⁸ See II Sam. 7: 11b-16 and other variations of this covenant in Ps. 89:20-37, I Kgs. 2:4; 8:25 9:2-9 and 2 Kgs. 21:7-8.

king's religious behaviour.”²³⁹ In the theological viewpoint of II Kings, the writer stresses that the radical failure of the people and especially the king of Israel to live up to divine expectations had drastic consequences. In effect, they triggered a divine wrath that could no longer be averted and resulted in the exile and destruction of the nation.²⁴⁰ This focus on the failure of Israel's kingship pervades the work, and it is worth noting that in the Deuteronomic History, the king is never described messianically.²⁴¹ The only exception to this rather somber appraisal for kingship in Israel's future is the Davidic covenant in II Samuel, which holds out the single possibility for hope. Due to the notion of corporate responsibility which was so closely bound up in the unique position of the sacral king, the roles of Israelite nation and king had become so closely connected that hope for the former was almost inconceivable without a corresponding restoration of the latter.

Conclusions

Kingship in Israel was shaped by a number of social and historical factors and drew on a number of general features of kingship which are recognizable from nations which surrounded them in the Near Eastern world. Yet clearly, the portrayal of the development of kingship within the Jewish Scriptures suggests

²³⁹ Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 54.

²⁴⁰ Kaminsky, *Corporate Responsibility*, 65.

²⁴¹ Cazelles, "Kingship and Monarchy." J. G. McConville concurs that it is difficult to find a messianic outlook *per se* in the Deuteronomic works, although he does see the possibility that the work gives clear parameters for such a theological vision. See "King and Messiah in Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic History," 271-295.

that, in many respects, these common royal attributes were adapted as they were appropriated for use within a context of Yahweh's relationship with his covenant people. Perhaps most prominent is the role of the king as the representative of the people in his capacity as the cultic leader and royal king-priest. As an extension of this status, his rule serves as the means by which Yahweh intended to bring blessing and security to the nation within the context of their covenantal relationship with their God.

This close linkage between kingship and the destiny of the nation continued even through periods where successive kings failed to meet divine expectations. While there was initially a deep uneasiness with the adoption of the monarchy, kingship became an integral part of Israelite identity. Over time, however, historical experience and most notably the inability of Israel's kings to keep the requirements of the Torah often led to critical assessment of specific kings and on occasion, even the institution of kingship itself. This critical perspective is evident in the prophetic writings as well as the narrative materials, both of which ascribe significant culpability to the kingship for the demise of the nation in the Babylonian exile. Juxtaposed with this critical assessment of kingship (and closely linked to the Davidic covenant) is the emerging hope for a royal figure who will restore Israel as Yahweh's people at some point in the future. In subsequent Jewish literature (both within and outside the canon of the Hebrew Scriptures) this hope for Israel's future is closely linked to a coming Davidic king who takes on a central role as the bearer of eschatological deliverance. Tracing the development of the Davidic covenant and the

subsequent messianic outlook which emerged in these later texts in Judaism will be the focus of the following two chapters.

Chapter 4

Israel's Kingship and Yahweh's Covenant With David

The Context of II Samuel 7

Numerous commentators have pointed out the central importance of Yahweh's promise to David of an enduring dynasty in II Samuel 7:5-16 in shaping Israeli's view of kingship. It is also significant for the development of the DH, as well as later messianic expectation.²⁴² As Cross rightly points out, the passage itself bristles with characteristic phrases and expressions found throughout the DH, suggesting to him that it has undergone considerable editing by the Deuteronomistic redactor.²⁴³ While some scholars have made careful and precise attempts to locate various layers and sources in the passage, no clear consensus as to its structure and makeup has emerged.²⁴⁴ Whatever its background, this chapter has been carefully unified by the writer of II Samuel, so that it now reflects the outlook of the rest of the work. Consequently, while

²⁴² See Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 252. Walter Brueggeman puts it this way: "By this announcement, the line of David is no longer simply a historical accident but is a constitutive factor in God's shaping of the historical process. Out of this oracle there emerges the hope held by Israel in every season that there is a coming David who will right wrong and establish a good governance. That coming one may be hidden in the vagaries of history, may experience resistance from the recalcitrance of injustice and unrighteousness, but nevertheless there is one coming who will make things right." Cf. *First and Second Samuel* (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1990), 257. See also Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 196; A. A. Anderson, *II Samuel*, (WBC; Dallas: Word Books, 1989), 112, 123; Antii Laato, *A Star is Rising* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 44-45.

²⁴³ See Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 252 ff., for a detailed list of characteristically Deuteronomistic phrases in this chapter.

²⁴⁴ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 241; Anderson, *II Samuel*, 113-114; Mettinger, *Kingship and Messiah*, 48-49.

possible sources for this text will be noted, primary attention will be given towards the function of this chapter within its context in the final, canonical shape of the book and others where it is subsequently treated in the Old Testament.²⁴⁵

Yahweh's promise is a response to David's concern (shared with Nathan the prophet) that the God of Israel lacks an appropriate dwelling, even though he himself has now built "a palace of cedar." Nathan's reply is deferential but non-committal, and the implication that the construction of a Temple for Yahweh lacks divine sanction is confirmed in an oracle he receives later that evening.²⁴⁶ The message from Yahweh begins with a challenge to David's plans to build a temple since Yahweh has never expressed the desire for "a house of cedar;" (II Sam. 7:5-7). It also gives assurance that David's name will be great and the people of Israel will have rest and security (vv. 8-11a). The oracle concludes with the heart of the covenant vow itself, in a declaration that Yahweh will establish a "house " for David through his "offspring" that will endure forever (vv. 11b-16). A warning of punitive consequences for disobedience highlights the inherently durable qualities of the covenant. Should any of David's successors prove unfaithful, they will be disciplined, but none will suffer the fate of Saul, who was rejected because of his disobedience (v. 15). The language can be paralleled in other Near Eastern texts which speak of the king as the son of the deity, pledge

²⁴⁵ See Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 205.

²⁴⁶ Nathan makes a typical prophetic reply to a sovereign similar to Micaiah in I Kgs. 22:15; so too does Jeremiah in Jer. 28:5, 11; see Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 242 citing Noth, *The Laws in the Pentateuch*, 257.

of critical importance,²⁵¹ as is reflected in the fact that II Samuel 9-20 is often characterized as a “succession narrative.” Here the future of Israel is in jeopardy because of the inability of many of its recent leaders to live up to the expectations of the Sinai covenant.

This larger concern with the fate of the nation in its relationship to Yahweh is reflected in the account which follows the covenant pronouncement itself. Here it is crucial to examine the oracle of Nathan in its immediate context. When this is done, at least several significant themes emerge. One is Yahweh’s promise to ensure that the people of God have a secure place, safe from oppressors, where they will be able to flourish as a nation (II Sam. 7:10-11). This promise has older roots and is closely connected with the land promises given in earlier times (Gen. 12:7, 15:7, 17:8; Deut. 6:8, 21; Josh 1:5, 13). Further, it is also vitally important to consider the response of David to this covenant, in a prayer which serves as an important interpretative clue to how the Deuteronomistic writer and the Chronicler view its significance (II Sam. 7:18-29; I Chr. 17:16-27). David marvels at how the vow of Yahweh to secure the future of his house is now closely bound up with his relationship with Israel, which has been selected as his chosen people since the days of the Exodus from Egypt. God’s actions on behalf of Israel were not an end in themselves; they have revealed his greatness and incomparable character.

²⁵¹ Perhaps in parallel to the words of the “man of God” who visits Eli. Following the death of Hophni and Phineas, the establishment of a faithful priestly “house” is also promised by Yahweh; I Sam. 2:34-36.

Perhaps most significantly, his prayer entreats Yahweh to keep the promise to the house of David so that the surrounding nations will realize the greatness of Yahweh's name by his faithfulness to Israel (II Sam. 7:25-26 // I Chr. 17:23-24). As it is found in both II Samuel and I Chronicles, the Davidic covenant is bound tightly to the issues of Israel's security and prosperity in the land as well as the redemptive relationship of Yahweh with his people and his reputation among the nations. The preservation of the kingship, the security of the promised land, and the recognition of Yahweh by the peoples form a triad of interdependent concerns in the context of the dynastic promises to David. The significance of this covenant is the assurance that the Davidic line will continue to play a key role in the much larger setting of Israel's well being as a nation and its ongoing relationship with Yahweh.

In terms of interpretation, the text is not without its difficulties. For example, the reason why David is not permitted to build the temple is not given. This problem was clearly of concern to later writers, who sought to clarify Yahweh's selection of Solomon as the temple builder.²⁵² It is difficult to mesh Yahweh's apparent disapproval of a Temple (II Sam. 7:6-7) and preference to remain in a tent with the eventual promise that David's son would in fact build a more permanent house for Yahweh's name (II Sam. 7:13).²⁵³ But the importance

²⁵² I Chr. 22:6-9.

²⁵³ Cross sees this as an issue of sources, with II Sam. 7:6-7 recording an older oracle from Davidic times that preserves the high regard of the tribal league for the Tent and Ark. In contrast, he sees 7:11b-16 as a later overlay of royal ideology designed to establish the eternal character

of the passage for the development of the kingship in Israel is clearly the assurance that the Davidic line would be preserved, given with the force of the covenantal language and form of a divine oath. Even though the word covenant (*brt*) itself is not used in the passage, and the promise comes in the form of a divine oracle,²⁵⁴ it is clearly treated as an irrevocable covenant between Yahweh and David in numerous texts within the DH and elsewhere in the Hebrew Scriptures (II Sam. 23:5; Ps. 89:3, 132:11; Jer. 33:21).²⁵⁵

This irrevocability stands in somewhat of a contrast to the earlier Sinai covenant traditions, which emphasized Israel's obedience as a condition of Yahweh's blessing on the people. It has been pointed out that in its form as a promissory covenant, the Davidic charter is closely related to the covenant between Yahweh and Abraham,²⁵⁶ which also stressed the divine commitment to unilaterally bless an individual and his descendants on account of the faith of the ancestor.²⁵⁷ The tensions between these two great strands of covenant

of the Davidic line by Solomon along the lines of Canaanite rhetoric about the divine sonship of the king. See his *Canaanite Myth*, 243.

²⁵⁴ See Anderson, *II Samuel*, 113-115, for a discussion of the background of the oracle and its probable genre.

²⁵⁵ John Walton (*A Survey of the Old Testament*, 222-223) proposes that only the succession of Solomon has this irrevocable quality and that kings after him rule only on merit. While the covenant clearly has obligations for obedience, the unconditional quality of the dynastic succession is stressed in II Sam. 7:16, where it does not appear to be limited to Solomon alone.

²⁵⁶ Gen. 12:1-4, 15:1-21.

²⁵⁷ R.E. Clements, *Abraham and David: Genesis XV and Its Meaning for Israelite Tradition* (SBT; Naperville: Alec R. Allenson, 1967), 15-16; 53-54. He argues that, in the Yahwist's account, these promises to Abraham form the basis for the rise of the kingdom of Israel in the David period.

tradition were quite apparent to biblical writers, who would attempt to bring them together in their accounts of Israel's life as a nation.²⁵⁸ Assessing the interaction between these two covenants has been as central issue in the study of the Davidic covenant in recent scholarly literature. Here an overview of how this relationship has been envisioned will provide greater appreciation for important the Davidic charter would become in the Scriptures of Israel.

The Davidic Covenant in Recent Studies

In an essay reviewing the history of Old Testament theology written in 1968, Frederick Prussner traced attempts to find a central concept around which the discipline could be properly organized.²⁵⁹ He pointed out that while for a time the Davidic covenant came to overshadow the importance of the Sinai traditions, the collapse of the monarchy returned the focus of post exilic community to the earlier covenant. As a result, the interplay of these two

²⁵⁸ Clements, *Abraham and David*, 80-82. See also B.W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 196, 206.

²⁵⁹ "The Covenant of David and the Problem of Unity in Old Testament Theology," in *Transitions in Biblical Scholarship*, ed. J. Coert Rylaarsdam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), 31. Drawing mainly on the work of von Rad, he argued that the Mosaic covenant, together with the Davidic covenant, formed the "foundation upon which the whole of Israel's existence before Yahweh rested."

covenants can (in Prussner's view) properly be called the center of Israel's faith.²⁶⁰

Several years later, J. Coert Rylaarsdam followed with an essay which affirmed the significance of these two covenants for both the people of ancient Israel and as well as the Jewish and Christian traditions which later emerged.²⁶¹ He went on to argue that the covenants stood in sharp opposition to each other, in a relationship of permanent paradoxical tension, in which neither covenant was ever able to absorb the other.²⁶² Rylaarsdam based his thesis on three points of contrast between the Mosaic and Davidic formulations of covenant: the historical vs. the primordial, the promised future vs. the pre-temporal past, and the emphasis on human responsibility vs. divinely ordained determinism. He went on to suggest that these tensions persisted into the early Christian era and that ongoing debate about the divergences between these two covenants could be part of a basis for Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Frank Cross treated the problem in his well-known work a year later.²⁶³ He proposed that II Samuel 7 was a merging of two views of kingship. The first view (expressed in vv. 1-7) was based on the conditional covenant traditions of

²⁶⁰ Prussner, *The Covenant with David*, 41. Prussner does not address the recurrence of Davidic interests in Haggai 2:20-23 and Zechariah 9:9-10 or a text such as Nehemiah 9:6-8, which appears to indicate an interest in the covenant with Abraham.

²⁶¹ "Jewish Christian Relationships: The Two Covenants and the Dilemmas of Christology," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 9, No. 2 (1972), 249-270; reprinted in *Grace Upon Grace: Essays in Honour of Lester B. Kuyper*, ed. James I Cook (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 70-84.

²⁶² Rylaarsdam, "Jewish Christian Relationships," 78-79.

²⁶³ *Canaanite Myth*, 217-264.

the tribal league, a perspective he associated with the Davidic court and one which stressed the accountability of the king.²⁶⁴ The other view of kingship (found in vv. 11b-16) had its origins in the Canaanite view of the eternal divine sonship of the monarch and was introduced for ideological reasons in Solomonic times.²⁶⁵ Cross proposed that in this text, liturgical fragments from a Canaanite sonship litany may have been interwoven with the older tradition (which received muted treatment in 7:14b) while the future of Davidic succession is given an unconditional guarantee with a view to legitimizing the Solomonic dynasty. For Cross, the older view of kingship (which was based on the Sinai covenant) was superseded by this newer dynastic decree. Though it would subsequently be placed in a variety of contexts, it is inherently unconditional.²⁶⁶

Like Cross, Mettinger approached the text primarily through an analysis of its sources and how they were handled by redactors. His general assessment is similar to Cross's in many respects, though at points his specific conclusions do differ.²⁶⁷ He proposed that the earliest core of II Samuel 7 can be found in an oracle to David but written in Solomonic times (vv. 1a, 2-7, 12-14a, 16) which was supplemented by a later redactor upon his death (vv. 8-9, 11b, 14b, 15, 18-

²⁶⁴ Cross suggested that this conditional view of kingship persisted in the North, which rejected dynastic ideology of Solomon and sought to escape from it at the first opportunity; cf. *Canaanite Myth*, 264.

²⁶⁵ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 254-259.

²⁶⁶ Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 259.

²⁶⁷ Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 48-63.

22a, 27-29). Mettinger saw the formulation concerning the obedience of the kingly “son” as the addition of the later DH redaction in a time after Solomon’s death. Differing here somewhat with Cross, he stressed that the concept of sonship developed in these verses was historical and adoptionistic, not mythological, in origin.²⁶⁸

Writing in 1979, Levenson attempted to pose the problem of the relationship between the two covenants in an entirely different way. He took a broader approach, comparing the work of scholars who emphasized the disjunction between the two covenants (as Rylaarsdam did) with those who saw more continuity between the two covenants, such as De Vaux and Seybold.²⁶⁹ While he saw some validity in the latter position, it was also clear to him that the two covenants differed completely in character. Levenson followed Moshe Weinfeld, whose work uncovered numerous examples of extra-Biblical covenants which were analogous to the Davidic covenant but differed from the Mosaic structure of a king/vassal agreement. He proposed that this contrast could best be captured by the terms “treaty” and “grant.”²⁷⁰ But Levenson was also critical

²⁶⁸ Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 259-261.

²⁶⁹ “The Davidic Covenant and Its Modern Interpreters,” *CBQ* 41 (1979), 203-219. Levenson identified these two approaches as “segregationists” and “integrationists” respectively. Levenson refers to R. de Vaux, “Le roi d’Israel, vassel de YHWH,” in *Melanges Eugene Tissement* (Vatican City: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1964) I.119; and to K. Seybold, *Das davidischen Königstum im Zuegnis der Propheten* (FRLANT 107; Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1972), 44.

²⁷⁰ For a discussion of the relationship between law, covenant and treaty in the Mosaic covenant, see Kenneth A. Kitchen, “The Fall and Rise of Covenant Law and Treaty,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 40 (1989), 118-135. For a recent objection to the land grant analogy posited by Levenson in

of attempts by both Bright²⁷¹ and Mendenhall²⁷² to portray the two covenants as antithetical, with proponents of each supposedly locked in a protracted conflict throughout Israelite history. Levenson countered that the two covenants are very different in character, purpose and scope. While they were related, this relationship is more complex than one of polar opposites; emphasis on the one does not necessarily detract from the other. Instead, he argued that the relationship between the two covenant formulations in the Hebrew Bible is complex, diverse and resistant to “excessive generalization and schematization.”²⁷³

While brief, Gerald E. Gerbrandt’s treatment in his larger study of *Kingship According to the Deuteronomistic History*²⁷⁴ anticipated several later developments. In his study (the published version of his dissertation) Gerbrandt traced the portrayal of kingship throughout the DH, and noted the surprisingly disproportionate attention paid to David. He followed von Rad²⁷⁵ in suggesting that one of the central concerns of this work was to accurately develop the

connection with the Davidic covenant, see Gary Knoppers, “Ancient Near Eastern Royal Grants and the Davidic Covenant: A Parallel?” *JAOS* 116 (1996), 670-697.

²⁷¹ He cites both *A History of Israel* (2nd ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972) and *Covenant and Promise* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1976).

²⁷² Levenson refers here to *The Tenth Generation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1973).

²⁷³ Levenson, “The Davidic Covenant,” 219.

²⁷⁴ Atlanta: Scholar’s Press, 1986.

²⁷⁵ Cited as *Old Testament Theology*, I: 339.

relationship of the Mosaic and Davidic covenant materials.²⁷⁶ While he noted the work of Mettinger, Cross and others in attempting to disclose the redactional history of II Samuel 7, he gave greater attention to the use of the text by the Deuteronomistic author as one of the key turning points in the larger narrative.²⁷⁷

Aspects of Levenson's approach have been addressed by two more recent essays. Further investigation of the historical and political parallels to the Davidic covenant was provided by Antti Laato's essay.²⁷⁸ Though he recognized that literary and redaction criticism has provided many valuable insights, Laato argued that such methods had much more limited validity than its proponents sometimes assumed, and needed to be much more securely grounded in empirical approaches that worked from parallel texts in the ancient Near East.²⁷⁹ Laato pointed out that since the actual source texts of II Samuel 7 are not available to us, the variety of possibilities open to a redactor in which these sources may have been reworked makes a modern reconstruction of the sources very difficult to prove. Consequently, his own approach began by looking for parallels to the present form of II Samuel 7 in other ancient Near

²⁷⁶ Gerbrandt, *Kingship*, 160.

²⁷⁷ "For the Deuteronomist, the prophecy of Nathan to David was an important operative force in the history of Judah, bring salvation to the Davidic dynasty and to Judah, where otherwise death and destruction would have been expected. This promise had this force, even though it was not totally unconditional and continued rebellion could result in punishment which might even include the loss of the throne." Gerbrandt, *Kingship*, 169.

²⁷⁸ "Second Samuel and Ancient Near Eastern Royal Ideology."

²⁷⁹ Laato, "Second Samuel, 245.

Eastern texts and inscriptions. His examination of Akkadian, Assyrian and Babylonian inscriptions found themes that can be paralleled as well in Phoenician and Aramaic phraseology. The dating of these inscriptions suggested that these ideological motifs which provided divine sanction for a dynasty were quite typical among Israel's neighbours at an early time, and likely known in Israel and Judah during the emergence of the Israelite monarchy. They could not be regarded as anachronisms from a later editorial hand.²⁸⁰

Two of his observations are especially significant. First of all, the closest parallels he cites of dynastic parallels made by deities are almost invariably accompanied by vehement curses and threats to eradicate the throne of the particular king should he prove unreliable in upholding the stipulations given.²⁸¹ While Laato emphasizes the sharp contrast between such threats and the apparent unconditionality of Yahweh's promise to uphold the Davidic line forever, it seems probable that the inclusion of II Samuel 7:14b-15 was intended as a qualification of the divine endorsement that would check monarchical abuses of power, as Gerbrandt also noted.²⁸²

Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, Laato notes a number of examples where dynastic promises are closely linked to other issues of national vitality such as security from enemies, economic prosperity and the benevolence

²⁸⁰ Laato, "Second Samuel, 257.

²⁸¹ Laato, "Second Samuel, 262.

²⁸² "Kingship," 164.

of the deity.²⁸³ It is clear that there are both Assyrian and Akkadian parallels for the way in which the dynastic promises to David function as a means of blessing the nation as a whole with territorial security, economic health, and the blessing of Yahweh. In the Davidic royal charter, dynastic succession, divine favour and larger national concerns are -- here as elsewhere -- closely related.

Laato's literary reconstruction posits that II Samuel 7:8-16 was part of the original core of a general dynastic promise to David's "seed" (7:12) which was later adapted and directed more specifically toward Solomon in order to legitimate his succession.²⁸⁴ In contrast to Cross and Mettinger, Laato found it virtually impossible to ferret out any of the exact wording of the successive literary strata. He did however suggest that there were at least three levels in the formation of the text and he proposed that the last of these included the declaration of Yahweh's enduring love for the Davidic line which is typical of the DH.²⁸⁵

Sharing Levenson's dissatisfaction with the dichotomy presented by the "segregationist" and "integrationist" positions, Gary Knoppers sought to challenge

²⁸³ Here he cites two Assyrian texts: the inscription A.O.87.1 [col. 8, lines 17-38] from the reign of Tilgath-Pileser I (1114-1076 B.C.E.) and A.O.1.101.04 which is from the later period of Ashurnasipal II (883-859 B.C.E.). Both are cited from R. Borger, *Die Inschriften Asarhaddons Königs von Assyrien* (Graz: Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1956) using Borger's citation system. Laato also cites the text FLP 1674 from Eshunna in M. DeJong Ellis's work "The Goddess Kititum Speaks to King Ibalpiel: Oracle Texts from Ishchali," in *Mari: Annales de Recherches Interdisciplinaires* (M.A.R.I.) 5 (1985) 235-266.

²⁸⁴ Laato, "Second Samuel 7," 268, though Laato's suggestion that 7:1-4 are evidence of Nathan's support for the Temple project misses the understated, deferential tone of a prophet who does not want to openly confront a king without divine sanction.

²⁸⁵ Laato, Second Samuel 7," 268-269.

the presuppositions of both ways of expressing the relationship between the Mosaic and Davidic covenants.²⁸⁶ In particular, he tried to show how each author who cited the covenant did so in diverse ways, making it preferable in some ways to refer to Davidic “covenants,” rather than attempting to work back to a hypothetical “original” form of the covenant.

To begin with, Knoppers pointed out that while Yahweh’s oath to David was “unconditional” – in that the succession of David’s descendants is not contingent upon their obedience to Yahweh – there is also an element of accountability in II Samuel 7:14b, which other presentations of this covenant also emphasized in different degrees (Ps. 89:30-32; 132:12). Moreover, even if in this particular oracle of Nathan it is the divine decree that is emphasized, the larger narrative of the DH clearly holds individual kings responsible to Yahweh for their actions, beginning with both David (II Sam. 11:1 – 12:12) and Solomon (I Kgs. 3:4-14; 9:1-9; 11:9). Knoppers also cites the words of Yahweh’s prophet Ahijah to Jereboam, where an offer of a dynasty like David’s is made, provided that he remains loyal to covenant statutes and laws (I Kgs. 11:37-38). It appears that unconditional promises to uphold the line of David run parallel with warnings of sanctions to specific kings should they prove faithless.

Knoppers also went on to show how the uses of II Samuel 7 in I Chronicles and Psalms 89 and 132 provide evidence of uniquely shaped presentations of Yahweh’s oath to David within varying contexts. In summary, he

²⁸⁶ “David’s Relation to Moses,” in *King and Messiah*, ed. John Day, 91-118.

stressed that that the significance of this covenant transcends the issue of dynastic succession and is repeatedly linked to issues of larger importance within a national context.²⁸⁷ He also questioned whether the recent preoccupation with recovering an earlier, and presumably pristine and unconditional version of the pledge misses the ancient interest in how this covenant was to be linked with other Israelite concerns.²⁸⁸ In this respect, Knoppers's work was seminal in drawing attention back to the relationship of the Davidic covenant to matters beyond the issue of royal succession alone, as important as that may have been.

In his essay, Knoppers has raised two issues that deserve further consideration. First of all, his focus on the final form of the text provides a needed balance to some of the current tendencies to focus primarily on literary and redactional approaches and look for the ideological value of various strata in the text. Aside from the fact that these strata are often isolated on speculative grounds, there is little consensus about which segments belong to which particular redactional stratum – an observation which should entail caution about

²⁸⁷“David's Relation to Moses,” 118.

²⁸⁸ “Integration was an ancient concern, not merely a modern approach. If one wishes to discuss the place of the Davidic covenant within the Hebrew scriptures, as well as its relationship to the Sinaitic covenant, it seems illogical to skirt most of the evidence pertaining to the issue. The question of integration raises a larger issue, that of the relative importance of the Mosaic and Davidic covenants. While it would be ill-advised to trivialize the Sinaitic covenant, it is also ill advised to marginalize the Davidic promises as engaging only the matter of succession. The modern preoccupation with issue of (un) conditionality and royal continuity obscures the extent to which biblical authors tie the Davidic promises to other major aspects of Israelite life.” See Knoppers, “David's Relation to Moses,” 117-118.

the certainty of such conclusions.²⁸⁹ Such approaches seem to isolate texts such as II Samuel 7 from the larger contexts in which we find them. Since no such “uncontextualized” versions of the Davidic covenant are accessible to us, there is a real danger that readings which rely too heavily on a speculative reconstruction can in fact impose any number of readings onto these texts.²⁹⁰

A second observation (which in essence goes a long way toward providing a corrective to this same problem) is the insistence of Knoppers that each of the references to the Davidic covenant should be read in the particular context in which it functions. This means that each reference relates the divine promises to a particular set of issues and concerns which is also reflected in how the

²⁸⁹ Cross sees the earliest version of the covenant, which he finds in Psalm 132, as conditional (cf. *Canaanite Myth*, 232-233.) On the other hand, Weinfeld (“Covenant, Davidic,” *IDB Sup*, 189) and Kenneth Pomykala see the oracle as preserving a tradition that was originally an unconditional divine oath, which was later reformulated into conditional terms; cf. Pomykala, *Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 13.

²⁹⁰ Levenson’s cautions with regard to the tendency to reduce biblical texts to ideology are relevant here; see his *The Hebrew Bible and Historical Criticism* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press), 1993. Careful scholars such as Mettinger and Cross can reach opposite conclusions regarding the origins of the Davidic covenant in II Samuel 7. Mettinger posits that the earliest form of the II Samuel 7 covenant was unconditional, that later redactors conditionalized it and that in post exilic times there was a reversion to the unconditional version (Mettinger, *Kingship*, 292). Cross, on the other hand, posits that the earliest form was in fact conditional (under the influence of the tribal league and its Sinai traditions) and that later Solomonic court influences turned the covenant into a divine *carte blanche* as an attempt to bolster the throne with a robust royal ideology (Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 264-265). Assuming Cross is correct and ideological concerns were as central as he supposes, it is hard to see how texts such as II Samuel 7 that were originally critical of royal ideology could first be subverted in order to legitimate Solomonic aspirations with divine support, and then could again be so easily co-opted into a larger account that is deeply critical of Solomon and his culpability in the demise of the nation. Bernard Anderson notes that while sociological dimensions cannot be ignored, they are only starting points and do not exhaust the meaning of a text. He is especially critical of interpreters that use a predominantly sociological analysis to picture the Davidic covenant as merely ideological in nature, missing the interplay of the Davidic and Mosaic covenants within the biblical account. His observations would seem especially appropriate here. See his *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 239-241.

covenant is formulated and shaped in each instance. While a detailed treatment of every use of this covenant is beyond our purpose here,²⁹¹ it is worthwhile to survey briefly some of the more significant appropriations of this covenant. Such a survey will attempt to show that this covenant is consistently linked with the security of Israel in the land and the health of their relationship with Yahweh, their God.

The Portrayal of the Davidic Covenant in I Chronicles

The figure of David and the dynastic promise of Yahweh to him, both play a significant role in the narrative of the Chronicler and how it is structured. Several important differences in the covenantal promise make this version clearly distinguishable from the way it is presented in II Samuel 7, his main source. While Chronicles comes from a much later period, its reliance on the content of the DH make it worth considering here as an example of how this content is placed in a new context. One difference in the Chronicler's version of the Davidic covenant is immediately apparent. Yahweh's warning of punishment with the "rod of men" should David's son do wrong is deleted in the Chronicler's version of the oath (I Chr. 17:13; cf. II Sam. 7:14b).²⁹² Though this clause is absent, the

²⁹¹ A more detailed and chronological survey of the development of the Davidic covenant in the Hebrew Bible can be found in Laato, *A Star is Rising*, 48-235.

²⁹² It is likely however that this specific comment has been deleted in deference to Solomon, who is presented without the lapses into idolatry that II Kings 11 so bluntly recounts (compare II Chr. 28:9, II Chr. 8:1-9:31). See Roddy Braun, *I Chronicles* (WBC, Waco: Word, 1986), 199. See also Laato, *A Star is Rising*, 231.

accountability of the king to Yahweh which is found in the DH is retained and appears prominently in a number of other texts in Chronicles.²⁹³

The fact that the expressly conditional element of II Sam. 7:14b has been shifted and not excised in the Chronicler's account is confirmed by the way David and Solomon are portrayed in his narrative. Besides the fact that a specific reference to Solomon the temple builder as one of David's sons is inserted (I Chr. 17:11), a direct link is also made between the kingdom of Solomon and the kingdom of Yahweh (I Chr. 7:14).²⁹⁴ As in the larger framework of the Chronicler's narrative, this serves to highlight both David and especially Solomon as constituting the ideal monarchy through whom Yahweh will bless Israel²⁹⁵ and the combined standard by which later kings will be judged.²⁹⁶ In summary, the impact of the Davidic covenant on the narrative of the Chronicler is evident in how it shapes his view kingship, as it does in the DH. This is true even though now the focus is on the fulfillment of the promises to David in the career of

²⁹³ See I Kgs 2:3-4, 8:25-26, 9:4-9 and compare I Chr. 22:12-13, 28:7-10; II Chr. 7:17-18, and II Chr. 6:16-17. Cf. Knoppers, "David's Relation to Moses," 103.

²⁹⁴ Knoppers points out that this is part of a theme that is repeated in I Chr. 28:5, 29:11 and II Chr. 13:8, and extended to link the thrones of both David and Solomon with that of Yahweh (I Chr. 28:5, 29:3, II Chron. 9:8). Cf. "David's Relation to Moses," 102-103.

²⁹⁵ Knoppers, "David's relation to Moses," 105.

²⁹⁶ The portraits of David and Solomon both serve as models, though in differing ways. David is the successful political leader and administrator, who effectively establishes his dynasty. In addition, he also establishes the location of the future temple in an episode that also established him as a model of humility and repentance. See Knoppers, "Images of David in Early Judaism: David as Repentant Sinner in Chronicles," *Biblica* 76.4 (1996) 449-470 and also John W. Wright, "The Founding Father: the Structure of the Chronicler's Davidic Narrative" *JBL* 117/1 (1998) 45-59, who focuses more on the political dimension of David in Chronicles.

Solomon, whose status as a recipient of blessing is now also part of the locus for the national hope. The Davidic covenant has been reinterpreted in light of new series of events which has led the writer to focus attention on the reformation of post-exilic Israel as a worshipping community.²⁹⁷

The Significance of the Davidic Covenant in the Psalms

Any consideration of kingship in the Psalms must deal with the difficulties of categorizing which Psalms can be identified as having reference to the royal office.²⁹⁸ Of those Psalms that are commonly identified as royal in character, Psalms 89 and 132 deal specifically with the question of how particular historical situations should be understood in light of the Davidic covenant.

The Davidic Covenant in Psalm 132

Psalm 132 identifies itself as connected with the procession of David in bringing the ark of the covenant to Jerusalem (Ps. 132:2-9). As a result, Zion has now become the chosen place of enthronement for Yahweh and a visible sign of Yahweh's faithfulness to David. The Psalm is closely related to the

²⁹⁷See Peter Ackroyd, "Chronicles, Books of," in *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 113-116 and B.W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 458-459. See also II Chron. 9:22-26, cf. Ps. 72:1-11. This last reference will prove to be an important text in considering the development of the royal ideal and eventual contribution to messianic expectation.

²⁹⁸For a fuller discussion of this problem, see Steven J.L. Croft, *The Identity of the individual in the Psalms*, (JSOT Sup, 44; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990).

historical events of II Samuel 6²⁹⁹ and its focus is on the election of David as king.³⁰⁰ Two key themes are combined and interrelated: first, the oath made to remember David's dynasty (Ps. 132:11-12) and secondly, the choice of Zion as the divine resting place (Ps. 132:7, 13, 14). Mowinckel links this Psalm closely to the beginning of the annual New Year's enthronement festival because of its use in II Chronicles 6:41-42, where the consecration of the Temple is made part of the harvest feast. While reference to the throne of Yahweh is made, the emphasis seems to be more on the choice of Yahweh's place rather than the act of enthronement itself, making this view less plausible than he supposed. The celebration of the bringing of the ark with a choral voice in vv. 6-9 is set within an appeal to remember the promises to David and never reject the "anointed one," that is, the Davidic successor.

Kraus places the Psalm within a modified "royal festival of Zion," which he distinguishes from the more expansive views of Mowinckel.³⁰¹ Laato has undertaken an elaborate reconstruction of the setting of the Psalm against the background of the DH and its concern with resolving some of the theological

²⁹⁹ Hans Joachim Krause, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*, ET Hilton C. Oswald (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 469-477. David's ordeals before he became king are also hinted at in vs. 1.

³⁰⁰ While there is a tendency to interpret Ps. 132 as an enthronement Psalm, it is interesting to note that the enthronement of the king or Yahweh is not specifically mentioned, while Yahweh's choice of David is emphasized in three places (Ps. 132:1, 10-11; 17-18). Mettinger argues for a very late date based on affinities with Deuteronomistic language (*King and Messiah*, 256) however his use of specific examples of Deuteronomistic language is fairly slim and based on arguments which Laato answers. See his article, "Psalm 132 and the Development of the Jerusalemite/Israelite Ideology," *CBQ* 54 (1992), 52-53.

