Exile and Restoration in the Old Testament Prophets

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(Note: All underlining of Scripture quotations for emphasis has been added by the author.)

Old Testament Restoration Prophecies

In the prophecies of the Old Testament (OT) we encounter threats of judgment interspersed with promises of Israel's restoration. Not infrequently, both threat and promise are found in almost the same breath.

The backdrop to many prophecies is the impending exile of God's people, or exile as having already transpired:
Amos ministered perhaps 760 to 753 BC; he threatened God's judgment on Israel at the hands of an unnamed enemy.
Coinciding with the rise of Assyria (from 745 BC) and then the Assyrian conquest and deportation of the northern kingdom (733 to 721 BC) were the ministries of Hosea (ca. 755 to 725) and those of Micah and Isaiah (both ca. 740 to 700).
Conversely, Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied while the Babylonians were threatening or deporting Judah.
Despite these different backgrounds, common themes permeate their prophecies:

- Judgment and exile for sin.
- God will ultimately rescue and gather his people from exile.
- They will enjoy peace and security under a Davidic/messianic king.

Significantly, even the earlier prophets foretell both the demise and the final restoration of Davidic kingship. They do so long before its actual termination in 586 BC.[2]
See Amos 9:11; Micah 4:8-9; 5:1-5a; Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-10; cf. Hosea 3:4-5.
And both Isaiah and Micah anticipate Judah's exile in Babylon, even though Assyria was the threatening power of their day.[3]

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[1] Other Bible versions employed:

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[2] Jerusalem was finally destroyed by the Babylonian army in July/August 586 BC; only then did Davidic kingship cease.
[3] Isaiah 40 – 66 assumes that the nation's exile in Babylon is almost over. Micah similarly foretells Jerusalem's (586 BC) destruction, along with the people's exile to, and ultimate rescue from, Babylon (Mic 3:12; 4:10).

The following are some of the recurring themes we find in the Old Testament (OT) prophets:

- Indictments of Israel and/or Judah for their wickedness.
- Threats of God's judgment upon them, usually entailing foreign conquest and exile.
- "Day of the LORD" or "In that day" promises — the time when God will act decisively to judge or save.[4] Often, "in that day" points to the time of salvation and of restoration following judgment.
- God's saving action, involving the release and return of his people from captivity — often coupled with his judgment of the oppressor.
- The remnant of Israel who survive God's judgments will return to their land and city.
- A regathering of both Israel and Judah as one nation.
- The people's return to God's holy mountain — Mt. Zion.
- The rebuilding and restoration of Jerusalem.
- Jerusalem to be finally a holy city — purged of evildoers.
- Yahweh's return to Jerusalem to dwell with his forgiven people.
- The restoration of David's throne and kingdom, along with the subjugation of enemies.
- God's people enjoying peace, prosperity, and security in the messianic kingdom.
- The disgrace of his people removed; their glory and honor restored.
- Salvation sometimes includes Gentiles.

These themes can perhaps be summarized thus:
Israel's salvation comes through judgment and transformation.
Israel will be judged, and ultimately so too will her enemies.
Israel (or Jerusalem) will be purged of evildoers, and a godly remnant will survive or return to inhabit the land.

With exile God was expelling his people from his presence because of sin (2Kgs 13:23; 17:18; 24:3, 20).
Exile was to all intents a recapitulation of Adam's expulsion from the Garden.
Indeed, the exile of God's people in Assyria and Babylon epitomized the exile of all mankind in Adam.

For this reason, when the OT prophets foretell the people's deliverance — their return from exile and the nation's restoration — they look beyond their immediate historical context.
They anticipate **the definitive return and restoration under the Messiah**:
Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-12; Jeremiah 23:5-6; 30:8-9; 33:15-17; Ezekiel 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Hosea 3:4-5; Amos 9:11-12; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12-13.
Both Judah and Israel will return and be reunited as one nation:
Isaiah 11:12-13; Jeremiah 3:18; 23:5-6; 30:3; 31:27, 31; 50:4-5; Ezekiel 37:15-25; Hosea 1:11; 3:5.
Gentiles, too, will be beneficiaries of God's saving action:
Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:10; 14:1; 25:6-7; 42:1, 4, 6; 49:6; 55:5; 56:6-8; Jeremiah 3:17; Micah 4:1-2; Zechariah 2:11.
Gentiles also needed to be saved — to be restored to God's presence and favor.
Gentile salvation is closely connected to Israel's end-time restoration.

[4] The "day of the LORD" refers to God's judgment on Babylon (Isa 13:6, 9); Egypt (Jer 46:10; Eze 30:3); Israel (Am 5:18); Edom and other nations (Ob 1:15); Judah (Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; Zeph 1:7, 14; Mal 4:5); the surrounding nations (Joel 3:14). Judgment generally takes the form of foreign invasion. In Joel 1:15 (and probably also in 2:1, 11) judgment entails a locust invasion.
Judgment Day in the New Testament is often called "the day of Christ" (or similar), because he is the Judge (1Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2Cor 1:14; Php 1:6, 10; 2:16; cf. 2Pet 3:10, 12).

Forgiveness and cleansing from sin are prerequisites for Israel's restoration as God's holy people:
Isaiah 1:18; 43:25; 44:22; 53:5-6, 8, 10-12; 55:7; Jeremiah 31:34; 33:8; 50:20; Ezekiel 36:25, 33; Joel 3:21; Micah 7:18-19; Zechariah 3:9; 13:1.[5]
These prophecies anticipate the New Covenant's provision of forgiveness and justification through Christ.
See Romans 4:4-8; Hebrews 8:8-12.

The recurrence of these themes throughout the OT prophets is surely significant:
The Holy Spirit, who inspired the prophets (1Pet 1:10-11), clearly wants us to understand Jesus' redemptive accomplishments in terms of these great themes.
Indeed, the New Testament itself concludes with a vision of a "new Jerusalem" (Revelation 21 – 21).
Much of that city's description derives from Isaiah and Ezekiel, showing the fulfillment of their prophecies.
John's vision therefore depicts what Jesus has finally accomplished:

1. The promised end-time restoration of Israel/Jerusalem.
2. The definitive deliverance and regathering of God's people from exile.
3. Their reconciliation to God and readmittance into his presence.

[5] This link between restoration from exile and God's forgiveness is clearly affirmed in Psalm 85:1-3 (KJV, MEV).

Restoration in Isaiah

Isaiah prophesied from about 740 until after 701 BC.
Chapters 1 to 35 have, for their background, the brutal Assyrian invasions:
From 733 to 721 BC the Assyrians dismembered the northern kingdom of Israel and deported many of its inhabitants. The capital, Samaria, fell in 722 following a three-year siege.
Following the failed Assyrian campaign against Jerusalem in 701 BC (related in chaps. 36 – 37), Isaiah foretells the future ascendancy of Babylon (chap. 39).
Babylon became leading power some 90 years later with the sacking of the Assyrian capital, Nineveh, in 612 BC.
In Isaiah's final section (chaps. 40 – 66) the prophetic focus shifts to the distant future — to Judah's eventual return from exile in Babylon.

In Isaiah, salvation entails a return or gathering of people to God's holy mountain — to Mt. Zion.
See Isaiah 11:9; 27:13; 56:7; 57:13; 65:25; 66:20.
Additionally, Israel's release from captivity is patterned after the first great deliverance in the Exodus — the new deliverance will be, as it were, a second and greater Exodus (see Isaiah 11:11, 15-16).[6]
A related theme is that of the Remnant — those of the nation who survive God's judgments:
With evildoers destroyed, the righteous remnant alone will remain, or return from exile to repossess their land and city.[7]
This remnant concept (though not always the term itself) is found in other OT prophets as well.[8]

Isaiah's first son was called Shear-Jashub, which means "a remnant shall return" (Isa 7:3).
The name, given prior to the Assyrian campaigns against the northern kingdom, anticipates both judgment (God's people will be reduced to a remnant) and grace (that remnant <u>will</u> return).
See Isaiah 10:20-23, where *shear-jashub* appears twice in the Hebrew text, in vss. 21 and 22.
His younger brother was Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, which means "quick to the plunder, swift to the spoil" (Isa 8:3).
The name portends the plundering of Damascus and Samaria by the king of Assyria (Isa 8:4).
Isaiah and his sons were "signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts" (Isa 8:18).

Note that first-century Christian Jews viewed themselves as constituting this faithful remnant (Rom 11:1-6).
The Hebrews author addressed these believing Jews, urging them to remain faithful in view of God's imminent judgment on their nation (cf. Heb 10:25, 30, 39).
Revelation 7:1-8 shows the first-century Jewish remnant being sealed by God to exempt them from coming judgment (cf. Eze 9:4-6). 12,000 were sealed from each Israelite tribe, 144,000 in total.[9]
This Jewish remnant constituted a sort of "firstfruits" of God's great harvest of people for his kingdom.
See James 1:18 (cf. 1:1); Revelation 14:4.

[6] This Second Exodus motif is also found in Jeremiah 16:14-15; 23:7-8.
[7] See Isaiah 1:9, 27; 4:2-3; 6:13; 10:20-23; 11:11, 16; 28:5; 37:31-32; 46:3; 49:6; 57:13; 59:20; 65:8-10, 13-15; 66:2, 5.
[8] See: Jer 3:14; 23:3; 31:7-9; 50:20; Eze 9:4-6; Dan 12:1; Joel 2:32; Am 5:15; 9:8; Ob 1:17; Mic 2:12; 4:7; 5:7-8; 7:18; Zeph 2:7, 9; 3:12-13; Hag 1:12, 14; 2:2; Zec 8:6, 11-12; 13:8-9; Mal 4:2.
[9] Members come from all twelve Israelite tribes, showing that OT promises anticipating the final reunion of both kingdoms — Israel and Judah — have been fulfilled in Christ and under the New Covenant.
See Isaiah 11:12-13; Jeremiah 3:18; 23:5-6; 30:3; 31:27, 31; 50:4-5; Ezekiel 37:15-25; Hosea 1:11; 3:5.

Isaiah 1:1 – 2:4

Date: About 740 BC.[10]

Isaiah's prologue initiates themes that recur throughout his prophecies:

Indictment for sin, divine judgment, salvation for the remnant, Jerusalem's final restoration.

- Only a small remnant will survive God's judgments (1:9).
- Jerusalem is likened to Sodom and Gomorrah (1:10).
- God offers forgiveness even for deep-rooted sins, but they must learn to obey him (1:18-20).
- The city will be judged and purged of evildoers (1:24-25).
- Though now a harlot (1:21), Jerusalem will again be called "the city of righteousness, the faithful city" (1:26).
- Isaiah 2:1-4 shows Jerusalem's definitive "last days" (MEV) restoration, with its temple becoming a worship focus for the Gentiles. They will seek out Israel's God (cf. 11:10).
  God's law and word will be universally proclaimed, leading to peace and productivity.

In Revelation, Jerusalem is called "Sodom" (Rev 11:8) and a "harlot" (Rev 17:1, 5, 15-16; 19:2, ASV).[11]
This city is judged (Revelation 18), and in her place comes a new Jerusalem.
New Jerusalem is a "holy city", a faithful Bride (Rev 21:2, 9-10); evildoers are excluded (Rev 21:27; 22:15);
only those washed clean through Christ are admitted (Rev 22:14; cf. 7:14).

Isaiah 4:2-6

- The Lord's "branch" (4:2) — a reference to restored Judah, or possibly to the Messiah (cf. 11:1; 52:3).
- Jerusalem will be inhabited by a holy remnant, whose names are "recorded for life" in the city (4:3).[12]
- God will cleanse its inhabitants of sin (4:4).
- God himself will be present to guide and protect, as in Israel's desert wanderings (4:5-6).

The prophecies of Isaiah 9 – 12:

Date: About 730 BC.

These prophecies are set against the brutality of the Assyrian invasion of Israel in 733 BC.
Assyria had annexed the northern half of Israel (Galilee) as well as the region east of the Jordan (Gilead).
Many Israelites had been deported (2Kgs 15:29).

Isaiah 9:1-7

Against this seeming hopelessness, Isaiah prophesies concerning a Davidic king who will arise to crush the Assyrian oppressor. He will rule with justice over God's people forever (9:6-7; cf. 16:5).

Which leads to an important point:
In foretelling deliverance from the Assyrians and other oppressors, Isaiah intersperses messianic prophecies.
For that final King will be the One who definitively delivers the people of God from their enemies.

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[10] Isaiah's prophecies are for the most part impossible to accurately date. The kings mentioned in Isaiah 1:1 reigned as follows: Uzziah, 792-740 BC; Jotham, 750-735 BC; Ahaz, 735-715 BC; Hezekiah, 715-686 BC. (Not including their time as co-regents.)
See page 34, Appendix: The dating of Isaiah's prophecies.

[11] In Revelation 11:8, Jerusalem ("where their Lord was crucified") is called "Sodom and Egypt" and "the great city".
Later we see that the great city and Babylon are one and the same (Rev 18:10, 21). Then the Harlot herself is identified as Babylon and as the great city (Rev 17:5, 18). Therefore, Jerusalem = Sodom = Egypt = the great city = Babylon = the Harlot.
The point being this: Jerusalem has become the sworn enemy of God's people — their chief persecutor (Rev 17:6; 18:20, 24).

[12] All those recorded as true citizens of the city. See Psalm 69:28; 87:6-7; Luke 10:20; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 17:8; 20:12, 15.

Isaiah 10:5-25

Assyria was the "rod" of God's anger sent against his own people (10:5-6), but that nation went well beyond God's intent (10:7).

When God has finished employing them to discipline his people, he will punish the Assyrians for their haughty defiance (10:12-19, 25).

With all this being tied to the saving of a chastened remnant within the nation (10:20-25).

Isaiah 11

Further prophecies concerning the Davidic king (cf. 7:14; 9:6-7):

With David's line cut down in judgment, this king will arise as a shoot from Jesse's "stump" (11:1).[13]

Endowed with God's Spirit, he will rule over the restored nation wisely and with justice (11:2-5).

God's people will enjoy peace and security on his "holy mountain" — in Jerusalem (11:6-9).

The Gentiles will themselves rally to and seek guidance from this king (11:10; cf. 2:3).

His resting place (where he lives) will be "filled with glory" (11:10, EXB; cf. 4:5).

God's people will be gathered as in a second Exodus, and their former dominion will be restored (11:11-16).

The lasting <u>peace</u> to be enjoyed in the messianic age is a prominent theme in Isaiah:

International relations will be transformed (2:1-4); foreign oppression will cease (9:1-7); former enemies (Egyptians, Assyrians, Israelites) will be reconciled as they worship God together (19:23-25); nothing will threaten God's people gathered to Jerusalem (35:9-10; 65:19-25).

Isaiah 11:6-9 depicts perfect harmony between creatures that are <u>natural enemies</u>: predators and prey.

How might this relate to the prophecies above?

Answer: The imagery speaks of conditions in Messiah's kingdom: former enemies will dwell harmoniously together under his rule.

Isaiah tells us that even the Gentiles will rally to and seek spiritual guidance from this king (11:10).

So, the prophecy is concerned with harmony between Israelites and their (former) enemies.[14]

Recall that the background to these prophecies is the Assyrian devastation of the northern kingdom.

Fulfillment:

It is surely significant that Paul in Romans 15:12 cites Isaiah 11:10 (LXX) to support his assertion that Gentile salvation was God's intention all along (cf. Rom 15:9-12).

In context, Paul is urging his readers to accept one another despite their differences (Rom 15:1ff.).

Such unity will bring praise to God, who (in Christ) has fulfilled his promises to the patriarchs (Rom 15:7-8).

With the Gentiles brought in, they too will praise God for his mercy (Rom 15:9).

Paul viewed Isaiah's prophecies as being fulfilled in his day through the gospel, as the "knowledge of the LORD" (Isa 11:9) spread throughout the world. Diverse groups were becoming united under the lordship of Christ.

In church life, the natural hostility between Jews and Gentiles was being steadily eroded as they worshipped God together (Eph 2:14-15).[15] Indeed, the Church is Christ's "resting place" (Isa 11:10) — his glorious new temple.

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[13] He will be a new and better son of Jesse, a greater David.

[14] The absence of ferocious animals in Isaiah 35:9 and Ezekiel 34:25 similarly depicts the peace and security to be enjoyed by God's redeemed people.

[15] Many Christians believe that Isaiah 11 is foretelling some future transformation of Nature, where the Curse is reversed and predators are transformed (back) into herbivores. As explained above, the prophet is dealing with far more weighty matters.

Isaiah 13 – 14

Date: About 725 BC?

These chapters initiate a series of prophecies against the nations, beginning with Babylon (13:1 – 14:23) and Assyria (14:24-27) and extending to smaller nations — Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Cush, Egypt, etc.

- Though Assyria was the world power then dismembering the northern kingdom, Isaiah anticipates the ultimate ascendancy of Babylon and that nation's eventual conquest by the Medes under Cyrus (13:17).
- The "day of the LORD" (Isa 13:6, 9) is his coming against Babylon with a foreign army (13:3-9).
  Note the cosmic imagery used to describe Babylon's demise (13:10; cf. 34:4).
- Babylon's fall is linked to the restoration of Israel:
  Yahweh will gather and resettle the exiles, and foreigners will join the restored nation (14:1).
  The restored nation will rule over her former oppressors (14:2; cf. 11:14; 49:23; 60:12; Mic 5:4-9).

Isaiah 15 – 16

Date: About 718 BC.

Isaiah prophesies about the judgment that is soon to overtake Moab — Israel's neighbor and frequent enemy.
Refugees from Moab will seek safety and asylum in Judah from the invading Assyrians (16:2-4).[16]
Proud Moab is advised, in her time of crisis, to submit to the king in Jerusalem (16:1; cf. 2Kgs 3:4).
Ultimate deliverance from injustice and oppression will come only through God's appointed king, to whom Moab and all others must submit (16:4-5).

Isaiah 24 – 27

As elsewhere in Isaiah, the various judgments of this section relate to the time when God will deliver his exiled people and gather them to Jerusalem.[17]

- God's judgment seems to be directed against the world's nations generally (24:1-22).
  Such judgment will clearly demonstrate that Yahweh "reigns on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem" (24:23).
- In this section, the phrase "on/in that day" (24:21; 25:9; 26:1; 27:1-2, 12-13) refers to the time of God's judgment and salvation:
  The time of salvation, when God delivers his people from exile and oppression (25:9; cf. Isaiah 12).
  The time of judgment upon the nation's enemies: Moab (25:10-12); "Leviathan" (27:1).
- The righteous will enter Jerusalem (26:1-2); Israel itself will flourish (27:6).
  Indeed, so many will be gathered that the nation will have to be enlarged to accommodate them all (26:15; cf. 9:3; 49:19-20; 54:2-3; Zec 2:4; 10:10).
- God had not dealt with his people as harshly as he had with their oppressors (27:7).
  God shows restraint even as he disciplines his people with exile (27:8).
  Through such discipline they will be purged of idolatry (27:9).
- God will "thresh" (judge) in order to separate out and gather his people from Assyria and Egypt.
  The exiles will be gathered with the sound of a great (Jubilee) trumpet.
  They will return to worship Yahweh on his "holy mountain at Jerusalem" (27:12-13; cf. 11:6-12).
- On Mount Zion (cf. 24:23) God will prepare a feast <u>for all nations</u>; he will destroy death and wipe away tears and remove his people's disgrace from the earth (25:6-8).

[16] Moab's destruction came about with the Assyrian invasion under Sargon II in 715 BC. Isaiah prophesied some three years prior, around 718 BC (cf. Isa 16:14).

[17] This section is often called "The Little Apocalypse" because it supposedly deals with universal judgment at the end of the world. But enough evidence is presented here to show the passage's true significance.

Note the death/resurrection language employed here (Isaiah 25:7-8; 26:19):

> [7] *And [God] will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples,*
> *the veil that is spread over all nations.*
> [8] *He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,*
> *and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth.*
>
> [26:19] *Your dead shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing*
> *for joy! … and the earth will give birth to the dead.*

Israel's return to God's holy mountain is here tied to the termination of death itself.
"Covering" and "veil" (25:7) might refer to a burial shroud (the sheet in which a corpse is wrapped for burial), and/or to the veils that cover the faces of mourners at a funeral.
Either way, the references are to death and to the gloom associated with it.

Is Isaiah's language here merely a vivid description of national restoration — as in Ezekiel 37:1-14?
This might perhaps be the case with the latter verse (Isa 26:19).
But this cannot be so for the former promise (Isa 25:7-8), since all nations are beneficiaries.

Moreover, Paul's application of this promise to the final Resurrection shows that he viewed it as no mere metaphor: "Death is swallowed up in victory" (1Cor 15:54) derives directly from Isaiah 25:8.
It seems that Paul regarded the Resurrection as tied to Israel's end-time restoration/salvation.[18]

As I explain elsewhere, the Resurrection is indeed to be understood in terms of Man's release from captivity, of the end of his exile, and of his readmittance into God's presence in heaven.[19]

Isaiah 32 – 33

Date: 702 BC.
Isaiah again relates the final messianic kingdom to Jerusalem's deliverance from the Assyrian threat:

- The messianic king will reign justly and appoint godly leaders over his subjects (32:1-2).
- His people will be responsive to him, becoming wise and godly (32:3-8; cf. 6:9-10; 29:9-12).
- The complacent women of Jerusalem will tremble as the invading Assyrian army destroys the land and its crops (32:9-13). This will transpire in just over one year's time (32:10).[20]
- Ultimately God will save his people; he will pour out his life-imparting Spirit, reversing the devastation caused by the invaders (32:15).
  Justice and righteousness, and quietness and confidence (32:16-17), will be the lot of God's people.
- The destructive, traitorous Assyrians will finally be destroyed and betrayed (33:1).[21]
- The consequences of the Assyrian invasion are described in 33:7-9.