³⁰¹ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 477.

tensions surrounding the monarchy in Israel.³⁰² He sees the Psalm as functioning within Solomon's transfer of the ark to Jerusalem, using David's ordeals in his transfer of the ark as propaganda. Following Fretheim,³⁰³ his understanding of the Psalm is also based on a division into 4 strophes (132:1-5, 6-10, 11-12, 13-18) in which the first and third strophes as well as the second and fourth are closely related to one another. While the precise form and structure of the Psalm have been debated,³⁰⁴ it is important to notice the relationships which Gunkel observed between 1-10 and 11-18.³⁰⁵ Both v. 1 and v. 10 are communal pleas; one to Yahweh to "remember David," the other to not reject the Davidic successor, on the basis of the oath in the Davidic covenant. David's oath to make a dwelling for Yahweh is paralleled with Yahweh's sure oath to maintain the royal line of David and the Jerusalem monarchy and cult (Ps. 132:13-18). It appears likely that the origins of this text may well date back to an early time of celebration in the liturgy.³⁰⁶ The conditional aspect of the royal charter is made more explicit (132: 11-12), yet because the reference is placed within a context of

³⁰² Laato, "Psalm 132," 59.

³⁰³ Cited as "Psalm 132: A Form Critical Study," *JBL* 86 (1967), 289-300.

³⁰⁴ Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 474.

³⁰⁵ Cited in Kraus, *Psalms 60-150*, 475.

³⁰⁶ Laato places it at the time of Solomon's transfer of the ark of Yahweh to the temple (1 Kgs. 8:14). He also suggests that the "covenant" and "statutes" of Ps. 132:12 refers to a treaty which may have defined the expectations between the king and Yahweh and the king and the people ("Psalm 132," 55, 62). Knoppers ("David's Relation to Moses," 108) sees these terms as more likely to be referring to the Sinai covenant. In either case, the oath to David is related to Yahweh's loyalty to Zion, which will ensure the well being of both the priests and the people (132:14-16).

celebration no minimizing of the divine promises is apparently intended.³⁰⁷ Although the dating of this Psalm is difficult, it is quite possible that it reflects a time close to Solomon or just after his death,³⁰⁸ when concerns over the direction of the kingship led to a renewed emphasis on the tribal covenant traditions which eventually resulted in the Deuteronomist's work. Its emphasis on the enduring commitment of Yahweh to David on the basis of the election of Zion makes it quite probable that this Psalm could have been read with a view to political restoration in the post exilic era.³⁰⁹ In any case, the promises given to David are clearly the basis for a prayerful hope that Yahweh's relationship with the king of Israel will continue throughout history.

The Davidic Covenant in Psalm 89

A second instance where the Davidic covenant gives expression to national hopes is found in Psalm 89, where this promise finds its most elaborate treatment among all of the Old Testament texts. In some interpretative traditions that relied heavily on the assumption that Israel adopted many practices from the traditions of sacral kingship, it was often suggested that this Psalm (and others which portray the ordeals of royal figures) depicts the Israelite version of the cultic humiliation of the Babylonian New Year's ritual. This now seems unlikely,

³⁰⁷ See 132:17, 18 where the accent is clearly one of hope that the horn of David will triumph over his enemies; cf. Knoppers, "David's Relation to Moses," 109.

³⁰⁸ Laato, "Psalm 132," 65-66.

³⁰⁹ Knoppers, "David's Relation to Moses," 110-111.

and historical circumstances (as opposed to mythic reenactment and cultic mockery) are predominately seen as the background for Psalms where the suffering of Israel's king is represented.³¹⁰

The text is a lengthy and elaborate description of several themes and stands clearly in the Deuteronomistic tradition.³¹¹ It is introduced with references to the enduring love and faithfulness of Yahweh (Ps. 89: 1, 2) and the eternal covenant with David (vv. 3-4). Then follows a detailed account of the power and might of Yahweh (vv. 5-18) and a return to the preferential love that Yahweh has for David (vv. 19-37), which will ensure the future of his line and the throne forever. There is an abrupt change of tone in vv. 38-48 with the depiction of Yahweh's royal "anointed one" now battered and defeated. While the final verse ends on a note of praise (likely a doxology for the section of the Psalter which ends here) there is a discordant plea in vv. 49-51 that suggests a jarring contrast to vv. 1-2: "O Lord, where is your great love, which in your faithfulness you swore to David?" The question and the request to Yahweh which follows to "remember ... how your servant has been mocked" is left unanswered.

Drawing on the work of several commentators, Knut Heim has noticed a number of differences between this Psalm's configuration of the Davidic

³¹⁰Kraus, (*Psalms 60-150*, 203-204) rejects the collapse of historical circumstances that such reductionism can lead to. See Mowinckel (*The Psalms in Israel's Worship*, 241-247), who also wants to avoid this problem.

³¹¹Laato, *Josiah and David Redivivus: The Historical Josiah and the Messianic Expectations of Exilic and Post Exilic Times* (ConBOT 33; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksells International, 1992), 362.

covenant and the oracle in II Samuel 7.³¹² Of these, perhaps the most significant are the following:

- David's rule is expanded to a universal scope (Ps. 89:26)
- The adoptionist language of II Sam. 7:14 has been intensified, now including Yahweh's responsibility to protect David and grant him preeminence over all other kings (89:27)
- The divine chastisement has been transferred from David's successor to the dynasty as a whole (89:31-33) though the singular is retained in the assurance which follows, suggesting that the punishment of previous kings may be falling on one
- The promises to David have been formalized, as can be seen by the fact that the term covenant is used repeatedly (89: 3, 34, 39)
- Reference is made to a covenant with David that will never fail (89:28) as long as the heavens endure

The importance of all these amendments to II Samuel 7 requires some further comment. Readily apparent is the broadening of the domain of David, making the defeat experienced by the Davidic king which is described in vv. 38-45 all the more striking by contrast. The repeated personal references to David (vv. 3; 19-29; 35-37) heighten the quality of Yahweh's preferential love for David and together with language of unconditional covenant, provide additional contrast

³¹² Heim, "The (God-) Forsaken King of Psalm 89: A Historical and Textual Inquiry," in *King and Messiah*, ed. John Day, 299-300.

with the abandonment of the Davidic successor and the complaint which follows in vv. 39 and 49-51. Both of these amendments serve to intensify the obligations of Yahweh to David's line and the dissonance of these assurances with the apparent breaking of this covenant by Yahweh. The possibility that divine punishment can now be extended to each successive king in the dynasty (vv. 30-32) shows that the Davidic promises have become associated with the dynasty as a whole, not just David's immediate successor, Solomon. The terms of the covenant will be upheld in perpetuity. The threefold use of *brt* (vv. 3. 34. 39) confirms that the promises given to David should be interpreted as formal in nature, committing Yahweh to take responsibility for the ongoing viability of the dynasty.³¹³

As Heim correctly suggests, all of these changes together serve two purposes. First, they make clear that Yahweh's commitment to David has an inviolable quality.³¹⁴ Secondly, in view of the crisis that has apparently moved the psalmist to write, there is no attempt to bring the covenant into harmony with the political realities of the day. If anything, the opposite is true:

All of this suggests that the composer of Psalm 89 did not forge the material contained in 2 Samuel 7 into an apologetic. Rather, the psalm appears to take the discrepancy between the dynastic promise and present political reality seriously. Drawing out the implications of what the dynastic promise had come to mean in its day, it points out the Lord *has* betrayed David (vs. 36) and broken his covenant (vv. 40, 50) or he must help his anointed.³¹⁵

³¹³ See II Sam. 23:5.

³¹⁴ Heim, "The (God-) Forsaken King," 300.

The shift back to the first person in the conclusion suggests a royal speaker in the concluding verses, personalizing and intensifying the lament even further. It is also striking that here, despite a situation of deep historical crisis, the terms of the Davidic charter are not softened but are in fact heightened, emphasizing the disjuncture between the promise and the troubling circumstances of the situation being described. The unconditional aspects of the covenant are now being measured by history and radicalized, not abandoned.

Within the larger Deuteronomistic perspective it comes as no surprise that the Davidic covenant can be cited during such dire circumstances which at first glance, might appear to call into question the unconditionality of the Davidic promises altogether. Interpretations of the Davidic covenant that uphold the irrevocability of the Davidic dynastic covenant on the one hand, but emphasized at the same time that Yahweh would punish unfaithful kings in David's line by taking away part of the land can already be noted in the book of Kings.³¹⁵ The loss of the united empire is punishment for covenant disloyalty, yet the retention of Judah reflects that Yahweh will honor the promises made in II Samuel 7 to

³¹⁵ Heim, *The (God-) Forsaken King*, 303.

³¹⁶ I Kgs. 2:4, 6:12-13, 8:25, 9:4-5. Laato connects the loss of the united kingdom after Solomon by Rehoboam with the retention of the throne in Jerusalem by the Davidic dynasty, to underscore that these are two sides of the same coin in the Deuteronomistic view. Cf. Laato, "Psalm 132," 53. According to David Howard, the book of Psalms in its final editing also retains the hope of a Davidic king as an earthly expression of Yahweh's enduring kingship, despite the devastating events depicted in Psalm 89. Cf. "Trends in Recent Psalm Study," in *The Face of Old Testament Studies* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 329-68.

ensure that a son of David will continue to rule and that Jerusalem will remain the dwelling of Yahweh.

It is worth considering the historical circumstances which may have prompted this presentation of II Samuel 7 in Psalm 89. A precise historical context for the Psalm is difficult to ascertain, but several tentative observations about the historical events which may have led to its composition can be made. Heim considers arguments for both pre-exilic and post-exilic settings and opts tentatively for a connection to the exile of Judah.³¹⁷ But a pre-exilic setting appears more likely for several reasons. The most obvious reason is that the speaker appears to be the Davidic king himself in 89:47-51, something which would be hard to imagine in a post-exilic setting. Also important is a comparison with several Psalms which can be dated with some certainty to the post-exilic era such as Psalms 74, 79, and 137³¹⁸ or depict the conquest on Babylon. While some initial similarities can be noted, such as the mythological allusions to Yahweh's primordial victories (74:13-14, cf. 89:9,10) it is also evident that several themes of the exilic Psalms are conspicuously absent from Psalm 89:

³¹⁷ Heim, "The (God-) Forsaken King, 298.

³¹⁸ Though in disagreement, see William L. Holladay, who follows Gary A. Rendsburg in arguing on linguistic grounds that Psalms 74 and 79 are northern compositions and thus date from before the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem. Cf. Holladay, *The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 33, citing Rendsburg, *Linguistic Evidence for the Northern Origins of Selected Psalms*, (SBLMS 43; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990). Nevertheless, Holladay's suggestion that the specific references to the destruction of Jerusalem in these two Psalms are thus very likely later editorial adaptations supports the point being made here. If Psalm 89 were written in the post exilic era, one would expect images of a ruined Jerusalem to be at least mentioned. For Holladay's dating of Psalm 137 see *The Psalms Through Three Thousand Years*, 57.

- Reference to the destruction of the temple sanctuary (74:3, 5-8; 79:1)
- The leveling of Jerusalem (79:1; 137:5-7)
- The loss of God's dwelling place in Zion (74:2; 137:1, 3)
- The suffering of the exiles themselves (74:1, 19; 79:2-4, 7-8, 11; 137:2, 3, 8, 9)³¹⁹

It is striking that there is no mention of any of these items in Psalm 89 and in fact, by contrast, the focus is solely on the plight of the Davidic king himself and the apparent abrogation of the royal covenant by Yahweh and its promises to defend and protect him. Neither does the exalted status of the Davidic king in this psalm seem to resonate with the circumstances of the early 6th century. Although there is a reference to the penetration of the walls of Jerusalem which has a certain similarity to Babylon's conquest (89:40, compare II Kgs. 25:4), it seems unlikely that the furtive flight of Zedekiah in a pathetic attempt to escape Nebuchadnezzar (II Kgs. 25:1-7) could provide a setting for such a Psalm. It is more likely that the imprisonment of Jehoiachin by Nebuchadnezzar provides a possible context, though Jehoiachin seems to lack the requisite stature as a king to invoke the high view of Davidic kingship mentioned here (Ps. 89: 19-37). Taken together, all these considerations seem to point to an earlier situation than 587/6 B.C.E.,

³¹⁹ In addition, one could compare the book of Lamentations, which in all likelihood is closely related to the events of 587/6 B.C. E. where one finds similar thematic treatment. Taking even a sample from Lam. 1 and 2 only, the following themes are evident: the defilement of the Sanctuary: 1:10, 2:6; the capture of Jerusalem 1:1,2, 7; 2:8; the loss of Yahweh's dwelling in Zion 1:4,6; 2:1, 6; the suffering of the people of Judah at Babylonian hands 1:11; 2:2, 2:9, 11,12,20-21) For discussion of the dating of Lamentations, see Richard S. Hess, "Lamentations, Book of" in *Anchor Bible Dictionary CD ROM* (New York: Doubleday, 1992.)

when a realistic hope for the dynasty's continuation could be still be maintained.

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If this correctly leads to a setting for Psalm 89 in the period before the Babylonian exile, two of the most plausible candidates for the faithful but abandoned Davidic successor being portrayed here readily suggest themselves: Hezekiah (II Kgs. 18:37; 20:3-6) and Josiah (II Kgs. 22:2; 23:25). While both are depicted favourably and credited with receiving Yahweh's approval, the far more likely referent for Psalm 89 is Josiah. He is the one whose determined reforms to bring Judah back in line with the older tribal covenant stipulations is emphasized repeatedly³²¹ and whose life was tragically cut short in a battle at Megiddo.³²² Laato has presented a detailed account of the relationship between the Davidic expectations of the late pre-exilic period, the reign of Josiah, and the subsequent development of messianic hopes in the post exilic period.³²³ Showing how Josiah's efforts at reform made him a prominent figure in prophetic literature and led to his becoming a locus for widespread hopes that the Davidic kingdom could be reestablished under his leadership, he concludes that the young monarch's untimely death presented a theological challenge for the Deuteronomistic viewpoint. This challenge was met in II Kings with the assertion

³²⁰ A conclusion reached also by Mettinger, *King and Messiah*, 255-256.

³²¹ Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 333-336.

³²² Cf. Ps. 89:45; Krause thinks the connection with Josiah is likely though not certain. See his *Psalms 60-150*, 203.

³²³ *Josiah and David Redivivus*, 1992.

that Josiah's death was the result of sins committed by Josiah previously under the reign of Manasseh (II Kgs. 23:26-27).³²⁴ Laato proposes that Psalm 89 finds its background in these events:

The Deuteronomistic Ps. 89 is probably connected with the catastrophe at Megiddo and its theological explanation. The central problem addressed by this Psalm is why YHWH has rejected his anointed one by not supporting him in battle. We argued that even though the Psalm probably originates from the time of the exile -- which is more probable than a date immediately after the catastrophe at Megiddo -- it probably reflects the fate of Josiah, since according to the Deuteronomistic History, the end of the kingdom of Judah occurred for all practical purposes at Megiddo.³²⁵

Laato has made the further proposal because Josiah was regarded as a righteous king, his death provided a hermeneutical clue for later interpretations of Zechariah and Isaiah.³²⁶ In Zechariah 12:10-13:1, the rejection of the faithful Davidic king would be used to explain the possibility of forgiveness for Israel. In Isaiah 53, "the suffering and death of Yhwh's righteous servant makes a renewed relationship between Yhwh and his people possible."³²⁷ While such an intriguing

³²⁴ On the other hand, the author of II Chronicles would argue that it was Josiah's own failure to heed the prophetic words of Neco that resulted in his death (II Chr. 35:22) and led to a tradition of commemorative laments being sung for his death (II Chr. 35:25).

³²⁵ Laato, *Josiah and David Redivivus*, 362.

³²⁶ *A Star is Rising*, 146-150.

³²⁷ *A Star is Rising*, 147. He concludes, "In order for Yhwh to be merciful to his disloyal people a great punishment had to be exacted upon the dynasty. The crescendo of his punishment was seen in the tragic death of Josiah" (cf. 150). Laato does admit that formal evidence for this linkage of II Kgs. 23:29-30 to Isaiah and Zechariah is lacking. It is also questionable whether his insistence on Josiah's death as basis for the formation of a *typos* is a necessary conclusion from these slender references.

connection between Josiah and later prophetic traditions may be difficult to prove with any certainty, it remains clear that the focus of the DH on the untimely death of a faithful Davidic king presents a jarring contrast with the promises of the Davidic covenant. Laato may well be correct in suggesting that these events raised the issue of theodicy as Psalm 89 clearly attests.

If such a reference for the historical situation is correct, it may also explain how the Psalm continued to be read and valued in the subsequent events of the Babylonian incursion and exile. While the focus of Psalm 89 does appear to be on the ordeal of the Davidic monarch personally, this distress was inextricably connected to the status of the nation and the health of the covenant relationship it enjoyed with Yahweh. Because the dynasty was the channel for Yahweh's blessing on Israel, a larger national disaster might well return the thoughts of the people to the Davidic promises. Continued reference to the Davidic covenant in a time of grave national crisis—here it seems in the case of the king who would turn out to be the last hope for a restoration of the sagging monarchy in Judah—would in fact occur frequently in the prophetic literature as they considered the possibility of a future hope after the loss of the nation itself.

Development of the Davidic Covenant in Prophetic Literature

Pre-Exilic Texts

The use of the Davidic covenant as a central component of writings which grappled with the future of the nation in times of crisis can also be observed in the prophetic literature. Here a selection of writings will be investigated for the purposes of finding common themes and identifying varying uses of the royal dynastic tradition.

Isaiah 1-39

In general terms, the writings found in the book of Isaiah are linked perhaps most closely of all to the royal Zion theology which finds its foundation in the Davidic covenant.³²⁸ Within a context that draws heavily on the so-called “Psalms of Enthronement” (47, 93, 96-99), we find an overarching emphasis on the divine kingship of Yahweh over his people and the cosmos.³²⁹ Yet paradoxically, the opening section of Isaiah 1-39³³⁰ focuses on how Yahweh intends to discipline his wayward people by allowing the city of Zion to be

³²⁸ B.W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 222-236.

³²⁹ Cf. Is. 2:12-17, 12:5,6, see Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 224-230.

³³⁰ By a convention among much current scholarship of Isaiah, the book is divided into roughly three parts 1-39, 40-55, 56-66, as successive additions and compilations are integrated to bring the book into its final shape over a period of about two centuries. For a reconsideration of the case for Isaianic authorship and an emphasis on the unity of the book's theology, cf. J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC, Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1999), 27-35. The argument here works from the final form of the book and is not directly dependent on specific issues of date.

destroyed by his judgement (1:7, 21:28). Interwoven with these references to judgement are promises of restoration and hope.

One earlier text portrays the coming of a royal deliverer who will take his place in the dynasty of ancient times:

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne, and over this kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever (Is. 9:6, 7).

While the covenant with David is not explicitly mentioned, the link with the Davidic dynasty founded in II Sam. 7:14 clearly establishes the basis for this hope.³³¹ The failures of a series of Judah's kings has led to a coming judgement on the nation. This in turn has resulted in an idealization of Davidic kingship and the portrayal of an eschatological king who will establish a throne that is not hampered by the flaws and failings of previous monarchs. In the words of B.W. Anderson, "The Davidic king became a symbol and a prototype of the one who was to come in order to introduce a new era of peace and justice."³³² The language is militant and the installation of this king will be done by the power of Yahweh, who will decisively free his people from oppression and allow his wrath upon his own people to abate (9:1; 8-21). A related expression of hope, which also speaks of an end to Yahweh's punishment on Judah and the removal of the

³³¹ Kenneth Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty in Early Judaism*, 19-20.

³³²B.W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 235.

Assyrian yoke (10:27), can also be found in the promise that “A shoot shall come out of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots” (11:1). The allusion to the Davidic line and its portrayal in a spirit-filled leader who will exercise righteousness, justice and compassion for the poor is linked here to an eschatological age of peace and a universal acknowledgement of Yahweh and a second Exodus for the scattered members of Israel and Judah. Despite the absence of explicit reference to the Davidic covenant, this enduring promise is clearly the basis on which this oracle of hope is offered. Subsequent prophets will pursue this same theme in various ways.

The Davidic Covenant in Jeremiah

The book of Jeremiah draws on the figure of David and the Davidic dynasty traditions in a variety of ways.³³³ Among several incidental references to David are three which warn both the people of Judah and the kings that the continuance of the Davidic throne will depend on their obedience to Mosaic law. In one case, the importance of Sabbath observance is stressed (17:19-27), in the other case an end to the oppression of the vulnerable that is called for (Jer. 22:1-5). In both instances, repentance will allow that kings who sit “on David’s throne” will continue to come and go through Jerusalem’s gates (17:24, 22:4) while failure will result in the destruction of the city (17:27, 22:5). The focus is thus

³³³ There are divergent opinions among scholars about the dating of a number of sections of Jeremiah, including several considered here. Interpretation of the significance of these texts for the purposes of this study does not depend on particular dating. For a summary of the arguments, see Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty*, 21, 33, 42 ff.

more on the physical survival of Jerusalem than on the Davidic dynasty. A final reference can be found in Jeremiah 22:24-30, where the prophet pronounces divine judgement on Coniah (Jehoiachin) and in three parallel negative pronouncements: vows that he will not prosper, none of his offspring will prosper and finally, that none of his children will succeed him as king “on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah.” Here the issue of succession is in view and the text strongly expresses divine disapproval in terms of the end of Jeconiah’s line. While this need not imply the end of David’s line, the language used suggests that it may be the Davidic promises of II Sam. 7 which are being revoked here for this particular king.

There are also several references where it is clear that the dynasty of David is in view. An analogous reference to Isaiah 9 can be found in Jeremiah 23:5-6, where a future Davidic king is promised. Described as a righteous “branch,”³³⁴ this king is also given attributes of wisdom and righteousness. Larger national concerns are also in view, for during his reign, “Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety” (23:6). Similarly, Jeremiah 30:8-9 promises that after the exile, Yahweh will break the yoke of oppression and slavery. Instead, the people will serve Yahweh and David their king, “whom I [Yahweh] will raise up for them.”³³⁵ The people have been disciplined, but the throne of

³³⁴ John M. Bracke, “Branch,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary CD ROM*, (New York: Doubleday, 1992).

³³⁵ Here there is an interesting parallel to the context of the Davidic covenant in II Samuel 7, where the terminology of “raising up” is also employed in II Sam. 7:12. This phrase is also important for at least on NT author, as we will observe in due course.

David will be reestablished. Here as in II Samuel 7, an obedient relationship with Yahweh (30:9, 22), the banishment of fear (30:10), the security and safety of Israel (30:100) are all linked to the coming Davidic successor.

The longest and most detailed use of the Davidic covenant is found in Jeremiah 33. Here again there is a lengthy description of the restoration of Israel. A time of cleansing from past sins, abundant prosperity, a restoration of the land -- all are in view. The words of Jeremiah 23:5, 6 are paralleled, emphasizing a clear link between the restoration of the Davidic dynasty and the future of both Jerusalem and the nation.³³⁶ While an indirect reference is made to David's charge to Solomon that he will "never fail to have a man on the throne of Israel" (I Kgs. 2:4), here the conditional clause related to the future kings' obedience is missing, presumably since the dire events of Jeremiah's era had borne out that Yahweh's judgement was inevitable.

There are also several significant innovations of this text in dealing with the Davidic covenant. First of all, Yahweh's covenant to David is compared with Yahweh's creational covenant to establish day and night (33:20,25): as unimaginable as it would be to break the latter, so irrevocable is the former. The Davidic covenant is also paralleled with the promise that the Levites will also continue to serve in the Temple, and linked to Yahweh's faithfulness to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a reference also reflected in the promise of numerous descendants in language that recalls the patriarchal

³³⁶ Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty*, 45.

covenant (Gen. 15:5, 22:17, 26:4). Faced with the crisis of the exile, the Davidic covenant is now a basis for renewed hope that the nation of Abraham's children will have a future.³³⁷

Davidic Covenant References During and After the Exile

One text in the early exilic era which describes the restoration in reference to David is found in Amos: "In that day, I will restore David's fallen tent. I will repair its broken places, restore its ruins, and build it as it used to be." While at first glance it may appear that the focus of this text is limited to the physical rebuilding of Jerusalem, the city of David³³⁸ the use of the term "tent" (lit. "booth," *skh*) may also be suggestive of the house which Yahweh promised to David through Nathan. Most commentators agree there is a broader concept of the Davidic dynasty and kingdom in view.³³⁹ On the other hand, Pomykala argues for a restricted usage on the basis of word usage elsewhere.

Two additional points which could be considered in favour of a restricted usage are, first, the absence of Davidic covenant references elsewhere in Amos

³³⁷ Ronald Clements argues that there is a close link between the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, though at different points in Israel's history, the relationship is envisioned in different ways. Here the absence of reference to the covenant with Abraham suggests the Davidic covenant is still seen as predominant. See Ronald E. Clements, *Abraham and David: Genesis XV and its Meaning for Israelite Tradition*, 69-71.

³³⁸ As Pomykala argues in *The Davidic Dynasty*, 61-63.

³³⁹ For references see Pomykala, n. 224 in *The Davidic Dynasty*, 62.

and secondly, the specific and descriptive references to the way in which the cities of Israel will be rebuilt in 9:13-15. Yet neither of these two points is decisive. The first misses the fact that Zion is referred to as the setting of Yahweh's judgement in the introduction to the book; here the close link between Zion and the Davidic covenant should not be forgotten (Ps. 132) . Similarly, the references in 9:13-15 could also be seen as an explication of the restoration of the Davidic dynasty, rather than merely repeating the thought of 9:11. The secure state of the returned exiles pictured in 9:14-15 parallels the rest promised the people of Israel in the key text of the Davidic covenant (cf. II Sam. 7:10 –11; I Chr. 17:9, particularly the use of the phrase "to plant my people Israel.") This linkage between the security of the Davidic dynasty and the larger well being of the nation is a recurring and important one.

A final and equally important consideration which points to a dynastic reference in Amos 9:11 is the accompanying mention of the repossession of Edom and "all the nations that bear my name" (9:13), which suggests a revival of the dynastic kingdom and expanded borders of Davidic times, not just the physical reconstruction of Jerusalem the capital alone. Edom is specifically referred to as part of Davidic kingdom in a text which occurs just after the Davidic covenant is pronounced (II Sam. 8:12,14), and as a territory he put down which later was the first to rebel against Solomon (I Kgs. 11:14-16; II Kgs. 8:22). Given earlier considerations which have shown how national restoration (which includes territorial security and victory over traditional enemies like Edom) is often closely

related to Yahweh's promise to uphold the Davidic dynasty, it seems a broader reading of this text may in fact be the one more warranted by the context.

Davidic Covenant Texts in Ezekiel

The treatment of the kingship themes in the book of Ezekiel is striking for its paradoxical combination of two contrasting comments regarding the monarchy. Some texts are highly critical of the monarchy in terms of its failure to live up to Yahweh's requirements and its unwillingness to respond to divine discipline (7:27; 12:10-13; 22:6). The kingship clearly has a responsibility for the disaster of the exile. Others appear to hold out hope based on royal figures of some kind that Yahweh's blessing will again return to his people (11:14-21, 16:59-63, 17:22-24; 20:40-44).³⁴⁰ The Davidic promises play a significant role in the book of Ezekiel. One indirect reference is suggestive of Psalm 132:17, in that the house of Israel is promised that Yahweh "will cause a horn to sprout up" in what seems to be an eschatological context.³⁴¹

Both of the more explicit references found in the prophecies of Ezekiel (34:23-24, 37:24-25) make reference to David as Yahweh's "servant" who will be the shepherd of the people in a future time of restoration and peace. In contrast to previous kings (compare here the faithless "shepherds" of 34:1-10,

³⁴⁰ Note the treatment of Paul M. Joyce, "King and Messiah in Ezekiel," in *King and Messiah*, 323-337.

³⁴¹ See Ez. 29:21; cf. Joyce, "King and Messiah in Ezekiel," 328.

who have been faithless and derelict in their royal duties) David here functions as a typological figure on whom the coming king will be modeled.³⁴² At the same time, the parallels extend beyond typology. The investiture of a king like David will coincide with Yahweh's establishing of an everlasting covenant of peace with his people (34:25; 37:26). This "covenant of peace" echoes language found also in Isaiah 54:7-10. The results of Yahweh's initiative will be significant. Israel will be gathered from among the nations (37:21) and brought together into one unified nation, undoing the catastrophe of the schism under Rheoboam. The people will be cleansed and freed from their idolatrous tendencies (37:23), newly committed to obeying Yahweh's laws.³⁴³ This will be a time for the people to live in the land in safety and security (34:25; cf. II Sam. 7:10-11), experiencing blessing and prosperity in the land (34:26-29). The people will then know that Yahweh is their God, and that he is with them (34:30, cf. II Sam. 7:24-26; I Chr. 17:22). This renewed relationship with Israel will also be a demonstration to the nations of Yahweh's faithfulness to his people and his desire to dwell among them (34:30; 37:28, cf. II Sam. 7:26) and place his sanctuary "among them forever" (37:26). This final reference to the temple is closely linked to the original circumstances of the Davidic covenant in II Samuel and it is the focus of the restoration vision of Ezekiel 40-48 in which an Israel with its restored land enjoys, the benefits of a new temple.

³⁴²Refer here to Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty*, 27-29.

³⁴³Cf. Ez. 37:24. The phrase "careful to keep" also occurs in Deut 4:1-3, 6:1-3.

Because both texts focus more on Yahweh's restoration of the nation and his covenant relationship with Israel, both Pomykala and Joyce argue that the national reunion of Israel is more of a concern than the Davidic figure *per se* and downplay the connection to a figure in the Davidic covenant line.³⁴⁴ But this line of argument misses the point of Ezekiel's Davidic references. However, it should by now be clear that this larger hope is precisely the point of the key Davidic covenant texts and the reason they become so important when the well being of the nation is threatened or violated, as in the exile. The dynastic charter ensures not just the succession of David's line, but the security of the nation in its larger relationship with Yahweh. The consistent prophetic use of the Davidic covenant is best explained within this larger context in which royal charter, the nation's status and the hope for Yahweh's continued blessing of his people are intrinsically linked together. The apparent muted place for a new David figure himself in Ezekiel 34 and 37 underscores rather than undermines this. Similarly the possible references to Yahweh as king over Israel in 37:22 are not the replacement of the Davidic kingship, but actually echo Yahweh's preeminent place in Israel in the key Davidic covenant texts as well (II Sam. 7:22-26; I Chr. 17:23-24). For both the Chronicler and the writer of the Deuteronomic History, the Davidic covenant serves to enhance and reinforce Yahweh's kingship over his people, not detract from it, and this is also the case here.

³⁴⁴See Joyce, "King and Messiah in Ezekiel," 328; Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty*, 28-29.

Daniel Block has argued that this link between the election of David as king and Israel's status as Yahweh's possession is visible throughout the prophetic writings.³⁴⁵ He also points out that the reference to the dynastic covenant to David and reinstatement of a king on that basis serves here also as a fulfillment of the national covenant made at Sinai. This national covenant was also in view in the Deuteronomic History, where in II Sam 7:23, David also makes reference to the Exodus and the establishment of Israel as Yahweh's own, though he does not mention the Sinai covenant. The prophet apparently draws on a wide range of traditions, as Block also sees a number of parallels between the language of Ezekiel 34:25-30 and Leviticus 26:4-13.³⁴⁶ While the kingly figure in Ezekiel appears to have a much more limited role in Israel than that enjoyed by the pre exilic kings, the appointment of a Davidic leader is symbolic of Yahweh's presence among his people, and a confirmation that the divine shepherd will provide for them.

³⁴⁵ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel: Chapters 25-48* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 300. He also cites Hos. 3:5 and Jer. 30:9-10.

³⁴⁶ Block, *The Book of Ezekiel*, 303. For an opposing view, see Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty*, 28, who argues that Ezekiel has no expectations for a dynastic revival of David's house.

The Davidic Covenant in Isaiah 55

One additional text which illustrates the use of the Davidic promises is found in Isaiah 55:3-5. In the context of an invitation to the nation to repent of its past sins and find forgiveness and satisfaction in Yahweh's sustaining presence, the "everlasting covenant" with David is now offered to the people as a nation. Like the accomplishments of David, which were a sign of Yahweh's greatness, their revived relationship with Yahweh will be a witness to the nations (II Sam. 7:25-26) and an everlasting sign (Is. 55:13). The restoration of the fertility of the land and the security of the people will result in celebration and joy. In the chapter which follows, the obedience of Israel to Yahweh's law will be part of Yahweh's gathering of other peoples as well, allowing foreigners who keep the covenant to come in worship to Yahweh's "holy mountain."³⁴⁷ Pomykala, following Eissfeldt,³⁴⁸ correctly draws attention to the fact that the Davidic promises are here extended to Israel as a nation: a democratization of the covenant has taken place. Given the close connection between the Davidic dynasty and the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and Israel, this extension is not surprising. If traditions dating back to the early monarchy could

³⁴⁷Is. 56:6-8; this text is part of third division of the book of Isaiah which some suggest is written by a "third Isaiah" because it seems to be set in the period of the restoration itself rather anticipating the return in the future, as most of Isaiah 40-55 seems to. Regardless, there is a close relationship between these two sections and also between the thematic concerns of Isaiah 55 and 56, which make it quite legitimate to include Isaiah 56 as part of the context of interpretation here. For a brief summary of issues surrounding the division and dating of Isaiah, see Bernard Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 418-424.

³⁴⁸ Cited as "The Promises of Grace to David in Isaiah 55:1-5," in *Israel's Prophetic Heritage*, (ed. B.W. Anderson and W. Harrelson; London: Harper & Row Brothers, 1962), 197-201.

already observe that Yahweh's actions at the Exodus in choosing and saving one special people would make his name known, then it would not be unthinkable that his actions in delivering Judah from exile and restoring the nation to obedience might have a similar effect.³⁴⁹ It is less clear that this use of the Davidic covenant is not just an extension of David's role to Israel, but also an abrogation of the Davidic covenant and the collapse of a hope that the dynasty will continue. When Pomykala argues that this passage represents a complete abandonment of the messianic hope for an individual kingly messiah, he goes beyond the evidence.³⁵⁰ Such a permanent renunciation of the dynastic promise would undermine the very argument that the text is trying to make.³⁵¹ If this text pronounces that the Davidic line is finished, this would seem to revoke the very basis by which Israel is assured that the "everlasting covenant" of Is. 55:3 will be equally durable. Moreover, such an outright abrogation would run sharply counter to deep and well developed expectations found earlier in Isaiah that a Davidic successor would come (Isaiah 9:7, 11:1) and move beyond the reinterpretation of earlier chapters to an essential retraction of its prophecies, severely straining the unity of this prophetic work. As was demonstrated in Psalm

³⁴⁹B. W. Anderson, *Contours of Old Testament Theology*, 294-295.

³⁵⁰"Henceforth, the everlasting covenant with David will be fulfilled in the witness and glorification of Israel." Cf. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty*, 41.

³⁵¹ So Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 166. "This of course does not imply the thought, which has sometimes been read into the passage, that the nation will now take the place of the dynasty and inherit the promises made to David, but rather that these promises have again become effective."

89, the Davidic dynasty promises were remarkably durable. Even in disastrous historical circumstances, appeal was still made to the inviolability of the Davidic covenant as a source for hope and resolution.