[18] According to Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, "Isaiah 25:8 is cited in rabbinic literature as a divine promise that death would be no more in the age to come." Section on 1 Corinthians 15:54. In: G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson, editors, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), p. 747. In Jewish parlance, "age to come" denoted the future messianic age and kingdom. Undoubtedly this interpretation is correct, for Isaiah ties death's destruction to the time when Yahweh will reign on Mount Zion (24:23; 25:6-8). All nations will enjoy these blessings in God's future kingdom.
[19] See my article on this website: *Resurrection represents the end of Man's exile*, pp. 9-11.
[20] Fulfilled with Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and siege of Jerusalem in 701 BC.
[21] Hezekiah paid Sennacherib to withdraw its army (2Kgs 18:14), but the Assyrians still attacked and demanded total surrender. Hence the "you traitor" in Isaiah 33:1, and the "covenants are broken" in 33:8.

- The ungodly in Jerusalem will be afraid, sensing that the God who dwells therein is acting in judgment against them (33:14; cf. 32:9-13).
- Zion will finally be inhabited by a righteous remnant (33:15-24):
  They will see their king (33:17; cf. 32:1).
  Their enemies will be no more (33:18-19); Jerusalem will be eternally secure (33:20-21).
  Yahweh himself will be their judge, lawgiver, king, and savior (33:22).
  No one in Jerusalem will be sick, for everyone living there will have their sins forgiven (33:24).

Isaiah 34 – 35

God's deliverance of his people is tied to his judgment of the nations:

- God is angry with all nations and will destroy them (34:1-4).
- Edom especially — symbolic of all God's enemies — will be totally destroyed (34:5-6, 9-15; cf. 63:1-6).
- God acts in vengeance "for the cause of Zion" (34:8).
- The lot of God's people will be completely transformed — like the desert after rain (35:1-2).
- This deliverance anticipates the work of Yahweh's Servant (35:5-6a; cf. 42:7; Lk 4:18; 7:22).
- Only the redeemed and holy will enter restored Zion — no unclean or wicked person (35:8-10).
- Gladness and joy will replace sorrow and sighing (35:10).

Isaiah 40 – 66

In this, Isaiah's final section, the prophetic focus shifts to the distant future — to Judah's eventual return from exile in Babylon. Isaiah here prophesies of events that would transpire 140+ years after his own death.[22]

Cyrus, whom Isaiah twice mentions by name, will be God's agent to deliver the people and rebuild Jerusalem (41:2, 25; 44:28; 45:1-5, 13; 46:11; 48:14-15).[23]
Yet this final section looks beyond Cyrus.
Isaiah's prophecies are punctuated with several "Servant Songs" that foretell the coming of One who will definitively save and restore. These Songs are found in Isaiah 42:1-7; 49:1-9; 50:4-9; 52:13 – 53:12.[24]

Yahweh's Servant will save by dealing with the root cause of exile — the people's sin (Isaiah 53; cf. 50:1):

- Restoration to God's presence will necessitate their forgiveness (40:2; 43:25; 44:22; 55:7).
- The Servant's saving work will extend to the Gentiles (42:1, 4, 6; 49:6; 52:15; 55:4-5; 56:6-8).
- He will bring Jubilee release for the captives (61:1-2).
- Great blessing will attend restored Zion and her inhabitants (54:1-3, 11-17; 60:1-22; 65:17-25).
  Yahweh himself will return to dwell there (52:8).
  Gentile nations will be attracted to her splendor; everyone will be invited to partake of her blessings — even the wicked upon their repentance (55:1-7).
- Instead of the gloom and sorrow of exile there will be great joy (51:3; 55:12; 65:19; cf. 35:10).

[22] Isaiah in this section anticipates Judah's future exile in Babylon even though Assyria (not Babylon) was the dominant world power of his day. According to tradition, Isaiah died by being sawn in two during the reign of King Manasseh (cf. Heb 11:37).
[23] The unity of Isaiah, often denied by liberal scholars, is clearly demonstrated by the theme of Jerusalem's restoration that pervades the entire book — from chapter 1 on.
[24] To which we might add Isaiah 61:1-3 and 63:1-6, since these, too, relate to the work of Yahweh's Servant.

- So altered will Jerusalem's circumstances be that it will be as if new heavens and a new earth have come about — a whole new order (65:17; 66:22).

Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12

Isaiah's fourth Servant Song shows the Servant's death to be the means by which the people's guilt will be removed:

- The Servant will be "pierced" and "crushed" on account of the people's sin (53:5).
- He will bear the "chastisement" (punishment) due to them, so that they might enjoy peace (53:5).
- He will be "cut off out of the land of the living" for their sin (53:8) — killed despite his own innocence (53:9).
- It will be Yahweh's will to "crush" him in order to make his life "an offering for guilt" (53:10).
- The Servant will be raised from death and restored to divine favor (Isaiah 53:11a, WEB):
  After the suffering of his soul, he will see <u>the light</u> and be satisfied.[25]
- His death will result in the nation's acquittal:
  He will "justify the many, for he shall bear their iniquities" (53:11b, MEV).
- In his death "he bore the sin of many and made intercession for the transgressors" (53:12, MEV).
- Isaiah 52:13-15 (and 53:12) relates the Servant's vindication and exaltation before the nations.

These prophecies are truly remarkable:

- Israel's exile — her expulsion from the land — represented the nation's death.[26]
  The Servant is the one true (the ideal, perfect) Israelite. In fact, he is even called "Israel" (Isa 49:3).[27]
  So, in Isaiah 53, "Israel" the person substitutes for "Israel" the nation.
  The Servant's death will represent the ultimate exile; his resurrection will be the ultimate restoration.
  He substitutes for the nation: his death/exile on behalf of Israel means that the nation will be finally restored, not destroyed.
- Isaiah's prophecy shows how the Law's sin-offerings will be finally fulfilled:
  No mere animal can ever atone for sin — rather, the Servant will himself substitute for sinners, enduring and thereby appeasing God's wrath (propitiation).
  That's how God can forgive people (e.g., Ex 34:7; Ps 32:1-5; 51:1-9; 85:1-3; 103:3, 10-12; 130:1ff.).
- All this was fulfilled in Jesus' substitutionary death on the cross (2 Corinthians 5:21, my translation):
  God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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[25] The WEB here follows the Dead Sea Scrolls text of Isaiah 53:11 which reads: "from the labor of his soul, he will see <u>light and</u> he will be satisfied." The Masoretic text omits the underlined words.
Several other translations have also chosen to follow the DSS variant: CSB, EHV, EXB, NABRE, NCB, NIV, NRSV.
That "light" was part of the original text is suggested by its presence also in the (pre-Christian) Greek Septuagint translation.
See the online article by Jeff A. Benner: *The Great Isaiah Scroll and the Masoretic Text*, https://www.ancient-hebrew.org/dss/great-isaiah-scroll-and-the-masoretic-text.htm.

[26] Moses, in Deuteronomy, anticipates Israel's future exile and portrays it as the nation's death. Disobedience will cause Israel to "perish" or be destroyed (Dt 4:26; 6:15; 7:4; 8:19-20; 11:17; 28:20; 45, 48, 51, 61, 63; 30:18).
As Kenneth Turner observes, "The people will continue to exist physically in exile; yet, as a single entity, Israel is said to 'perish' or 'be destroyed.' So, it is not Israel as an historical or socio-religious people, but Israel as Yahweh's elect son and servant (Dt 1:31; 7:6; 14:1) that is put to death. Exile constitutes the death of Israel as a nation in covenant [with Yahweh]."
Kenneth J. Turner, quoted by Jason S. DeRouchie in *Why the Third Day? The Promise of Resurrection in All of Scripture*, https://jasonderouchie.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/2019-Why-the-Third-Day-Resurrection-DeRouchie.pdf.

[27] Sometimes the "servant" refers to the nation as a whole. See Isaiah 41:8-9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:1-2, 21; 45:4.
However, it's clear that an individual is also often intended: In Isaiah 49:1-7 the true Servant — called "Israel" (49:3) — has a mission to restore Israel the nation and, further, to bring salvation to the Gentiles. The Servant of 49:7 is the same Person as the messianic Servant of 52:13 – 53:12.

Charles Ellicott comments concerning this verse:

> God dealt with Christ, not as though He were a sinner, like other men, but as though He were sin itself, absolutely identified with it.[28]

- The Servant will die "for the transgression of my people" (53:8) — for Israel.
  Yet his work will benefit the nations too:
  Kings and nations will be awe-struck by his transformation from suffering Servant into glorious and exalted Savior — when they learn of his true dignity (52:13-15).
  Paul cites the latter part of Isaiah 52:15 in connection with his desire to preach the gospel to those who have never before heard it — see Romans 15:21.
- Thus will the Servant's saving work extend to the Gentiles; they too will be gathered to Jerusalem (Isa 49:6; 56:6-8; 1Pet 2:24-25). But the "unclean" will never enter the city (Isa 52:1).

Paul's application of Isaiah's prophecies

Paul viewed Isaiah's restoration prophecies as being, for the most part, fulfilled in his own day through the gospel. We can see this from the way he relates Isaiah's prophecies to his own ministry to the Gentiles, and to the first-century responses of Jews and Gentiles to the gospel:
Acts 13:47; Romans 9:27-29, 33; 10:11, 15-16, 20-21; 15:12, 21; 2 Corinthians 6:1-2; Galatians 4:26-27.

[28] From Ellicott's *Commentary for English Readers*, notes for 2 Corinthians 5. Via the Bible Hub website: https://biblehub.com/commentaries/ellicott/2_corinthians/5.htm.

Restoration in Jeremiah

Jeremiah prophesied from 627 to 586 BC — a century after the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel.
This was a turbulent period, with the rise of Babylon at the expense of Assyria.
Nineveh fell in 612 BC. In 601 BC Judah came under Babylonian rule.
There were three deportations under Nebuchadnezzar — in 597, 586 and 581 BC (Jer 52:28-30).[29]
Jeremiah witnessed the first two deportations.

Jeremiah 3:6-18

Date: ca. 615 BC.
God indicts Judah for imitating Israel's sinful practices — practices that had led to the northern kingdom's exile over a century earlier (3:6-10).
Judah's repentance during the religious reforms of Josiah (628-622 BC) had been superficial (3:10).
God commissions Jeremiah to call the Israelites, exiled and scattered among the nations to the north, to repent and return to the One who is their true Lord (3:12-14).
God himself will restore a remnant from the exiled Israelites:
"I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion" (3:14).
He will give them good leaders and prosper them in the land (3:15-16).
At that time Israel and Judah will both be gathered from exile and reestablished in their own land (3:18), and the Gentile nations themselves will come to seek Yahweh in Jerusalem:
"At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart" (3:17).