The Davidic House in Haggai and Zechariah

A final and important set of references to the Davidic house is found in the writings of Zechariah. In the context of a book which calls the returned exiles to hope on the basis of visions which depict Yahweh's final victory over his enemies, there is an early announcement that Yahweh's servant, the Davidic 'Branch', will soon be brought to Israel.³⁵² Zechariah also prophesies that Zerubbabel, a scion of the Davidic line, will rebuild the temple (4:6-10). Because "the man whose name is the Branch" is also spoken of as building the temple, this suggests that Zechariah may be indirectly confirming Zerubbabel's status as the one to reestablish the Davidic line.

Such an expectation was clearly put forward by Zechariah's contemporary Haggai.³⁵³ According to Haggai, during a time in which Yahweh would

³⁵² Cf. Zech. 3:8, Is. 11:1; for further discussion, see Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament*, 463 and Ralph Smith, *Micah-Malachi* (WBC 32; Waco: Word, 1982), 200. In the absence of stronger evidence, it is difficult to link servant here with other uses such as Isaiah 53:5-6, as many commentators have suggested. It is more likely a reference to one who like David, was seen to be Yahweh's royal and obedient vassal. Smith (*Micah-Malachi*, 200) correctly warns of reading all of the aspects of the "Suffering servant" into this passage, but apparently misses the juxtaposition of servant and branch, which does appear to suggest a royal usage.

³⁵³ Carol and Eric Meyers posit a common redactor for Haggai and Zechariah 1-8, which if correct, further reinforces the commonalities in outlook between these two works. See *Zechariah 1-8* (Anchor Bible 25B; New York: Doubleday, 1993), xlv-xlv. Differences in style have long led

“overthrow royal thrones and shatter the power of foreign kingdoms” (Hag. 2:21), Zerubbabel would be Yahweh’s “signet ring” and Yahweh’s “servant.”³⁵⁴ These promises come at the conclusion of the book and so are not developed further, but the overtones are clearly Davidic.

The figure of Zerubbabel is given further context in Zechariah 6. Where there is a reference to a crown of silver and gold to be given to Joshua, the high priest (6:11) the context seems to suggest shared ruling status between priest and monarch is reflected in that Joshua should in turn crown a royal figure “whose name is Branch,” who will in turn build the temple and rule on his throne (6:12-13). Secondly, the temple that Zerubbabel is building may be overshadowed by a later temple that will be built by those who are “far away” (6:15), a phrase which suggests Jews still exiled who will return later and likely also all nations who will one day come to worship in Jerusalem in the eschatological age.³⁵⁵ Given the possibility that Zerubbabel was quite possibly removed by the Persians before even being anointed, there appears to be a movement to seeing him as part of an eschatological foreshadowing.

The opening chapters of the book conclude with a lengthy description of divine blessing that was soon to come to Jerusalem, and by extension Judah and

commentators to see Zechariah 9-14 as a later addition to the book, though opinions vary as to the structure of the material within these chapters.

³⁵⁴See Ezra 6:16-18. For a description of this figure, see Russel Fuller, “Zerubbabel,” *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 829. See also Hag. 2:23; Zech. 6:12-13 although Zerubbabel is not mentioned in the remainder of the book of Haggai and does not appear in Ezra’s description of the dedication of the temple.

³⁵⁵See Zech. 2:11, 8:22.

Israel. The language of safety, fertility in agriculture, and the coming of many nations to worship in Jerusalem powerfully evokes a common prophetic image for the restored Israelite community whose prosperity and obedience will serve as the Yahweh's witness to the nations, ending on a strong universalistic note (8:3, 7,12-13, 20-23). All of these events are connected with the return of Yahweh to Zion; the Davidic ruler is not mentioned.

The relationship of Zechariah 9-14 to the previous eight chapters has long received attention. Meyers and Meyers have drawn on the social and political context of the exilic community under Persian rule to reconstruct a historical background for these later chapters, which appear to have a strong apocalyptic coloring.³⁵⁶ In terms of kingship themes, this suggests that there is an ongoing transformation of kingship imagery being developed in Zechariah. As part of Yahweh's judgement on a series of Israel's oppressors, the opening vision of this section portrays a king who will enter Jerusalem to shouts of rejoicing. The mention of Zion follows traditional prophetic usage as the symbolic locus on

³⁵⁶C. Meyers and E. M. Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 15-29. They cite Brevard S. Childs' comments: "Zechariah 1-8 envisions a future rooted in the return from Babylonian exile and the reorganization of Judean life around the Temple. Zechariah 9-14 anticipate the ultimate, full restoration of Israel, the return of all the exiles, and the final participation of all the nations in recognizing Yahweh's sovereignty (14:16-19) as human history comes to a climax and is transformed into a truly sacred society (14:20-12) again with the center of the new order being Jerusalem and the temple. Whether from one or many hands, these chapters are consistent in outlook with those of the first eight chapters and in the final canonical shape of the book, there is an integrated and common perspective which permeates the book as a whole which makes an attempt to read and interpret the book as a unity imperative." Cf. Meyers and Meyers, 58, citing Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 484-485.

which expectations of Yahweh's intervention against Israel's enemies and restoration of the nation are centered.³⁵⁷

The coming kingly figure will be righteous and is pictured as mounted on a donkey's colt. While the language employs common Near Eastern royal motifs, the tone as elsewhere in Zechariah is non-militaristic (3:8; 4:6-10, 6:12). This is not a uniquely Israelite motif, since the king riding a mule in procession is attested elsewhere in the ancient world.³⁵⁸ This represents a significant contribution to the interpretation of the royalist hope, as Meyers and Meyers and explain:

By substituting non-military animals for horses, the prophet is reversing the power imagery associated with a king's rule. In the eschatological future, the restoration of the Davidic monarchy will radically alter the notion of kingship but the future king will not exert exploitative domination or foster socioeconomic elitism.³⁵⁹

It is worth noting that one of Samuel's arguments against the introduction of the monarchy is that inevitably the new king will require Israelites to serve as his charioteers.³⁶⁰ It is quite possible that we have here a subtle but unmistakable critique of the shortcomings of the Davidic monarchy. Yet it is placed in a passage which at the same time seeks to appropriate the now

³⁵⁷ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 122; Ben Ollenburger, "Zion", *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 830.

³⁵⁸ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 129. It is possible that historical realities have brought to mind Gen. 49:10-11 which is being reworked here in order to lend credence to this vision.

³⁵⁹ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 129-130.

³⁶⁰ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 133.

chastened dynasty's symbolic potential within a larger context of national restoration and hope.³⁶¹

The accession of this new ruler will inaugurate an era of peace and security which will come as the result of Yahweh's intervention on behalf of his people as the Divine Warrior (Zech. 9: 14-15)³⁶² By removing the chariots and war horses (Zech. 9:10) -- the quintessential symbols of monarchical power and domination-- from Ephraim and Jerusalem, Yahweh establishes that these will no longer be needed in the ensuing time of peace.³⁶³ The inclusion of Ps. 72:8 in this verse is notable for its inclusion of the verb *msl* in place of *rdh* to express the rule of this king. The Hebrew *msl* is a common enough verb, yet it is distinctively employed to describe the rule of only David, Solomon and Hezekiah (who were among the most divinely favoured among the Davidic kings), perhaps because it is also frequently used as well to describe God's universal reign.³⁶⁴ In any

³⁶¹ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 357. "Although the inviolability of Davidic rule was never questioned, Deuteronomic and prophetic literature is often highly critical of actions taken by the crown and many kings are portrayed as little better than oriental despots. Thus a critique of the expression of royal powers was already firmly part of prophetic expression among Second Zechariah's predecessors." See also Laato (*Josiah and David Redivivus*, 271-272), who points out that while Jer. 17:25 and 22:4 associate royalty with chariots in a positive light, 1 Kgs. 1 presents a critique of the oriental despotism based on military might in favour of the older charismatic kingship ideal based on the war of Yahweh. This older tradition is paralleled also in Ps. 20:7-9, where the king who depends on the power of Yahweh rather than boasting in his chariots is praised. Deut. 17:16 could also be cited here.

³⁶² Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 166, 170.

³⁶³ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah*, 132-133.

³⁶⁴ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 126.

case, the universal character of the kingship may suggest an eschatological situation.³⁶⁵

Even though neither David or the Davidic covenant is explicitly mentioned, this text clearly stands in that same tradition of interpretation. Given the historical realities, this covenant is the implicit basis for the hopes expressed here. In terms of the messianic development that is closely associated with this tradition, Zechariah provides the basis for a unique messianic outlook characterized by a non-militarist royal rule, a reconstituted version of Judah's monarchy, and an active and decisive intervention of Yahweh on behalf of his people.³⁶⁶ Rex Mason has suggested that this royal figure is one whose righteousness is clearly evident, exhibiting qualities that suggest the influence of Psalm 72.³⁶⁷ Further, he notes that the unique and rich complex of qualities attributed to this king in Zechariah 9:9-10 (including the eschatological salvation he brings and the eschatological *slm* he shall command to the nations) evokes numerous parallels

³⁶⁵ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 137.

³⁶⁶ As elsewhere, the Davidic king is here established on his throne by the power of Yahweh. In the context of the Davidic dynastic portrayal, Yahweh's deliverance at the Exodus is also celebrated in II Sam 7: 22-24, and Ps. 78 : 51-66).

³⁶⁷ *Bringing Out the Treasure: Inner Biblical Allusion in Zechariah 9-14*, Mark J. Boda and Michael H. Floyd eds., JSOT Sup 370 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2003), 35-42. "What seems to be indicated here, therefore, is that the king who comes brings victory and deliverance with him for the people. But it is God's victory which he has experienced, and which he mediates to the community by virtue of his right relationship with God" (36).

with Isaiah's portrait of the Servant. It may even suggest the possibility that this portrait has coloured Zechariah's own description.³⁶⁸

The several references to the "house of David" in Zechariah 12:2-13:1 are especially striking in view of the fact that, in all likelihood, these verses emerge from a time in which historical events had brought an end to the Davidic line's participation in actual power in the Persian province of Yehud (Judah). This movement is linked with similar hopes for political independence, as Meyers and Meyers point out: "Thus, just as the intensification of eschatological depiction of Judean independence and even universal dominance represents a reversal of political reality, so too would this emphasis on the house of David arise from a political situation in which just the opposite condition -- the de-emphasis of Davidic potential -- obtained."³⁶⁹ Nevertheless, the prophet envisions here much more than a simple return to the pre-exilic past.

When Yahweh (here identified emphatically as the creator God) does act, he will save the dwellings of Judah first so that the community will receive equal

³⁶⁸ Mason concludes later, "...it would seem that we may have here a re-interpretation of the Messianic role in light of the mission of the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah." Cf. *Bringing Out the Treasure*, 42.

Other interpretations of the messianic mission can be found in the Old Testament, including Is. 55:3-5, where the Davidic covenant is extended to the whole community of Israel. What is especially striking here, however, is the portrayal of a royal figure as one who will exercise power through prophetic proclamation and win victory in humility. This represents a unique appropriation of Israel's kingly traditions and a distinctive portrayal of the expected messianic leader.

³⁶⁹ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 356.

honor with the house of David.³⁷⁰ At the same time the prophetic compares the feeblest in Jerusalem with David, he also pronounces that “the house of David will be like God.” This type of eschatological language represents further idealization of a dynastic house that has been severed from current political involvement.³⁷¹

As the book of Zechariah develops these themes, there are indications that the Davidic line has been chastened and humbled. Yahweh will endow the house of David and the leadership of Jerusalem with a spirit of repentance and supplication for the wounding of an individual they now recognize was wrongly treated. This verse (Zech. 12:10) poses immense problems of reading and interpretation. Meyers and Meyers translate as follows: “Then I will pour out on the house of David and on the leaders of Jerusalem a spirit of favor and supplication so that they will look to me concerning the one they have stabbed.” Since Yahweh is the implied speaker, he is clearly also the one to whom they will look, with the simultaneous grief and mourning for the “stabbed one.” Further clues as to the identity of this person are cryptically omitted and the exact reference is difficult to establish with any certainty. Meyers and Meyers suggest that this is a figurative allusion to the true prophets of Yahweh, who had sometimes fallen victim to the excesses of royal oppression during the Davidic

³⁷⁰See Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 328, who suggest that social and political realities within the post exilic community have caused democraticizing and decentralizing trends.

³⁷¹Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 332, and Laato, *Josiah and David Redivivus*, 274, who sees 9:9-10 as an eschatological revision of 2:14-15 in the aftermath of Zerubbabel's failed ascendancy.

dynasty. Laato finds that the figure's close association with Yahweh and the numerous other typological parallels with Josiah he sees in Zechariah provide a basis for identifying him as an unnamed royal or messianic figure of some kind, modeled after the untimely death of king Josiah.³⁷² At the same time, he also recognizes that the fate of the false prophets in 13:1-6 is a critique of the prophets who supported the Jerusalem aristocracy. This is further supported by the reference to the striking of Yahweh's shepherd, "the man close to me [Yahweh]", which follows in 13:7.

In any case, the "stabbed one" is clearly a representative of Yahweh who has been wrongly injured in some way that implicates both the house of David and the leaders of the Judean capital, an act for which they now acknowledge their complicity. The intensity of the grief experienced by the house of David and the Jerusalem hierarchy is depicted in terms of "the weeping of Hadad Rimmon on the plains of Jericho" (12:11). While the reference may possibly be to a type of cultic mourning associated with Hadad, a western Semitic god of storm, another and more likely explanation for this allusion may lie in the tradition of mourning which followed the death of Josiah (II Chr. 35:25) and is here conflated with the location of this event on the plain of Megiddo.³⁷³ It is even possible that this cultic mourning has been transposed into a memorial for Judah's last good king –the bearer of great national hopes-- in some way. Since Josiah is also the

³⁷² Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 339-349; cf. also Laato, *Josiah and David Redivius*, 290-291.

³⁷³ Meyers and Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14*, 343-349.

last of only a few Davidic kings to have earned divine approval (II Kgs. 22:2), it seems difficult to exclude this annual commemorative tradition from consideration in explaining this text's reference to mourning. Meyers and Meyers suggest that these Jerusalem leaders will be transformed through the action of Yahweh's spirit (12:10) in a number of important ways. In addition to their remorse about their history of misdeeds and desire to seek divine forgiveness, there will be an outpouring of genuine grief which will lead to a renewal and purification. The house of David and people of Jerusalem will be restored and cleansed in unprecedented ways (13:1).

Whatever royal (and later messianic) hopes, aspirations and motifs may be detected in Zechariah 12:1-13:6, they are not explicitly grounded in the unconditional promises to David. The Davidic dynasty itself is portrayed primarily in terms of its failings and shortcomings and need of redemption.³⁷⁴ While both Davidic Kingship and messianic hopes are alluded to, it appears that (perhaps because of the pervasive inadequacies of the Davidic line at the time of writing) messianic hopes are not specifically connected to the Davidic dynasty, though subsequent readers of the text would soon do so.³⁷⁵ The restorationist hopes in Zechariah 9-14 and 12-14 specifically are placed within a larger context so concerned with Yahweh's direct saving activity on behalf of his people that the

³⁷⁴ Pomykala, (*The Davidic Dynasty*, 125) excludes references to both Davidic kingship and Messianic reference here, quoting Mason, "The Relation of Zechariah 9-14 to Proto Zechariah," *ZAW* 88, 1976,) 237. See also John Collins, *The Scepter and The Star*, (ABRL, New York Doubleday, 1995), 32-33.

³⁷⁵ See William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1998), 33.

person of the Davidic successor is somewhat overshadowed. Zechariah presents the reader with the dramatic flaws and trials of the historical Davidic line, as well as the hope that Yahweh's enduring promises to David will be fulfilled, leaving it to the eschatological future for the tensions to be resolved.

Conclusions

The following comments can be made by way of summarizing these references to David's dynasty and the covenant associated with it. It is widely recognized that kingship in the ancient Near East is generally viewed as the conduit through which the deity will bless and prosper the nation. Kingship and national well being are organically related. This was also true in Israel and particularly evident in the formulation of the Davidic covenant, which, though it was centered on succession and dynastic concerns, linked the well being of the Davidic dynasty to the security of the nation from external threats, the prosperity of the people, the fertility and abundance of the land and finally, the favour and blessing of Yahweh towards his covenant people and their identity as his very own. Contrary to the thesis of "corporate personality", this is a specifically Israelite formulation of a dynastic covenant arrangement between king and deity common throughout the ancient Near East, as Laato has shown.

It is also clear that, through the Hebrew Bible, the Davidic promises are employed in a variety of ways. Instead of a single uniform use of the Davidic covenant, various aspects of the royal charter are utilized in different contexts.

The significance of the Davidic covenant can be seen in the Chronicler's work as a basis for linking David with Solomon, who together form the ideal for kingship in the book. Elsewhere, the Davidic covenant exercises force as a restraint on the excesses of kings (Deuteronomic History) or a basis for hope in a time of failure and crisis (Ps. 89, Isaiah 9). In Ezekiel we find the Davidic covenant established as the way of envisioning the renewal of Yahweh's kingship as shepherd over his people, even as he appoints a Davidic king to be a representative shepherd.

The uses of the Davidic covenant show that interaction with historical circumstances is taking place in a variety of ways. Despite historical circumstances which suggest that the Davidic line has been terminated, a heightened interpretation of the divine obligations made in the covenant can instead become the basis for lament, complaint and deeper hope. Even events such as the untimely death of the Davidic king Josiah come to have a large role in portraying the expectations of a new king.³⁷⁶ At times when the Davidic line

³⁷⁶ See Marvin Sweeney, *King Josiah of Judah: The Lost Messiah of Israel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001). Sweeney's study argues that Josiah's career was greatly influential on the composition of many OT texts including the DH and numerous prophets. He suggests that Josiah's failure to reunify Israel and tragic death resulted in the widespread abandonment of a Davidic hope in the late monarchic period which, would become even more evident in the works of Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. Because Ezekiel subordinates the Davidic "prince" to the Temple priests, Sweeney proposes that an earlier, positive view of the Davidic king has been qualified in the aftermath of Zerubbabel's failure (320). Similarly, when Jeremiah places the Davidic king under the restraint of Mosaic law, Sweeney argues that this book represents a reinterpretation of the Davidic kingship (321). One could argue instead however, that both portrayals are part of the ongoing Israelite interest in relating and integrating the Mosaic and Davidic covenants that go back to the inherent structure of the Davidic covenant itself. This process may date to an even earlier time, close to the Davidic era, as has been demonstrated. Sweeney's contention that the historical demise of the Davidic line allowed other leadership forms (such as the Levitical priesthood) to emerge in the exilic period is certainly valid (323). However, his study does not take into account the example of Zechariah's account of a humbled and chastened Davidic line as a possible new beginning for the monarchy. As a result, an opportunity

has come to an end, the hope becomes part of an eschatological vision, secure despite the political disappointments of historical figures such as Zerubbabel, as in the case of Haggai and Zechariah 1-8.

As responses to the fall of the nation demonstrated, the Davidic covenant clearly occupies a key place in the attempt of various texts to reconstruct a basis for the restoration and hope for the nation after the destruction of the exile. It is evident that when such a figure is referred to, the status of the royal deliverer may at times be less prominent than in others. Though the precise shape of the hoped for ruler envisioned varies, what is constant is that the Davidic covenant remains a consistent source of hope for the restoration of the nation to peaceful security, safety from enemies, and a restored relationship with Yahweh. These realities were part of the context of II Samuel 7 and part of the earliest traditions in which the Davidic covenant has been transmitted canonically.

The Davidic covenant is thus integrally related to the life of Yahweh's people, as was the case in the original context in which the Davidic charter is positioned in the two most prominent narrative texts (cf. II Sam. 7:18-2 and I Chr. 17:20-24). What is especially important here is that the Davidic covenant, while it could be appropriated in a variety of ways, was always integrally connected to the security of the nation and the blessings that resulted with

to account for the persistence of the Davidic hope despite its failings, and the continuation of the ongoing messianic developments associated with the Davidic covenant during the post exilic period is missed. Further, it is not clear that his view of Isaiah 11:1-16 as pointing to Yahweh alone as the righteous monarch (and thus an abandoning of the royalist hope) in Israel was shared by all. In fact, this text would prove to be a persistent ingredient in the development of messianic expectation, as will be discussed further below.

Israel's ongoing relationship with their covenant God. The Davidic covenant and the hope which rested on its inviolability were both inextricably bound up in the life of Israel and its future. As subsequent messianic hopes would come to rest on individual figures to restore and decisively establish the continuity of this covenant relationship, this close relationship between divine covenant, royal "son" and national viability and prosperity would continue even as it was being continuously reinterpreted in the face of historical events.

Finally, there are also indications that a variant messianic tradition began to take shape in various texts, in which the historical failure of the Davidic line to rule obediently was acknowledged. Here a renewal and repentance of the Davidic house (Zechariah 12) as well as an emphasis on the righteousness and integrity of the coming Davidic successor are prominent themes (Isaiah 11, Psalm 72, Zechariah 9:9-10). In this vision, the Davidic messiah cannot simply be looked to for a military conquest that reestablishes the United Empire of Solomonic times. Here the flaws that proved the undoing of David, Solomon and their successors must be overcome. The qualities of the expected king would be modeled after a higher standard.

Chapter 4

The Development of the Messianic Figure in Judaism

Tracing the Beginnings of the Messianic Hope

The origins and development of messianic belief in Judaism continue to be topics of great interest among scholars. Two important studies by Klausner and Mowinckel, completed in the 1950's, have been followed by numerous others in more recent decades.³⁷⁷ It has received even more interest in light of the translation and availability of the Qumran scrolls, and numerous new studies continue to emerge. The literature is vast and continues to grow, requiring a selective approach for the intent of the present study. Three issues will be of central concern. The first is determining the extent to which messianic expectation is evident in the Hebrew Bible and other Second Temple literature. The second involves assessing the variety of messianic motifs which this literature exhibits. Finally, attention will be directed towards determining the influence of the Davidic covenant texts in the development of messianic

³⁷⁷ Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel* (trans. W.F. Stinespring; New York: Macmillan, 1955); Sigmund Mowinckel, *He That Cometh* (trans: G.W. Anderson; Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1956). As Klausner notes (*The Messianic Idea*, 2-3), there were numerous studies by an earlier generation of scholars done in the late 19th century in Europe. Among the more recent studies which each focus on various aspects of messianic development are Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, Ernest S. Frerichs, eds., *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992); John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star* (New York: Doubleday, 1995); Craig A. Evans and Peter W. Flint (eds.), *Eschatology, Messianism and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); John Day (ed.), *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM Press, 1998); Gerbern Oekema, *The Anointed and His People* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998); Richard S. Hess and M. Daniel Carroll R. (eds.) *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Press, 2003).

expectation. Before dealing with these three questions, a brief summary of some of the central issues in the study of Jewish Messianism (raised by these two early studies of Klausner and Mowinckel and addressed in subsequent studies) will be useful in establishing some connections to the larger discussion.

Klausner and Mowinckel both approached the topic from a developmental perspective. While Mowinckel traced the origins of messianic belief back to Israel's traditions of sacral kingship and their background in ancient kingship ideology, Klausner dealt primarily with the texts of Judaism in the prophets, the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha and the later developments in the era of the Tannach. He found that while embryonic forms of the messianic idea could be discerned in a number of earlier biblical texts, the actual apex of messianic development emerged in the works of Amos and Hosea (who provided vivid descriptions of the messianic era) and the early chapters of Isaiah, which focused more specifically on developing the personality of the Messiah.³⁷⁸ He contrasted these texts with the relative paucity of references to the personal attributes of the Messiah in the apocryphal books and the greater attention given to describing both the messianic era and characteristics of this promised deliverer in such pseudepigraphal works as Enoch and the Psalms of Solomon.³⁷⁹ He argued that as Christianity adopted the messianic motif in its own development, it gave the messianic figure a significance and centrality unprecedented in Judaism, which, by way of comparison, had always been somewhat ambivalent about the Messiah's relationship to Yahweh and modest

³⁷⁸ Klausner, *The Messianic Idea*, 44.

³⁷⁹ Klausner, *The Messianic Idea*, 249-250; 274.

about his role, placing greater stress on the obedience of the worshipping community rather than the atonement of the divine deliverer.³⁸⁰ In summary, Klausner celebrated Jewish messianic thought as one of the great cultural contributions of Judaism with widespread impact outside the faith in which it took root.

Mowinckel traced messianic themes back to the eschatological hope which permeated the restoration visions of the post exilic prophets, in which Yahweh's enthronement over the nations -- now transferred to a time of national crisis-- becomes a basis for the hope of restoration and eventually a decisive, eschatological intervention of Yahweh.³⁸¹ Because the king played such a central role in Yahweh's relationship with Israel, the future restoration of Israel was intimately tied up in the restoration of the monarchy --- so much so in fact, that the figure of a promised Messiah served as "the future eschatological realization of the ideal of kingship."³⁸² Moreover, he contended that "The Messiah is the ideal king of David's line, who reigns in the restored kingdom of his ancestor when the nation has been raised from degradation and freed from foreign domination, when justice has been established and godliness and virtue again prevail in the land."³⁸³ Mowinckel accounted for the often minimal references to the person of the Messiah *per se* in the Hebrew Bible by noting that from earliest times, messianic hope was primarily centered on the more

³⁸⁰ Klausner, *The Messianic Idea*, 526.

³⁸¹ Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 125-154.

³⁸² Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 159.

³⁸³ Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 160; see also 261.

expansive and central hope of the coming of the Kingdom of Yahweh in Israel and the world. This kingdom had a profoundly religious character, though this could never be separated from its earthly, concrete expression in the political life of Israel.

While there were occasional exceptions where the coming deliverer might play a more active role as Yahweh's agent³⁸⁴ or even when the political hopes might appear to become more prominent, overall the depiction was of Yahweh's action in establishing his rule on earth, who might on occasion elect to make use of human instruments such as the Messiah.³⁸⁵ Over time, in circles where political hopes became more pronounced and explicit, the influence of the political dimension of the messianic kingdom can be detected on such figures as the "Son of Man," creating a fusion that combined the transcendent concepts of apocalyptic eschatology with the more traditional nationalistic expectations.³⁸⁶ It would be left to Jesus, suggested Mowinckel, to repudiate the messianic, political elements that had come to adhere to this title and instead reinterpret "Son of Man" in terms of the "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah 53 who would suffer, die but then be exalted in victory and vindication.³⁸⁷ Here (in their view of how the

³⁸⁴ Is. 9:1; see also Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 280.

³⁸⁵ Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 173 ff. The figure of the messiah is something of a peripheral figure throughout the literature of Judaism, in fact: "As in the Old Testament, so in that of later Judaism the figure of the Messiah is not an indispensable part of the future hope, or of eschatology," 280.

³⁸⁶ Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 361.

³⁸⁷ Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 448-449: "The Jewish Messianic concept is thereby transformed, and lifted up to a wholly other plain. In fact, the Jewish Messiah, as originally conceived, and as most of Jesus' contemporaries thought of him, was pushed aside and replaced by a new redeemer and mediator of salvation, 'the Man,' who comes from God to suffer and die

Messiah figure would be interpreted by the early Christian movement) Klausner and Mowinckel appear to part ways somewhat. They did, however, share the common assumption that the development of a Messianic concept can be traced as a significant theme in parts of the Old Testament and the literature of later Judaism. Both also downplayed the significance of the messianic figure *per se*, suggesting that larger communal concerns and the coming kingly reign of Yahweh were more central themes.

Assessments of the Significance and Extent of Messianism

Despite the complications raised by employing the term, the early Christian movement was insistent that Jesus be regarded as the Messiah³⁸⁸ and went on to search the Old Testament for texts which supported and explicated this claim. The influence of this understanding can be observed in the way that messianic interpretation of the Old Testament went on to become a dominant paradigm for dealing with a range of Jewish texts, despite the fact that many of them were not read messianically in Second Temple Judaism.³⁸⁹ Reactions to

as God's Servant, in order to save men from the power of sin, Satan, and death. For Jesus, the Jewish Messianic idea was a temptation of Satan, which He had to reject."

³⁸⁸ It is not always clear whether the term "Messiah" (Gr. *christos*) in New Testament texts is being used in a titular sense for Jesus (i.e. "the Messiah") or as a proper name (Jesus Christ). However, it does seem evident that deep conviction about the former use lay behind the eventual common use of the latter. The title thus precedes the proper name. For further discussion see John Sawyer, "Messiah", *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 513; E. Rivkin, "Messiah, Jewish", *IDP Supp* 588-591; Marinus de Jonge, "Messiah," *Anchor Bible Dictionary* CD ROM; N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 486-489; *The Resurrection of the Son of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 555 ff.

³⁸⁹ One recent study by Alexander defends a traditional reading of messianic texts, and argues that the foreshadowing of Jesus as a royal Messiah in the books from Genesis to Kings is so translucently visible that it forms a central theme for a Biblical theology capable of uniting the Old

this have emerged, challenging that the degree of messianic material in the Hebrew Bible has been overstated, and that the emergence of the Messiah figure is a much later development than has been previously thought.³⁹⁰

The problem of determining the extent of Messianic expectation in the literature of Judaism goes back at least as far as Klausner and Mowinckel, and emerged in their own attempts to define the terminology of this subject. Klausner distinguished between what he coined “messianic expectation” (which he related to a hope for political freedom and a blissful existence for Israel in its own land as well as the world) and a more explicit, prophetically based “belief in a Messiah,” in which an end-time redeemer figure would bring political and spiritual redemption to Israel and the entire human race.³⁹¹ While Klausner saw these two forms of messianic hope as virtually inseparable, he regarded the more specific belief in a personal messianic figure as the key to understanding

and New Testaments. T. Desmond Alexander, “Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings: Their Importance for Biblical Theology” *Tyndale Bulletin* 49.2 (1998) 191-212. While it does draw attention to the connection between the promises made to Abraham and the fulfillments of those divine oaths in later periods of Israel’s history, the essay seems so concerned with establishing the divinely preordained character of Israelite kingship that it pays little attention to the ambivalence of the Deuteronomistic History towards this institution *per se*. This results in a somewhat scripted reading of the Old Testament that flattens the many vicissitudes and crises which are such an integral part of Yahweh’s covenant relationship with his people. The prophetic warnings and criticisms about kingship are not mentioned (e.g. I Sam. 8:11ff.; 10:17-19 as well as later critiques of kingship), leaving the reader with the impression that kingship itself was an unmitigated good and an unequivocal part of the larger divine intention from the beginning of history. As has been noted, this runs counter to Old Testament evidence. To anticipate the argument taken here, it was not until Jesus’ own ministry, death and resurrection that a new understanding of the Old Testament history (including its kingly and messianic elements) was possible and appropriate. Jesus’ career is, in a sense, the hermeneutical key to seeing these texts in a new light. So while (for example) Jesus is recognized as a king in the line of David, he is king in a much different way than the history of kingship would suggest.

³⁹⁰ Desmond Alexander blames the 18th century Deist Anthony Collins for proposing a “demessianized” reading of the Old Testament ; cf. “Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings,” 192.

³⁹¹ Klausner, *The Messianic Idea*, 9.

two parallel streams of messianism which flourished during differing historical circumstances. During periods of national stability, there was a greater emphasis on an ethical, spiritual messianic figure, while periods of oppression and national crisis produced hopes for a politically nationalistic deliverer. Here again, however, Klausner insisted that the political/nationalistic hopes were closely connected with spiritual/universalistic expectations, which are evident in an elaborate messianic text as *Psalms of Solomon* 17.³⁹² In all cases, Klausner thought that Judaism held to an earthly, this-worldly messiah rather than a heavenly figure.³⁹³

Mowinckel posited that while messianic belief could be traced back to its background in the anointing of (especially the Davidic) kings in Israel, the more mature expectation of later, post-exilic Judaism looked for a figure whose domain would combine both the eschatological and political dimensions: "The Messiah is he who shall restore Israel as a people, free her from her enemies, rule over her as king and bring other nations under her political and religious sway."³⁹⁴ Mowinckel also noted that historical circumstances played a key role in shaping the intensity and colour of messianic expectations, in times of crisis often finding a central place and during other, more tranquil periods, receding into the background. In any case, he placed the emergence of the hope for a Messiah (who is "simply the king in this national and religious future kingdom, which will

³⁹² Klausner, *The Messianic Idea*, 317-324.

³⁹³ Klausner, *The Messianic Idea*, 10.

³⁹⁴ Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 6.

one day be established by the miraculous intervention of Yahweh ") at the time of the post exilic prophets.³⁹⁵

A brief and helpful essay by Raymond E. Brown similarly distinguishes the general "messianic" hope from the more specific and limited concept of a Messiah, "the anointed king of the Davidic dynasty who would establish in the world the definitive kingdom intended by God for Israel."³⁹⁶ Brown traces the development of messianism in three stages, the first of which is complete before the 8th century BC and emerges out of the dynastic covenant with David³⁹⁷ and leads to the emergence of an idealized (but non-eschatological) royal figure whose reign will be characterized by Yahweh's promised blessings. A second progression begins to emerge in the early chapters of Isaiah following the corruption and demise of the historical Davidic line, where the concept of universal redemption and peace by Yahweh is first related to the resurgence of this dynasty in a restored future.³⁹⁸ The third and final stage takes place after the Judean exile, when the interruption of the Davidic line moved the expectation of a dynastic successor to the indefinite future and intensified his stature to a person through whom Yahweh would act decisively and definitively on behalf of his people. In this third stage we may finally speak of a Messiah as such.³⁹⁹ Even here, Brown suggests that the Messiah so depicted is primarily an historical

³⁹⁵ Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 155 ff.

³⁹⁶ "A Brief History of the Development of a Royal Messianic Hope in Israel," 155.

³⁹⁷ See Part 2 of the present work.

³⁹⁸ Isaiah 11:1ff, Micah 5:1-6, Ez. 34:23, 37:24.

³⁹⁹ Brown, "A Brief History," 159.

figure and that eschatological and transcendental qualities are only hinted at --- a reminder that the messianic hope, however it is defined, is conceived of in Judaism in concrete, national and terrestrial terms from its beginnings into the Second Temple era.⁴⁰⁰

Two issues are suggested here. The first is the question of determining the point when a clear Messiah figure emerges in the literature of Judaism. The second task involves assessing the relative importance of this figure in the worldview of Second Temple Judaism. These two issues have recently been subjected to considerable discussion. Two recent treatments⁴⁰¹ have presented an alternative reading of messianic texts which argues that many studies have overplayed the continuity and homogeneity inherent in developmental description of Old Testament messianism. As well, this revisionist approach finds that many previous works have overstated the significance of the person of the Messiah, who is now taken as a figure who emerges much later and quite infrequently in a variety of cryptic and sometimes contradictory guises. William Green and J.H. Charlesworth have both argued for such a modified appraisal.⁴⁰² Green takes issue with Franz Hesse, suggesting he is guilty of substituting vague references to Israel's "future hope" for concrete and specific instances where the term

⁴⁰⁰See Brown, "A Brief History," 161, n. 220. This point was also argued with respect to the use of the Davidic covenant in the Hebrew Bible in Part 2, above where the dynastic hope, the security of the land and the blessing of Yahweh as Israel's God were closely interrelated.

⁴⁰¹Neusner, Green and Frerichs, (eds.), *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*; James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah: Developments in Earliest Judaism and Christianity*.