Jeremiah 22:24-30

Yahweh declares that King Jehoiachin will be exiled, and none of his descendants will sit on David's throne.
In March 597 BC, the Babylonians deported Jehoiachin and 10,000 of the city's inhabitants and carried off the temple treasures (2Kgs 24:13-15; Jer 24:1).
Nebuchadnezzar placed Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, on the throne.
King Zedekiah ruled in Jerusalem for 11 years, until the city's destruction in August 586 BC.

Jeremiah 25

Date: 605 BC.
God will judge and destroy Judah and the surrounding nations through his servant Nebuchadnezzar (25:9).
After 70 years, Babylon in turn will be judged (25:12-14).

[29] Jehoiakim reigned for 11 years (609 to 598 BC). Eight years into his reign (601 BC), Judah came under Babylonian rule.
Then, after three years as Nebuchadnezzar's vassal (598 BC), Jehoiakim decided to rebel (2Kgs 24:1; Dan 1:1).
Nebuchadnezzar responded by sending a punitive army. Jehoiakim died around this time, although the exact circumstances of his death remain uncertain. (Compare 2 Kings 24:6, 2 Chronicles 36:6, Jeremiah 22:18-19, and Daniel 1:1-2.)
His son Jehoiachin reigned for just 3 months (December 598 to mid-March 597 BC) before surrendering to Nebuchadnezzar (2Kgs 24:8-12). Jehoiachin and 10,000 of his subjects were then deported to Babylon (2Kgs 24:14).
Ezekiel, and perhaps Daniel and his friends, were among those exiled around this time — either before the siege or at the end of it. The traditional date for Daniel's exile (605 BC) is probably too early. See Kurt Simmons' comments in *Adumbrations* (Carlsbad, NM: Biblical Publishing Company, 2009), pp. 33-38, 47-48.

Jeremiah 23:3-8; 30:1 – 33:26

Prophecies of the nation's final regathering from exile and restoration to their land:

- Jeremiah prophesies concerning a Davidic king whom God will raise up to reign over the restored nation (23:5-6; 30:9; 33:15-16).
  Both Judah and Israel will return and be reunited as one nation (23:6; 31:31; cf. 3:18).
  The name of the king, and of Jerusalem itself, will be: "The LORD is our righteousness" (23:6; 33:16).
- God will gather his people in a new and greater Exodus (23:7-8; cf. 16:14-15; Isa 11:11, 15-16).
- God will establish with his restored people a New Covenant, different from the failed Mosaic covenant.
  In this new relationship, Yahweh will write his law of their hearts so that each person will truly know him, and he will completely forgive their sins (31:31-34; 33:8).
  And he will give them singleness of heart to obey him (24:7; 32:39).
- Despite all their wickedness, God will never finally reject his people (31:35-37; 33:23-26).

Even while Jerusalem was under siege by the Babylonian army (in 587 BC), the Lord directed Jeremiah to redeem a parcel of land in Anathoth from his cousin Hanamel (chap. 32).
This was intended to show that following the judgment of exile, God would ultimately gather the Judahites back to their land (32:37), and normal civic life would return (32:15, 42-44).
He will again be their God, and they his people (32:38).

Restoration in Ezekiel

Ezekiel was exiled to Babylon in 597 BC. He was from a family of priests (Eze 1:3).

Here is a brief outline of his prophecies:

1. Chapters 1 – 3 (July 593 BC):
   Ezekiel's inaugural vision was God's call to him to preach and prophesy to his fellow exiles in Babylon.
   Ezekiel prophesied from 593 to 571 BC.
2. Chapters 4 – 24 (593 to 587 BC): Pronouncements of judgment on Judah and Jerusalem.
3. Chapters 25 – 32 (587 to 585 BC): Pronouncements of judgment on the gloating nations:
   On Ammon, Moab, Edom, Philistia, Tyre, Sidon, and Egypt.[30]
   The prophecy of 29:17-21 intrudes here: this is Ezekiel's final message, given in April 571 BC.
4. Chapters 33 – 39 (from 585 BC): The focus returns to Judah.
   33:21 is a pivotal verse: A fugitive (in January 585 BC) informs Ezekiel about the fall of Jerusalem.
   With this news, all of Ezekiel's previous prophecies were fulfilled and vindicated, thereby affirming his prophetic ministry (cf. 24:25-27).
   His prophetic focus now shifts to messages of hope and restoration.
   Exception: Chapter 35 is a pronouncement of judgment on neighboring Edom.
5. Chapters 40 – 48 (April 573 BC): Ezekiel's vision of the temple, land and city restored.

Ezekiel 8 – 11

In September 592 BC Ezekiel was transported in a vision to Jerusalem. God shows him the idolatrous practices that were taking place within the temple itself (chap. 8).

Ezekiel is shown God's judgment falling upon the city's inhabitants (chap. 9). The godly within the city receive a mark on their foreheads to exempt them from judgment; all others are killed without mercy (9:4-6).

The prophet is then shown God's glory departing from the Jerusalem temple (chap. 10).

In 11:1-13 judgment is pronounced on the inhabitants of Jerusalem who, with the Babylonian threat receding, had grown complacent. But God will bring judgment upon them and drive them far away (11:7-12).

In 11:14-20 God promises restoration for Ezekiel's fellow exiles — whom the Jerusalemites had written off as being far away from, and forsaken by, God (11:15). Though indeed driven far from the temple, Yahweh had himself become their sanctuary in exile — present among them to bless and preserve (11:16).

In time God will regather them to their land. Idolatry will cease. He will grant them a new heart to obey him. They will again be his people, and he their God (11:17-20).

Ezekiel 34; 36 – 37

Following Jerusalem's fall (in 586 BC), Ezekiel's messages included promises of restoration (chaps. 34; 36 – 37; 40 – 48) interspersed with threats of judgment against Edom and Gog (chaps. 35; 38 – 39).

- God will, as a shepherd, gather his exiled people to the land (34:11-24).
  He will also place "David" over them as their shepherd (34:23-24).
- He will establish a "covenant of peace" with them (34:25; 37:26).
  This peace (Hebrew: *shalom*) will entail a restored relationship with God and a life blessed by him — a secure, full, and prosperous life. With no threatening wild animals (34:25).

[30] Judah's neighbors gloated when the Babylonian army besieged and destroyed Jerusalem and sent its inhabitants into exile: Ammon (see 25:3, 6), Moab (25:8), Edom (25:12), Philistia (25:15), and Tyre (26:2). See also Ezekiel 28:24-26.

- God will restore the nation for the sake of his own holy name and reputation (36:22-23).
- In so doing he will cleanse them from sin, grant them a new and responsive heart, and impart his Spirit to enable them to obey him (36:25-27; 37:23).
- This restoration will be akin to a resurrection of people who have long been dead (37:1-14).
- Both Judah and Israel will return from exile and be reunited as one nation (37:15-22).
- "David" will be prince and shepherd over the restored nation — forever (37:24-25).
- God will dwell in their midst in his "sanctuary". He will be their God, and they his (holy) people (37:27-28).

Ezekiel 40 – 48

Ezekiel's received this vision in April 573 BC — in the 25th year of his own exile and 13 years after the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem (40:1).[31]

This vision concerns the restoration of Israel as a purified, holy nation, and it includes a detailed account of a glorious new temple:

- The new temple's courts, gates, rooms, and structure (chaps. 40 – 42).
- The return of God's glory to the temple and his promise to dwell there forever (43:1-9).
- Various regulations (chaps. 43 – 46).
- The temple's river (47:1-12).
- The new nation's external boundaries and tribal allotments (47:13 – 48:29).
- Jerusalem's gates (48:30-34).
- Jerusalem will be renamed *The LORD Is There* (48:35). God will again dwell with his people (cf. 37:27).

John's vision of the New Jerusalem (in Revelation 21 – 22) draws on Ezekiel's last vision as follows:

- The New Jerusalem's 12 gates — three on each side, each gate associated with one Israelite tribe (Rev 21:12-13; cf. Eze 48:30-35).
- The city's cubic dimensions (Rev 21:16) recall those of the inner sanctuary (the Most Holy Place) of the tabernacle, of Solomon's temple, and of Ezekiel's idealized temple (1Kgs 6:20; Eze 41:4).
  The significance is obvious — the entire city is God's new "inner sanctuary" where he sits enthroned.
- The "river of the water of life" flowing from God's throne in the city, with the tree of life on each bank bearing fruit every month and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations (Rev 22:1-2).
  In Ezekiel's vision (47:1-12), the "water from the sanctuary" (47:12) gets deeper and becomes a swimmable river (47:5). The river flows eastwards and into the Dead Sea (47:8).
  Wherever it flows it supports life — the salt water becomes fresh and numerous creatures thrive (47:9-10).
  But there will be areas left untouched and lifeless (47:11).
  Fruit trees of all kinds grow on the river's banks (47:7, 12) — reminiscent of Eden.
  Watered by the life-enhancing sanctuary water, these trees bear fruit every month, and their leaves are for healing (47:12).
- God is enthroned therein; his people serve him there and "see his face" (Rev 22:3-4; cf. Eze 48:35).

[31] Apart from the brief prophecy of Ezekiel 29:17-21 (which was given in April 571 BC), this is the prophet's last recorded message.

Restoration in Hosea

Hosea 1:6-7, 10-11

Hosea's messages were directed primarily to the northern kingdom of Israel.
He prophesied during Israel's last years, prior to and during the nation's dismemberment by the Assyrians.
He was a contemporary of Isaiah and Micah.
Hosea was required to marry an adulterous wife, with their relationship reflecting God's own relationship with Israel.
As with other prophets, threats of judgment are interspersed with promises of restoration:

- God will abandon Israel. But he will deliver Judah from the Assyrians — and that not by conventional military means (1:6-7).
  God spared Judah in 722 BC, and he delivered them again in 701 BC (Isaiah 37).
- Despite Israel's looming exile, the promise to Abraham of numerous offspring will yet be fulfilled.
  The Israelites will again be God's people (1:10).
- Judah and Israel will ultimately be reunited under one leader (1:11).

Note that Paul (in Romans 9:25-26) relates Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 — promises of Israel's restoration — to the calling and ingathering of Gentiles through the gospel. God delights to call outsiders to himself.

Hosea 3:3-5

Hosea was to love and take Gomer back even as Yahweh loved the wayward Israelites.