⁴⁰²William S. Green, "Messiah in Judaism: Rethinking the Question" in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, 1-14. See also J.H. Charlesworth, "From Messianism to Christology: Some Caveats and Perspectives," in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, 225-264.

“messiah” is specifically used, in order to avoid the embarrassing paucity of such texts.⁴⁰³ Further, Green suggests Mowinckel and Schürer were involved in a misguided attempt to construct a uniform and pervasive messianic expectation where one simply does not exist.⁴⁰⁴ With respect to this way of reading the messianic evidence, he concludes: “It is no longer possible to justify the standard, homogenous reading of the varied Jewish writings or to assume that different Jewish groups, even within Palestine, shared a single outlook, social experience or religious expectation simply because they were Jews.”⁴⁰⁵ In his essay in the same volume, J.H. Charlesworth comments along similar lines:

Since we are dealing not with one normative structure, but with many structures and substructures, each conceived as normative in its own way and to its own religious group, we must resist the old methodological approach that assumed a coherent messianology in Early Judaism.⁴⁰⁶

Further, and contrary to a long held view (influenced largely by Christian theologians), “First century Palestinian Jews held many different, often mutually

⁴⁰³ Citing Hesse’s article on “*Chrio, etc.*,” *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* 9 (1974): 496-509.

⁴⁰⁴ William S. Green, “Messiah in Judaism: Rethinking the Question,” 7. Green takes issue with Schürer’s work *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, Vol. II, rev. and ed. Geza Vermes and Fergus Millar (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1979), 492 and Mowinckel’s *He That Cometh*. Green rightly draws attention to the need for precision in determining the criteria for explicitly “Messianic” texts in the limited sense used by Brown. It may be, however, that he misses some of the subtlety of those he criticizes such as Klausner. For example, his criticism of Joseph Klausner for beginning his study of the messiah idea with Moses (“Messiah in Judaism, 7) ignores Klausner’s own qualification of Moses’ relationship to messianism, which is based on later evidence and seeks to trace the emergence of messianism historically. “The phrases cited from the Talmud and Midrash...were spoken at a very late time, [and] cannot, of course, be used as historical proof that the belief in the Messiah virtually sprang from the marvelous traditions of Moses the first redeemer.” See Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, 18.

⁴⁰⁵ Green, “Messiah in Judaism,” 10.

⁴⁰⁶ “From Messianism to Christology: Some Caveats and Perspectives,” in *Judaism and Their Messiahs*, 227.

exclusive, ideas and beliefs regarding the Messiah. There was no developed and set messianology ready to be used in christological didache and kerygma."⁴⁰⁷ Clearly, a careful appraisal of messianism in the early Christian era must benefit from such observations and take seriously the variegated and diverse character of Jewish hopes and expectations in this period.

An analogous reassessment of the long association between the Davidic dynastic covenant traditions and the development of messianic belief has also been offered.⁴⁰⁸ Again, Alexander represents the longstanding view in which the books of Genesis to II Kings demonstrate a continuous and cumulative hope for a divinely sent, Davidic, royal saviour.⁴⁰⁹ This can be contrasted with the recent observations of Kenneth Pomykala:

...there existed in early Judaism no continuous, widespread or dominant expectation for a Davidic messiah. Indeed, after the expression of hope for the restoration of the Davidic dynasty in some biblical texts from the exilic and post-exilic periods, the first evidence for Davidic messianism is found in *Pss. Sol. 17*, which dates from the middle of the first century

⁴⁰⁷ This observation provides a needed corrective to the traditional "checklist" approach to messianism, in which Jesus' career meshed seamlessly with a well defined and essentially uniform set of expectations. "From Messianism to Christology," 248. See also a later essay by Charlesworth on the same general topic, "From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects" in *The Messiah*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 3-35. It is quite possible that in this revisionist reading of messianism, the comments of Charlesworth, Neusner and others indicate as much as anything, a shift in approach to a historical approach, away from a more theological method (such as Alexander's). However, as noted above (n. 13), Alexander seems to confuse these two somewhat. For a helpful discussion of a possible way of recasting Old Testament theology that takes historical issues seriously, see John Barton, "The Messiah in Old Testament Theology" in *King and Messiah*, ed. John Day, 365-379. See also Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1997), 481-482.

⁴⁰⁸ Moshe Weinfeld once summed up the basis for the older consensus by making the following observation: "The belief in a King Savior who will appear in the future and will bring bliss to the nation was prevalent in the ancient Near East, especially in Egypt and Mesopotamia, and even reached Rome...However the association of this idea with David is clearly the outcome of the Davidic covenant. See his article, "Covenant, Davidic" in *IDP Sup*, 191-192.

⁴⁰⁹ Alexander, "Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings: Their Importance for Biblical Theology", 209. This is precisely the kind of "promise-fulfillment approach" which Green and others have protested against; cf. Green, "Messiah in Judaism," 5.

BCE. As we have argued, the idea of a Davidic messiah first emerged in the first half of the first century BCE, in order to articulate Pharisaic opposition against the ruling Hasmoneans. After this, Davidic messianism also appears in the ideology of Qumran community in the herodian period. The last evidence of Davidic messianism in the early Jewish period comes from 4 Ezra (ca 100 CE), where it is no longer a central motif. *Thus the evidence for Davidic messianism in the Second Temple period is limited to three communities, all of Palestinian provenance, active between ca. 60 CE and 100 BCE. Other royal messiahs known from the literature and history of Judaism are not to be identified as Davidic messiahs.*⁴¹⁰

He concludes by explaining the implications of his assessment:

Accordingly, since there never existed a continuous, widespread, dominant or uniform expectation for a Davidic messiah in early Judaism, scholarly discourse should dispense with the idea of a “traditional” Davidic hope for this period. Nor can appeal to such a traditional hope serve as a resource for explaining why some early Christians came to designate Jesus as Son of David, or why Davidic messianism played an important role in rabbinic Judaism. Interpretations of earliest Christology or rabbinic messianism that rely on a straight line development of “traditional” Davidic messianism rooted in biblical material carried on through the Second Temple period, must be rejected.⁴¹¹

Pomykala’s treatment of the texts of early Judaism is extensive and detailed, which makes his judgment especially striking. Pomykala correctly asserts that no “straight line” can be drawn in the development of Davidic messianism (or for that matter other types) and that the development was much more complex. Yet the absence of a “straight line” should not exclude the possibility that other, more subtle but very viable connections are visible which are of equal importance.

When texts that deal with the Davidic dynasty tradition are handled on their own merits and interpreted within what can be known of the historical, social

⁴¹⁰ Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 270; the italics are my own. See also his comments on *Pss. Sol.* 17 in 165-170; 264. For further comment and discussion of this text, see n. 88 below.

⁴¹¹ Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism*, 271.

and political situations in which they were read and understood. Commenting on both the Old Testament texts and those of other Jewish movements, Howard Kee urges that “the messianic roles are always linked with the welfare of the Covenant people, so that one cannot accurately assess the role of the Messiah without understanding the values and aspirations and norms of the community making the affirmation.”⁴¹² This close connection between the messiah and the welfare of the people of the nation is based on Israel’s own formulation of sacral kingship, in which the fortunes of the state and the blessing of Yahweh are closely tied up with the role of the king or leader. Davidic covenant texts exhibit much of the same relationship to particular historical and social realities which held at the time of their composition and reappropriation in new works, as I have tried to show. Pomykala’s assertion that Davidic messianism is only one of several streams of such expectation, does not require that the traditional Davidic hope is irrelevant as a resource for understanding early Christology. Further, his restriction of this form of Davidic messianism to the period between 150 B.C.E. and 60 A.D. must be reexamined and does not take adequate account of the development of the Davidic covenant. By defining Davidic messianism in such a way that it can be found only in a small sampling of texts during this 200 year period, it appears to emerge as something unprecedented. In fact, a careful study of the sources supports a quite different assessment.

⁴¹² Howard Clark Kee, “Christology in Mark’s Gospel” in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, 190-191.

Messianism and the Literature of Early Judaism

While each messianic reference needs to be understood within an historical context, individual texts never stand completely alone, in total isolation from others that make similar or related references. While there was clearly plurality, debate and diversity in the world of Judaism, reflected in texts that deal with Davidic messianism as with other subjects, it is also likely that there was a larger, shared matrix of thought in which these arguments and discussions could be carried out. Thus, while Charlesworth quite rightly points out that “early Jewish literature, however, cannot be mined to produce anything like a checklist of what the Messiah will do,”⁴¹³ this does raise the question as to why New Testament writers attempt to demonstrate that Jesus conforms, at least in some important ways, to a set of expectations associated with “the Messiah.”⁴¹⁴ This is an essential and important question that requires further attention⁴¹⁵ but it can only be undertaken in even a modest way by recognizing that though messianology was not linear, uniform or homogeneous, it did develop within a widely shared, ongoing and developing discourse within Judaism. The diversity and variety of messianic expectations is only intelligible with at least some underlying reference to the origins of this hope as it developed over time in

⁴¹³ “From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects”, 6.

⁴¹⁴ “From Messianology to Christology: Problems and Prospects”, 34-35. Charlesworth also adds that “Jews did not profess a coherent and normative messianology”. There clearly was no single, “normative” messianology, though across various streams and subgroups, there may well have been a degree of similarity and shared views.

⁴¹⁵ An attempt will be made to explain at least one aspect of Matthew’s way of relating Jesus to royal Davidic messianology in the following section.

relation to historical circumstances, which shaped and nuanced expectations in these various and sometimes dramatic ways.⁴¹⁶

One implication of this is the practice of interpreting texts in relative isolation should not be pressed too far. Expressing his concerns for some aspects of Pomykala's methodology, William Schneidewind has raised this point in terms of a "Reception Theory" approach to II Samuel 7: 12-14. He traces the various uses of this text and its reference to the Davidic dynasty which were made in scrolls found at Qumran. He goes on to show convincingly that a number of texts found there demonstrate the existence of a shared and "well developed discourse" within this community about this passage and how it was to be understood. According to Schneidewind, this common understanding can in turn be clearly linked to "the larger discourse about the meaning of the Promise to David within biblical literature itself" in texts such as Amos 5:26-27; 9:11 and Is. 7:17.⁴¹⁷

This sort of reinterpretation and rereading of texts was an integral part of how the Scriptures and other literature were employed and understood within Judaism, and a necessary component in coming to terms with the interpretation of messianic themes and passages in this era. Here one could consult in a general way the work of James B. Kugel, who demonstrates this process with

⁴¹⁶ A conclusion reached in the detailed study of Gerbern S. Oegema, *The Anointed and His People*, 300-306. Here too, however, Oegema moves to the conclusion (an unwarranted one, in my judgement) that "we can speak neither of a messianic 'idea' in Judaism nor of a history of ideas in the development of messianic expectations. We can only locate the historical realizations, but not the idea itself" (306). Such a conclusion would appear to run the danger of making any scholarly discussion and study of the topic unintelligible and logically incoherent.

⁴¹⁷ "The Davidic Dynasty and Biblical Interpretation in Qumran Literature" in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years After Their Discovery*, ed. Lawrence Schiffman, Emmanuel Tov, and James C. VanderKam (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 90.

respect to the emergence of royal messianic interpretation and many other motifs and concepts as well.⁴¹⁸

A more specific study which examines the possible links between the messianism of the Second Temple period and that of early Jewish Christianity has been offered by William Horbury. He defines messianism quite broadly as “the expectation of a coming pre-eminent ruler—coming, whether at the end, as strictly implied by the word “eschatology or simply at some time in the future.”⁴¹⁹ While convinced that the messianic hope is more widespread and pervasive than recent criticisms have suggested, Horbury attempts at a revised synthesis of messianism that considers the historical evidence more seriously than a merely “promise-fulfillment” scheme tends to do.⁴²⁰ In this regard, his approach represents a significant advance that tries to take seriously the proper warnings of Charlesworth, Pomykala and others, while reaching quite different conclusions about both the extent of messianism and the significance of the figure of the Messiah in Second Temple Jewish literature.

Briefly put, one of Horbury’s main theses is that messianism was a dynamic and widely recognized expectation throughout the composition, arrangement and collection of the Old Testament books. During the Second Temple period, he suggests, a number of messianic prototypes became pronounced and visible. In his view, there are numerous “indications that there

⁴¹⁸ *The Bible as It Was* (Cambridge: The Bellknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1997), especially 276 ff.

⁴¹⁹ *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 7. See also his essay “Messianism in the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” in *King and Messiah*, ed. John Day, 402-433.

⁴²⁰ See, for example, Alexander, “Royal Expectations in Genesis to Kings.”

was a set of expectations, flexible and various but sufficiently coherent to be called a narrative or myth of the messiah,⁴²¹ in existence then and dating from not long after (and perhaps even during) the Davidic period. He concludes (in reply to Mowinckel, von Gall, and others⁴²² who propose a “no hope” period in which messianism was essentially dormant from the fifth to second centuries) that the evidence instead suggests a continuous and rich messianic hope that flourished and intensified into the Persian, Greek and Roman periods.⁴²³ Moreover, he attempts to trace and elaborate on what he calls the “coherence of messianism,” made up of references to Israelite rulers (both pagan and Jewish) as well as ruler cults, direct divine intervention compatible with human messianic agency, and especially angelic and other spiritual messiah figures.⁴²⁴ In support, he cites examples where several of these elements begin to appear together or alone across a range of texts.⁴²⁵ Horbury musters numerous more subtle

⁴²¹ Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 13.

⁴²² Horbury also mentions John J. Collins in this company. Collins appears to at least agree that “the pendulum of scholarly opinion has swung too far” in its minimization of messianic expectation, though he too takes the position that messianism was virtually dormant during the period between the early fifth to late second centuries BCE. See Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 4; 40.

⁴²³ Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 41-63. He relies primarily on the Septuagint, apocalyptic writings and the texts at Qumran.

⁴²⁴ Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 64-108.

⁴²⁵ Horbury notes a variety of instances where common kinds of language suggest an emerging, coherent messianic outlook. To illustrate the close connection between messianism and historical kings, he cites the successive references to Gen. 49.10 in Targums Onkelos and Neofiti as well as 4QP Bless from Qumran and Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* (25:2 and 5), the use of Num. 24:17 in the War Scroll (1QM xi 1-7) and the Damascus Covenant (CD vii 19), and Justin's use of Psalms 110 and 72 in his *Dialogue*, (33-34); see Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 66-68. He also finds a common pattern in how the hand of Yahweh is seen to be at work in both past and future deliverance of Israel through the agency a variety of human envoys and emissaries such as Moses (the use of Deuteronomy 32 in the *Assumption of Moses*, 9:7-

instances where the reception history and intertextual references are clearly suggestive that messianism remains an active, important aspect of Judaism throughout these eras leading to the early Christian period.⁴²⁶ Though some of his evidence is drawn from later works such as the Talmud, the Mishnah and the Targums, he establishes quite convincingly that these later attestations to messianism are part of a much longer historical development that goes back to the early period of the monarchy.

Along a more theological line of argument, Barton has argued that it is quite possible to begin with the more cautious appraisals advanced by Neusner, Green and others and then, employing a fairly broad yet still Jewish, eschatological and salvific definition of Messiah, be able to discern real and legitimate lines of convergence and development within messianism that are not

10:7), Melchizedek (11Q Melch ii 13) and Christ (Heb. 10:30-31). Here passages such as Deuteronomy 32:35-36 and the LXX of Isaiah 63:9 are important, since they stress the direct action of Yahweh yet are both often found in larger texts where divine representatives are in view, with no apparent contradiction. He argues that even during periods where explicit messianic expectation appears muted, the frequent use of these texts "suggests that expectation of future deliverance would normally include expectation of leadership by a divinely appointed king;" cf. Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 83. He also investigates the possibility that a convergence of texts including the LXX Pentateuch, Prophets and Psalms, the Psalms of Solomon, apocalypses from the later Herodian era and a number of rabbinic writings together share a common contention that "the messianic king, a human figure endowed with heavenly virtue and might can be regarded as the manifestation and embodiment of a spirit sent by God;" *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 90. He concludes that this depiction of a spiritual, transcendent messianic figure may well have been more widespread than is often supposed, and may allow for considerable continuity between the Jewish conception of the messiah and the paradigm which emerged within Christianity; see Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 106-108.

⁴²⁶ Though it is not possible to enter this discussion here, Horbury also explores the intriguing possibility that the language of praise extended to Jewish and pagan rulers influenced the way in which such themes were eventually employed in honour of Jesus Christ in early Jewish Christianity; see here *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 127-152.

imposed extraneously by Christian or other biases.⁴²⁷ In his view, such parallel and enduring concerns as the intimate connection of God with political realities, the versatility of God's willingness to work through a variety of human agents to aid his people, and the extension of the deliverance of Israel to include both Gentiles and the larger created world, can each be traced from its beginnings in earlier Old Testament literature to concepts in later messianism which explicated and developed these ideas further. Even as messianism comes to represent an innovation that is diverse and distinctive, Barton, together with Schneidewind, Kugel and Horbury each in their own way propose that important consideration also be given to questions of continuity and ongoing development within a flexible, shared paradigm.⁴²⁸

Primary Motifs in Messianic Expectation in Judaism

Studies of the varieties of messianic development have been undertaken by numerous writers and will not be treated in detail here.⁴²⁹ Nevertheless, a brief and selective overview of the terrain is necessary, examining in turn the extent of messianism in the Old Testament, the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

⁴²⁷ Barton, "The Messiah in Old Testament Theology," 373-376. He also makes the (obvious, but sometimes ignored) point that without the eventual Christian interest in messianism, this topic would be of much less importance for scholars. It is difficult to separate the historical significance of messianism from the historical reality that Christian belief attributed a great degree of attention to this one element of expectation, which, though it was significant and attested throughout a number of texts in Judaism, cannot be described as having nearly the same importance there.

⁴²⁸ "The Messiah in Old Testament Theology," 375-378.

⁴²⁹ For selected references to a steadily accumulating body of literature, see n.1 above.

In his brief but important study, Aage Bentzen raised the question, “Can the word ‘Messianic’ be used of the king of Israel?”⁴³⁰ In reply, he explored whether the kingly figure portrayed in Israel’s enthronement psalms could be part of the tradition which eventually leads to the later messianic hope associated with eschatological deliverance. It is probable that this question would be posed quite differently today, taking into account that royal messianism is but one of several such streams in ancient Judaism and that much of Bentzen’s reliance on cultic parallels from the ancient Near East has since proven problematic. Nevertheless, Bentzen questions whether the qualifier “eschatological” would be a necessary ingredient in phrasing such a definition of “messiah.” He ultimately concludes that the sacral king of Israel portrayed in Psalms 2:2 and 45:7 are on a continuum with the Son of Man of Daniel 7 and other later eschatological figures. The historical experiences of Israel shape these earlier concepts in a complex but discernible process of development, where cultic realities gradually come to be portrayed against a transcendent and futuristic background.⁴³¹

Employing a more technical and literary approach, a recent study by S.E. Gillingham draws the opposite conclusion. Critical of both the history of religions approach taken by Bentzen and Mowinckel and a “promise/fulfillment” trajectory proposed by the Biblical Theology movement, she distinguishes between the function of a messiah (lower case “m”), denoting any number of dynastic figures, and the title Messiah (capitalized M), which she uses to refer to a “once-for-all-

⁴³⁰ Aage Bentzen, *Messias-Moses redivivus-Menschensohn* (ATANT, 17; Zurich: Zwingli Verlag, 1948) (ET *King and Messiah* [trans. G.W. Anderson; London: Lutterworth Press, 1955]), 35.

⁴³¹ Bentzen, *King and Messiah*, 78-79.

figure” coming at or near the end of time.⁴³² Since eschatology is a later development, it is hardly surprising to find her concluding that, while a range of messianic motifs are detectable, there is no evidence of “Messianic” concern by either the pre exilic or post exilic composers, editors and collectors of the Psalter. She sees the first examples of clear Messianic exegesis appearing in the Septuagint versions of Psalms 72:17 and 110:3, where subtle shifts in phrasing appear to be suggestive of pre existence as an attribute of the kingly figures being addressed,⁴³³ followed by a number of examples from Qumran psalmody and of course, *Psalms of Solomon 17*. In each case, the question of eschatology is a decisive part of the argument. This suggests that the prior questions of how terms like messianic, messiah and Messiah are defined, is critical in establishing when these concepts can be detected in a particular text or body of literature. This is not a criticism of Gillingham or her conclusions in what is a very convincing essay, but it does speak to the fact that different nets sometimes do catch different fish.

Of the many “Davidic covenant” texts discussed earlier, none can be said to decisively link together all the concepts denoted by the concept of ‘Messiah’: an anointed figure, who restores the Davidic lineage, brings Yahweh’s eschatological deliverance and effects the restoration of the nation. To varying degrees, each of these concepts may be visible in each text. So for example, Isaiah 11:1-9 clearly depicts a shoot/branch/root⁴³⁴ from the stock of Jesse, the

⁴³² S.E. Gillingham, “The Messiah in the Psalms” in *King and Messiah*, 209-237.

⁴³³ S.E. Gillingham, “The Messiah in the Psalms”, 229 ff.

presence of the Spirit (I Sam. 10:10; 16:13, 14), and royal attributes of wisdom and righteousness that will lead to a kingdom characterized by a time of Edenic peace, yet the word “anointed” and the term “end of days” or its equivalent is specifically absent. By a more strict set of definitions such as Gillingham’s, there may be messianism here, but no full fledged ‘Messiah.’

Nor do all texts or works that mention Davidic covenant do so with equal degrees of messianic purpose. Even with a fairly minimalist definition of “messiah,” Paul Joyce’s study of Ezekiel concludes that the prophet’s radical theocentrism precludes the possibility for a human, messianic figure, though he does refer to the person of David as part of his restoration vision.⁴³⁵ An essay by Rex Mason in the same collection also raises the issue of how one’s definition of “messiah” impacts on the extent messianism will be found. Arguing on strictly literary grounds, he concludes that while the figure of David is widely attested, particularly in connection to the dynastic promises of Yahweh, post exilic biblical literature provides little in the way of what might be called explicit Davidic messianism. For Mason, we are only left with a few examples: the “democratizing” reinterpretation of the Davidic covenant in Isaiah 55:3-5; a brief allusion to Zerubbabel in Haggai 2:23 as a restored Davidic ruler (whose role is greatly muted in Zechariah 1-8); and finally, the sober royalist hopes of Zechariah 9 –14.⁴³⁶ If these investigations are correct in arguing that the Hebrew Bible

⁴³⁴ For another dynastic use of “branch” see Jer. 33:15; for a messianic understanding of this verse elsewhere with this sense, see 4Q285 5:1-5 in *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 293.

⁴³⁵ Paul M. Joyce, “King and Messiah in Ezekiel,” in *King and Messiah*, 232-337. This essay may underestimate the linking of the Davidic and Mosaic covenants in such texts as Ez. 34:23-24 and Ez. 37:23-28.

seems only to provide the constituent parts for Davidic Messianism without ever really assembling them together, it seems necessary to look elsewhere to determine where the comprehensive hope for a Messianic figure begins to emerge.

Messianic Expectation in the Apocrypha

The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha are two collections that are distinguishable in character from those books received as canonical by Protestants. The books of the Apocrypha are known as deuterocanonical within the Roman Catholic tradition, since they were recognized at a later time.⁴³⁷ Though the two collections do overlap somewhat in terms of the time period in which they were composed and though they were not divided into these collections until later, they will be treated separately here.

It is often noticed that the collections differ quite substantially in terms of their interest in messianic themes. The Old Testament apocrypha contain far fewer references than the Pseudepigrapha, as Horbury acknowledges.⁴³⁸ He attributes this partly to the fact that most of the Apocrypha consist of narrative material, while messianic references are more often found in biblical texts in prophetic poetry or psalmic material. In addition, he notes that the Apocrypha

⁴³⁶Rex Mason, "The Messiah in Postexilic Old Testament Literature," in *King and Messiah*, 338-364. Though as Horbury has pointed out, this does not mean that these passages were not read or appropriated messianically within a short period of time.

⁴³⁷ Lee M. McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon* ([rev. ed.] Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995) 281-292; Craig A. Evans, *Non Canonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992), 9-19.

⁴³⁸ "Messianism in the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," in *King and Messiah*, 408; *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 52-59.

also puts a great emphasis on the kingship of God in portrayals of future restoration and redemption⁴³⁹ -- a tendency which does not logically preclude messianism, since God remains active in the actions of a messiah figure as well,⁴⁴⁰ but appears here at least to diminish specific interest in a messianic intermediary or agent.

Two examples may help to clarify this further. One is found in the book of 1 Baruch, which purportedly records the words of Baruch, the associate of Jeremiah the prophet. The composite version of the work probably dates to about 100 B.C.E.,⁴⁴¹ and reflects on both the causes of the Babylonian exile and a future hope for Judah, expressed specifically in terms of the restoration of Jerusalem.⁴⁴² What is especially striking is that the basis for a return from exile is conceived of entirely in terms of the Mosaic covenant, not the Davidic.⁴⁴³ In addition, one could cite the words of Tobit, who praises God for his enduring kingdom,⁴⁴⁴ despite the author's own departure from Galilee at the hands of the Assyrian king Salmeser. Even though there is an interest in the return and restoration of Israel, such as the reconstruction of the temple as a place of

⁴³⁹ "Messianism in the Old Testament Pseudepigrapha," 408.

⁴⁴⁰ "Silence, then, need not always be non-messianic, for a heavy emphasis on God's own action was fully compatible with recognition of the activity of a king or messiah." Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 83. Cf. *Pss. Sol.* 17:33-34.

⁴⁴¹ Evans, *Non Canonical Writings*, 14.

⁴⁴² Bar. 4:24, 30-37; 5:1-6. There are apparent allusions to Isaiah; cf. Is. 40:4 in Bar. 5:7.

⁴⁴³ Bar. 2:27-35; cf. Deut. 30:1-10.

⁴⁴⁴ Tob. 12:1, 10. The work likely dates from about the second century B.C.E. See Evans, *Non Canonical Writings*, 12.

worship and in the rebuilding of Jerusalem as a city of golden towers,⁴⁴⁵ there is no mention of a messianic figure.

Yet this general characterization notwithstanding, several additional works are worth briefly considering for their interest in messianism. Two references to David in Ecclesiasticus both attest the persistence of the Davidic covenant as a source of hope and divine blessing, as well as potential evidence for a developing messianic understanding. In one passage Jesus ben Sirach extols the virtues of Phineas son of Eleazer⁴⁴⁶ (Ecclus. 47:25, NRSV; cf. Ex. 6:25; Num. 25:6-18; Ps. 106:30-31; I Macc. 2:54) and in the other briefly considers David's career and concludes by mentioning that "The Lord took away his sins, and exalted his power forever; he gave a covenant of kingship and a glorious throne in Israel (Ecclus. 47:11).⁴⁴⁷ Neither passage is explicitly messianic,⁴⁴⁸ though a later verse in the same chapter speaks of the persistence of God's commitment to David and the permanence of his bond to David's line, evident in the fact that despite Solomon's failures, "he gave a remnant to Jacob, and to

⁴⁴⁵ Tob. 13:16-17; 14:5-7; cf. Rev. 21:18-21.

⁴⁴⁶T.M. Mauch, "Phinehas," *IBD* 3, 799. The rather involved attempt by Pomykala (following Burton Mack) to argue that the priestly covenant has here absorbed the kingly covenant for good is unpersuasive in my judgement. His use of Ecclus. 49:4-5 in support of this reading, to indicate a permanent end to kingship in Judah, is questionable; cf. Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition*, esp. 140-44.

⁴⁴⁷ There may be an allusion to this verse in a fragment of 4QMMT (4Q398) of the Dead Sea scrolls. See the discussion by Craig Evans, "David in the Dead Sea Scrolls" in *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After* ([eds. Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans; Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series 26] Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 188-189.

⁴⁴⁸ Oegema, *The Anointed and his People*, 51.

David a root from his own family.”⁴⁴⁹ Several commentators have pointed out the apparent reference here to Isaiah 11 where the larger context also combines the promise of a “remnant of Jacob” (Is. 10:20-21) with David’s root.⁴⁵⁰

A second important reference emerges in I Maccabees 2:57 in the final words of the patriarchal figure Mattathias, who reviews the heroes of Jewish faith and their exemplary virtues as he nears death. Intriguingly, we again find nearby a comment about the covenant of an “everlasting priesthood” to Phinehas” (2:54) and then mention that, because of his mercy, David “inherited the throne forever.”⁴⁵¹ While the duration of time reference here should not be overstated, neither can the persistence of David’s status as the recipient of an enduring dynastic promise be overlooked, especially given the fact that it occurs in a book concerned primarily with praising the exploits of the non-Davidic Maccabees and Hasmoneans. The only real hint of an anticipated messianic figure is linked to the expectation that the prophetic office will again be filled.⁴⁵²

Finally, the most elaborate depiction of the Messiah in the Old Testament Apocrypha is given in 2 Esdras. This apocalyptic work is concerned primarily with issues of theodicy and has a long history of composition.⁴⁵³ In material that

⁴⁴⁹ Ecclus. 47:22

⁴⁵⁰ See Horbury, “Messianism in the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” 416, citing M.H. Segal, *Sepher Ben Sira ha-shalem* (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 2nd Ed. 1958), 329. The Isaiah texts were associated closely with the readings of Genesis 49:9-10 in both the LXX and Qumran writings.

⁴⁵¹ There is reference here of course to II Sam. 7:13, 16; cf. later echoes in Lk. 1:33, spoken of Jesus. See Horbury, “Messianism in the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha,” 420.

⁴⁵² I Macc. 4:46; 9:27; 14:41; Deut. 18:15-18 is likely in the background of these very subtle references. Cf. Evans, *Non Canonical Writings*, 18.

probably dates back to a first century Jewish author, we find mention of a Messiah “whom the Most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the offspring of David,” a “man who will come up from the heart of the sea” who will bring deliverance to the creation, and with whom the speaker, Ezra, and others shall live as God’s “Son.”⁴⁵⁴ In this later work we find the kind of development that parallels some of the more explicit messianic material in the Pseudepigrapha, a collection of works which, like the Apocrypha, date in composition from the two centuries before the Christian era and later, but, though it was influential in many circles, achieved canonical status only in the Ethiopic branch of the Christian Church.

Messianic Expectation in the Pseudepigrapha

Several references to this large collection of works will serve as illustrations of the messianic themes found there. In a reference that some attribute to Egyptian influences, *Sybilline Oracles* 3 speaks of a time when “God will send a king from the sun who will stop the entire earth from evil war” acting “in obedience to the noble teachings of the great God.”⁴⁵⁵ The figure referred to is likely a Greek overlord,⁴⁵⁶ a surprisingly positive appraisal, yet not

⁴⁵³ Evans, *Non Canonical Writings*, 11.

⁴⁵⁴ 2 Esdras 12:32; 13:26; 14:9.

⁴⁵⁵ *Sybilline Oracles* 3:452-456, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, Vol. 1 ([ABRL, Ed. James H. Charlesworth] New York: Doubleday, 1983)

⁴⁵⁶ J.J. Collins, “Sibylline Oracles: A New Translation and Introduction” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, Vol. 1, 356. Pomykala draws attention to 3:193, 318, 608 for further references in support of this identification; cf. *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition*, 257.

unprecedented in view of Isaiah's reference to Cyrus in an earlier era.⁴⁵⁷ Though the reference may not at first seem overtly messianic in the traditional Jewish sense, there are considerable grounds to read it as a portrayal of how a benign Ptolemaic ruler could provide the conditions for a flourishing theocracy in Palestine.⁴⁵⁸ The work also shows signs of having been considerably influenced by Isaiah 11:1-12 in its description of the messianic age, both in structure and content.⁴⁵⁹

Two works from the end of the first century A.D. serve to develop further the messianic trajectories apparent in Judaism. Brief mention is made of "the Anointed one" in *2 Baruch*, an apocalyptic work closely related to the events of the Roman attack on Jerusalem in 70 A.D. While the tone of the book as a whole puts much more emphasis on the importance of the Law as a path for deliverance, the coming return of this "Anointed one" in glory is a significant focal point for the work's depiction of an end time resurrection which will be followed by blessing for the righteous and torment for the souls of the wicked.⁴⁶⁰ The book, however, makes no mention of an earthly messianic kingdom.⁴⁶¹

⁴⁵⁷ Is. 45.1

⁴⁵⁸ Collins (*Scepter and the Star*, 38-40) sees it as a typical example of how many Jewish writers of this period expressed their hope of deliverance in terms of a benevolent Gentile agent rather than an indigenous Jewish messiah, and Pomykala cites it as a clear example of how messianic hope could flourish apart from the Davidic dynasty tradition. See *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition*, 257-58.

⁴⁵⁹ Oegema, *The Anointed and His People*, 83-85.

⁴⁶⁰ *2 Bar.* 29:3; 30:1-5.

⁴⁶¹ See A.F.J. Klijn, "2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch: A New Translation and Introduction," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1, 619.

In a second work which probes the plight of the Jewish people under Gentile rule, *4 Ezra* 12 attests the expectation of an interim messianic kingdom after which God's son "the Messiah shall die, and all who draw human breath,"⁴⁶² suggesting in some ways a human, modest figure. But the messianic portrait in this work is complex. In a later vision which attempts to elaborate on the fourth Danielic kingdom,⁴⁶³ Ezra sees the Roman (not Greek, as in Daniel) eagle reproved by the roar of the messianic lion, "whom the most High has kept until the end of days, who will arise from the posterity of David"⁴⁶⁴ --he will deliver Israel, and bring Israel's enemies to judgement. The Son of the Most High reemerges as one who comes as "the man from the sea" to judge the assembled nations and gather a "peaceful multitude," the people of the lost ten tribes, to himself.⁴⁶⁵ This portrayal is made even more cryptic by the comment to Ezra that "Just as no one can explore or know what is in the depths of the sea, so no one on earth can see my Son or those who are with him, except in the time of his day."⁴⁶⁶ Here an eschatological messianic judgement, divine (and possibly a type of pre-existent) Sonship, and Davidic lineage are linked together in an apocalyptic portrayal.⁴⁶⁷

⁴⁶² *4 Ezra* 7:26-28.

⁴⁶³ Dan. 7:7.

⁴⁶⁴ *4 Ezra* 12:32.

⁴⁶⁵ *4 Ezra* 13:21-40.

⁴⁶⁶ *4 Ezra* 13:52.

⁴⁶⁷ While numerous parallels to New Testament messianism are obvious, there is no need to posit direct dependence. See Bruce M. Metzger, "The Fourth Book of Ezra: A New Translation and

Two final works illustrate the convergence of a number of themes and the further development of messianism in the Pseudepigrapha. Reference has already been made to the *Psalms of Solomon* 17, which witnesses to an elaborate portrayal of a Davidic deliverer in the middle part of the first century B.C.E.⁴⁶⁸ Traditionally the composition of this messianic description has been connected with the attack on Jerusalem by the Roman general Pompeii in 63 B.C.E. This event effectively marked Palestine's introduction into the Roman empire. Some evidence indicates the book may have been written by someone associated with Pharisaic ties, but some recent treatments have suggested other settings.⁴⁶⁹ The figure described is a "son of David" who will be raised up⁴⁷⁰ as "a righteous king," who will both repel the foreign invaders from Jerusalem with a

Introduction" in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Apocalyptic Literature and Testaments*, Vol. 1, 522. See also Pomykala, *David Dynasty Tradition*, 217-20.