- She must live with him, but there would be no sexual intimacy until she fully recommits herself to him.
  It would be a time of discipline and rededication (3:3-4).
  So also, Israel will remain in exile, deprived of kingship and religious worship.
- Ultimately the Israelites will "return and seek the LORD their God, and David their king," and thereby enjoy all his benefits (3:5). Having long been in revolt against the house of David, the Israelites will return and submit themselves to God's appointed Davidic ruler (cf. 1:11; Eze 37:21-24).[32]
  All this to take place in the "latter days" — in messianic times (cf. Isa 2:2).

Hosea 11:8-11

Yahweh expresses his extreme reluctance to give Israel up to judgment (11:8-9).
And he is determined to call a remnant back from exile to their own land (11:10-11).

Hosea 13:14

Amidst Yahweh's indictment of Israel, he appears to express a remarkable promise of restoration:

> *I shall ransom them from the power of Sheol; I shall redeem them from Death.*
> *O Death, where are your plagues? O Sheol, where is your sting?*

The nation had "died" through its Baal worship (Hos 13:1), but here God seemingly promises deliverance from Sheol (the grave) and Death.
Yahweh, throughout Hosea, expresses his reluctance to give Israel up to judgment (e.g., Hos 11:8-9).

[32] To truly belong to God's people and partake of his covenant blessings, one has to submit to his appointed king.

The above interpretation, however, may not be correct.
In view of the immediate context (i.e., concerning judgment about to fall on the northern kingdom),[33] it is more likely that 13:14 should be read negatively — as a pair of rhetorical questions and inviting Death and Sheol to do their worst:

Shall I ransom them from the power of Sheol? Shall I redeem them from Death?
[No, I will not!]
O Death, bring on your plagues! O Sheol, bring on your sting!
Compassion is hidden from my eyes.[34]

As the following verses (13:15-16) intimate, judgment and violent death would soon overtake Israel and her capital Samaria by the hand of the Assyrian invaders (733-721 BC).

Paul's positive rendering (in 1 Corinthians 15:55) is perhaps based on the Septuagint text.
In any case, Paul interprets Hosea's prophecy in the light of Jesus' death and resurrection — Jesus has absorbed death's power and sting, rendering death completely impotent.[35]
The death and resurrection of Jesus has ensured that "Israel" will be finally restored, not destroyed.

[33] The ESV's heading for this entire section of Hosea (chapter 13) is *The LORD's Relentless Judgment on Israel*.
[34] The NET Bible (New English Translation) supports this reading. Other versions that render this verse interrogatively include the AMP, CJB, ESV (2001 edition), EXB, LEB, LSB, NASB, NLT, and RSV.
[35] As Ciampa and Rosner note, "If in Hosea death is called upon to punish sin, Paul shows that such a role is no longer needed. [Death's sting has been] drained of potency." Section on 1 Corinthians 15:55. In: G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson, editors, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), p. 748.

Restoration in Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, and Zephaniah

Joel 2:28 – 3:21

Date: After the return from Babylon, perhaps ca. 500 BC.[36]

- "Afterward" — in the messianic era — God's Spirit will be poured out on all of his people (2:28-29).
  The Spirit's descent at Pentecost fulfills Joel's prophecy (Ac 2:17-18).
  So does his indwelling of New Covenant believers (Rom 8:9).
- The Day of the Lord will transpire then too, which Joel describes using cosmic imagery (2:30-31).
- At that time (notes Joel) those who call on God's name will be delivered:
  On Mt. Zion and in Jerusalem there will be "those who escape", "survivors" — a chosen remnant (2:32).
  Note how Peter goes on (in Acts 2:38-40) to urge his Jewish listeners to repent and be baptized in order to be delivered from the judgment to befall that wicked generation (in the War of 67-70 AD). Forgiveness and the gift of God's Spirit are for them and for all whom God calls to himself (Ac 2:39; cf. 2:21).
- Judah and Jerusalem's restoration will coincide with a time of judgment upon the nations (3:1-2):
  God will gather the nations to the Valley of Jehoshaphat near Jerusalem and there judge them for their mistreatment of his people (3:2).
  Here is Joel's graphic description of this judgment (Joel 3:14-16, WEB):

  > 14 *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!*
  > *For the day of Yahweh is near, in the valley of decision.*
  > 15 *The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.*
  > 16 *Yahweh will roar from Zion, and thunder from Jerusalem*.

- The nations' judgment will prove that God again dwells in Zion (3:17a).
- Restored Jerusalem will be holy; never again will she be invaded by foreigners (3:17b).
- Restored Judah will be exceedingly fruitful.
  Water will flow from the temple to water the desert (3:18; cf. Eze 47:1-12; Zec 14:8; Rev 22:1-2).
- Judah and Jerusalem will be inhabited forever.
  God will forgive his people's sin, and will dwell in their midst in Zion (3:20-21).

Amos 9

Date: Before 753 BC, 20+ years prior to the Assyrian invasions.

- God will judge and punish the northern kingdom (Israel), sending them into exile (9:1-10).
- But ultimately that nation will be restored. So too will Davidic kingship and empire (9:11-12).
  Israel's former extensive rule (enjoyed under David and Solomon) over their enemies ("Edom") and over tributary nations will be restored.[37] Amos is clearly reminding his northern audience that God's salvific purposes are tied to the house of David, which they had long rejected.
- The phrase "all the nations that bear my name" (9:12) anticipates God's <u>ownership</u> of the world's nations.
  Bearing (or being called by) God's name was a privilege belonging to his covenant people (Isa 43:7; 63:19), but someday the nations themselves will enjoy this privilege. They, too, will belong to God.[38]

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[36] References in Joel to the casting of lots for people and to Edom's violence against Judah (3:3, 19) suggest a date after the Babylonian conquest (cf. Ps 137:7; Ob 1:10-14). Mention of the temple — its priestly ministries and offerings, along with the call to come to God's house (1:13-14) — would seemingly require the rebuilt temple. References to the scattering of Israel among the nations and the restoration of Judah and Jerusalem (3:1-2) further suggest a post-exilic date.

[37] The territorial extent of David's victories and Solomon's reign are related in 2 Samuel 8:1-14 and 1 Kings 4:21, 24.
Note that "remnant of Edom" refers to those of that (hostile) nation who survive God's judgment (cf. Am 1:11-12).

[38] All this is fulfilled in Christ's heavenly rule, and in his gospel "conquest" of the nations. See Acts 15:14-18.

- Israel will return from exile and the ruined cities will be rebuilt (9:14). They will enjoy Edenic prosperity (9:13; cf. Joel 3:18); never again will they be uprooted from their land (9:15).

Obadiah

Date: After the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC (1:11), but before the Babylonian campaign against Edom in 551 BC.
Obadiah is a message of judgment on Edom. That nation had failed to help their Judahite brothers during the Babylonian crisis of 587-586 BC, siding instead with the invaders (1:10-14; cf. Ps 137:7; Eze 25:12; 35:5).
Edom initially escaped conquest by the Babylonians.
But Obadiah, along with other prophets, foretells their contrasting destinies: Zion will be finally restored, but Edom will be totally destroyed (cf. Lam 4:21-22; Ezekiel 35; Joel 3:19-20; Mal 1:2-5).

Obadiah's prophecies began to be fulfilled with the Babylonian campaign against Edom in 551 BC.[39]
Thereafter, the Edomites were gradually forced (ca. 550-400 BC) from their homeland by the Nabatean Arabs.

Here is a brief summary of Obadiah:

- A message from God to Israel: an envoy has been sent out, calling the nations to battle against Edom (1:1).
- Though feeling proud and secure in her mountain fortresses, Edom will be brought down (1:3-4).
- Edom will be utterly ransacked; her allies will betray her (1:5-7).
- Edom's famed wise men will be destroyed; there will be a great slaughter (1:8-9).
- The reason for God's judgment: the Edomites had failed to aid their Judahite brothers, even siding with the invaders (1:11; Ps 137:7); they had gloated over and taken advantage of Judah's misfortune (1:12-13); they had killed or handed over fleeing Judahite refugees (1:14).
- Edom's judgment points to the day of the Lord that will bring judgment on all nations (1:15).
  Edom stands as the archetype of all of Israel's enemies; all enemies will be judged.
- Those who seek refuge on Mount Zion (i.e., in God himself) will escape his judgment and will repossess the Promised Land (1:17). United Israel — including the northern tribes ("the house of Joseph") — will be God's agent to bring judgment on Edom; there will be no survivors (1:18).
- The Israelite remnant, including many currently far off in exile, will regain and occupy the full extent of the Promised Land (1:19-20).
- The final word: "… and the kingdom shall be the LORD's" (1:21b).
  God will rule over his people and over the nations.

Micah

Date: ca. 740 to 700 BC, during the reigns of Jotham (ended in 735 BC), Ahaz, and Hezekiah (1:1).
His earliest prophecy foretells the Assyrian destruction of Samaria (1:6), fulfilled in 722 BC.
His prophecy concerning Jerusalem's destruction was given during Hezekiah's reign (3:12; cf. Jer 26:18-19).
Micah was a contemporary of Isaiah and Hosea.
And like Isaiah, Micah alternates between messages of judgment and final restoration.
Micah addresses both Israel and Judah; he especially critiques the wealthy oppressors and corrupt leaders.

[39] Nabonidus, the last ruler of the Neo-Babylonian empire (ruled 556-539 BC), conducted a successful campaign against Edom that is traditionally dated to 553 BC but which more likely took place in 551 BC. See: https://www.jstor.org/stable/25067039.

A major theme in Micah is that of the "Shepherd-King" who rescues and gathers a remnant of the nation:
Yahweh himself will fulfill this role (2:12-13; 4:6-8; 7:14), but so too will a certain Man (5:2-5a).
The restoration promises therefore have reference to the final, messianic kingdom (4:1, 6; 5:10; 7:11-12).

Here is a brief summary of Micah's prophecies:

- Coming judgment on Israel and Judah (1:1 – 2:11):
  Israel's capital, Samaria, will be totally destroyed (1:6). The Assyrians will sweep down into Judah, capturing several towns and laying siege to Jerusalem itself (1:8-16) — fulfilled in 701 BC.
  An indictment of the wealthy oppressors (2:1-5) and false prophets (2:6-11).
- Promises of ultimate deliverance and restoration (2:12-13):
  Yahweh will himself gather the remnant of Israel, and lead and shepherd his flock.
- An indictment of the leaders of Judah (chap. 3):
  Leaders, priests and prophets are alike corrupt (3:11).
  Consequently, Jerusalem and its temple will be destroyed and abandoned (3:12).[40]
- Yet in messianic times Jerusalem and its temple will become a worship center for the nations (4:1-3).
  This prophecy was first seen and uttered by Isaiah (Isa 2:1-4).
  Micah describes the peace and security to be enjoyed under God's rule (4:4; cf. 1Kgs 4:25; Zec 3:10).
  Yahweh promises to gather the exiles and restore the nation; from Mt. Zion he will reign over them forever.
  To Jerusalem (the "watchtower of the flock") former kingship and dominion will be restored (4:6-8, MEV).
- Micah foretells the end of the monarchy, and Judah's exile in and final deliverance from Babylon (4:9-10).
  Jerusalem will be besieged and her king humiliated (5:1) — probably a reference to Zedekiah in 586 BC.
- From Bethlehem a Shepherd-King will arise to rule over the restored nation (5:2-5a):
  His ancient origins (5:2) refers to his Davidic lineage and the secure covenant God made in 2 Samuel 7.
  But until his birth Israel will be largely abandoned, having no king and oppressed by enemies (5:3a).
  Under this Shepherd-King God's people will be reunited (5:3b), and they will live in complete safety (5:4).
  All enemies will be defeated; indeed, the saved remnant will rule over their former enemies (5:5-9).
  And Israel will be purged of idolatry; she will rely on God rather than weapons of war (5:10-14).
- The prophecy's conclusion (7:8-20):
  Micah had anticipated Jerusalem's destruction (3:12), but now he foretells her restoration.
  The fallen city, as if in a dark dungeon, recognizes that she suffers God's judgment because of her sin, and looks to him to finally save and vindicate her (7:8-9).
  Zion's walls will be rebuilt and her boundaries greatly extended (7:11). The exiles will return (7:12).
  Foreign lands, under God's judgment, will become a wasteland (7:13 cf. 5:15).
  A prayer request follows, that God again may lovingly shepherd his people as in former times (7:14).
  And God responds: He will display his saving wonders, as when they came out of Egypt (1:15).
  His wonders displayed in Israel's deliverance will make her enemies ashamed (7:16; cf. 7:10).
  Then those nations, overcome with fear, will turn to Israel's God (7:17).
  God's will forgive the sin of his saved remnant "because he delights in steadfast love" (7:18).
  Their sin will be decisively dealt with — trodden underfoot and hurled into the depths of the sea (7:19).
  God's promises made to the patriarchs will yet be fulfilled (7:20).

[40] The temple-mount will be so neglected as to become overgrown with bushes. Micah's threat here evidently led to the spiritual reformation under Hezekiah, so that Jerusalem's fall was averted for some 130 years (Jer 26:18-19).

Zephaniah

Date: During the reign of King Josiah (1:1), who ruled Judah from 640 to 609 BC, but prior to the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC (cf. 2:13-15).

Zephaniah proclaimed the approaching "day of the LORD" (1:7, 14) — the day of his wrath (1:18; 2:2-3).

Judgment was to come upon Judah and its neighbors, and upon the Assyrians.

These prophecies were to be fulfilled soon (1:7, 14).

Though not specifically mentioned, the Babylonians (as the agent of God's wrath) were soon to expand and conquer these lands.

- Judgment will be an act of de-creation (1:2-3):

  2 *"I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth," …*

  3 *"I will sweep away man and beast; … the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, …*
  I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth," declares the LORD.

  The language here is reminiscent of God's utterances prior to the Flood (Gen 6:7).
  Only this time the destruction will be by fire:
  "For in the fire of my jealousy all the earth shall be consumed" (3:8; cf. 1:18).
- Judgment on Judah and Jerusalem (1:4-13):
  For their idolatry and disloyalty to Yahweh (1:4-6). The day of the Lord is fast approaching (1:7).
  Jerusalem will be searched and every sinful person punished (1:12).
- The Great Day of the Lord (1:14 – 2:15):
  A day of wrath, anguish, ruin, darkness, gloom, clouds, blackness (1:15, WEB).
  God's judgment is directed against Judah (1:14 – 2:3) and the surrounding nations (2:4-15).
  The humble in Judah are urged to seek God so that they might be sheltered from his wrath (2:3).
  Philistia will be judged (2:4-7).
  Moab and Ammon will be destroyed for their proud mocking of God's people (2:8, 10).
  God will restore Judah's fortunes. The remnant who survive will inherit these surrounding nations (2:7, 9).
  Cush (Ethiopia and Egypt) "shall be slain by my sword" (2:12). (The Babylonian army was God's "sword".)
  Assyria's capital, Nineveh, will be utterly destroyed (2:13-15).[41]
- Indictment of Jerusalem (3:1-8):
  The city is rebellious (3:1); she disregards God (3:2). Her rulers, prophets and priests are corrupt (3:3-4).
  Yahweh alone, within the city, is righteous, and he daily dispenses justice (3:5).
  His destruction of foreign cities was meant to serve as a warning to Jerusalem, but to no avail (3:6-7).
  God will gather the nations for judgment. The whole world will be consumed by his wrath (3:8).
- After judgment, the nations will turn to the Lord (3:9):

  "For at that time I will change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech, that all
  of them may call upon the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord."

  Such unity under God will reverse the judgment at Babel.
- The Israelite exiles will also be gathered, and Jerusalem will be restored (3:10-20):
  From the most distant lands God's scattered people will come to Jerusalem to bring him offerings (3:10).
  Jerusalem will be inhabited by the humble remnant who trust God; the haughty will be removed (3:11-13).
  Yahweh will deal with their oppressors and gather the exiles. He will "change their shame into praise and renown in all the earth" when he restores and forgives them (3:19-20; cf. 3:11).

[41] Nineveh was sacked by the Babylonians and Medes in 612 BC.

Restoration in the Post-exilic Prophets

Cyrus in 538 BC issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their temple.
Indeed, he offered to fund the project (Ezr 1:2-4; 6:3-5).
Following his decree, around 50,000 Jews returned to Judah.
The new temple's foundation was completed in 536 BC amidst great rejoicing (Ezr 3:8-11).
However, enemies in surrounding nations opposed the rebuild and managed to halt the work (Ezr 4:1-5).
Only much later, through the promptings of Haggai and Zechariah, did work on the temple finally resume:
Work resumed on 21 September 520 BC (Hag 1:15), and the new temple was completed on 12 March 516 BC (Ezr 6:15).

The restoration community was small and demoralized. Only some of God's promises through Isaiah and other prophets had been fulfilled in their return:

- Judah comprised only a small portion of its former territory — some 32 by 48 km in extent — with a population of perhaps 150,000.[42]
- Though grateful for their return, the people still viewed themselves as being slaves of their foreign rulers (Ezr 9:8-9; Neh 9:36-37).
  They lived in the midst of a mixed, and often antagonistic, population.
- The earlier prophets (Isaiah, Micah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel) had promised a glorious future:
  God's house would become the focus for a world that feared Yahweh.
  But now there was no Davidic king — no peace, prosperity, security.
  The new temple was not glorious, and God had not returned to indwell it.
  The promised New Covenant, and the outpouring of God's Spirit, had not materialized.
- Non-fulfillment led to doubts about God's love, to despondency and spiritual lethargy.
  God was seemingly far away — disinterested.

The post-exilic prophets Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi spoke into this situation.
So, too, did the author of the two books of Chronicles.
Each prophet/author explains how, despite appearances, Yahweh is continuing to work out his purposes.
The promised messianic future was completely on track!

Haggai 1

A call to renew the work on God's house.
Date: Aug. 29 to Sept. 21, 520 BC — some 16 years after the temple's foundation had been laid.

- Misplaced priorities (1:2-11):
  The people had been putting their own interests first — their own "paneled houses" ahead of his "house", which continued to lie in ruins (1:2-4, 9).
  The lack of progress on the temple was more their own fault than those of their enemies.
  But the temple was important:
  It signified <u>God's presence</u> with his people. And it was the place where their sin was dealt with.
  God wanted his house built so that he might "take pleasure in it" and be glorified through it (1:8).

[42] From the ESV Study Bible (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), Introduction to Malachi, p. 1772.

This is tabernacle language:
God takes pleasure in acceptable sacrifices offered on the altar (Ps 51:19); such offerings are a "pleasing aroma" to him (Ex 29:18, 25, 41; Lev 1:9, 13, 17; etc.).
Wrong priorities had led God to withhold his blessings — particularly on their agricultural labors (1:6, 9-11).

- God empowered obedience (1:12-15):
  The people listen to and obey the promptings of Haggai (1:12) and Zechariah (Ezr 5:1-2).
  As a result, the Lord encourages them with his promise to be with them (1:13). He will aid their work!
  Indeed, God himself stirs up the spirit of Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the high priest, and all the people, so that they renew the work (1:14).
  (Work on the temple resumed on 21 September 520 BC — see 1:15.)

Haggai 2

Date: Oct. 17 to Dec. 18, 520 BC:

- The new temple was insignificant in comparison with that built by Solomon (2:3; cf. Ezr 3:12).
  Yet God encourages them to continue with the work; he is with them, just he was in the Exodus (2:4-5).
- The new temple will ultimately be more glorious than the former structure (2:9).
  For God will "once more … shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land … [and] all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in" (2:6-7).[43]
  In the messianic age the nations will turn and will willingly offer back to God what belongs to him (2:8); they will beautify and adorn his house with their best "treasures".[44]
- Blessings for a defiled people (2:10-19):
  In the Law, ceremonial uncleanness is transmitted much more easily than holiness (2:11-13).
  In the same way, sin has spread and the whole nation has become defiled in God's sight (2:14).
  And without the temple, such sin has not been dealt with.
  Failure to take seriously their relationship with God led him to withhold his blessings (2:15-17).[45]
  But now, with the resumption of work on the temple, God will bless their everyday endeavors (2:18-19).
- God will overthrow the entire world order when he fulfills his (messianic) promises (2:21-22).
  Enemies will be overthrown — foreign powers that oppose his kingdom.
  "Horses and their riders" is an allusion to the destruction of Pharaoh's army (Ex 15:1, 21).
- God has chosen Zerubbabel as his new "signet ring" in place of his discarded grandfather, King Jehoiachin.
  Zerubbabel is thereby raised to a position of special honor and royal authority (2:23; cf. Jer 22:24-30).[46]
  Indeed, he is the (messianic) "servant" though whom Yahweh's purposes will be accomplished: the temple will be made glorious, the world order overthrown, and Davidic kingship restored.

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[43] The first time God shook the world order was when he gave Israel the law at Mount Sinai (Ex 19:18; Heb 12:26). At that time, he broke into the darkness of the pagan world with the light of his law. But Haggai speaks of a further shaking and toppling of the world order (Hag 2:6-7, 21-22). The author of Hebrews (in 12:26-28) takes up Haggai's prophecy and relates it to the coming of God's eternal New Covenant kingdom. The material order ("things that have been made") will be shaken and removed, so that the "kingdom that cannot be shaken" might remain (Heb 12:27-28). He is referring to the Mosaic order's provisional and typical entities — the Jerusalem temple with its priesthood, sacrifices and ceremonies — all now "obsolete" and "ready to vanish away" (Heb 8:13). But the unshakeable spiritual city and kingdom will remain (Heb 12:22, 28).