⁴⁶⁸ There has been some recent rethinking about the dating of *Pss. Solomon 17*, its composition, and the exact character of Messiah figure described in the text. For date and setting, see Kenneth Atkinson's paper presented at the 1997 meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, "On the Herodian Origin of Militant Davidic Messianism at Qumran: New Light from *Psalm of Solomon 17*," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118/3 (1999), 435-460. Regarding the messianic figure depicted here, opinions vary. On the one hand, Klausner emphasizes the spiritual aspect of this Messiah (*The Messianic Idea*, 324), Charlesworth contrasts him with the much more violent figure of the messiah in the well known Targum Pseudo-Jonathan to Genesis 49:11 ("From Messianology to Christology," 236) and Burton Mack ("Wisdom Makes a Difference" in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, esp. 32-47) suggests that it primarily his wisdom that is being praised. On the other hand, Collins stresses that the language is not without its militaristic overtones (*The Scepter and The Star*, 54). Yet the overall emphasis does seem to be on the qualities of a righteous and faithful shepherd who relies on God's deliverance rather than "horse, rider and bow." See also S.E. Gillingham, "The Messiah in the Psalms," *King and Messiah*, 235 ff. As Mack argues, the focus of the work as a whole moves significantly in the direction of theodicy, reflecting on the righteous judgement of Israel's God against the disobedient within Israel and those Gentiles who threaten from without. This act of divine intervention vindicates the "pious ones" of the writer's own circle. Interestingly, though the portrait of the messiah depicted here is rich and exalted in texture (suggestive even of pre-existence), God clearly remains Israel's true king forever (*Pss. Sol. 17:1, 46*).

⁴⁶⁹ See Atkinson, "On the Herodian Origin of Militant Davidic Messianism," 440-446; R.B. Wright, "*Psalms of Solomon*" in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 639-670.

⁴⁷⁰2 Sam. 7:12.

rod of iron and also judge the nations with wisdom and righteousness.⁴⁷¹ Numerous references to biblical texts are compiled into an extensive composite: “a rod of iron” will break the sinner’s pride as “a potter’s vessel;”⁴⁷² he will rebuke the sinners by the “might of his word,”⁴⁷³ being made wise by the spirit of God.⁴⁷⁴ While the elaborate description of the Messiah and its integration of a range of familiar messianic elements is striking, the elements themselves and the overall structure are traditional and rooted firmly in the Old Testament messianic soil of the Davidic dynasty tradition.⁴⁷⁵ They also represent a further revision of the Davidic messianic tradition along the lines observed in Zechariah 9. As Laato points out:

We have seen that already in the Old Testament the traditional Israelite royal ideology is being interpreted in a more peaceful way by the postexilic period (see e.g. Zech. 9:9-10 in comparison to Psalm 72). In a corresponding way, *PsSol* 17:24 refers to Psalm 2:9 (“to smash...like a potter’s jar...with an iron rod”) but these phrases here are reinterpreted

⁴⁷¹ Ps. 72:2. For a more detailed study of how Psalm 72 may have influenced this text and others, see Craig Broyles, “The Redeeming King: Psalm 72’s Contribution to the Messianic Ideal,” in *Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Craig A. Evans, Peter W. Flint] Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 33-34.

⁴⁷² Ps. 2:9.

⁴⁷³ Is. 11:4.

⁴⁷⁴ Is. 11:2.

⁴⁷⁵ As noted above, Pomykala argues that this passage is the first evidence for Davidic messianism in early Jewish literature (*Davidic Dynasty Tradition*, 169) used by the writer as part of a polemic against those he viewed as the Hasmonean usurpers. It may well be one of the most extensive examples of a Davidic Messiah available (i.e. a composite depiction of an eschatological, anointed deliverer in the Davidic line.) But if it were a completely novel portrayal, it would seem that its force as a polemic would actually be weakened. As Pomykala suggests, the writer protests that the Hasmoneans are the innovators who are violating ancient and long accepted traditions about true kingship in Israel with their unsanctioned seizure of both royal and priestly authority. It seems in this way to rely on the wider background of messianic traditions for its argument.

to refer to the Messiah's use of wisdom and righteousness to bring catastrophe upon sinners.⁴⁷⁶

The focus on the personal qualities of the messiah were read in later translations as suggestive of pre-existence, a quality apparently hinted at by God's knowledge of the messiah's "beauty" and his raising up of this messiah at a time only he knows.⁴⁷⁷

The section of the composite work of *1 Enoch* which demonstrates perhaps the most profound development of messianic thematic material is found in chapters 37-71, commonly known as the Similitudes, or "Book of Parables."⁴⁷⁸ The date and provenance of this particular work have been much debated, with a general consensus emerging that it was written by a Jewish author at some point between the 1st century B.C.E. and the Jewish Revolt of 66-70 A.D.⁴⁷⁹ The messianic emphasis of the Similitudes is centered around four key titles: the Righteous One, the Messiah, the Chosen One and the Son of Man, of which the last two are the most frequently used.⁴⁸⁰

While a full discussion of this complex and much examined work is not possible here, several key observations should be made. First, it seems fairly clear that, in the Similitudes, the four titles just mentioned refer to one and the

⁴⁷⁶ Laato, *A Star Is Rising*, 282. |

⁴⁷⁷ Horbury, "Messianism in the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha," 431.

⁴⁷⁸ For a discussion of the composition of the work, cf. E. Isaac, "1 Ethiopic Apocalypse of Enoch" in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 5-12; George W. Nicklesburg, "Enoch, First Book of," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* CD ROM.

⁴⁷⁹ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 177.

⁴⁸⁰ James C. VanderKam, "Righteous One, Messiah, Chosen One and Son of Man in 1 Enoch 37-71" in James C. Charlesworth, Ed., *The Messiah*, 169-191. For a full bibliography, see Nickelsburg, "Enoch, First Book of."

same figure, a conclusion which is supported by their interchangeable use, apparent functional equivalence and similarity of their attributes.⁴⁸¹ Secondly, we find here again that the portrait of this figure is drawn from traditional sources—mainly Daniel 7 and the servant songs of Isaiah 40-55-- and supplemented with (among others) a variety of biblical motifs from such common messianic sources as Psalm 2, Psalm 110, Proverbs 8 and Isaiah 11.⁴⁸² But most importantly, the vision of the Enochic Son of Man represents not just a compilation of messianic texts and traditions but an innovative reappropriation of these texts to give expression to the worldview of a particular group within Judaism near the early Christian era.⁴⁸³ In contrast to Daniel 7, where the status of the Son of Man as a judge is presented with more subtlety, here it is spelled out explicitly, elevating the status of this figure as one who now casts down kings from their thrones and is himself worshiped.⁴⁸⁴ While the messianic qualities of this figure are less pronounced than the one found in *4 Ezra*, there are similarities between these two works. In addition to the fact that both present “one like the Son of Man” with strong messianic associations, both also attribute pre-existence and transcendence to this central eschatological figure. The features allow the “Son of Man” to take a more active role in the final defeat of evil in these two works than he does in the Danielic portrayal.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸¹ VanderKam, “Righteous One, Messiah”, 185-187.

⁴⁸² VanderKam, “Righteous One, Messiah”, 188; Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 182.

⁴⁸³ VanderKam, “Righteous One, Messiah”, 190-191; Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 182.

⁴⁸⁴ VanderKam, “Righteous One, Messiah”, 191; Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 181.

Messianism in the Dead Sea Scrolls

While not pervasive, messianic figures and motifs are also in evidence in the materials found at Qumran, as several studies have shown.⁴⁸⁶ Various approaches have been followed, particularly in dealing with the question of how the diversity of messianic figures in the Scrolls are related to each other. Oegema located eschatological figures that corresponded to prophetic, priestly and kingly concepts and found that Qumran concepts of the Messiah were developed in order to provide a critique of the reigning Jewish authorities, and a way of expressing more desirable and normative power relationships.⁴⁸⁷ Pomykala's study argued that in general terms, the royal Davidic messiah was subordinated to the priestly authority,⁴⁸⁸ but others have taken a different position.⁴⁸⁹

Of the full monograph treatments, perhaps few works have proven as comprehensive and balanced in their assessment of messianism at Qumran as

⁴⁸⁵ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 187.

⁴⁸⁶ Cf. George J. Brooke, "Kingship and Messianism in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, 434-56; Craig Evans, "The Messiah in the Dead Sea Scrolls" in *Israel's Messiah in the Bible and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 85-101; Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition*, 171-211; Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 59-63; Shemaryahu Talmon, "Waiting for the Messiah: The Spiritual Universe of the Qumran Covenanters," in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, 111-138. For an extensive bibliography, see Oegema, *The Anointed and His People*, 86-96.

⁴⁸⁷ Oegema, *The Anointed and His People*, 101.

⁴⁸⁸ Pomykala, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition*, 212-213.

⁴⁸⁹ Talmon, "Waiting for the Messiah at Qumran," 131.

Collins' *The Scepter and the Star*.⁴⁹⁰ In distinction from many earlier studies of messianism along the traditional view, which often attempted to develop a single common messianic expectation, his study is organized around four key messianic paradigms –king, priest, prophet and heavenly messiah.⁴⁹¹ In terms of royal messianism in the Scrolls, there are such examples as 4Qpls^a, which refers to a “Branch of David” (Is. 11:1) who will “arise at the en[d of days]” to win an eschatological victory and judge the peoples. Collins further suggests that the evidence of such materials as the Isaianic fragment 4Q285 (the questionably named “Dying Messiah” portion), read in connection with the 1QM portion of the War Scroll, provides a connection between the “Prince of the Congregation” and the Branch of David and suggests that a Davidic king was an important part of messianic expectations at Qumran.⁴⁹² In addition to such references to a Davidic figure, other expectations are also attested at Qumran. The Testimonia, a collection of proof texts about the messiah,⁴⁹³ seem by their selection to include

¹¹³ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 12. As noted, the work of Charlesworth, Neusner and others has shown the need for greater precision in definition and a better recognition of the variety and diversity of within ancient Judaism. Nevertheless, some modifications of their position may be needed. Collins proposes that a reappraisal of this minimalist position regarding the significance and coherence of messianism is in order. His study surveys the range and variety of messianic figures attested in Judaism and especially in the Qumran texts.

⁴⁹¹ In addition, he argues that they were not all of equal importance and cautions that it is difficult to assess exactly how popular each was among the majority of the people in Judaism. The literary evidence we have represents the outlook of religious leadership. See Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 12, 67.

⁴⁹² Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 60. Though the number of Davidic references is relatively small, it remains significant and several other texts, including 4Q174 Florilegium, could be cited here also.

references that suggest figures who were either royal, priestly or prophetic as part of the Community's hope.⁴⁹⁴

Also central to the messianic expectations at Qumran is the figure of the "teacher of righteousness." He appears in such texts as the Damascus Document,⁴⁹⁵ and is also associated with the figure of the "interpreter of the Law" mentioned in the Florilegium together with the "Shoot of David" as an eschatological figure who will arise in the end of days.⁴⁹⁶ While the lines between these figures and others in the Scrolls are sometimes difficult to draw with certainty, the texts seem to be operating with an eschatology that is based in part on a restoration and fulfillment of the past.⁴⁹⁷ There also appears to be the possibility of the convergence of some of these titles, allowing that the "interpreter of the Law" and "Teacher of Righteousness" might be descriptions of the eschatological High Priest alluded to as "the messiah of Aaron" and described in 4Q174, where the descendants of Levi are said to carry out the role of teaching Israel the Law.⁴⁹⁸

The Deuteronomic promise of a successor to Moses forms part of the background to a messianic prophet figure at Qumran.⁴⁹⁹ Associated with Elijah

⁴⁹³ Cf. Michael Wise, Martin Abegg & Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: Harper, 1999), 229; the work is identified as 4Q175.

⁴⁹⁴ Collins, *The Sceptre and the Star*, 75, 95.

⁴⁹⁵ *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 52; see also in the *peshet* on Habakkuk 1QpHab 2:2, 116, though here it is likely an historical figure in the past, not an eschatological personage.

⁴⁹⁶ *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 228.

⁴⁹⁷ Collins, *The Sceptre and the Star*, 112-115.

⁴⁹⁸ Collins, *The Sceptre and the Star*, 114.

in one later prophet,⁵⁰⁰ this figure is also mentioned apparently in New Testament texts.⁵⁰¹ There is fragmentary reference in two Qumran texts, of which only one, 4Q521, is preserved well enough to merit discussion.⁵⁰² Several fragments, taken together, appear to record God speaking of a time when, at the coming of an Elijah-like figure, he will prompt the fathers to return to the sons, alluding to Malachi 3:24. Of even greater interest in this text however is the fragment 2 ii which combines references to Psalm 146 and Isaiah 61 to speak of a time when the Lord will bring deliverance to his people: glorifying the pious on an eternal throne, releasing the captives, providing sight to the blind and raising up those who are bowed down, healing the wounded, giving life to the dead and preaching good news to the poor.⁵⁰³ The aspects of this deliverance can almost all be traced to Isaiah 35 and Isaiah 61,⁵⁰⁴ with the apparent addition of the raising of the dead, which is also part of Jesus' answer to the disciples of John the Baptist and where it is also associated with Isaiah's prophecies.⁵⁰⁵ Collins raises the intriguing possibility that the proposed source Q (which lies behind Matthew and Luke) and the author of 4Q521 were drawing on a common traditional

⁴⁹⁹ Mentioned in Deuteronomy 18:18. For the Dead Sea Scrolls version, see Martin Abegg, Peter Flint & Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* (San Francisco: Harper, 1999), 172.

⁵⁰⁰ Cf. Mal. 3:1; 4:5 and also Ben Sira 48:10.

⁵⁰¹ Mark 8:27-28; 9:11-13 and parallels.

⁵⁰² The other is only a phrase in length and is cited by Collins from a published fragment by Jean Starcky in "Les Quatres étapes du messianisme à Qumran," *Revue Biblique* 70 (1963) 498. See *The Scepter and the Star*, 116.

⁵⁰³ *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 421.

⁵⁰⁴ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 68.

⁵⁰⁵ Matt. 11:2-5, Luke 7:22

expectation of an Elijah-like eschatological prophet. Though it was less widely known than the Davidic messiah, this tradition was apparently known in circles outside of Qumran as well and was therefore not limited to the teachings of the sect itself.⁵⁰⁶

The description of separate priestly and royal messiahs often associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls community⁵⁰⁷ seems to be part of a specific and limited critique of the presumptive Hasmonean party of the first century BCE, who combined both offices despite having neither historical precedent nor Davidic credentials.⁵⁰⁸ The evidence for “dual messiahs” comes primarily from the Damascus Covenant, which mentions “the Messiah from Aaron and from Israel”⁵⁰⁹ and 1QSb, “Priestly Blessings for the Last Days.” Here blessings are given first to the High Priests and the sons of Zadok and then to the “leader of the nation,” an eschatological war leader depicted largely in language taken from Isaiah 11 and Balaam’s “scepter and star oracle” in Numbers 24:17.

It has almost become axiomatic that these texts provide the basis for a “co-messianic” expectation for Qumran, in which priestly and royal messiahs would rule side by side as comparable and equivalent in authority. This view has recently been challenged by Craig Evans.⁵¹⁰ Following Martin Abegg’s work

⁵⁰⁶ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 122.

⁵⁰⁷ This type of dual messianism may be paralleled in Zech. 4:14; 6:11-14

⁵⁰⁸ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 95.

⁵⁰⁹ *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, (Geniza B 19:20) 59.

with 1QSb, he points out that while the Zadokite priests and High Priest are addressed in the second person (e.g. “May the Lord bless you”) because they are present and already serving, the royal messiah is addressed in the third person (e.g. “And He shall renew for him the Covenant...so as to establish the kingdom of his people forever”) because he is still missing. Thus while the Qumran community certainly envisioned that the Zadokite priesthood would take its proper place as part of a restored Israel, they awaited the arrival of a royal messiah to win the final battle over Israel’s enemies so that the land could be purified and justice together with proper worship reinstated.⁵¹¹ If the thesis proposed by Evans is correct, then the repeated references to the royal messiah in the Scrolls --who is frequently connected with Davidic promises --- form a very significant element in Qumran expectations.⁵¹² As Evans writes elsewhere:

The Davidic tradition contributes significantly to the messianic expectation of the Dead Sea Scrolls, just as it does to that found in the Old Testament prophets. Not all of the eschatology of the Scrolls is Davidic, nor is all of the messianic material Davidic, but it clear that the Davidic tradition is the most important single factor.⁵¹³

⁵¹⁰ “Diarchic Messianism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Messianism of Jesus of Nazareth,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years After Their Discovery*, (ed. Lawrence Schiffman, Emmanuel Tov, James C. VanderKam] Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 2000), 558-567.

⁵¹¹ Evans, “Diarchic Messianism,” 562-564. Evans also connects this to the actions of Jesus in his ministry, a point which will be considered below.

⁵¹² Evans includes CD 7:15-21; 4Q1612-6 ii 19; 4Q174 1:10-13; 4Q252 1 v 3-4; 4Q266 iv 9; 4Q285 4 2, 4 6; 5 4; 6 2; 4Q3761 iii 1. Of these, several merit special attention. The text found in 4Q174 is especially interesting in regards to Evans’ main point and the argument of the present study, since it quotes II Sam. 7:10-14 and links it with Amos 9:11 to refer to a fallen “Branch” of David who will deliver Israel and inaugurate a time of security, blessing and pure worship in accordance with Mosaic stipulations. The commentary on Isaiah (4Q161) also connects Isaiah 11:1-5 to the “leader of the nation” who will appear in the last days, inherit a glorious throne, and rule with a scepter over all the Gentiles in conjunction with the Zadokite priests (Wise, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 209-211). In a battle scenario, the War Scroll 4Q285 suggests that a “shoot of Jesse shall come out from the stump of Jesse [and a branch shall grow out of his roots. This is the] branch of David.” This figure is then further portrayed as the one who will defeat the Kittim (Gentile enemies); cf. Wise, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 293.

In summary, it seems that despite the clear diversity and variation of messianic figures at Qumran, the Davidic messiah⁵¹⁴ is still the central core tradition around which the others are organized and on which the primary sense of expectation rests.⁵¹⁵

The Messiah as a Davidic King

As a way of drawing together some of the initial arguments advanced to this point, several comments can be made. First of all, while a diversity of messianic figures can be discerned in the wide range of Second Temple Jewish literature, these various figures are not necessarily all parallel and equivalent in stature. While a Gentile ruler such as Cyrus could be described in terms of such exalted language as the “anointed of the Lord” (Is. 45:1), it would be difficult to argue that such a potentate could hope to fulfill all the expectations attached to the broader messianic hope which would include the royal Davidic tradition, the political restoration of the nation and the return to Yahweh. Similarly, while priestly figures sometimes provided temporary political leadership in the absence

⁵¹³ Craig A. Evans, “David in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After*, 191.

⁵¹⁴ There is no intention to argue here that the representation of David in the Scrolls was only found in terms of royal messianism. One other very significant portrayal is that of David as exorcist and spirit-filled prophet, as attested in 11QPS^a 27:10-11, to which further attention will be paid below. This diversity in how the figure of David is presented in the Qumran texts fits with the larger contours of the argument of this paper. See Craig A. Evans, “David in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 196.

⁵¹⁵ Horbury (*Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 30) goes still further and argues that the phrase “messiah of Aaron and Israel” in 2Q266 and 1Qsa can also be read as denoting only a singular figure, though this is not the majority view.

of kings or other political figures, and could even be spoken of in terms of eschatological expectation, an inherent part of messianism also included more than an anointed leader but also included the completion of covenant promises made to Abraham, Moses and David. Because of the comprehensiveness of this messianic tradition, interpretations that focus only on issues of diversity and plurality among various messianic figures, without attempting to integrate these figures into the larger tradition and view them against the background of the broader matrix of expectation are not as successful in making sense of the relationship between these figures.

To put this same point differently, there are three texts which speak of a figure whom Yahweh will raise up for his people: These "I will raise up" texts include Deut. 18:15 (a prophet like Moses) , 1 Sam 2:35 (a faithful priest), 2 Sam 7:11 (an offspring for David). I am not aware of an interpreter that has argued that any of these replaces the other two, or is in competition with them. It seems even less probable that these three texts represent contesting theologies which centered on one figure alone to the exclusion of the others, since all three are taken from the broader Deuteronomistic history. All three figures were "anointed" in Israel and each of these texts would provide fertile soil for later messianic and eschatological interpretation surrounding various prophetic (Moses, Elijah) priestly (Phinehas, Zadokite high priest) and kingly (David, Zerubbabel) individuals -- together with other texts that are part of the early history of Israel -- as several illustrative studies cited above have each attempted to show. The point here is that in an analogous way, the diversity of specific strands of

messianic hope should not necessarily be taken to mean that the flourishing and development of one meant the exclusion of any or all of the others. Neither would any one strand necessarily supersede the others any more than this would be intended with respect to the three figures within the Deuteronomistic history's "I will raise up" pronouncements and the subsequent development of each of these within the Hebrew canon.

To give just one example for the purposes of illustration, we can cite the expectation which comes to be associated with the prophetic figure of Moses based on Deuteronomy 18:15 that eventually includes royal qualities as well. The NRSV translates Deuteronomy 33:5 as "There arose a king in Jeshurun," referring to Moses, to which can be added Isaiah 63:11, where the kingly terms "shepherd" and "servant" are referred to him also. When these references are taken into account along with the LXX of Exodus 4:20, which pictures Moses as receiving a rod/scepter from God,⁵¹⁶ as well as several other references where Moses' stature is exalted relative to the Hebrew text, it becomes possible to see how subtle but discernible royal messianic qualities have begun to surround the figure of Moses over the course of time.⁵¹⁷ By the time Ezekiel the tragedian writes his *Exagogue* in the second century B.C.E., Moses is pictured in a dream as taking his place on the throne of Yahweh at the top of Mt. Sinai, suggestive that while Moses is seen here not just as a kingly figure experiencing the

⁵¹⁶ *Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*, trans. Lancelot C. Brenton, ([London: Samuel Bagster and Sons, 1851] Rep. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 66.

⁵¹⁷ Cf. Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 31, 49.

transformation of an apotheosis.⁵¹⁸ The figure of Moses can thus be envisioned (without apparent contradiction or implication of supersession) within 3 of the 4 different categories of messianic hope which are presented as paradigmatic by Collins in his study.⁵¹⁹

If messianism can indeed be conceptualized in this way as a composite of flexible and interrelated aspects, it should be possible to revisit the traditional “single stream” Davidic Messianic view and make some adjustments. Here two comments, the first by Klausner, the second by Mowinckel, need to be considered. We first take note of Klausner’s statement, assessing the Jewish tendency to use grandiose language about David:

Yet this fact alone, that popular imagination expanded and exalted this national hero not only as a king possessing outstanding political talents but also as the possessor of superior religio-ethical qualities—this fact alone proves that undoubtedly David was a man of the very highest attainments...Outstanding political abilities together with these religio-ethical qualities made David the authentic prototype of the redeemer and the founder of that ruling family one of whose descendants the Messiah must be. Not only did the name “son of David” become a standing title of the King-Messiah, but also the name “David” itself.

Commenting on Isaiah 55:3, Mowinckel states:

Now as always, David and his dynasty represent the people; and in David the nation has the visible expression of its unity, its embodiment and its palladium. The promises made to David are the essential content of the covenant with the people. In and through the covenant with David, the covenant with Israel is also confirmed.⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁸ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 145.

⁵¹⁹ While a detailed treatment is not possible here, a fourth category in addition to prophetic, priestly and kingly messiah is that of the heavenly figure. See Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 136-172, and Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 624-629.

⁵²⁰ *He That Cometh*, 166.

Both statements capture similar sentiments, and of the two, Mowinckel's comment –by identifying the significance of the Davidic covenant as the basis for David's close identification with Israel's future in the biblical text—comes closer to the line of argument being suggested here. Yet both these comments are in need of adjustment, given the developments of recent writing. A variegated appraisal of the structure of messianism which has emerged out of more recent studies and access to a wider range of Jewish texts, requires a more nuanced view of the place of Davidic messianism in relation to the other strands. Here an observation made by John Collins could be compared to that of Klausner and Mowinckel. Of the four paradigms he employs in his study, Collins finds that the “concept of the Davidic messiah as a warrior king who would destroy the enemies of Israel and institute an era of unending peace” is still most widely attested and central at the beginning of the Christian era.⁵²¹

If the main lines of the argument being proposed to this point are essentially correct, then the way is now open for a reconsideration of the significance of the Davidic covenant and dynasty tradition within a more diverse and varied Jewish messianic hope. In this regard, it is quite interesting that a noted Old Testament scholar has recently attempted something along these lines. In a recently released collection of essays, Daniel Block's essay examines the messianic texts of the Old Testament and attempts to argue that, taken together, they conceive

⁵²¹ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 68. Though here it would also be important to recognize that not all Davidic portrayals were necessarily militaristic, as the development of a messianic expectation associated with a cleansed and humbled Davidic house in Zechariah 9-12, and also in evidence in *Psalms of Solomon 17* makes clear.

of the Messiah exclusively in terms of a Davidic configuration.⁵²² The paper is important in several respects. First of all, it notes the close connection between the terminology of *masiah* and the ritual and practice of ancient Israelite kingship.⁵²³ Secondly, it takes note of the variety of messianic figures found in the Old Testament texts, such as prophetic, priestly and kingly figures.⁵²⁴ Thirdly, Block's study draws important attention to the high correlation between a number of royal messianic concepts and the Davidic dynasty tradition within the Hebrew Bible.⁵²⁵ Fourthly, he correctly points out the influence of sacral kingship tradition in pre-Israelitic times,⁵²⁶ in which kings often carried out priestly functions. This sets a precedent which kings such as David drew from in order to take an active part in Israel's worship, functioning as a priest in a number of instances, as has been argued in Section 1 above.⁵²⁷ Finally, he presents an innovative proposal for understanding the "suffering servant" figure of the Isaianic songs as a Davidic and messianic figure.⁵²⁸

Though there is much to appreciate in the essay, there are several issues where further refinement is needed. Block does take stock of the variety of

⁵²² Daniel I. Block, "My Servant David: Ancient Israel's Vision of the Messiah," in *Israel's Messiah*, 17-56.

⁵²³ Block, "My Servant David," 23.

⁵²⁴ Block, "My Servant David," 26-49.

⁵²⁵ Cf. Block, "My Servant David," 47-49, for a study of the connection between "servant" and David in the Old Testament.

⁵²⁶ Here he also cites the study of Deborah Rooke ("Kingship and Priesthood," in *King and Messiah*, 197-198) which demonstrated that while priestly prerogatives are sometimes derived from the monarchy (cf. Ps. 110), the obverse case is never noticeable in the Old Testament.

⁵²⁷ Referring to the essay by John Day, "The Canaanite Inheritance of the Israelite Monarchy."

⁵²⁸ Block, "My Servant David," 49-55.

messianic figures and even goes so far as to make the statement, "...one doubts whether we may even speak of *an* Old Testament messianic vision, as if there were a single, universally accepted view of the Messiah."⁵²⁹ But the implications of this statement are not followed consistently in what follows. In fact, in the remainder of the essay, it seems as if he collapses all variation within the Old Testament messianic expectation into a single, monolithic Davidic mold,⁵³⁰ which is waiting -- as if it were the proverbial blank checklist -- for the New Testament writers to employ in constructing their christological project. In my view, this prematurely synthesizes and defines the messianic expectations of Judaism, which up to the early Christian era exhibited a greater degree of flux and indeterminacy.⁵³¹

A second problem in the paper is the attempt to draw a straight line from Old Testament expectation to New Testament fulfillment, without enough attention to the developments in Jewish extra biblical literature. Even if it be granted that the canonical books are uniquely authoritative, a number of the developments in the wider textual traditions of Judaism (which might be gleaned from a consideration of how key messianic texts came to be understood in the Old Testament Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha and Qumran) would help to shed

⁵²⁹ Block, "My Servant David," 19.

⁵³⁰ In his reply to Block in the same volume of essays, J. Daniel Hays makes much the same point. See his "If He Looks Like a Prophet, and He Talks Like a Prophet, Then He Must Be..." in *Israel's Messiah*, 69. I am indebted to Hays' careful analysis for a number of points in what follows.

⁵³¹ This, incidentally, also makes much more sense out of the data in the Gospels that suggest that the disciples, among others, had great difficulty in recognizing Jesus' messianic characteristics. Cf. Mk. 8:27-33; 9:9-13; Mt. 11:2-5; Luke 24:13-27. It also explains why the author of Hebrews could so closely link Jesus messianic Sonship with his role as a high priest (Heb. 4:14) and carries this title repeatedly throughout the book.

light on Jesus' own messianic actions and the way they were understood within Christian circles. This is closely related to the consistency of Block's methodology, which seems to shift between taking the authorial intent of the Old Testament writer and New Testament exegesis of the Old Testament text as the locus for handling Old Testament passages.⁵³² In neither case is it really possible to speak of the view of "ancient Israelites."⁵³³ It seems that more of a developmental approach is needed which will take both history and theology seriously.

A third point concerns the interpretation of the "Suffering Servant" of Isaiah 53,⁵³⁴ which Block takes as having been originally intended to refer to the Davidic Messiah, along with the rest of the Servant songs of Isaiah.⁵³⁵ He cites the evidence of Hugenberger⁵³⁶ for a number of Davidic parallels and challenges the Mosaic interpretation that Hugenberger puts forward on several grounds.⁵³⁷

⁵³² Cf. Hays, "If He Looks Like a Prophet," 58-59.

⁵³³ Block, "My Servant David," 23.

⁵³⁴ Cf. Richard J. Clifford, "Isaiah, Second Book of," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary* CD ROM; C.R. North, "Servant of the Lord," *IDB* 4, 292-294.

⁵³⁵ Usually recognized as Is. 42.1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9 and 52.13-53.12, although various scholars have allowed for longer additions to the first three; see North, "Servant of the Lord," 292.

⁵³⁶ Cited in Gordon Hugenberger, "The Servant of the Lord in the "Servant Songs" of Isaiah," in P.E. Satterthwaite, R.S. Hess, and G.J. Wenham (eds.) *The Lord's Anointed*, Carlisle: Baker, 1995), 106-19. Hugenberger ultimately opts for Moses as the referent of these Servant Songs.

⁵³⁷ Block, "My Servant David," 44-46. Several of his criticisms against Hugenberger cut more than one way and would also mitigate against a Davidic interpretation, weakening Block's own case as well. For example, while Yahweh never made a covenant with Moses, neither is covenant a dominant theme in the Servant Songs. Also, while Moses is not portrayed as an eschatological messianic figure in the Old Testament, this development does take place with Judaism through the Second Temple period. In any case, Block seems to assume, rather than show, that the Servant is an "eschatological messianic" figure. If the emphasis in these Isaianic "second exodus texts" is on Israel's God Yahweh, not on the individual Moses (as Block argues, against a Mosaic identification of the Servant) it is difficult to see this favours a messianic, Davidic referent for the

While Block must be credited for noting the parallels with Isaiah 53 in the Qumran text 4Q491,⁵³⁸ there is also little evidence in that text for a Davidic messiah or eschatological conflict over evil.⁵³⁹ Indeed, there is more of an emphasis on the enthronement of an exalted, righteous figure who may resemble the Teacher of Righteousness in the way he endures the scorn and opposition of his enemies.⁵⁴⁰ Though he is associated with the “sons of kings” in his exaltation, there is no evidence that he is a kingly figure. Block does make an intriguing reference to the problem of the Servant’s substitutionary role, suggesting the possibility that kingship rituals attested in Assyrian texts may have influenced the portrayal of the Servant,⁵⁴¹ though he does not explain whether this influence is merely literary or whether it derived from actual religious ideas coalescing with the theology of Isaiah.⁵⁴² Given the improbability that such kingship rituals were

“Servant”. Presumably, the theocentrism of the context would rule out a Davidic individual with equal force. Finally, Block seems to focus almost exclusively on the individual interpretation, which at least in the early sections of the songs have a corporate reference to Israel as well. Cf. Clifford, “Isaiah, Second Book of.” See also Mowinckel (*He That Cometh*, 229, n.1) who, anticipating much of this discussion, gives an evaluation of the “new Exodus theme” of Isaiah 40-55 and the probability that a “new Moses” is in view in Isaiah 53.

⁵³⁸ See n. 157 in Block, “My Servant David,” 54.

⁵³⁹ Though it was originally thought to be a fragment of the War Scroll, this is no longer the case.

⁵⁴⁰ Collins, *The Scepter and the Star*, 148. If Collins and Wise (*The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 168) are correct in making this connection then the Thanksgiving Scroll (1QH, 1Q35, 4Q427-432) may provide a background for this text as well. Interestingly, here too there are allusions to Isaiah 53 as well as other “righteous sufferer” texts such as Psalm 22:14 in a context that includes the humiliation of Yahweh’s servant. Cf. Col. 10:9-12 (1QH + 4Q432 Frag. 3), *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, 92. See also the comments by Richard Hess, “Messiahs Here and There,” in *Israel’s Messiah*, 108.

⁵⁴¹ He cites the work of Walton in *The Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, 633-634.

⁵⁴² Mowinckel had already discussed the possibility that features of oriental kingship (and especially the Babylonian New Year Festival) may have influenced the portrait of the Fourth Servant Song but he does not find this very likely. In his view, given whatever parallels there might be between the concept of “servant” and royalty, the context of Is. 52:13 ff. provides little evidence that such parallels were intended here. By way of identifying the origins of these texts,

ever part of Israel's practice or ideology of kingship, the former seems far more likely than the latter.

Here several pieces of evidence must be considered. It is true (as Block points out) that Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is quoted more than any other Old Testament passage by New Testament writers, however, in not a single case is this text used to establish specifically Davidic credentials.⁵⁴³ Likewise, while the word "root" does appear in Isaiah 53:2 ("like a root out of dry ground," NRSV; cf. Is.

Mowinckel proposes the possibility that a novel and unprecedented development has taken place: the life and death of an unknown prophet of the broader Isaianic circle, taken together with the experiences of a number of prophets who also in some way experienced suffering and martyrdom, has been idealized into a figure whose suffering would have atoning value and restore the people to Yahweh. He concludes, "Thus the message about the Servant far surpasses everything in the Old Testament message about the Messiah (the future king), his person, and his work. The Servant's task is to do the very thing which was not expected of the future king... The Servant will do this, not as a victorious king, but by his suffering and death." Cf. *He That Cometh*, 221-255. Mowinckel may well be correct in drawing greater attention to the prophetic qualities of the Servant. However, I do not follow his contention that Isaiah 52:13ff. was written by someone other than the writer of the rest of Isaiah 40-55. Cf. also Laato (*A Star is Rising*, 143-150), who suggests that the death of Josiah at Megiddo is part of the traditio-historical background for this passage. In addition, R.E. Clements, while rejecting the "corporate personality" concept of H. Wheeler Robinson, sees the possibility that the succession of disasters which befell the royal house of David and the nation from Josiah to Jehoiachin may have been a formative influence on the Servant material in Isaiah 42-55. The hope of a future vindication for the Servant held open the corollary hope that the independence of the nation could also be restored; cf. "Isaiah 53 and the Restoration of Israel," in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant*, ed. William H. Bellinger Jr. and William Farmer (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998), 44-45. While he does not see Moses as any kind of prototype for the Servant, Clements does find parallels between the theological outlook which shaped the portrayal of Moses in the Deuteronomic perspective and those which coloured the presentation of Yahweh's Servant in Isaiah; cf. 43-53.