[44] Haggai's prophecy should be related to the similar prophecies found in Isaiah 60:5-7, 11, 13, 17; 61:6; 66:12. All such prophecies are fulfilled in God's ultimate temple-city — the New Jerusalem, the Church (Rev 21:24, 26; cf. Eph 2:21).

[45] Blight and mildew (Hag 2:17) were among the curses threatened for disobedience to God's covenant (Dt 28:22).

[46] A signet ring was worn by the king's representative who exercised his royal authority. Used to stamp documents, it marked them as genuine and authoritative (Gen 41:42; Est 8:8). It could further serve as a pledge or guarantee of full payment.

Zechariah 1 – 5

Date: Oct./Nov. 520 BC to ?? 518 BC.

Work had recently resumed on the new temple.

Zechariah begins with a call to repentance (1:2-6):

Turning to God was a prerequisite for his return to them (1:3).

They must not to be like their stubborn forefathers (1:4).

Though their forefathers and the prophets who warned them had all died, God's words through those prophets lived on and had been fulfilled (1:5-6a). Apparently once in exile, some of their forefathers had repented (1:6b).

First Vision: Horsemen sent throughout the earth (1:7-17).

Date: Feb. 15, 519 BC, just two months after Haggai's last "shaking" prophecy (Hag 2:20-22).

Stability and peace had returned to the Persian Empire following a period of internal unrest (1:11).[47]

Cornelis Vanderwaal comments:

> … the shaking of heaven and earth of which Haggai prophesied has not yet begun. … The throne of the heathen kings is not shaken, and there is no sign of the Messiah taking over the throne.[48]

Indeed, it seemed that God was still angry with Judah and Jerusalem (1:12).

But God assures the people of his jealous love for Jerusalem (1:14).

He was somewhat angry with his people, but now he is "exceedingly angry" with the complacent nations that he had employed to punish his people (1:15; cf. 1:18-21).

For those nations went too far; they "furthered the disaster" by seeking to destroy Israel as a people.[49]

God continues to assure his people of his good intent towards them — both the temple and the city will be rebuilt, and the nation will greatly prosper (1:16-17).

Second Vision: Horns and craftsmen (1:18-21).

These "horns" — the nations and world-powers that had earlier scattered God's people — though currently at rest and feeling "secure" (cf. 1:11, 15), will in turn be terrified and destroyed by "craftsmen" (1:18-21).

God is sovereign, and his choice of Jerusalem means that his kingdom will surely come (cf. 14:9).

Third Vision: A man with a measuring line (chap. 2).

Jerusalem will be greatly enlarged; God will himself be its protecting wall of fire, and its glory within (2:4-5).

Therefore, those Jews still living in Babylon should return (2:6-7).

God will return to Jerusalem to live with his people — among whom will be many Gentiles (2:10-11).

Fourth Vision: Clean Garments for Joshua (chap. 3).

A heavenly courtroom scene, with the angel of the Lord as the judge, Joshua the high priest as defendant, and Satan as the prosecutor (3:1).

Satan's case: Joshua is defiled, so how can he fulfill his high-priestly office? On the Day of Atonement, how can the nation's defilement be removed when their mediator is himself polluted?

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[47] Darius the Great reigned from 522 to 486 BC, with his first two years spent consolidating power and putting down rebellions.

[48] Cornelis Vanderwaal, *Search the Scriptures*, Volume 6: Hosea-Malachi (St. Catharines, Ontario: Paideia Press, 1979), p. 100.

[49] The Assyrians and Babylonians were used by God to discipline his people, but they evidently went well beyond the call of duty (cf. Isa 10:5-7; 47:6).

But Satan's charges are inadmissible: Joshua's rescue from exile means he is free from condemnation (3:2). Joshua's "filthy garments" (symbolizing his sin) are removed; he is reclothed with "pure vestments" that signify his new (imputed) righteousness and his reinstatement to his high-priestly office (3:4-5).
So now he can govern Yahweh's new temple; indeed, as the nation's mediator he will enjoy direct access to God, as if he were himself a member of the heavenly council (3:7). God will no longer be distant from his people!
Joshua and his fellow priests foreshadowed the "the Branch", the promised King (cf. Isa 11:1; Jer 23:5), through whom the nation's sin will be completely removed "in a single day" — the definitive Day of Atonement (3:8-9).[50]
Then the nation will enjoy peace, like that enjoyed at the height of Solomon's reign (3:10; cf. 1Kgs 4:25; Mic 4:4).

Fifth Vision: The Golden Lampstand and Olive Trees (chap. 4).
The two olive trees supply oil to a bowl or tank which in turn supplies oil to the seven lamps of the lampstand. With this arrangement, the supply of oil is maintained and the lamps continue to burn.
The olive trees are God's anointed servants — Zerubbabel from the royal line of David and Joshua the high priest (4:14). The oil signifies God's Spirit.
The vision shows that God's work will certainly progress:
Through the leadership and cooperation of Zerubbabel and Joshua the lamp will continue to burn and God's work progress — yet not so much through human effort, but through dependence on God's Spirit (4:6).
Under Zerubbabel, all difficulties and opposition will be overcome and the temple completed (4:7-10):
Much rejoicing will attend the work's completion when Zerubbabel places the final capstone (4:7).
So, no one should make light of the small progress made thus far (4:10a).

Sixth and Seventh Visions: The Flying Scroll, and a Woman named "Wickedness" (chap. 5).
For God to return to dwell in the land (cf. 2:10-11; 8:3) it must first be purged of evil.
Sin will be punished (5:1-4), and wickedness must be banished (5:5-11).[51]

Eighth Vision: Horses and Chariots (6:1-8).
Four "strong" horses with chariots are sent out throughout the world.
Kurt Simmons notes that:

> In Zechariah, the horsemen symbolize God's activity among the nations of the world to execute wrath and bring about his purpose.[52]

Zechariah 6:9-14

Zechariah is to get a crown made and place it on the head of Joshua.
In this too, Joshua was foreshadowing "the Branch" who will build God's temple and reign as both king and priest — uniting the two offices (6:9-13).

Zechariah 7

Date: Dec. 518 BC.
An enquiry from the people concerning their ritual fasts of the past (nearly) 70 years:
Should they continue to show sorrow and repentance for the disasters that had befallen their land (7:2-3)?
(No doubt performed to change God's disposition toward them and earn his favor!)

[50] The nation's sin was removed annually on Yom Kippur — the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The high priest's action on that day foreshadowed Jesus' work on the cross, whereby "in a single day" the sin of God's people was completely and forever atoned for.
[51] Sent packing to the land of Shinar (Babylonia), where it belongs (Zec 5:11)!
[52] Kurt M. Simmons, *The Consummation of the Ages* (Carlsbad, NM: Bimillennial Preterist Association, 2003), p. 144.

In answer, God questions the sincerity of their observances and calls for true obedience to his covenant (7:4-10). Failure of their forefathers to heed the earlier prophets had aroused God's anger, resulting in the curse for covenant disobedience: the nation's exile and the land's desolation (7:11-14; cf. Lev 26:33; Dt 28:64).

Zechariah 8

Judgment is not the last word!

For God now graciously promises to renew his covenant and bless Jerusalem:

- He is intensely jealous for Zion (8:2).
  He will return to dwell therein. Jerusalem will then be called "The City of Truth" and Mount Zion will be called "The Holy Mountain" (8:2-3, WEB).
- A depiction of Jerusalem's future — a community enjoying peace and prosperity (8:4-5).
  A truly remarkable transformation, given their present impoverished circumstances (8:6).
- God will gather his scattered people and bring them back to live in Jerusalem; he will restore his covenant relationship with them (8:7-8).
- A further encouragement to continue building the temple, with a promise of blessing (8:9-13).
- God has fully determined to bring good to Jerusalem and to the people of Judah (8:14-15).
  He again calls for repentance — for truth and justice (8:16-17).
- The various fasts that recalled the former disasters will become joyful feasts instead (8:19; cf. 7:3, 5).[53]
- God's blessings on his people will even induce foreigners to seek Yahweh in Jerusalem (8:20-23).

Zechariah 9 – 14

Further prophecies, probably given many years later.

Themes include God's judgment of Israel's enemies; the coming messianic king; Jerusalem's restoration:

- God will judge the surrounding nations but deliver his own people (9:1-8):
  Alexander the Great's campaign is here foretold — his subjugation of powerful cities (in Syria, Phoenicia, and Philistia) and his sparing of Jerusalem.
  The Philistines remnant will be converted out of idolatry and incorporated into the people of God (9:7).
  Ultimately, God's presence in the temple will ensure that foreigners never again oppress his people (9:8).
- Jerusalem's king will come to her "righteous, and <u>having salvation</u>; lowly, and riding on a donkey …" (9:9, WEB). The Hebrew participle here should rather be taken in its passive sense: "saved", "delivered".
  He will bring <u>peace</u> to the reunited kingdom ("Ephraim" = Israel) and to the nations; his rule will extend to the ends of the earth (9:10; cf. Ps 72:8; Isa 2:4).
  All this was fulfilled in Jesus, who entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Mt 21:1-11).
  Jesus learned obedience through suffering and sought (and finally received) from his Father deliverance from death itself (Heb 5:7-8).
  Through him Israel has been restored, and his peaceable rule extends via the gospel to the nations as well.

[53] The fasts of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months (Zec 8:19) recalled, respectively, the breaching of Jerusalem's walls by the Babylonian army (Jer 39:2); their destruction of the city and temple (Jer 52:12-14); Gedaliah's assassination (Jer 41:1-2); and the time when the Babylonian siege had first begun (Jer 39:1).

- Messiah's victories over his enemies (9:13-17).

  The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges comments concerning these verses:

  > The prophecy now moves forward, and takes for its groundwork a later epoch in the future history of the Jews. As their deliverance from their enemies without fighting, in the times of Alexander (Zechariah 9:1-8), was foretold as the pledge and type of Messiah's kingdom of peace (Zechariah 9:9-12), so their victories over the Seleucidae, in the times of the Maccabees, are in these verses foretold as the pledge and type of Messiah's victories over all His enemies.[54]

- A fountain will be present to wash away the sin of Jerusalem's inhabitants (13:1; cf. 3:9).
  God himself will remove idolatry and false prophecy from the land (13:2-6).
- The sword of Yahweh's judgment will strike the Good Shepherd — God's close associate — leading to the scattering of God's people. Through these trials, God will refine a remnant of the nation and restore them to a proper covenant relationship with himself (13:7-9).
- God will gather the nations to fight against Jerusalem (14:1-2).
  He himself will fight against and judge those nations (14:3-5, 12-15).
- At that time "living waters" will flow from Jerusalem (14:8).
  Yahweh "will be king over all the earth" (14:9).
- Following their judgment, the nations will come to worship Yahweh in Jerusalem — to celebrate, and indeed to fulfill, the Feast of Tabernacles (14:16-19).[55]
- Everything and everyone in Judah and Jerusalem will be holy (14:20-21).