⁵⁴³ According to *The Greek New Testament*, ed. K. Aland, M. Black, C.M. Martini, B. Metzger, A. Winger ([3rd Edition] Munster: United Bible Societies, 1983), 907, there are at least 34 allusions or verbal parallels to the fourth "Servant Song" in the New Testament. This makes Horbury's comment "In the New Testament it [this text] is cited sparingly" (*Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 33) somewhat puzzling. While it may not be cited very often in explicit quotations, it is clearly a prominent text in early Christian theology and ethics. A number of the New Testament references are concerned with Jesus as an example of how patient endurance of suffering is rewarded by God, (e.g. I Pet. 2:21-25).

11:1, 10) it is telling that the LXX does not necessarily read it this way.⁵⁴⁴ In what may be the earliest interpretation of the text, Daniel 12:3 occurs in a context dealing with the suffering righteous oppressed by an arrogant Gentile king (Dan. 11:33-36).⁵⁴⁵ Any Davidic allusions are noticeably absent.

In any case, attempts to see in the "Suffering Servant" veiled references to a particular historical individual, Davidic or otherwise, have proven problematic. It may be preferable to question the assumption that such a concealed reference to an actual historical figure of the past. Instead, greater concentration should be given to the distinctive features of the Servant's experience and the path he follows from ignoble beginnings, through suffering, to eventual vindication and prosperity.⁵⁴⁶ Several echoes of Isaiah 53 in the wisdom literature of the Old Testament Apocrypha reflect on the ordeal of those who patiently suffer injustice and derision at the hands of the wicked, and the compassion of the Lord in vindicating and elevating them to the surprise of their tormentors.⁵⁴⁷ These may

⁵⁴⁴ C. Maurer, "rhizo, [root]" in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Abridged; eds. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich; [trans. Geoffrey Bromiley] (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1982), 986. See also Horbury, who makes a similar point.

⁵⁴⁵ Cf. Clifford, "Isaiah, Second Book of," who cites H.L. Ginsberg's work *The Oldest Interpretation of the Suffering Servant*, VT 3: 1953, 400-404

⁵⁴⁶ While actual historical events and people may of course have inspired the Song, the portrait points beyond these in a genre that combines elements of lament and prophecy. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 196-213, is still very valuable in this regard. See also the observations of Paul D. Hanson, *Isaiah 40-66*, Interpretation, ed. James Luther Mays (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1995), 166. He comments: "Is the Servant an individual or a people? To make this the central focus of the study of the Servant Songs seems fruitless, and it easily degenerates into Jewish Christian polemic. The central point is, rather, the redefinition of power that occurs in the Songs. The power that can annul the wages of sin and restore human beings and their communities to health is not the power that potentates wield. It is, rather, the power with which God has endowed the Servant, the power to place God's will over selfish desire and thereby to be an instrument of God's healing."

⁵⁴⁷ Sirach 11:11-13, Wisdom 2:12-24; 5:1-5; 11:14; cited in Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 33; about patient suffering cf. 53:7, 9; on subsequent vindication and reward,

well serve as important interpretative clues for an alternate reading of this text's significance. Despite the importance of Davidic Messianism – which Block rightly contends for— all Old Testament texts which took on later significance in New Testament Christology cannot necessarily be subsumed under the messianic rubric.

Conclusions

To this point it has been argued that messianic hope is of central concern in the Hebrew Bible and that its emergence can be traced to the eschatological hope of the prophets, who responded to the historical crisis of the exile by looking for the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant promises for the people of Israel in the coming of a successor to David, who would decisively provide for the deliverance of Yahweh's people Israel. There is therefore both continuity with the pre-exilic concepts of kingship (both of Yahweh and his appointed king) and discernible development and progression in response to events in the life of the nation. It has also emerged that a recent consensus in scholarly circles which minimized the extent of messianic hope in various periods during Second Temple Judaism is being reconsidered, with recognition that messianic interpretation and

compare Is. 52:13, 15, 53:12. While space does not permit a more detailed consideration of this point, it does seem to be very significant to the larger context of Isaiah 42-53 as well. Cf. Is. 49:4,13; 50:5-9 51:1-4. While Israel's punishment was in part deserved, the punishment of the righteous servant was not, and his patient endurance of the unjust abuse of others is what is commended here. I would suggest that it was this issue that made Isaiah 52:13 ff. of interest to early Christian authors much more than a messianic interpretation. Among other Old Testament figures, the substitutionary and intercessory status of the Servant (Is. 53:4a, 5, 6b, 8b, 10, 11, 12) does find some parallels in the lives of Abraham (Gen. 18:17ff.) Moses (Num. 11:1-14), David (II Sam. 24:10). Prophets such as Ezekiel and Jeremiah also experience suffering as a result of their close identification with the people, but the concept of a person whose suffering becomes a sinless "guilt offering" is without equivalent.

reflection continued even during eras when few compositions showed overt signs of messianic hope. While there appear to be a number of “messiahs,” there is also a larger matrix of messianism within which these messiah figures are visibly interrelated. Not surprisingly, determinations as to the extensiveness of both of these concepts depend largely on how they are defined. The importance of the wider context of a developing messianism is evident in the extent to a prominent and elaborate messianic description as *Psalms of Solomon 17* depends on this rich and well established tradition for its rhetorical impact.

While at least four distinct strands of messianic expectation can be discerned in the apocryphal, pseudepigraphal, Qumranic and biblical texts – prophetic, priestly, royal and heavenly—the royal messianic figure, linked with the promises to David who restores the political fortunes and religious ethos of Israel, seems to be the most central and widely attested to the time of the early Christian period. Nevertheless, the tendency to subsume all Old Testament messianism under a single Davidic classification should be resisted. There is great variety in the types of figures with whom the title “messiah” is associated, including transcendent and pre-existent beings, as well as Gentile potentates and a human messiah who dies at the end of the messianic age. While some passages were part of a developing and coalescing pattern of messianic interpretation (e.g. Gen. 49:10; Numbers 24:17; II Sam. 7:13-14; Is. 11:1-10; Jer. 33:15), the evidence also suggests that other texts were not read messianically with the same degree of consistency until much later.

Chapter 6

The Suffering Davidic King in the Matthean Passion Narrative

The Use of Messianic Motifs in Matthean Texts

There is abundant evidence that the early Christian movement understood Jesus as the Messiah of Israel. This contention is visible in both the portraits of Paul in Acts⁵⁴⁸ as well as the apostle's own writing,⁵⁴⁹ not to mention works as diverse as Hebrews, I John and Revelation.⁵⁵⁰ Several characters in the opening chapter of John's gospel are preoccupied with the question of Jesus' messianic identity,⁵⁵¹ and the question persists throughout the gospel as a recurring theme.⁵⁵² Luke's introduction employs Jesus' Davidic ancestry as part of a messianic description⁵⁵³ and following his reading of Isaiah 61 in the synagogue of Nazareth, the demons recognize him as the "Holy One," the "Son of God" and the Messiah.⁵⁵⁴ While the term appears with less frequency in the Gospel of

⁵⁴⁸ Acts 17:1-4; 26:22-23.

⁵⁴⁹ Romans 1:3,4; 15:7-12; I Cor. 15:23-28. George McCrae has argued that the messianic identity of Jesus is not central to Paul's writings, though he does point out that Jesus plays the role of messiah insofar as he is God's agent of eschatological salvation through his death and resurrection. Cf. his essay, "Messiah and Gospel" in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, ed. James C. Charlesworth, 172-173. For a detailed discussion that sees a direct link between Jesus' resurrection and his identity as Messiah of Israel, see N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*.

⁵⁵⁰ Heb. 1:5-13; I John 2:22; Rev. 5:5.

⁵⁵¹ John 1:23-25, 41, 45-49. The messianic description takes place among a number of Christological titles including Word (1:1-18), Lamb of God (1:36), Son of God (1:49) and Son of Man (1:51).

⁵⁵² John 4:25-30; 7:30, 40-43; 9:22-23; 10:22-30; 12:34-36; 20:30-31.

⁵⁵³ Luke 1:27, 30-33, 69-71; 2:4, 11, 25-32, 36-38.

Mark, it does occur at several key points in the development of the narrative⁵⁵⁵ and the unfolding of Jesus' identity as Messiah, particularly to his disciples, is also a key theme of the gospel.

Given the apparent audience and thematic concerns of this work, Matthew's account⁵⁵⁶ would be among the Gospels in which we might expect messianic concerns to be prominent.⁵⁵⁷ While the relationship of Matthew's intended audience to Judaism is debated, recent study suggests that the first Gospel was composed within a community that included members whose ancestry could be found in Judaism and who were facing opposition from Judaism's leaders, even as they were actively carrying their message to Gentiles.⁵⁵⁸ The question of Jesus' identity is considered a central theme to the

⁵⁵⁴ Luke 4:34-35, 40-41.

⁵⁵⁵ Mark 1:1; 8:27-30; 12:35-37; 13:21-27. The taunts of the chief priests and scribes in Mark 15:31-32 are intended to mock Jesus' messianic identity, but there is unmistakable irony here, given Mark's contention that all along, Jesus saw suffering and death as integral to his task as the Messiah and the Son of Man.

⁵⁵⁶ Scholarly opinion about the author of this anonymous work exhibits a range of opinion about such matters as whether Matthew the disciple/apostle is the author, and whether the author was Jewish or Gentile. Here "Matthew" will be employed in its traditional usage as referring to the writer of the first Gospel, without necessarily implying a definite conclusion on issues of authorship. For more detailed discussion of this question, see John P. Meier, "Matthew, Gospel of" in *ABD CD ROM*; Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 38-41.

⁵⁵⁷ Jack D. Kingsbury, "Matthew, The Gospel According to," *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, 502-503; Raymond E. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament* ([ABRL] New York: Doubleday, 1997), 203-217; L.M. McDonald & Stanley Porter, *Early Christianity And Its Sacred Literature* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2000), 297-302; R.G. Hamerton-Kelly, "Matthew, Gospel of," *IDB Sup*, 580-83.

⁵⁵⁸ Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish Christian Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 84-123. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 49; Meier, "Matthew, Gospel of". While no certainty regarding the location of writing is possible, Meier points out that there is a broad consensus that Syrian Antioch is the front running candidate at present; cf. also McDonald and Porter, *Early Christianity And Its Sacred Literature*, 300.

Gospel: how then does the gospel of Matthew relate Jesus to the Jewish messianic expectation that existed in his day?

In a recent essay, W.D. Davies proposes that Matthew's messianism can be broadly organized around four central themes or motifs: the new creation, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham, and the Greater Moses.⁵⁵⁹ While Davies focuses mainly on the opening chapters of Matthew 1-8 in his survey, these motifs foreshadow much of the later thematic development and so provide a useful overview to the structure of the gospel as it proceeds to the passion narrative. Given the focus of the present work, special attention will be paid to the "Son of David" theme.

The New Creation

The first two chapters of Matthew are uniquely Matthean⁵⁶⁰ and include a genealogy of "Jesus the Messiah" (1:1-17), an account of the circumstances of his birth (1:18-25) and the story of his escape from Herod and safe arrival in Nazareth (2:1-23). The opening phrase of the genealogy parallels language found also in Genesis in a number of ways.⁵⁶¹ One of these is apparent

⁵⁵⁹ "The Jewish Sources of Matthew's Messianism," in *The Messiah*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 494-511.

⁵⁶⁰ Under the prevailing opinion of "Markan priority" in synoptic study, this material is sometimes classified as coming from a special "Matthew source," though in all likelihood this unique material (not found in either Mark or Luke) is a composite of various traditional sources and Matthean writing. See Meier, "Matthew, Gospel of."

⁵⁶¹ Davies, "The Jewish Sources of Matthew's Messianism," 496-497. This introduction may well function on several levels, introducing the opening genealogy, the entire prologue (1:1 – 4:11) or, to some commentators, even the whole Gospel as Mark 1:1 does for its story. Cf. Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 174.

immediately, with the phrase *biblos geneseōs*⁵⁶² that opens the gospel in the Greek. When Jesus later calms the waters of the Sea of Galilee (8:23-27) the disciples' question ("What sort of man is this, that even the winds and the waves obey him?") finds a resonance in the subduing of the waters at creation (Gen. 1:7,9) and in later descriptions of Yahweh as one whose power over the cosmic forces allows him to command the waves with a word (Ps. 104:7-9). Jesus' coming inaugurates a new creation and his messianic status entails authority on a cosmic and universal scale.⁵⁶³

Son of David as Son of God

Matthew identifies Jesus as "the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (1:1, NRSV), linking him with two prominent figures of the Hebrew Bible.⁵⁶⁴ The phrase introduces a genealogy which indicates that Jesus' coming is part of a divinely orchestrated plan which is discernible in several stages of Israel's history.⁵⁶⁵ While the messianic title "son of David" first appears in *Psalms of Solomon* 17 and 18, its background is well established in Old Testament

⁵⁶² Brown holds that this phrase reflects the background of *sēper tōl^e dōt* (Heb.) in Genesis 5:1; cf. *The Birth of the Messiah*, 59.

⁵⁶³ Brown, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 174.

⁵⁶⁴ The reversing of the chronological order of David and Abraham forms an *inclusio* with 1:17 that indicates the totality of Israel's history is being organized around these two central figures. See Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 59.

⁵⁶⁵ There is even the possibility that Matthew has employed gematria in his use of 3 sets of "fourteen" in the genealogy (1:17), which is also the value of David's name in Hebrew. See Davies, "The Jewish Sources of Matthew's Messianism," 499; John Mark Jones, "Subverting the Textuality of Davidic Messianism: Matthew's Presentation of the Genealogy and the Davidic Title," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 56 (1994), 259. At the very least, the division into three sections serves to highlight the key events in Israel's history up to the point of Jesus' arrival.

messianic expectation and finds its origins in the Davidic covenant of II Sam. 7:13-16. This is reinforced by the description of Joseph as “son of David” (1:20) and the birth in Bethlehem (2:1, 6, 8, 16) where the associations with Judah’s kingly line (Gen. 49:10) are further heightened by the tribute paid by the magi from the East. The divine acclamation of Jesus in Matthew’s account of his baptism (3:17) further intensifies Jesus’ identity as the anointed Messiah-King from the line of David.⁵⁶⁶

The title “Son of David” appears more frequently in Matthew than in the other two synoptic gospels combined (with Mark mentioning it three times, while Luke has none)⁵⁶⁷ and in subsequent use appears to link Jesus to the traditions associated with Solomon, who in Josephus and other texts of Judaism is known for healings and exorcisms.⁵⁶⁸ The use of the title serves to delineate those who use it to recognize Jesus as Messiah --- often the sick and vulnerable among the crowds, as well as children (21:15) -- while the Pharisees and other religious leaders express doubt and even hostile intent towards Jesus (9:34; 12:14; 21:15-17, 23).⁵⁶⁹ In the use of this title, Matthew’s presentation of Jesus makes acceptance of Jesus’ messianic status (something Jesus never explicitly claims,

⁵⁶⁶ The words of God at the baptism are drawn from Ps. 2:7 and Is. 42:1, linking the royal Davidic coronation themes with that of the anointed servant of Yahweh. See Jack Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 50-51.

⁵⁶⁷ Davies, “The Jewish Sources of Matthew’s Messianism,” 500.

⁵⁶⁸ Matt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20: 30-31. Davies cites Josephus, *Ant.* 8: 45-49 in “The Jewish Sources of Matthew’s Messianism,” 500; Edward P. Meadors also cites Wis. 7:17, 20, Ps. Philo LAB 63 and 11QPs 27. See “The ‘Messianic’ Implications of the Q Material,” 263. David himself was also able to send out evil spirits from Saul (I Sam. 16:23; 18:10-11).

⁵⁶⁹ Christopher Rowland, “Christ in the New Testament,” in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East*, ed. John Day, 477.

though he does allude to it)⁵⁷⁰ part of what a disciple of Jesus believes, in contrast with what the opponents of his community hold.

The genealogy of the son of David in Matthew includes 5 women, several of whom (Tamar of Canaan, Rahab of Jericho, Ruth of Moab, and possibly Bathsheba the wife of Uriah the Hittite) are Gentile.⁵⁷¹ Moreover, the birth of Jesus by a direct act of the Holy Spirit makes his Davidic lineage unlike that of any other who ever claimed this distinction. This direct divine intervention is evident in the linking of Jesus' birth to a synopsis of all of Israel's history as its completion and fulfillment, in the frequency of angelic appearances to Joseph (1:20; 2:13, 19) and even in the rhetorical devices used to highlight the exceptionality of the child being born.⁵⁷² These divine actions signal the eschatological quality of the events being described. While the first set of fourteen generations ends with David, the second set terminates with the exile to Babylon. These two epochal events summarize in brief the first-century predicament of Israel, which is at present under Roman rule, still in an exile⁵⁷³ which happened (according to the prophets and the historical narratives of the Hebrew Scriptures) as punishment for the sins committed against Yahweh. With the arrival of Jesus, all of that will now change.⁵⁷⁴ One example of Matthew's attention to this can be seen in the way Jesus' initial ministry in Galilee is described as the restoration of Israel, beginning with the lost ten tribes of the

⁵⁷⁰ In Mark's gospel, Jesus goes further and seems to discourage this conclusion, leading much recent scholarship to speak of a "messianic secret." It seems more likely that Jesus was following common Jewish understanding that the identity of the messiah was known only to God. See 4 Ezra 12: 32, which, while later, seems to voice a traditional view.

Northern kingdom, to whom Jesus will now offer the message of the kingdom of heaven.⁵⁷⁵

While the genealogy presents Jesus as the expected Davidic deliverer,⁵⁷⁶ it is also clear that Matthew presents Jesus in Davidic messianic terms, a designation his opponents disputed.⁵⁷⁷ Here both the encounter with the

⁵⁷¹ The connection between these 4 women and Mary is debated. See Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, 70-74; John Mark Jones, "Subverting the Textuality of Davidic Messianism, 259; Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 78-79. It would appear that they are linked perhaps most clearly through the way God providentially intervenes in their lives despite unusual circumstances; their shared Gentile background might also imply that ordinarily they would be considered "suspect" in Jewish eyes.

⁵⁷² Jones, "Genealogy and Davidic Title in Matthew," 263.

⁵⁷³ For a recent study which investigates the historical circumstances and sociological consequences of the Babylonian exile see Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Overtures to Biblical Theology; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 75-104. Smith-Christopher sees strong links between the circumstances of exile and the emergence of the wisdom tradition in works such as Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Daniel and Wisdom of Solomon. In each case, wisdom is a requisite quality for those who would remain faithful to Yahweh in circumstances of political subordination and vulnerability.

⁵⁷⁴ Matt. 1:17. One writer who has developed the larger underlying narrative of Israel against which the Gospels should be read is N.T. Wright in *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992) 157-166; 299. He concludes (386) "...most Jews of the second-temple period regarded themselves as still in exile, still suffering the results of Israel's age-old sin. Until the great day of redemption dawned, Israel was still 'in her sins', still in need of rescue. The genealogy then says to Matthew's careful reader that the long history of Abraham's people will come to its fulfillment, its seventh seven, with a new David, who will rescue his people from their exile, that is, 'save his people from their sins'. When Matthew says precisely this in 1.18-21 we should not be surprised." See also *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 428-29.

⁵⁷⁵ For the background to this question, see John Mauchline's article "Implicit Signs of a Persistent Belief in the Davidic Empire" *VT* 20 (1970) 287-303. He pays special attention to the importance of Isaiah 8:23-9:1, which Matthew cites as being fulfilled by the fact that Jesus makes his home in Capernaum in 4:15-16. See also Nolan, *The Royal Son of God*, (Gottingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1979), 174-175.

⁵⁷⁶ See Cyrus Gordon, "Paternity at Two Levels," *JBL* 96 (1977), 101.

⁵⁷⁷ For discussion of this theme, see Jones, "Genealogy and Davidic Title in Matthew," 268. See also Dennis Duling, "The Therapeutic Son of David: An Element in Matthew's Christological Apologetic," *NTS* 24 (1978), 392-410. Jones follows Duling in using the somewhat anachronistic phrase "therapeutic Son of David." Further, his own contention that the title "Son of David" is always surrounded by a negative atmosphere overstates the matter, since it is the resistance of Jesus' opponents that causes the tension, while many in the crowds employ the title genuinely;

disciples of John the Baptist (11:2-5) and the conversation with the Pharisees (22:42-45) are significant examples. In the first instance, John's question about whether Jesus is the "one to come" is answered with an allusion to Isaiah's prophecies to explain the character of his messianic mission.⁵⁷⁸

In the second instance, Matthew develops the discussion over Psalm 110:1 more fully than Mark to emphasize that David's son is undoubtedly also the Son of God.⁵⁷⁹ Though this verse is often found in New Testament texts to describe the heavenly enthronement of Christ,⁵⁸⁰ Psalm 110:1 was not itself widely read as messianic in pre-Christian times.⁵⁸¹ Here, however, a messianic reading is assumed, at the conclusion of a succession of incidents where Jesus has been recognized as the Son of David by the populace of Jerusalem, to the chagrin of his opponents.⁵⁸² In addition to the use of this title in Matthew, Jesus'

Matt. 20:29-33; 21:9-11, 14-17. Nevertheless, the essay does correctly recognize the way in which some of the traditions surrounding "son of David" are subtly reinterpreted in Matthew.

⁵⁷⁸ Is. 29:18,19; 61:1 and 35:5,6.

⁵⁷⁹ Matt. 22:41-46. For explanation, see D.H. Juel, "The Origin of Mark's Christology," in *The Messiah*, ed. James H. Charlesworth, 453-455, who sees Jesus employing a common rabbinical tactic of creating a Scriptural contradiction to score a point with an opponent. Juel cites E. Lövestam's comments in "Die Davidssohnsfrage," *SEÅ* 27 (1962) 72-82. He points out that "...the implied solution to the problem Jesus has posed -- a possible contradiction within the Scriptures—is provided by events the readers know will soon follow. Jesus, the son of David, rejected by the temple authorities, will be raised from the dead and enthroned at God's right hand. In fact, only if Jesus, the Son of David, has been elevated to that position does the alleged Scriptural contradiction disappear." Cf. Juel, "The Origin of Mark's Christology," 455.

⁵⁸⁰ Acts 2:34; I Cor 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1. See Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 223-225.

⁵⁸¹ Schnackenburg, *Matthew*, 224; Wright, *Victory of God*, 508, n. 116. But see also Richard Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic Period* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975), 73 n. 57, who suggests that rabbinic silence on this text regarding the messiah until about the middle of the 3rd century A.D. may have been a reaction to its dominance in Christian circles.

⁵⁸² The two blind men (20:30-31); the crowds in the triumphal entry (21:9); the children in the temple, in response to Jesus' healings in the temple (21:14-16).

own actions in the Jerusalem temple are vital to the development of his role and purpose as Messiah and his claim of divine prerogatives: challenging the money traders, healing the blind and lame,⁵⁸³ and teaching with an authority that clearly goes beyond what the chief priests and elders are willing to acknowledge.⁵⁸⁴

The opposition to Jesus' Davidic claims is already foreshadowed in the conflict over the disciples' plucking grain from the fields and eating it on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1-14), where Jesus' own allusion to David's actions acts on two levels to implicitly validate his own claims and critique his opponents.⁵⁸⁵ Clearly Jesus is here paralleling himself and his disciples to "David and his companions" (12:3) who ate the bread of the presence with the permission of Ahimelech at Nob. More subtly, however, and perhaps more importantly as well, his selection of this story is taken from an episode where David, despite being Yahweh's anointed king and popular with the people⁵⁸⁶ is under threat of death by the official king, Saul. But by now Yahweh has rejected Saul for his disobedience and, jealous of his influence and divine blessing, Saul is intent on murdering David. The parallels with the covert intentions of the chief priests and Pharisees to secretly arrest and kill Jesus (12:14) which conclude this pericope can hardly be missed here or somewhat later in the Gospel, when reference to

⁵⁸³ A surprising action in view of Lev. 21:16-20, as Dennis C. Duling notes. The events of 2 Sam. 5:8 may also be part of the background. See "Matthew's Plurisignificant Son of David," *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 22.3 (1992), 112. See also Kim Paffenroth, "Jesus as Anointed and Healing Son of David," *Biblica* 80 (1999), 553.

⁵⁸⁴ For a full discussion of the implications of Jesus' actions, see Wright, *Victory of God*, 405-432.

⁵⁸⁵ I Sam. 21:1-6.

⁵⁸⁶ I Sam. 18:6-9; I Sam. 21:10-11.

the plotting leaders is again made after the parable of the wicked tenants which concludes Matthew 21. Jesus, like David, is God's rightful anointed but targeted by the Jewish leaders (Israel's official leaders) who, like Saul, are jealous of his popular exploits and intent on killing him nevertheless.

Yet Jesus is more than a "new David." Jesus' cryptic question makes it clear that son of David --while an accurate designation as far as it goes -- is only an adequate title if it is understood in terms of his own unique claims and actions as Messiah, and indeed by implication, as Son of God.⁵⁸⁷ This designation is both directly⁵⁸⁸ and indirectly alluded to in a variety of ways in the Gospel. The phrase can traced to the royal kinship language of II Samuel 7:14 and Ps. 2:2 and is closely connected with David as the exemplary king, on intimate terms with Yahweh, as well as the recipient of the dynastic covenant promise to his successor, who would be known as Yahweh's son. Further development of this "son of God" theme takes place in a tradition of depictions where the righteous and faithful Jew trusts in God for help and vindication.⁵⁸⁹ In application to Jesus, it accents his fidelity as the obedient son of Israel's God.

⁵⁸⁷ With regards to Matthew's use of Son of David, see Paffenroth, "Jesus as Anointed and Healing Son of David," 553. "In all of this Matthew does not overturn or reject the title Son of David for Jesus: in light of the first verse of Matthew's Gospel, it would seem to be an incredible claim to say that he does. Matthew embraces the title, than expands its implications to include the compassionate power shown in Jesus' healings. It is not that Matthew shows Jesus to be more than the Son of David, but instead that Matthew shows Jesus to be the Son of David who is more than David." One can refer here also to Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 532-533 who points out that outright rejection of the Davidic title would have been unthinkable, and notes that Matthew expands Mark's dialogue in order to emphasize Jesus' role as part of his presentation of Jesus as an authoritative teacher and rabbi. See also Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish Christian Community*, 170.

⁵⁸⁸ As Saldarini points out (citing Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975]) close to half of Matthew's uses of the term occur in redaction of Mark; cf. *Matthew's Jewish Christian Community*, 286, n. 27.

Brian Nolan's study has drawn important attention to this other aspect of the "Son of David" which deals with David the man as an exemplar of personal faith and devotion to Yahweh.⁵⁹⁰ Arguing for the existence of what amounted to a hagiography surrounding David in Second Temple Jewish literature, he has shown that in first-century Judaism, the figure of David was regarded as "not only a model of piety and fidelity to the Lord who loved him, but the man who spoke in the Spirit of the ways of God to man."⁵⁹¹ Along similar lines, a more recent study by Gary Knoppers has argued that writers such as the author of Chronicles were interested in David not just as idealized royal hero, but also an ordinary figure of piety who modeled repentance, confession and intercession throughout his life.⁵⁹² Such traditions were doubtless well known in Jesus' day.

Matthew's use of Son of David thus clearly suggests a royal messianic status⁵⁹³ but also leads the reader to notice that like David, Jesus is obedient, faithful and on intimate terms with the divine Father.⁵⁹⁴ This complex combination

⁵⁸⁹ Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish Christian Community*, 172-177.

⁵⁹⁰ Nolan, *The Royal Son of God*, 159-169.

⁵⁹¹ Nolan, *The Royal Son of God*, 169. Evidence includes 2 Samuel 22, Sirach 47:1-22, Wisdom of Solomon 7-9, the Qumran Psalms Scroll 11QPs, Psalm 151, and references in Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* and Josephus.

⁵⁹² Gary N. Knoppers, "Images of David in Early Judaism: David as Repentant Sinner in Chronicles," *Biblica* 76.4 (1996), 449-470.

⁵⁹³ See Nolan, *The Royal Son of God*, 224 ff. Nolan argues that the Davidic covenant is central for Matthew's understanding of the royal dimension of "Son of God."

⁵⁹⁴ Commenting on this close relationship between Son of David and Son of God, Saldarini writes: "The author of Matthew drew upon this rich and varied tradition when he stressed God the Father in the birth narrative. At the same time, he brought a variety of roles, titles and scriptural passages to bear on Jesus in order to establish him firmly within the biblical world and further mark him out as a special figure in Israel. Since David was king, anointed one, and son of God, Jesus is present as the Son of David, born in Bethlehem, David's ancestral home. ...Jesus is also presented as the just, wise, and faithful son of God who is persecuted by evil and and

of ascriptions for Jesus suggests that he was chosen to carry out a unique and unprecedented role. There are hints of this as early as the birth announcement to Joseph; Mary's son, deliverer of Israel, is actually one who will "save his people from their sins,"⁵⁹⁵ sins which were -- according to the prophets, at least -- the deeper reason for the exile all along (Deut. 28:36; Jer. 5:14-19; Amos 7). Jesus' coming as Son of David is thus linked to the central events of Israel's history as a nation which found its beginnings in the Mosaic covenant, and before that in the call of Abraham.

Son of Abraham

Davies suggests that the inclusion of Abraham in the genealogy has a dual function. On the one hand it heightens Jesus' Jewish ancestry, and reminds his readers of the ancestral covenant with Abraham from which their people originated. The covenant was often closely associated with the Davidic covenant, and together these two covenants encapsulate Yahweh's special choice of his people throughout their history.⁵⁹⁶ On the other hand, Abraham also represents the inclusiveness and universality of the Old Testament hope. Through him (in actuality the first Gentile convert), "all the families of the earth would be blessed" (Gen. 12:3, 18:18, NRSV), a promise that finds resonance in

powerful opponents. Jesus' persecution by the authorities both in the birth narrative and at the end of the gospel parallels the hostility shown the just man in Wisdom of Solomon, chapters 2-5. He faithfully observes God's law and teaches it authoritatively. He is given power over diseases and demons. In conflicts with the leaders of Israel, he shows himself superior because he has wisdom from God." Cf. *Matthew's Jewish Christian Community*, 176-77.

⁵⁹⁵ Matt. 1:21. See Jack Kingsbury, "The Birth Narrative of Matthew," in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 154-165.

⁵⁹⁶ Davies, "The Jewish Sources of Jesus' Messianism," 502.

the closing verses of Matthew, where his followers are charged to “make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28:19).⁵⁹⁷ Taken together with the mention of the four Gentile women in the genealogy, the arrival of the magi from the East at the house to worship (Matt. 2:1-12),⁵⁹⁸ the faith of the centurion (Matt. 8:5-13; cf. also 12:21) and the recognition of the centurion at the cross (Matt. 27:54), the expression “son of Abraham” accents the intent of Matthew to show that Jesus comes for Israel but for the rest of the nations as well.⁵⁹⁹

A New Moses

Within a larger Davidic atmosphere, other Old Testament figures too play a part in Matthew’s messianic portrayal. While the first and arguably the greatest prophet of Israel (Deut. 34:10-12) is of course absent from the genealogy because of his Levitic ancestry, hints that the figure of Moses is important to Matthew’s interpretation are not difficult to find.⁶⁰⁰ Matthew’s infancy narrative is

⁵⁹⁷ The universality of Abraham and the Abrahamic covenant was evident in elsewhere in Judaism (cf. Sirach 44:19-23) and is not lost on Paul, who refers to him as the father of all believers in debates with his more conservative Jewish counterparts (Rom. 4:1-25; Gal. 3:6-29).

⁵⁹⁸ Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 190ff., who notes the parallels with the Balaam story of Numbers 24. Nolan (*The Royal Son of God*, 206-209) adds the possibility of a number of parallels in Matt. 2:10-11 with the story of Hezekiah in Isaiah 39:1-2 but this seems less obvious.

⁵⁹⁹ Davies, “The Jewish Sources of Jesus’ Messianism,” 503. See also Nolan (*The Royal Son of God*, 203) whose comments recall Clements’ attempt to relate the Abrahamic and Davidic covenant by the Deuteronomist. In Matthew’s case, a similar integration may well be happening: “Rather than hold that for Matthew the sonship of David is relativized by being part of an arc stretching from Abraham to Christ, it would be more consonant with the evangelist’s outlook to state that the hope of the Gentiles is realized by the worldwide kingdom of the Son of David anticipated in Genesis 49:10; Psalms 2:8; 89:24-29, 110:6. The Abrahamic sonship is absorbed into the covenant sonship of David.”

⁶⁰⁰ For a detailed and comprehensive study of Matthew’s parallels between Moses and Jesus, see Dale C. Allison’s *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.) Allison notes that while Matthew assumes Jesus’ superiority over Moses, his careful use of the Moses

suggestive of several parallels, including a narrow escape, a murdering king who kills baby boys and a journey into Egypt.⁶⁰¹

This Moses motif is extended to include Jesus' retracing of some of Israel's experiences as a nation, when, following the return from Egypt, Jesus passes through the waters of the Jordan River at his baptism and his ordeal in the wilderness is presented in terms of Deuteronomy 6-8.⁶⁰² In his portrayal of Jesus, teaching his people in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) Matthew not only mentions Jesus seated to give instruction, as any good Jewish teacher would be (Matt. 5:1), but does so in language that expressly indicates his awareness of a long tradition of Jewish exegesis suggestive of several other parallels with Moses.⁶⁰³ In Matthew 11:25-30, Jesus' words about his close relationship with the Father evoke Ex. 33:11-13, and the often quoted offer of "the rest" of an easier yoke can be found there as well (Ex. 13:14.) While the exact relationship of Jesus' teaching in the "sermon on the mount" to that given by Moses in the Sinai laws is widely disputed,⁶⁰⁴ Matthew concludes the sermon

typology is meant, among other things, to portray the continuity between Moses (Judaism's personification of authority) and Jesus and by so doing, to "drape the Messiah in the familiar mantle of Moses, by which dress he made Jesus the full bearer of God's authority" (277).

⁶⁰¹ Brown, *Birth of the Messiah*, 214-219; Wright, *The New Testament*, 386-388.

⁶⁰² In Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus' replies to the tempter are taken from Deut. 8:3, 6:16 and 6:13 respectively. Also, like Moses on Mt. Sinai, who fasts for 40 days and nights, Jesus does the same; cf. Dt. 9:9, and Davies, "The Jewish Sources of Jesus' Messianism," 505.

⁶⁰³ "He went up the mountain" (Gr. *Anebe eis to oros*) is a common phrase in the LXX Pentateuch which usually describes Moses, and similarly with "when he had gone down from the mountain" in Matt. 8:1. See Davies, "The Jewish Sources of Jesus' Messianism," 505-06; cf. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 164 for a list of scholars who see Jesus as reenacting Moses' reception of the law on Sinai.

⁶⁰⁴ Keener notes 8 specific positions taken by scholars, and suggests there may close to 30 others; *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 160-62. The placing of the discourse on a mountain by Matthew (cf. Luke 6:17, "He came down with them and stood on a level place...")

with the comment that the crowds are amazed by Jesus' authority which is unlike that of the scribes. There is no further explanation given, but several chapters later Matthew returns to the figure of a "New Moses" to explain that Jesus' teaching emerges from Jesus' unique relationship with his Father, who has the power to reveal and conceal wisdom in surprising ways.⁶⁰⁵

While it is possible to isolate each of these four strands of Matthew's messianism so that it is discernible in its own way, in the gospel itself they are intertwined and evoked in a rich variety of ways that are much more subtle. Further, none of these strands encompasses Jesus' messianic status fully. In the case of David, Abraham and Moses, the Old Testament figure provides an important lens through which to view Jesus as Messiah, yet Jesus' status transcends each one. The "son of David" has come, argues Matthew, yet someone greater than Solomon⁶⁰⁶ and something greater than the Temple is

has been read as either a parallel with Mt. Zion or Sinai, but the strength of the Moses figure in these chapters appears to favour the latter reading. See Davies, "The Jewish Sources of Matthew's Messianism," 505, for a discussion of the evidence.

⁶⁰⁵While Sirach 51:23-27, with its reference to the yoke of wisdom may be in the background here, there is even more prominently a comment on the "yoke" of the Torah (as it was referred to in Judaism) and a comparison to how it was being taught by the scribes (23:4). Jesus here presents a yoke of his own, which -- like the law of Moses first given, is a source of blessing and gladness for those who keep it. Cf. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 110-11. The issue of the relationship between the Mosaic and Davidic covenants is the background here. In connection with the Davidic covenant, Nolan traces the development Old Testament royal theology in which the king as Son of God is closely associated with the temple and wisdom, a triad which he argues a very viable and active part of first century Judaism and forms the almost mystical background against which Matthew's portrayal of Jesus is intelligible; see *The Royal Son of God*, 224-232.

⁶⁰⁶ Matt. 12:42. See Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 535. Edward P. Meadors has argued that this statement, like a great deal of other Jesus' spoken words in the hypothetical "Q" material, bears a definite messianic stamp. Taking these together with other "Q" titles and themes, he proposes the intriguing thesis that the blend of wisdom, prophetic language, eschatology and apocalyptic which we find in "Q" texts are consistent with what we should expect from material that originates with a figure such as Jesus. He thus challenges recent attempts to stratify Q on

now here.⁶⁰⁷ This implicit eschatology is consistent with Matthew's larger fulfillment scheme, in which he presents Jesus as the culmination of Israel's history, his words and deeds as the completion of Old Testament prophecy, and his audience as witnesses to a climactic and decisive moment in Jewish and ultimately, human history.⁶⁰⁸

The Development of Christology in Matthew's Passion Narrative

A number of scholars have examined particular aspects of Matthew's portrayal of Jesus, focusing on details of the use of Old Testament motifs, messianism and Christology.⁶⁰⁹ Each of these studies has contributed new insight into the complexity and subtlety of Matthew's intentional and careful portrayal of Jesus as grounded in patterns and typologies of early Judaism. Other scholars have examined the eventual crisis in Jesus' ministry when his words and actions were judged by Jewish authorities to be a threat, a crisis which culminated in his arrest and death.⁶¹⁰ In light of Matthew's concern to show

the basis of these various categories. See his article, "The 'Messianic' Implications of the Q Material."

⁶⁰⁷ Cf. 12:6, a statement which is unique to Matthew.

⁶⁰⁸ See Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 368, n. 90; Kingsbury, "The Birth Narrative," 165.

⁶⁰⁹ Brian M. Nolan, *The Royal Son of God*; Donald Verseput, *The Rejection of the Humble Messianic King* (New York: Peter Lang, 1986); John Paul Heil, *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus: A Narrative Critical Reading of Matthew 26-28* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel*. (JSNT Sup; Sheffield, Sheffield Academic Press, 1993).

⁶¹⁰ This problem goes back at least as far as Albert Schweitzer's study *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, but was subsequently moved to the background in many studies, that focused more on the formation of the gospel traditions and their discontinuity with history. Fortunately, as Ben Witherington has suggested, the significance of Jesus' death is reemerging as a significant focus for scholars attempting to make sense of Jesus intentions and aims; see his comments in *The Jesus Quest* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1990), 249ff. See E.P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*

that Jesus' words and deeds fulfilled Jewish expectation for a messianic deliverer⁶¹¹ --however diverse and complex that expectation may have been— one issue requires particular study. This concerns the way in which the messianism of Matthew's gospel attempts to integrate Jesus' status as a royal messiah of Davidic origin with the harsh events of his rejection by his own people and the ordeal of his eventual suffering and death.⁶¹²

Matthew's Reinterpretation of Davidic Messianism

While it has been suggested that Matthew begins his gospel with a traditional form of Davidic messianism but ultimately rejects it in favour of a more

(Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) which has returned attention to the issue of Jesus' death and attempts to find the continuity between his teaching, his actions such as the temple cleansing, his death and the early church. R.E. Brown's *The Death of the Messiah* (ABRL; New York: Doubleday, 1993) has provided a detailed commentary on the passion narratives in the four gospels and their interrelationship. The question of Jesus' death is also one of the five central questions posed by N.T. Wright's attempt at a historical reconstruction of Jesus' ministry in *Jesus and the Victory of God*, (83-124).

⁶¹¹ Citing Davies and Allison as representative of the scholarly consensus, Donald Senior writes, "The conviction that Jesus is the Messiah is the conceptual foundation of Matthew's Gospel and explains much of the Gospel's characteristic content. The liberal use of the Old Testament, and fulfillment quotations, the profusion of traditional titles applied to Jesus, the emphasis on his miracles, and the dominant role of the Sermon on the Mount within the structure and theology of Matthew—all are based on Matthew's overriding belief that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God. It is important to note, however, that the Matthean Jesus redefines and enlarges traditional messianic expectations." Cf. his "Directions in Matthean Studies" in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study*, 15-16. Allison himself, however, is less certain that a single, central theme lies at the heart of Matthew's intentions, and suggests that the something like a restatement of "the Pauline kerygma" is one of several foundational themes: "Christ died and rose according to the Scriptures." See his "Anticipating the Literary Reach of Matthew's Passion Narrative," *CBQ* 56 (1994): 714.

⁶¹² Allison has convincingly shown that the Passion narrative is anticipated in numerous ways by Matthew's intentional use of particular language and expressions earlier in the Gospel. These phrases both echo important motifs from the LXX and will also find a resonance in the actions and experiences of Jesus in his final hours before his death. He concludes that the passion narrative (roughly chapters 26-27) is the culmination of narrative found in the previous chapters of the first Gospel. He cites as examples: the echoes of Isaiah 50:4-9 in Matt. 5:38-42, 26:67 and 27:30; the ordeal of the first missionaries in Matt. 10:17;23 and its echoes in Jesus' passion; and also the structural parallels between the transfiguration account and the crucifixion account. For further development, see his essay "Anticipating the Literary Reach of Matthew's Passion Narrative," 701-714.

“therapeutic” revision of messianic ideology,⁶¹³ it appears probable, given the central place that Jesus’ Davidic credentials are given from the very beginning, that Matthew is doing something much more subtle. Matthew’s gospel accomplishes this in two ways. While recasting messianic hopes without rejecting Davidic messianism – a central component in biblical expectation for Israel’s deliverance-- Matthew links his story with the larger history of Israel. At the same time, by relating messianism to the traditional portrayal of David in a new way, Matthew challenges widespread messianic expectations for a political deliverer while broadening the royal, Davidic and thoroughly Jewish antecedents of this messianic expectation. Matthew accomplishes this by portraying Jesus’ messianic work through the inclusion of materials not usually seen as messianic at the time and the reinterpretation of other texts that were read messianically.

Matthew’s innovative view of messianism is not without parallels. The portrait of *Psalms of Solomon* 17 is often pressed into service as the classic construal of militant Davidic messianism of the kind quite alien to Jesus’ mission.⁶¹⁴ This claim can be maintained with respect to Matthew’s gospel if it refers to the means by which Jesus would inaugurate his kingdom, as the tone of Matthew 5-7 clearly bear out.⁶¹⁵ But in *Psalms of Solomon* 17, the traditional

⁶¹³ This is essentially the conclusion of Jones, “Subverting the Textuality of Davidic Messianism,” 268-270. Jones proposes that all references to Jesus as “Son of David” in Matthew are imbued with a negative atmosphere that are in inherent tension with Jesus’ real goals as “Child of God”.

⁶¹⁴ See Collins, *The Scepter and the Star* (53-55) with reference to Ps. Sol. 17:21-25.

⁶¹⁵ In Matthew’s explication of the standard of righteousness Jesus is calling is his disciples to uphold, it is clear the kingdom will not be won by military force to overthrow Roman occupational troops, as the reference to the common practice of soldiers asking Jews to carry their pack while on marches makes clear (Matt. 5:41). Yet Jesus clearly makes claims that have direct and

royal rhetoric⁶¹⁶ of one who would “smash the arrogance of sinners like a potter’s vessel” and destroy the nations by “the word of his mouth” and sinners “with a rod of iron” is closely connected to even more prominent themes of a righteous leader who will purify Jerusalem, restore Israel to obedience and draw the attention of the world’s peoples to the glory of Israel’s God, which is the end goal to which this Davidic deliverer will work.⁶¹⁷ Whatever military associations are in mind here, the biblical critique of the fallen Davidic dynasty of history is in evidence: this messiah will avoid the trappings of Near Eastern kingship and its reliance on brute force.⁶¹⁸ Here even in the *locus classicus* of a supposed “militant” Davidic expectation as elsewhere, the biblical materials alongside other texts of Judaism saw political leadership, moral integrity and spiritual authority as inseparable in describing royal leadership. These kinds of complex messianic concerns are visible in Matthew as well.

Craig Broyles has recently argued that the impact of Psalm 72 on the messianic tradition has been greater than often thought.⁶¹⁹ Unlike other royal Psalms, it is not quoted directly in the New Testament, probably because its

possibly threatening political implications, as his treatment during the Roman trial and the sign on the cross make clear (Matt. 27:11, 29, 37, 42).

⁶¹⁶ The language is likely a conflation of Isaiah 11:4 LXX with Ps. 2:9; cf. here Kenneth Atkinson, *An Intertextual Study of The Psalms of Solomon*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity Vol. 49 (Queenston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2001), 345-349. It appears the writing of enemies’ names on clay pots and the symbolic smashing of this pottery was common practice in both Assyrian and Egyptian investitures; see Walton, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament*, 519.

⁶¹⁷ Ps. Sol. 17:30-31.

⁶¹⁸ Ps. Sol. 17:33.

⁶¹⁹ “Psalm 72’s Contribution to the Messianic Ideal” in *Eschatology, Messianism and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Peter Flint (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 24-25.

intercessory language is more difficult to quote directly than the first person oracular contexts of Psalm 2 and 110, and early Christian texts appear to favour both of these for precisely that reason. What is especially striking about Psalm 72 and its portrayal of Israel's king is the way it links royal status with the kind of righteous rule that defends the poor and upholds justice for the afflicted with consequences of enduring rule and the blessing of all nations.⁶²⁰ Its impact on Isaiah 9:6-7 and *Psalms of Solomon* 17 (with their emphasis on the righteousness and peace associated with the Davidic messiah), and Zechariah 9:9-10 (where Ps. 72 is alluded to indirectly, as well as quoted verbatim) is clear enough. All of this suggests that there was available in Judaism a well developed tradition of a Davidic messiah which was not defined by mere political or military power (though divine force might be needed to deal with violent opponents) but by his role "as the agent of God's just and righteous rule, particularly on behalf of society's helpless."⁶²¹ While it is difficult to know whether he was aware of this tradition, Matthew apparently did understand Psalm 72 as applying to the character of Jesus royal status.⁶²² Though his only two direct allusions to it occur in his nativity narrative, his use of Isaiah 53:4 in 8:17 and his comment about Jesus' compassion for the crowds reinforce such a conclusion. His presentation of an alternative messianic agenda to that of

⁶²⁰ Broyles, "Psalm 72's Contribution," 34-39.

⁶²¹ Broyles, "Psalm 72's Contribution," 39.

⁶²² According to the *Greek New Testament (3rd Edition* [ed. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, et al] Westphalia: United Bible Societies, 1983), 905, two of the four NT allusions to Psalm 72 are found in Matthew 2:11.

popular expectation proceeds along a path that runs parallel to an emerging messianic tradition shaped by Psalm 72.⁶²³

As a recent essay by Craig Evans has argued, acclamation with a Davidic messianic title within the politically and theologically charged climate of the first-century Jewish world could have volatile consequences, since immediate political conclusions were often commonly drawn from this kind of status.⁶²⁴ Yet as his study of Qumran texts also goes on to show, there were a range of ways in which the Davidic tradition was appropriated in early Judaism of this era.⁶²⁵ Overlapping with references to the Davidic covenant and dynastic traditions which have been discussed earlier, one can also locate descriptions of the virtues of David the common man, including his trust in God and repudiation of evil⁶²⁶ (alluding to Ps. 26:1, though the theme appears throughout the Psalter⁶²⁷)

⁶²³ This close connection between royal Davidic messianism and Jesus' mission to deliver the poor, afflicted and oppressed within Israel is also the focus of Versepunt's study of Matthew 11-12, *The Rejection of the Humble Messianic King*, and especially his conclusion on 304-305.

⁶²⁴ Craig Evans observes, "The traditional notion of the expectation of a militant messiah who, like David of old, would lead Israel to a military victory over her enemies, especially the Romans, seems well established. It could be for this reason that Jesus does not exploit the Davidic element in his understanding of messianism. Although known as the son of David (cf. Mark 10:46, 47; Rom 1:3) – a datum not likely invented by the early Church, but grounded in a genealogical fact...Jesus makes little of it. The only reference to it (in Mark 12:35-37) is to challenge a point of scribal interpretation. Jesus seems concerned to claim that he is no mere 'son of David.' His consistent appeal to the mysterious human figure of Daniel 7 (the 'son of man') reflects in part his avoidance of Davidism—at least popular versions of it." Cf. "David in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *The Scrolls and the Scriptures: Qumran Fifty Years After*, JSP Sup Series 26; Stanley E. Porter and Craig A. Evans, eds. (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), 195. While Jesus does not exploit the Davidic title, he does acknowledge its validity, as Matthew also does even more strongly. In contrast to some popular expectation, Matthew is offering an alternate conception of Davidic messianism which emphasizes the humility and righteousness of the coming kingly ruler.

⁶²⁵ Evans, "David in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 183-197.

⁶²⁶ 1QM 11:1-2.

⁶²⁷ See for e.g., Ps.13:5, 17:2, 18:20, 20:6, 22:19, 23:5, 25:2, 27:13, 28:7, etc.)

as well as his acts of kindness and mercy.⁶²⁸ The repeated emphasis in Matthew on Jesus, “Son of David” as a prophet,⁶²⁹ healer and exorcist⁶³⁰ seen against this background, in no way detracts from Jesus as Davidic messiah. Davidic messianism appears to have been flexible and nuanced enough to incorporate a variety of aspects.⁶³¹ When the larger context of Yahweh’s ongoing history with Israel is kept in mind (a context which Matthew briefly summarizes in his genealogy) it appears that Matthew’s gospel is intent on developing a reinterpretation of the messianic traditions as part of his portrayal of Jesus. Confronted with the resurrection event, he now views the teachings, actions and impact of Jesus’ ministry as eschatologically significant. The work of Jesus provides him with the hermeneutical key to understanding both Israel’s scriptures and the life of Israel as a nation from its beginnings to the exile and return. His gospel is first and foremost the telling of the story of how this took place and what it means for his community.⁶³² It is within this story that his own portrayal of Jesus’ messianic character is given its particular character. The

⁶²⁸ Evans, “David in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 188-89. See also Nolan, *The Royal Son of God*, 160-169, for a description of the hagiography which came to surround the figure of David in Judaism

⁶²⁹ Matt. 11:9; 13:57.

⁶³⁰ Cf. 11QPs^a 27:10-11; Matt. 8:28-34; 9:27-34; 12:22-23. Though in Matthew’s overall redaction of Mark, he appears to minimize exorcisms and emphasize Jesus as a healer and teacher. See Kim Paffenroth’s article, “Jesus as Anointed and Healing Son of David,” 548-551.

⁶³¹ Wright also argues that Jesus saw himself as both a prophet and a messiah figure (*Jesus and the Victory of God* 472, 477-539). Like Saul before him (I Sam. 10:1-13) David on occasion also experienced some type of prophetic endowment in his speech (II Sam. 22:1,2). Prophetic and royal roles apparently were not exclusive of each other. See also Block, “My Servant David,” 32.

⁶³² Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 6. See also Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God*, 384-390; Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1986), 40.

person of Jesus and the unfolding story of Israel mutually influence each other in his account.⁶³³

Matthew's Passion Narrative: The Royal Messiah as A Suffering and Vindicated Figure

It is in Matthew's passion narrative that his own unique development of messianic Christology begins to take even more explicit shape.⁶³⁴ Matthew's account shows such a similarity to Mark's that it appears he knew Mark's account quite well and may have used Mark as a primary source.⁶³⁵ It might be tempting to simply focus on the points where Matthew modifies or appears to deliberately alter Mark's account in order to distill his particular intents. Yet this approach is at once too simplistic and too technically imprecise.⁶³⁶ Instead, a more modest goal will be set: to undertake a brief overview of how Matthew develops his passion account in relation to the messianic themes he has developed previously.⁶³⁷

⁶³³See a similar comment about the interpretation of Jesus' death in the Gospels generally by Joel B. Green, "The Death of Jesus and the Ways of God: Jesus and the Gospels on Messianic Status and Shameful Suffering," *Interpretation* 52:1 (1998), 35. Michael Knowles makes the same point about Jesus' career in a more general way in "Scripture, History, Messiah," 29.

⁶³⁴Raymond Brown's study of the Passion Narrative in Matthew begins at 26:30 and concludes at 27:66. Though he admits some arbitrariness in this division that may not necessarily conform exactly to Matthew's own intentions, this delimitation of the material this way allows for an adequate discussion of the themes under consideration here and will be followed in the present study as well. Cf. *The Death of the Messiah*, I:38-39.

⁶³⁵Assuming a form of Markan priority as the most probable explanation for the relationship between these two gospels.

⁶³⁶Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, citing Dahl, "The Passion Narrative in Matthew," in *Jesus in the Memory of the Early Church* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1976) 37-51, notes that not all the divergences evident in Matthew are theologically significant.

⁶³⁷Narrative approaches have recently become increasingly important, especially as the inadequacy of approaches that focus on titles alone has become apparent. As an approach to understanding Matthew's particular messianism, Jack Kingsbury has provided much important insight. See his *Matthew as Story*, especially 38-40.

Here specific attention will be paid to the significance of the broader background of Davidic⁶³⁸ messianism and how it plays a pivotal role in Matthew's description of Jesus' final days of suffering and vindication.

Predictions of Suffering, Gethsemane and the Arrest: Matthew 26:30-56

Matthew's passion narrative is linked to several earlier predictions of his suffering and death by means a statement which follows the eschatological discourse of 24:4-25:46: "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified." These earlier predictions closely link suffering at the hands of the chief priests, elders and scribes with Jesus' messianic identity and acclamation by Peter (16:13-23),⁶³⁹ and emphasize the humiliating betrayal of the Son of Man and his vindication (17:12, 22-23). Even more, they express Jesus' coming ordeal in terms of events in Jerusalem which would see him "handed over" to the chief priests and scribes and, later, to the Gentiles to be mocked and crucified, only to be raised on the third day (20:17-19).⁶⁴⁰

During the final communal Passover meal which Jesus ate with his followers, he announces that the bread they eat represents his body, and the

⁶³⁸ See Nolan, *The Royal Son of God* (170-185; 232) on the use of Davidic imagery throughout Matthew, and especially in the Passion account and for the importance of the larger Davidic expectation in Matthew's outlook.

⁶³⁹ Peter's recognition of Jesus as Messiah is closely tied to Jesus' status as "Son of God," a pair of terms also prominent in the birth narrative and baptism (Matt. 1:18, 1:23, 2:15, 3:17).

⁶⁴⁰ The response of Jesus to the request of the mother of Zebedee's sons indicates that for Jesus this suffering was not a contradiction of his messianic task but rather precisely how he envisioned it taking place. Jesus' kingship will be diametrically opposed to the typical *modus operandi* of the Gentile rulers at whose hands he would be killed; cf. 20:25-28.

wine symbolizes his “blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”⁶⁴¹ Following this meal, which Jesus shares with his disciples on the evening of the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples sing the appropriate hymn and go out to the Mount of Olives. There Jesus predicts their desertion, quoting Zechariah 13:7⁶⁴² concerning the striking of the shepherd⁶⁴³ and the accompanying national catastrophe described there. The larger context implies that the time of suffering at the hands of enemies will be brutal, but that God will prevail on Israel’s behalf and establish his universal kingship (Zech. 13:8-9, 14:3-9). Interestingly, all of these events are accompanied by a cleansing of the house of David and the removal of false prophets and idols from Israel (Zech. 13:13).⁶⁴⁴ The Lord’s going to battle on

⁶⁴¹ An expansion to Mark which is indicative of Matthew’s awareness of Isaiah 53:12 (“the sin of many: *polloi*, LXX) as the background for Jesus’ actions. See John T. Carroll and Joel B. Green, eds., *The Death of Jesus in Early Christianity* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 216.

⁶⁴² The exact wording alters Zechariah 13:7 slightly, since in the prophet a sword is commanded to strike the shepherd, where in Matthew and Mark, God himself strikes the shepherd. Brown raises the possibility that this quotation may have been influenced by Isaiah 53:4,10; *Death of the Messiah*, I:130. See Carroll and Green (*The Death of Jesus*, 219-220) for further discussion of the influence of Zechariah 9-14 on the synoptic passion story.

⁶⁴³ The shepherd motif is integral to one set of messianic passages which use the term in terms of a Davidic ruler who will safeguard Yahweh’s “sheep,” Israel (Ezekiel 34, esp. 20-24; 37:24). In Zechariah, it is developed initially in 11:4ff. where Yahweh himself becomes the shepherd of Israel. The chapter concludes with Yahweh raising up a “worthless” shepherd who devours, harms and ultimately deserts the flock, only to be punished by God (11:17). Zech. 13:7 may well be intended to describe punishment for this “worthless shepherd”, but both Matthew (and Mark) quote it as describing the betrayal and arrest of Jesus, the caring shepherd, whose disciples will now be left without their leader. (While Matthew --unlike John -- has no prolonged treatment of Jesus as the good shepherd, he does identify Jesus in this way in 9:36 in a brief but poignant reference, which echoes the true prophet Micaiah in I Kgs. 22:17.) Cf. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 621, 635; also Matt. 26:15, 27:9,10 where the allusion to “30 pieces of silver” going to buy a potter’s field incorporates a reference to Zech. 11:13.

⁶⁴⁴ It is also interesting to note that in Zechariah, the Mt. of Olives is often linked closely with Ezekiel 11:23 and 43:2 and their descriptions of the departure (a sign of judgement on Jerusalem’s corrupt leadership) and the return of the glory of Yahweh to vindicate the faithful within the community and restore Israel under true leadership. Zechariah 14:1-5 is an implicit

behalf of Israel against Jerusalem's enemies will happen on a day when "his feet shall stand on the Mt. of Olives" (Zech. 14:4-5, NRSV). There is little doubt that Matthew is evoking the eschatological context of these concluding chapters of Zechariah to heighten the significance of Jesus' words.⁶⁴⁵

Even more striking however, is the convergence of the geographical location of Jesus' movement from Jerusalem, across the Kidron valley to the Mt. of Olives, with a parallel episode in the life of David. Using the same verb which describes David's journey from Jerusalem⁶⁴⁶ as he goes up to the Mount of Olives for a time of distraught prayer during the revolt of Absalom and Ahithophel, his trusted advisor, Matthew sets the stage for Jesus' time of prayer and betrayal by one of his closest followers. When, in a uniquely Matthean episode, Judas hangs himself (27:15), the echoes of Ahithophel's suicide (II Sam. 17:23) are unmistakable.⁶⁴⁷ Jesus' prediction of the desertion of even

judgement of Jerusalem's disobedient elites and a message of hope which anticipated Yahweh's imminent eschatological victory. While it difficult to prove how much of this intertextual context Matthew intended to convey, the parallels between Zechariah and his community in conflict with the leaders of Israel, and between Jesus and the Jewish leaders within the gospel itself, are nevertheless intriguing. For a discussion of the Zechariah reference see the newly published dissertation of Rex Mason in *Bringing Out the Treasure*, Mark Boda and Michael H. Floyd, eds.; 177-184.

⁶⁴⁵ The background of Zechariah (especially ch. 14) is also associated with the entry into Jerusalem as portrayed by Mark. Matthew (alone among the Synoptic Gospels) seems to heighten this by quoting Zechariah 9:9 as fulfilled by this action. See the discussion of this and parallels to Greco-Roman entry processions in the article by Paul Brooks Duff, "The March of the Divine Warrior and the Advent of the Greco Roman King: Mark's Account of Jesus' Entry Into Jerusalem," *JBL* 111 (1992) 55-71.

⁶⁴⁶ Gr. *eiserchesthai*, II Sam. 15:16 LXX. This discussion is indebted to the material in Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, I:122-130.

⁶⁴⁷ Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, I:125. For further background in the events of David's life see Michael Goulder, *The Prayers of David (Psalms 51-72)* JSOT Supp Series 102 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 41-50. Goulder posits the existence of a "Passion of David" account in II Sam. 15:7 –17:29. He reads the Psalms 51-72 against the background of an annual Israelite liturgical reenactment of David's journey during Absalom's revolt as a communal ritual of

Peter provides the somber transition to Matthew's next scene, where Matthew (like Mark) places greater emphasis on Jesus' suffering in the Garden than Luke and John do.⁶⁴⁸

While in Gethsemane, Jesus confides to his disciples that he is grieved to the point of death, using words which evoke the suffering righteous figures of the Psalms.⁶⁴⁹ Jesus' prayer combines a deep awareness of what will soon take place with a pleading for the Father to allow the cup to pass from him.⁶⁵⁰

With the arrival of Judas and a large crowd, armed with swords and clubs, the ordeal of Jesus, which began with the prediction of his disciples' desertion, is intensified. Judas (now referred to simply in terms of his role as "the betrayer", 26:48) greets Jesus formally as "Rabbi," using a term Jesus had discouraged his disciples to use (Matt. 23:7-8) and which Judas nevertheless persisted in using

penitence. While this thesis has not met with wide acceptance and seems overly speculative, it does demonstrate the way in which specific events and concrete geographic places in the life of David could be evoked by allusions particular Psalms.

⁶⁴⁸See Burton H. Throckmorton, ed. *Gospel Parallels* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1992), 188. Luke 22 has no parallel for Matt. 26:37-38/Mark 14:33-34, which describes Jesus' distress and grief over what is ahead and presents Jesus as an exemplar for quiet trust who twice instructs his disciples to pray so that they not come into the time of trial. John's portrayal places emphasis on Jesus' calm foreknowledge of events and utter composure in the episode (John 18:4, 8-9, 11, 20-23, 32).

⁶⁴⁹Both Brown (*Death of the Messiah*, 154-155) and Bruce Throckmorton (*Gospel Parallels*, 188) suggest an echo with Psalm 42:5, 6 in the words of Matt. 26:38. Brown adds the possibility that Sirach 37:2 "Is it not sorrow like that for death itself, when a dear friend turns into an enemy?" may part of the allusion. He also cites Ps. 31:10-11 as a possible parallel, which is interesting with respect to Luke 23:46, where Jesus quotes Ps. 31:5, and notes such Psalms as 10, 13, 15, 22, 39 which all deal with the suffering of one who trusts Yahweh for deliverance in a time of oppression by evil.

⁶⁵⁰While the context of David's prayer during the illness of his son in II Sam. 12:16 is quite different (the consequences of his adultery with Bathsheba), there too David "lay all night on the ground", pleading with God. There do not appear to be clear linguistic parallels with Matt. 26:39, however, making deliberate allusion unlikely.

during the Last Supper (Matt. 26:25).⁶⁵¹ While perhaps Judas did so in an effort to portray normalcy, Jesus' reply (a uniquely Matthean comment) both slices this pretense away and heightens the intimacy of their relationship by its reciprocal address to Judas as more than a rabbi's disciple: "Friend, do what you are here to do." There is an intended irony here in the use of "friend" (Gr. *hetairos*), which is employed in two other Matthean contexts of reproach to situations where a just and generous action on the part of the speaker were met without appropriate gratitude.⁶⁵² The same specific term is used in Sirach 37:2, and several OT Psalms make more general reference to the pain of a companion's betrayal (Ps. 42:10, 55:13,14, 20).

When an unnamed follower draws a sword and strikes the high priest's slave in an attempt at protecting him from the armed crowd, Jesus' explanation that "more than twelve legions of angels" would be available if he wanted them again includes mention of his divine Father,⁶⁵³ and echoes the words of Satan which challenged his status as the Son of God (Matt. 4:6). Angels are repeatedly associated with Jesus' self-descriptions of the coming Son of Man in eschatological judgement (Matt. 13:41, 16:27, 24:30-31),⁶⁵⁴ making this uniquely Matthean statement an appropriate inclusion. The reference to the need for

⁶⁵¹ Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, I: 254.

⁶⁵² Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, I: 257; cf. Matt 20:13, 22:12. Brown further notes the use of *hetairos* in the LXX of II Sam. 15:37 where Hushai is referred to as a loyal friend of David during the Absalom crisis. That Judas should merit such an address by the Son of David in his own deepest crisis is not without its own irony.

⁶⁵³ With whom the royal son of Matthew's gospel is on intimate terms (12:25-27, 26:39), and to whom disciples of Jesus must likewise address their prayers and piety, as Jesus does.

⁶⁵⁴ See also Keener, *A Commentary on Matthew*, 643 for references to the intervention of angels on behalf of God's people.

Scripture to be fulfilled by the manner of Jesus' arrest may well invoke the immediate Scriptural background of Jesus' desertion by disciples and betrayal by Judas, which Matthew has been carefully compiling through quotes and allusions to this point in the account.⁶⁵⁵

As his repeated use of fulfillment statements illustrates,⁶⁵⁶ Matthew of all the gospels is the most concerned with the unfolding of the divine plan in Jesus' life since its beginnings, and his account of the passion reinforces this on numerous occasions.⁶⁵⁷ In terms of Jesus' own intentions, it seems very likely that part of his identification with the people of Israel by means of the eschatological confrontation with evil that he saw unfolding in his own life, included culmination through his own redemptive suffering. Wright has argued as one of his central theses that throughout his ministry, Jesus' aims, words and deeds drew on a matrix of scriptural texts in which this type of messianic suffering was a central concern, and that Jesus applied these texts cumulatively to his own work and vocation as Messiah.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁵ Somewhat surprisingly, Schnackenburg suggests no specific passages are in mind (*The Gospel of Matthew*, 273).

⁶⁵⁶ Although the exact wording in this formulaic introduction is only used in Matt. 1:22, which suggests to Brown that a broad, sweeping *inclusio* from Jesus' birth to the manner of his arrest and death is being constructed by Matthew; cf. *The Death of the Messiah*, 288.

⁶⁵⁷ The statement is repeated in 26:56 and is followed by the fleeing of the disciples; numerous other instances of fulfillment are integrated into the passion account by Matthew, as we will discover.

⁶⁵⁸ *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 574-611. These texts include Daniel 2 and 7, Zech. 9-14, a number of Psalms, and Isaiah 40-55. Though he specifically excludes any Davidic features in Jesus' ministry in Matthew, Adrian Leske makes a similar point about Jesus' reliance on a broader Isaianic tradition in his essay, "Isaiah and Matthew: The Prophetic Influence in the First Gospel," in *Jesus and the Suffering Servant*, 156-169. Noting the influence of Isaiah 40-55 on such texts as Jonah, Malachi, Zechariah 9-14, Daniel and Wisdom of Solomon, he observes: "No other writing in the New Testament bears such a strong evidence of the influence of thought of

Together these [texts] offer grand-scale deeply poetic and richly symbolic statements of exile and restoration, of suffering and vindication, and of the way in which according to prophetic promise, YHWH would become king of all the world. Together they speak of of YHWH's once and for all defeat of evil, and his vindication of his people, his servant, his Messiah, after their and his terrible but redemptive suffering.⁶⁵⁹

Matthew then is drawing on tradition that in its earliest form goes back to Jesus himself. When Jesus complains to those who come to arrest him that they have come armed, Matthew includes Mark's statement in 14:49 as a second scriptural fulfillment to emphasize the close link between the specific circumstances of desertion, betrayal and treatment as a "bandit" (Gr. *lēstēs*). Given Matthew's specific inclusion of the fulfillment of the scriptures of the prophets, some commentators have suggested that this text is alluding to Isaiah 53:12.⁶⁶⁰ If this is correct, then the stage has been carefully set by Matthew for the events that will now follow.

The Trial Before the Sanhedrin : Matthew 26:57-68

The scene now shifts to a gathering of scribes and elders at the home of Caiaphas the high priest, who are looking for false witnesses against Jesus.⁶⁶¹

Second Isaiah and how his hope of the restoration of God's reign after the exile was reaffirmed, reshaped and transformed in [these] writings as time went on. The mission and message of Jesus in Matthew's gospel, therefore, must be considered in the light of the developing prophetic heritage;" 162.

⁶⁵⁹ Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*, 598. See also Green, "The Death of Jesus and the Ways of God," 34-35.

⁶⁶⁰ See Brown (*Death of the Messiah*, 288) though he disagrees. Given the use of Is. 53:12 in Luke 22:37 at an earlier point in the same episode (the drawing of swords by the disciples) and Matthew's identification of Jesus with the Servant figure throughout his work (8:17; 12:18-21), however, one cannot discount the possibility.

⁶⁶¹ Part of the continuity between the previous scene and this one is the theme of the righteous one, unjustly accused by malicious enemies; cf. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 434, for a list of biblical texts as well as Wisdom 2:12-20, in which this is developed most fully and which also

Unlike Mark, who makes the first accusation concerning Jesus' purported claim to destroy the temple and rebuild it patently false and invalid,⁶⁶² Matthew phrases his version of the accusation to allow it to stand as a fairly accurate description of the hope of Jewish apocalyptic, that God would replace the earthly temple with one of divine origins and which Jesus is aligning his own cause.⁶⁶³ Given Jesus' earlier statement that "something greater than the temple is here" (Matt. 12:6) and own temple action (21:12 ff.),⁶⁶⁴ it fits very well as perhaps a misquoted version of Jesus' own words.⁶⁶⁵ While it may not have been an unqualified messianic claim, Jesus' silence implies agreement to this status, which leads to the high priest's second question where Jesus is put under oath to answer whether he is "the Messiah, the Son of God."⁶⁶⁶ While the tone is derisive, the irony is all the richer for it. Jesus' own opponent unknowingly identifies him as the promised deliver of Israel in words that reverberate back to

has close ties to Isaiah 53. Cf. David A. deSilva, *Introducing the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 138.

⁶⁶² Mark 14:58.

⁶⁶³ Both Brown and Sanders point out that (despite the traditions of II Sam. 7:14-15 which associated David and Solomon with temple construction) there was no universal expectation that the Messiah would do this, and in fact in many texts God himself was explicitly stated as the builder. Cf. *The Death of the Messiah*, 435–460, esp. 441-443; and Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 87. In a general way, however, given the larger messianic background and the centrality of the Temple in Jewish life, the statement has at very least, strong Messianic overtones.

⁶⁶⁴ For a discussion of the meaning of Jesus' actions in the Temple during his final week in Jerusalem, see Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 61-90.

⁶⁶⁵ Wright, *Victory of God*, 523. It is also attested, significantly in a Jewish context of course, by two witnesses.

⁶⁶⁶ Matthew here has rephrased Mark's the "Son of the Blessed One." While it does not effect the meaning, it does serve to resonate with the centurion's comment in 27:54 which essentially concludes his description of the Passion.

the coronation litany of Psalm 2.⁶⁶⁷ Jesus affirms Caiaphas' description, but also goes on to recast his own Messianic identity in terms of the exalted "Son of Man,"⁶⁶⁸ by combining Daniel 7:13,14 with Ps. 110:1 in a warning of coming judgement.⁶⁶⁹ The high priest's response is immediate, decisive and quickly followed by a verdict of death. Matthew heightens the irony even further by adding that those who struck Jesus (26:68) mockingly called him "Messiah". The three-fold denial of Peter now completes the desertion that began with fleeing of the disciples. The Messiah is now totally abandoned by his own followers and at the mercy of both the Jewish leaders, and the Roman authorities, to whom he is now led away.

⁶⁶⁷ Wright, *Victory of God*, 523.

⁶⁶⁸ A detailed interaction with the extensive literature concerning the meaning of "son of Man" is not possible here, though one important point should be made. Collins (*Scepter and the Star*, 176) has contended that in Dan. 7, it refers to a heavenly individual, not Israel. But Dunn ("Son of God' As 'Son of Man' in the Dead Sea Scrolls? A Response to John Collins on 4Q246" in *The Scrolls and the Scriptures*, 1999) argues that the parallels between the Son of Man and the saints of the Most High in Daniel 7:18, 22, 27 suggest that a symbolic representation of Israel is intended, and that an individual usage may well have first been made by Jesus (201). In support, he cites 4 Ezra 13. If Dunn is correct, it is suggestive that the term may well have had a certain fluidity, since Jesus could reinterpret the term intelligibly. Moreover, it is also possible that the "heavenly individual/corporate symbol" dichotomy may be foreign to the first century situation; both may be in view simultaneously. See George Nicklesburg, "Son of Man," *ABD CD ROM* for a helpful summary, where in the most pertinent excerpt he states: "Although scholars debate the meaning of almost every element in the vision and interpretation, the following seems the best explanation. 'Son of man' is not a formal title, but a designation used in a simile ('one like a son of man'), quite possibly to contrast the cloud-borne figure with the beasts. But although this figure has the appearance of a human being, it is, in fact, a heavenly figure (cf. Dan 9:21; 10:5 and in Ezek 1:26 of God), one of the holy ones, who is the patron of the suffering people of the holy ones of the Most High. The relationship of this heavenly figure to suffering righteous Israel is analogous to the relationship between the angelic prince Michael and "your people" in Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1, although in the latter passages Michael has a judicial function not possessed by the one like a son of man. The heavenly enthronement of the one like a son of man will involve Israel's earthly supremacy over all the nations (cf. 1QM 17:5-8)." Some studies have tried to sever the connection between the phrase "son of Man" and the Danieli background, suggesting instead that had little titular usage. However, Paul Owen and David Shepherd have recently refuted the notion that the Aramaic phrase "son of Man" was simply an ordinary term for man in first-century Jewish discourse. See "Speaking Up for Dalman and the Son of Man: Was *Bar Enasha* a Common Term for 'Man' in the Time of Jesus?" in *JSNT* 81 (2001): 81-122.

⁶⁶⁹ Cf. Wright, *Victory of God*, 524-528.

The Trial By Pontius Pilate: Matthew 27:1-26

In view of the importance of the title “Son of Man” in the previous scene, it is striking that both Matthew (and Mark) tell us that Jesus is “handed over” to the Pilate. This phrase⁶⁷⁰ echoes the predictions of Jesus on a number of occasions, where he tells the disciples the Son of Man will suffer mistreatment at the hands of the elders and chief priests (16:21, 17:12), will be betrayed into human hands (17:23) and be “handed over” to the chief priests and scribes and then to the Gentiles to be flogged and crucified (20:18-19).⁶⁷¹ This successive linking of predictive statements is concluded with Jesus’ sober remark that “the Son of Man came not to be served, but to be served and to give his life as a ransom for many” (20:28). This statement links Jesus’ self-referential “Son of Man” with Isaiah 53:12. In terms of broader background, the figure of the Servant in Isaiah 42-53 is especially anointed to be obedient to Yahweh, with the mission of restoring Israel to obedience and faith despite (or perhaps better, by means of) great personal cost and suffering.⁶⁷² Matthew’s progressive and repeated

⁶⁷⁰ The Gr. *paradodomi* is common in the gospels to describe this transition to custody. See F. Buschel, “*paradidōmi*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, [ET: Geoffrey Bromiley; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985], 166. The phrasing also has a well attested usage in the LXX and linguistic parallels in the Dead Sea Scrolls, where it is usually ascribed to the action of God in handing over the wicked to judgement; here a righteous man is handed over to enemies. This language becomes prominent in very early Christian tradition; cf. Rom. 4:25, 8:32 and shows influence from both Is. 53:6 and Wisdom 2, 3. See Brown’s discussion in *Death of the Messiah*, I: 210-212.

⁶⁷¹ Green, *The Death of Jesus*, 43.

⁶⁷² While some scholars have argued against this conclusion, I find it an entirely consistent one, given Matthew’s direct and indirect parallels between Jesus and Isaiah’s description of the Servant in Is. 42-53. One study noted for its tendency to minimize the influence of “the Servant” in the New Testament is Morna Hooker’s work, *Jesus and the Servant* (London: SPCK, 1959).

references to the “handing over” of the Son of Man to be tried culminate here in the handing over of the Messiah to Pilate for a hearing.⁶⁷³

Matthew’s unique account of Judas’ death⁶⁷⁴ is part of his thematic concern that the death of Jesus involves the shedding of innocent blood, a motif expressed by Judas’ own words (27:4;⁶⁷⁵ cf. also 27:19, 24).⁶⁷⁶ The creative conflation of Zechariah 11:13 and Jeremiah 18:2-3 and 32:6-15 which concludes the Judas episode, attributed to Jeremiah, simultaneously suggests a number of implications. The reference to the thirty pieces of silver in Zechariah 11:12-13 recalls its use in Matt. 26:15 to suggest the relatively cheap valuation of Israel’s good shepherd (Yahweh, in Zechariah) whose removal is here also being facilitated in the plot against Jesus. While Judas’ attempt to return the money to the temple treasury (as Zechariah was instructed to do in Zech. 11:13) is

Nevertheless, Hooker’s study did draw extensive parallels between the larger context of the Servant texts in Isaiah 40-55 and the restoration prophecies of Jeremiah 30-33 and Ezekiel 34-37 (pp. 30-34). Given Matthew’s interest in showing that Jesus came to restore an Israel still in exile (Matt. 1:17, 21) and ability his to find much more subtle and obscure connections between the events of Jesus’ life and Old Testament prophetic texts, it seems he would not have overlooked such an obvious connection. Here see the still excellent study by W. Zimmerli and J. Jeremias, “Pais Theou”, in *Theologisches Woterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, ed. G. Kittel, V, (Stuttgart, 1954), 653-713; ET: *The Servant of God* (London: SCM Press, 1965 [Rev. ed.]), which carefully analyzes the literary influence of the *ebed Yahweh* on both later Judaism (45-59) and early Christology (88-94) and correctly sees a much greater influence on the synoptic tradition.

⁶⁷³ Given the background of Daniel 7 alluded to in Matt. 26:64, and the close identification between the Son of Man there and the saints of the Most high whom he comes to vindicate against four hostile kingdoms, it is worth noting there the saints will be “handed over” to a hostile Gentile king (Dan. 7:25, NIV, RSV; though the LXX has “power will be given into his hands”) where here Jesus is given into the hands of the Roman governor, as his predictions have suggested would happen.

⁶⁷⁴ An account he alone offers in the Gospels, and quite different from the one presented in Acts 1:18-19. Though both do agree that the name of the field purchased is “the Field of Blood.”

⁶⁷⁵ Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 281.

⁶⁷⁶ Green, *The Death of Jesus*, 45 ff; Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 657.

rebuffed by the chief priests and elders, Matthew sees in the purchase of the potter's field that Scripture is nevertheless fulfilled.⁶⁷⁷

It is tempting to overinterpret this complex and heavily reworked prophetic quotation, but two further observations can be made. First, Judas' action and his tragic end foreshadow a parallel to the rejection of Jesus that here found dramatic resonance with the life of Jeremiah the prophet, heightening the degree of Jesus' betrayal, and intensifying his portrayal as a righteous figure who suffers unjustly at the hands of malicious and hostile opponents.⁶⁷⁸ Secondly, by attributing this final formulaic fulfillment statement to Jeremiah, Matthew also simultaneously evokes prophetic images of Yahweh's judgement on Israel as well as hints of a future restoration. Israel is the clay in the hand of God (Jer. 18:1-11) facing God's imminent and reshaping judgement if she does not repent. The purchase of a field was Jeremiah's way of enacting Yahweh's words of hope that after the exile, fields and vineyards would again be planted (Jer. 32:9-15).⁶⁷⁹ These unfolding events of Jesus' death also carry a dual implication of judgment

⁶⁷⁷ Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 657; Brown, *Death of the Messiah* (646. 652) notes that even the naming of the field which they purchase unwittingly emphasizes Jesus' innocence and complicity of his opponents.

⁶⁷⁸ This reinforces a number of earlier instances which have been already noticed in Matthew's passion narrative. Cf. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel*, 77: "In 27:9-10 Matthew sees in what is probably the most perfidious act of the opposition to the messiah in his Gospel—Jesus' betrayal by one of his closest disciples—not only the fulfillment of prophecy in general but also a link to the words of Jeremiah in particular...Without question, the fulfillment quotation provides the climax and focal point for Matthew's narrative: the messiah is sold for the price of a slave, with Judas' belated attempt to redress the wrong demonstrating both an acknowledgement of his own guilt and the complicity of those who refuse what they themselves acknowledge to be 'the price of blood.' In this way, Matthew demonstrates Jesus' innocence at the expense of other participants' guilt and responsibility. And all this is seen to be fulfilled in the words ascribed deliberately, albeit enigmatically, to the prophet Jeremiah."

⁶⁷⁹ Lest his audience miss the point, upon completion of the transaction, the legal deeds of Jeremiah's purchase were kept in an earthenware jar (Jer. 32:14; contrast 19:1, 10).

on Israel for her ongoing unwillingness to accept their messiah.⁶⁸⁰ As in the infancy story, Israel's larger story as a people in relation to God is again closely connected to the specific events of the life of Jesus the suffering Messiah.

The repeated mention of Jesus' silence in response to Pilate's questions continues this attention to the figure of the "righteous sufferer", which is central to Matthew's account of Jesus as the suffering Messiah.⁶⁸¹ The juxtaposition with the notorious prisoner Barabbas echoes Jesus' earlier complaint that he was being wrongly treated as a bandit.⁶⁸² Here, Matthew appears to heighten the contrast between Barabbas and Jesus by the inclusion of the character of Pilate's wife.⁶⁸³ While deliberating over the motives of the Jewish leaders' jealousy, word comes of a dream that she has had: "Have nothing to do with that innocent man, for today I have suffered a great deal because of a dream about

⁶⁸⁰ As was the case also in Matt. 2, where Herod and the oblivious chief priest and scribes fail to welcome Jesus, while the Magi from the East come in worship, with the result of 2:16-18, the murder of the innocent male children of Bethlehem. For a helpful discussion of the parallels between the first and last of Matthew's fulfillment quotations, see Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel*, 34-52; 78-81.

⁶⁸¹ Cited by Aland, *The Greek New Testament*, as a direct allusion to Isaiah 53:7. It is clear that Matthew sees numerous parallels between Jesus and the servant figure of Isaiah throughout his ministry. In his passion account, it is particularly the attribute of undeserved suffering that in some way is atoning for the sins of others that is of importance. See also the list of "Psalms of the Righteous Sufferer" provided by Carroll and Green (*The Death of Jesus*, 207-209), which appear to have been employed in a variety of ways throughout the Passion Narrative of the four gospels, and thus frequently in Matthew as well.

⁶⁸² A reputation likely known to Matthew's audience as Luke 23:19, 25 John 18:40 suggest.

⁶⁸³ Interestingly, a minority of readings in the textual tradition for both 27:16 and 17 suggest "Jesus Barabbas" as the prisoner's full name. Despite the strong textual evidence to the contrary, Brown's suggestion is that the longer name may be the more original (*Death of the Messiah*, 1: 798). Though undue speculation should be avoided, it raises the possibility of a further contrast between these two figures. Matthew employed a similar contrast in 2:1-4 where Jesus the rightful Messiah and Herod the reigning king (but to the reader, illegitimate, paranoid and violent) are juxtaposed; by the end of the chapter Jesus is safely in Nazareth, protected by direct divine intervention and Herod is dead.

him" (Matt. 27:19).⁶⁸⁴ This third recognition of Jesus' innocence⁶⁸⁵ makes the crowd's call for Jesus to be crucified all the more problematic for Pilate, who now washes his hands in a dramatic disavowal of their decision,⁶⁸⁶ and shifts the focus of the narrative to the people gathered there who accept responsibility for Jesus innocent death⁶⁸⁷ in fulfillment of Jesus' prediction in 23:35.⁶⁸⁸

The Crucifixion of the Messiah: Matthew 27:27-44

After being flogged, Jesus is now taken to Pilate's headquarters, where an elaborate mock crowning and abuse take place. While editing Mark's account, Matthew follows his portrayal closely in 27:27-31, describing two sets of actions. The first involves a scarlet robe, a crown of thorns and a reed-scepter; the second spitting and striking on the head. While not quoted, Isaiah 50:6 and 53:3 have clearly influenced the portrayal here, directly fulfilling the prediction of Matt.

⁶⁸⁴ The fact that this Gentile woman speaks in defense of Jesus should not go unnoticed, given Matthew's insistence that the Gospel is available to all.

⁶⁸⁵ Expressly by Judas in 27:4 and implied in 27:14. See Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, I: 805-807.

⁶⁸⁶ For OT background, see Ps. 26:6, 73:13, Deut. 21:1-9.

⁶⁸⁷ The innocence of Jesus is a particular concern of Matthew as Carroll and Green argue, citing Is. 53:11; cf. *The Death of Jesus*, 55. "It is plain that Matthew's passion account tells of the undeserved death of a righteous man... The cross of the Just One finds meaning within the larger saving activity of God. The Matthean passion narrative displays a magisterial Jesus, who never swerves from his commitment to 'fulfill all righteousness' (3:15; 5:17-20) yet as king-Messiah accepts a servant's death for the benefit of others."

⁶⁸⁸ As John Heil has noted; cf. *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus*, 76. See also See Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, I: 830-39. That later abuses of this passage to justify mistreatment of Jews at Christian hands are without support in Matthew can be seen from Matt. 26:68. Matthew simultaneously balances both aspects of judgement and salvation in his account. For further comment about how Matthew's apparent anti-Judaism can be understood without extending it into present relationships between Jews and Christians, see Daniel Harrington, "Retrieving the Jewishness of Jesus" in *The Historical Jesus Through Catholic and Jewish Eyes* ed. Bryan E. Le Beau, Leonard Greenspoon and Dennis Hamm, S.J. (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2000), 76-83.

20:18-19 about what would happen to the son of Man at the hands of the Gentiles.

Matthew's description of Jesus' crucifixion incorporates allusions to Psalm 69:21 in the offering of wine to drink, and two allusions to Psalm 22 in the division of Jesus' clothing by lot and the shaking heads of the passers by. The second of these ("He trusts in God, let God deliver him if he wants to, for he said, 'I am God's Son'") is here quoted directly (in contrast with Mark's allusion), suggesting a further expansion and development of the connection between the Righteous One of that Psalm and the details of Jesus' situation here.⁶⁸⁹ To Matthew's audience, the whole scene is rich in irony. As was the case with mockery of the Roman soldiers, the *titulus* over Jesus correctly identifies him as Israel's king, though without a real recognition of what this means, unlike the readers and hearers of Matthew, who by now know quite well.⁶⁹⁰ In the same way, the declaration of those who repeat the statement of the two witnesses in 26:61, joined by the chief priests and elders use the titles "king of Israel" and "Son of God" do so in a ridiculing mockery. But within the narrative, they also unwittingly bear witness to what Matthew's entire Gospel has been demonstrating as the heart of Jesus' mission. As Heil has observed, "The reader sees the irony here precisely because Jesus proves he is worthy of belief as the true king of Israel

⁶⁸⁹ Carroll and Green, *The Death of Jesus*, 211.

⁶⁹⁰ So Carroll and Green, *The Death of Jesus*, 54: "As we have seen, the Matthean passion narrative portrays the death of Jesus as the death of the 'King of the Jews [Israel].' The characterization of Jesus earlier in the story enables the reader to make sense of the enigma of a coronation through crucifixion. For like any authentic king, he seeks the well being (that is, salvation) of his subjects. But much more, he does so with the compassion and self sacrifice of a lowly servant.' Though it may have appeared innovative, this close linking of kingship with the well being of the nation and its relationship with Israel's God, is as old as II Samuel 7, and resonates with the kingly portrait of such texts as Psalm 72.

with power to save himself and others by remaining on the cross and refusing to save himself from a death that is God's will. "⁶⁹¹ The enemies of the righteous man in Wisdom of Solomon 2:12-20 use remarkably similar language.⁶⁹²

Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life.

For if the righteous man is God's child, he will help him,
And deliver him from the hands of his adversaries.

Even the bandits being crucified with Jesus participate in this cumulative and intensifying description of mocking and abuse, completing the abandonment and isolation that began with the prediction of his own disciples' desertion. For the royal Son of God, the ordeal by his people has been culminated. Now follows one final scene of abandonment.⁶⁹³

⁶⁹¹ Heil, *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus*, 81; Heil's larger discussion in 77-82 is also helpful here. See also Green, *The Death of Jesus*, 318.

⁶⁹² So Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 682.

⁶⁹³ Matthew's structure is modeled closely on Mark's, who may be following a traditional pattern of his own. George Nicklesburg has proposed the existence of a traditional genre of suffering and vindication stories that can be seen in such Jewish texts as the story of Joseph in Genesis 37-42, Esther, Daniel 3-6, Susanna, 2 Maccabees 7 in which the influence of Wisdom 2,4-5 and Isaiah 52:13-53:12 are apparent; cf. *Resurrection, Immortality and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (Harvard Theological Studies XXVI; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973); and "The Genre and Function of the Markan Passion Narrative," *HTR* 73 (1980) 156-163. For an brief overview of the structure of this genre, see *Resurrection*, 56-57. Following Nicklesburg's work, Joel B. Green argues in support of significant literary influence by this pre-canonical literary pattern on the Markan passion account. His findings suggest an even closer parallel between this "suffering/vindication" genre than perhaps even Nicklesburg himself found. Several components of the genre are accounted for in the ironic actions of Jesus' opponents, while others are anticipated or implied by Mark. Cf. *The Death of Jesus: Tradition and Interpretation in the Passion Narrative* ([Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament: Reihe 2; 33] (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1988), 169-174.

The Death of the Messiah: Matthew 27:45-54

The darkness that comes over the land marks an abrupt shift and suggests a divine action with reference to eschatological judgment.⁶⁹⁴ Such an event also appears to be part of common Jewish tradition surrounding the death of the righteous. Though this not attested until later times, it seems to be confirmed in Jesus' direct quotation of Psalm 22 and the offering of the sour wine on a sponge by those who want to revive him so that they can make better sense of his cry, which for a second time echoes Ps. 69:21.⁶⁹⁵ With Jesus' final cry and last breath, three further dramatic signs are recorded, and appear to be paralleled in sequence by Matthew.⁶⁹⁶ The rending of the temple curtain is dramatic validation of Jesus' authority to challenge the Jewish temple leaders and their religious practice and an affirmation of his claim to be able to rebuild the temple, however his accusers may have misquoted him. Like the temple curtain, the rocks are also split, which in turn allows the tombs to be opened. The raising of bodies of saints who had fallen asleep recalls the words of Daniel 12:1-2⁶⁹⁷ and puts the lie to the accusation of 27:52-53. By not saving himself, he has

⁶⁹⁴ Amos 8:9; see also Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 289; Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 685.

⁶⁹⁵ Both Psalms are of course concerned with the plight of a Davidic speaker besieged by enemies, asking in trust and hope for God's vindication and help.

⁶⁹⁶ Cf. Heil, *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus*, 83 with reference to Amos 9.

⁶⁹⁷ It may also suggest Ezekiel 37 and the resurrection of the nation; if so, than there is an additional example here of how Jesus' life is closely related to the story of Israel as a nation. Carroll and Green also suggest that Zech. 14:4-5 (splitting of the Mt. Olives, coming of the Lord with the "holy ones") and Joel 2:10 (eschatological darkness and earthquakes) may also be part of the background; cf. *Death of Jesus*, 49.

saved others.⁶⁹⁸ Within Jewish expectation, these events could only mean that the expected final resurrection was being initiated.⁶⁹⁹ When the centurion and those who were with him respond with the acclamation that “Truly, this man was God’s Son,” Matthew’s presentation of Jesus’ death concludes on a note of certain recognition. The events just described have revealed Jesus as the one his entire account has pointed to: the obedient, kingly, Son of David.⁷⁰⁰

The Suffering of the Son of David: A Broader Theme

The central conclusion being urged here is that suffering and humiliation which Jesus undergoes in the Passion Narrative of Matthew is part of a consistent development of his role as Messiah that is carefully worked out from the beginning of the first Gospel. For Matthew, there is no contradiction between Jesus as promised Son of David, Son of God and the recipient of the dynastic covenant promises on the one hand and the ordeal described in detail in Matthew 26-27 on the other. In fact it is part of the divine plan that Jesus’ messianic identity be revealed precisely in this way.⁷⁰¹ Here it is worth considering whether Matthew’s attempt to integrate Jesus’ coming as a Davidic

⁶⁹⁸ Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 686; Green, *The Death of Jesus*, 48-49.

⁶⁹⁹ Though Matthew is clear in his use of “many bodies of the saints” to suggest that all of this, as dramatic as it is, will be only anticipatory in character.

⁷⁰⁰ Carroll and Green, *Death of Jesus*, 210; *contra* Brown, *Death of the Messiah*, 2.1461.

⁷⁰¹ “According to the passion account, why did Jesus die? Because God willed it! It was necessary, in God’s salvific plan. This is the most significant theme around which all others are related and from which they draw significance.” Cf. Green, *The Death of Jesus*, 315, referring specifically to the purpose of Old Testament references in the passion narrative.

messiah with his ordeal as a righteous, suffering figure is unique among New Testament writers.⁷⁰²

One way to assess this thesis more closely is to examine the uses of some of the key texts in the Davidic covenant tradition. Here a brief consideration of two examples may illustrate how other New Testament authors argue along similar lines, and perhaps suggest other analogous examples.

As seen earlier, Psalm 89 dealt with the abandonment of the Davidic promises in the aftermath of events in which the reigning Davidic king was apparently defeated in battle. However, the more pressing problem for the psalmist is the rejection and humiliation of this king by Yahweh himself (Ps. 89:38-45). This is given even greater poignancy by the use of the first person voice of the defeated Davidic king, who cries out for Yahweh to remember his steadfast love and faithfulness sworn to David. The tension between the enduring covenant promises to David and the historical circumstances, which apparently contradict them, is not resolved in the Psalm. It ends on a note of urgent petition and appeal for Yahweh to deliver on what he has promised, with no evidence that any answer is in sight.⁷⁰³ Here the defeat and abandonment of the Davidic king and the inviolable dynastic promises to David are juxtaposed without resolution.

⁷⁰² Graham Stanton's study draws close parallels between the negative response of the Jewish leaders to Jesus' Davidic title and the persecution suffered by Matthew's community at the hands of their opponents. See *A Gospel for a New People*, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark 1992), 180-191.

⁷⁰³ See the study by Craig C. Broyles, *The Conflict of Faith and Experience in the Psalms*, JSOT Sup Series 52 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 168-173.

The parallels to the death of Jesus, who as a Davidic messiah and anointed royal son (Ps. 89:19-29) also called out to God for vindication, did not go unnoticed in early Christian texts. A number of New Testament writers appropriate this Psalm in various ways to link the ministry and career of Jesus with that of his Davidic predecessors.⁷⁰⁴ The song of Mary in Luke's Gospel responds to the words of blessing from Elizabeth with praise that God has shown strength with his arm in the events which surround the birth of the coming Messiah (Luke 1:51; Ps. 89:10; cf. Luke 1:31-33).⁷⁰⁵ The writer of Acts has Paul quote Psalm 89:20 in his speech in the synagogue at Antioch to describe David, though the focus eventually shifts to David's messianic descendant, since it is Jesus, after his resurrection, to whom God says, "I will give you the holy promises made to David" (Acts 13:34, citing Is. 55:3). Further, in a comment that has interesting parallels to the issues raised in Matthew 22:41-45, Jesus is described as more than "Son of David," for David, when he was buried, experienced corruption, but not Jesus, God's holy one (Acts 13:35; cf. Ps. 16:10). The author of Revelation extends a word of grace and peace from "Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first born of the dead and ruler of the kings on earth," echoing and subtly enhancing the words of Psalm 89:27. The reinterpretation of traditional Davidic images continues into Rev. 5:1-14, where the slain Lamb is the one who receives the honour and dominion due to God.⁷⁰⁶

⁷⁰⁴ For the allusions and verbal parallels which follow, see Aland (ed.), *The Greek New Testament*, 905–906.

⁷⁰⁵ On Luke's attention to Davidic parallels in the events of Jesus' life, see *The New Testament and the People of God*, 378 ff.

Further examples can be found in the letter of I Peter, which employs Psalm 89 to draw a number of implicit parallels between the suffering of the community he addresses and the ordeal faced by Jesus. If as obedient sons of the sovereign God and judge, they invoke God as “Father,” this should lead to lives of reverential fear built securely on the Rock of their salvation, Jesus (I Pet. 1:17, 2:6-8; cf. Ps. 89:26). If his readers “are reviled for the name of Christ” (I Pet. 4:14; cf. Ps. 89:50-51),⁷⁰⁷ they are blessed, since they share in the suffering of him who also suffered righteously (I Pet. 4:18; 3:17-18; 2:18-25; and cf. Is. 53:12). It is of course clear that the Psalm is not being used in an apologetic way to offer proof-text support for messianic suffering. Rather, the identification of Jesus as the Davidic messiah allows a text such as Psalm 89 to be seen in a new light, and its resources appropriated to describe the identity of both Jesus and his followers.

Seen from this vantage point, the use of Psalm 89 in the explication of the messianic career of Jesus is a part of the ongoing reinterpretation of the kingship traditions of Israel, which are rooted in the earliest texts surrounding the origins of the Davidic dynasty. Yahweh’s promise of an enduring dynasty to David is the basis of the hope that the nation’s future will be guaranteed and the viability of its covenant relationship with Yahweh will be assured.

In addition to these numerous forays into Psalm 89, a second example of how New Testament authors went about reinterpreting the Davidic covenant

⁷⁰⁶See Carroll and Green, *The Death of Jesus*, 144-145.

⁷⁰⁷ Cf. Aland (ed.), *The Greek New Testament*, 906 where this cited as a verbal parallel.

tradition in terms of the suffering of Jesus can be observed in the letter to the Hebrews. Central to the high Christology of the opening chapters is the assertion that Jesus' supremacy exceeds that even of the angels (Heb. 1:5-14). The argument presented links the Davidic coronation liturgy of Psalm 2:7 with the words of praise ascribed to the king in Psalm 45:6-7 and the frequently quoted Psalm 110:1, which forms a cornerstone of early Christian interpretation.⁷⁰⁸ After his suffering and death, Jesus is crowned with glory and honour, so that he might become the one through whom God will gather a new people, a role described in the confession of the vindicated sufferer of Psalm 22:22. As king, Jesus also carries out the role of a merciful and faithful high priest, atoning for the sins of his people.⁷⁰⁹ Christ's faithfulness over God's house as an obedient son is a model for his followers to follow (Heb. 3:6; 4:14). The royal adoption language of Psalm 2:7 is again employed in Hebrews 5:5 and linked with Psalm 110:4 to explicate the special choosing and appointing of God through which he was also given his priestly role and to explain the meaning of his suffering as a royal Son of God. This priestly action is summarized further in Hebrews 8, where Jesus' role as mediator of a better covenant is linked with the words of Jeremiah the prophet, whose promise of a new covenant is grounded securely in the Davidic dynasty tradition.⁷¹⁰ This same Jesus, says the author, is the "pioneer and perfecter" of Christian faith, who having endured the humiliation of crucifixion, now sits at the

⁷⁰⁸ Cited by Jesus in the "Son of David" debate of Matt. 22:44, as well as Matt. 26:64 and parallels. See also Acts 2:34-35.

⁷⁰⁹ See also Heb. 9:28 and the parallels there to Isaiah 53:12.

⁷¹⁰ Cf. Heb. 8:8-12, citing Jer. 31:31-34, which in the larger context rests on the Davidic promises referred to in Jer. 33:19-22.

right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 12:2; cf. 10:13 and allusions in both verses to Ps. 2:7).

The trajectory of Matthew's gospel, in its attempt to interpret the suffering which Jesus, the son of David, undergoes is part of a larger thematic concern evident elsewhere in the New Testament. Moreover, Matthew's gospel also stands in continuity with a number of writers in the Old Testament. As earlier studies of the various uses of the Davidic covenant within the Hebrew Bible illustrated, numerous authors here as well were concerned with the reinterpretation of the meaning of the Davidic dynasty tradition within the events of their own time.⁷¹¹ Thus while Matthew describes events of unprecedented eschatological significance, the gospel seeks at the same time to understand their meaning in continuity with the larger traditions of Jewish expectation by carefully reflecting upon the ancient story of God's covenant relationship with Israel.

Conclusion

From the beginning, this study has argued that Davidic messianism was a significant theme in the development of early Christology, and that the roots of this "enthroned son of David" motif originated with some of the earliest Christian

⁷¹¹As was argued in Chapter 3 above. A number of years ago, Rex Mason made the point that Zechariah 9:9-10 was a reinterpretation of the Davidic Messiah influenced by the portrait of the Servant in Isaiah 42-53 and Psalm 72; see *Bringing Out the Treasure*, 34-45. If this conclusion is correct, then Matthew's configuration of these and other texts may well draw on existing tradition of exegesis in order to understand the events of Jesus' career.

communities. The initial impetus for such an interpretation of Jesus' actions perhaps originated in Jesus' own sense of his task and mission. Messianic kingship is an important rubric (of several others) within which the early Christian movement attempted to understand the meaning of Jesus' ministry, death and resurrection.

The context for such a way of viewing Jesus resonates with several important aspects of Second Temple Judaism which had their origins much earlier in Israel's history. It is important here to see that Israel's appropriation of ancient Near Eastern kingship customs and its recasting of kingship within the Davidic covenant tradition were pivotal events in the history of the nation. The texts surrounding this covenant link three interrelated concerns: the integrity and prosperity of Israel, the relationship of the nation to Yahweh, and the continuity of the Davidic line.

This Davidic dynastic promise by Yahweh was a foundation to which later generations would return repeatedly in order to assess their own historical circumstances and look to the future with hope. The expectation that an "anointed" deliver would come to eventually restore Israel as a nation and inaugurate God's kingdom over all the world was in large part an extension of this covenant. While it became more nuanced over time, and was expressed in varying forms and with differing degrees of emphasis in the texts of the post exilic period, it can be said that a larger, coherent messianic expectation was a pervasive aspect of Second Temple Judaism. It is therefore not surprising to find

messianic concerns occurring in a number of New Testament texts, here again with a variety of forms and degrees of emphasis also in evidence.

In its portrayal of Jesus, Matthew's gospel employs a cluster of at least four messianic themes in order to describe the contours of Jesus' messianic identity. Jesus is God's "new creation," and Jesus' messianic credentials are elaborated by references that demonstrate his power over creation and his task as the "Son of Abraham" who will bring blessing to all nations (Gen. 12:1-4). Parallels with the life of Moses illustrate that Jesus is the "new Moses," who has come to deliver his people and to lead them in obedience and establish them in the way of righteousness.

However, throughout the gospel, and particularly in the passion narrative, the focus is especially on Jesus as the anointed "son of David," whose kingship involves the redemption of Israel by means of obedience and righteousness, even at the cost of suffering and death. Initial reference to Jesus' Davidic lineage comes in the genealogy and is further accented through his acclamation by the crowds as the one who casts out evil spirits and heals the sick. By drawing on a messianic tradition that emphasized the role of Israel's king as one who would protect the vulnerable and deliver those in need, Matthew signals that Jesus' messianic vocation will involve a reinterpretation of traditional messianic expectation.

In Israel's traditions, the continuity of kingship was closely linked with Israel's relationship to Yahweh and the security and cohesion of the nation. While the ability of historical kings to fulfill this mandate varied and they were at times

oppressive and self serving, kingship itself was reconfigured. Texts such as II Kings 23 (Josiah) and Zechariah 9 -14 (read against the influential background of Isaiah 42-53) develop the notion of a chastened and humbled kingship in which royal rule includes humility and even suffering.

Matthew's presentation also incorporates Davidic features in his portrayal of the suffering and death of Jesus the Messiah. This portrayal alludes to episodes in David's life that emphasize his royal status as well as traditions that reflect his piety and trust in Yahweh during times of danger and difficulty. As Jesus faces his arrest and death, Matthew's account portrays him as one who at times resembles David besieged by enemies within his court. Geographic details and linguistic parallels suggest the influence of Septuagint accounts of David's life in similar circumstances of betrayal and danger.

At the same time, it is through these trying circumstances that Jesus' messianic vocation comes to clear expression. Jesus is clearly also much more than a "Son of David." There are further indications that throughout, Jesus saw these ordeals as a central part of his decisive messianic role and a way for Yahweh to deliver his people and vindicate his servant. Matthew's characteristic insistence that Jesus' suffering is unwarranted and undeserved closely ties Jesus to the "righteous sufferer" tradition and accents Jesus as "son of God" also in his obedience and faithfulness to Yahweh. In Matthew, Jesus' own words during his crucifixion are drawn from a cluster of Psalms which suggest that he saw his ordeal as the unfolding of God's mysterious plan which will involve betrayal, isolation and death but also eventual vindication and reinstatement, to the

amazement of others. Even while enemies mock and revile him, their taunts ironically bear witness to what the reader of Matthew sees clearly: this suffering king is the Son of God, one who holds authority over the nations (Matt. 28:18-20). In the concluding words of the first Gospel, Matthew's readers are now enjoined to teach others what they have learned, so that they too may experience the presence of this vindicated, risen royal Son, the anointed king of Israel, who, by laying down his own life, does indeed have the power to save others (Matt. 27:42).

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