[54] *The Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, notes for Zechariah 9: The Burdens of the Word of the Lord. Chaps. 9–14. Via the Bible Hub website: https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/zechariah/9.htm.

[55] The Feast of Tabernacles or Ingathering signified the ultimate conversion of the nations to the Lord. Seventy bullocks were to be sacrificed for the 70 nations of the world (Num 29:12-38; cf. Genesis 10), in anticipation of their ingathering into God's kingdom (Zec 14:16-19). See David Chilton, *Paradise Restored* (Tyler, TX: Reconstruction Press, 1985), p. 45.

Malachi

Date: 430 BC?

The apparent non-fulfillment of God's promises had led to doubts about his love and justice.

Worship had degenerated into mere formality, and the people no longer took God's law seriously.

Through the prophet, God admonishes:

- the people for doubting his love for them (1:2-5).
  Yet God had shown his love by graciously restoring Judah after her exile — in contrast to his treatment of Edom whom he was about to irreversibly destroy.
- both priests and people for dishonoring him through worthless offerings (1:6-14).[56]
- the priests for unfaithfulness to their calling (2:1-9).
- the people for their infidelity (2:10-16):
  They could not trust their fellow Israelites (2:10); they had married foreign women in violation of God's covenant (2:11-12); through divorce they had broken their own marriage covenants (2:14-16).
- the people for their cynical charge concerning God's justice (2:17).

Further messages:

- The One (the Messiah) they seek will indeed come, but he will come to judge and purify them first (3:1-5).
- A call to faithfully tithe so that God can bless them again (3:6-12).
- God responds to the cynical charge, made by the outwardly religious who go about as "mourners", that serving him is futile because the arrogant and defiant are the ones who prosper (3:13-15, MEV).
  But God indeed takes careful note of the righteous who fear him — they are his "treasured possession".
  On Judgment Day God will spare them and clearly distinguish them from the wicked.
  Evildoers will be completely incinerated (3:16 – 4:3).

Final admonition: Remember God's law (4:4-6):

God will send them "Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD" (4:5, KJV).

God's final word to his OT people is a threat of <u>total destruction</u> for ongoing disobedience (4:6).[57]

New Testament fulfilment:

Malachi's prophecy concerning Elijah was fulfilled in John the Baptist (Lk 1:17; Mt 11:14; 17:10-13).[58]

John warned Israel of coming judgment (Mt 3:7), and he did so utilizing language reminiscent of Malachi:

- Those not producing good fruit will soon be cut down and thrown into the fire (Mt 3:10).
- Messiah will baptize (purify) Israel with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Mt 3:11; cf. Mal 3:2-3).
- Messiah will separate the wheat but burn up the chaff with "unquenchable fire" (Mt 3:12; cf. Mal 4:1).

Judgment began with the ministry of Jesus and culminated with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

That event served as the definitive "day of the Lord" in fulfilment of OT prophecies.

See Luke 21:22; Acts 2:20; Hebrews 10:25; 2 Peter 3:10, 12.

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[56] Yahweh contrasts his people's hypocritical worship with the genuine worship that will someday characterize the nations:
For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name will be great among the nations, and in every place incense will be offered to my name, and a pure offering. For my name will be great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts. (Mal 1:11)

[57] For continued disobedience, God will strike the land of Israel "with a curse" (Mal 4:6, KJV). The single Hebrew word underlying this phrase (*ḥērem*, Strong's H2764) refers to entities or persons that are wholly devoted to God, being set apart either for sacred use or for complete destruction. Accordingly, God is here threatening Israel with the same fate as Edom: total destruction (cf. 1:3-4).

[58] Turning the hearts of fathers and children to each other (Mal 4:6; cf. Lk 1:17) means this: Parents will diligently teach their children God's law, and the children will in turn obey those commandments and honor their parents.

The Books of Chronicles

These two books were composed ca. 400 BC during the Persian period (539-332 BC).
The Chronicler was most likely a priest or Levite who served in the rebuilt temple, sometime after the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah. He interprets Israel's history for the restored community.
He seeks to answer their concerns:

- Is God still interested in the nation?
- Are his covenants still in force?
- Will his promises to David be fulfilled?
- Is the rebuilt temple important?

The Chronicler is highly selective in his history. He had access to numerous earlier sources.
His idealized depiction of the Israelite kingdom united under the godly leadership of David and Solomon serves to prefigure the final messianic kingdom.
After the rift under Jeroboam, the Chronicler focuses on the southern kingdom of Judah and the line of David.
And so, apart from his account (in 2 Chronicles 18) of the death of the especially wicked King Ahab, the northern Israelite kings receive scant attention.
An acknowledgement: Some of the following material derives from the introductory notes for 1 and 2 Chronicles in the NIV and ESV Study Bibles.

1. The Chronicler assumes his readers' familiarity with Samuel and Kings; he sometimes gives brief overviews, omitting the details supplied by these earlier works (e.g., 1Chr 10:13-14; 11:1-3; 13:6; 15:29).
2. The Chronicler emphasizes God's sovereign acts of election:
   Of the tribe of Levi to serve as priests and Levites in the temple (1Chr 15:2; 23:24-32).
   Of David as king over Israel (1Chr 28:4; 2Chr 6:6).
   Of Solomon as his heir chosen to build the temple (1Chr 22:10; 28:5-6, 10; 29:1).
   Of Jerusalem (2Chr 6:6, 34, 38; 12:13; 33:7).
   Of the temple to signify God's presence among his people (2Chr 7:12, 16; 33:7).
3. Israel is still central to God's purposes.
   The genealogies of 1 Chronicles 1 – 9 show Israel's origins.
   Israel's ancestry is traced back to Adam (1Chr 1:1): from the very beginning God had Israel in mind.
   "All Israel" is a major focus of the Chronicler (e.g., 1Chr 11:1-4; 28:4; 2Chr 1:2-3; 7:8; 30:1, 5; 35:18).
   Hence 1 Chronicles 2 – 8 relates the genealogies of 12 tribes — "all Israel" (1Chr 9:1) — for though the northern tribes lived in rebellion against the house of David (2Chr 10:19), they never forfeited their status as members of the nation. This is apparent from Abijah's appeal in 2 Chronicles 13:5-8.[59]
   The whole nation supported David as king (1Chr 11:1 – 12:40; 13:5; 15:3; 28:1) and were present when Solomon dedicated the temple (2Chr 1:2; 5:2; 6:3; 7:8-10).
   Following the nation's division, many in the north migrated to Judah:
   Levites during Rehoboam's reign (2Chr 11:14) migrated south, and so did ordinary Israelites from Ephraim and Manasseh during Asa's reign (2Chr 15:9).

[59] The standard list of tribes (i.e., of Jacob's sons) is given in 1 Chronicles 2:1-2. The Chronicler then (in 2:3 – 8:39) gives twelve tribal lists by omitting genealogies for Zebulun and Dan; he has replaced Joseph with his sons Ephraim and Manasseh, and he has counted the half-tribe of Manasseh that settled east of the Jordan as a separate tribe.

Hezekiah sought to heal the rift by inviting the northern tribes — those who had survived the Assyrian deportations — to celebrate the Passover at the temple (2Chr 30:1-10).

In Josiah's time, northerners contributed funds for repairing the temple (2Chr 34:9), and many joined in to celebrate his great Passover festival (2Chr 35:17-18).

For the Chronicler, whenever the northerners worship together with the people of Judah, it is as if they are again one people, united under Davidic leadership (2Chr 11:13-17; 30:11, 18, 25; 35:17-18.).

Following the (Babylonian) exile, some from the northern tribes who had been exiled by the Assyrians also returned to live in their own towns and in Jerusalem (1Chr 9:2-3).

4. God's covenant with David is still important.

   The author recounts God's promises to David of a lasting dynasty (1 Chronicles 17), and he often harks back to these promises (2Chr 6:10, 15-17, 42; 7:17-18; 13:5, 8; 21:7; 23:3).

   David's heirs ruled as God's "son" over God's kingdom (1Chr 17:13-14).

   They sat on Yahweh's throne (1Chr 29:23, 2Chr 9:8) ruling over Yahweh's kingdom (1Chr 17:14; 28:5).[60]

   When Jeroboam and the northern Israelites fought against Abijah (Rehoboam's son), they were resisting Yahweh's kingdom (2Chr 13:8). The northern religion was defective (2Chr 13:9); Yahweh was on the side of Judah on account of their pure worship of him (2Chr 13:10-12).

   Under the good kings the people enjoyed rest and peace (1Chr 22:18; 23:25; 2Chr 14:1, 5-7; 15:15; 20:30).

   God maintains his covenant even through apostasy and exile (1Chr 3:17-24).

   The eight "good" Judahite kings were:

   Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and Josiah.[61]

   The Chronicler gives idealized depictions of David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah.

   Though not flawless, their reigns promoted the nation's godliness and covenant faithfulness.

   God gave David victories over surrounding nations, so that they came to fear him (1Chr 14:17).

   When God gave Jehoshaphat great victories, a similar fear came over their enemies (2Chr 17:10; 20:29).

   When the Ark was brought to Jerusalem, the Chronicler notes (as does 2 Samuel 6:14) that David was wearing the priestly linen ephod, but he adds a further significant fact: David was wearing a robe of fine linen like the Levites in the procession (1Chr 15:27). The Chronicler is attempting to portray David as a sort of priest-king along the lines of the prophesied Messiah (cf. Psalm 110; Zec 6:11-13).

   Sin in the lives of the kings brought swift judgment, usually in the form of illness or defeat in war.[62]

   Conversely, repentance, trust, and obedience brought peace, victory, and prosperity.

   With these (positive) portraits the Chronicler was seeking to promote, in the face of much discouragement, Israel's hope in the One whom the prophets had spoken about — the final Davidic heir.

5. Any material in Samuel and Kings that tarnishes the picture of David and Solomon is omitted in Chronicles.

   There is no mention of David's sin with Bathsheba, or Absalom's plot and David's subsequent flight from Jerusalem. Nor is there any mention of Solomon's failures — his idolatry and foreign wives.

   And similarly for Hezekiah: the Chronicler shows him urging the people to trust in God when Sennacherib invades Judah (2Chr 32:6-8) — something not reported in 2 Kings 18 or Isaiah 36. Conversely, Hezekiah's stripping of the temple treasures to bribe Sennacherib (related in 2 Kings 18:14-16) receives no mention.

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[60] Comparison of 2 Chronicles 9:8 with 1 Kings 10:9 shows that the Chronicler has altered the Queen of Sheba's words to reflect his own conviction that "the throne of Israel" is in a sense actually God's throne. The king ruled for God, on his behalf. In other words, God's rule over his people was mediated through his earthly representative. The same conviction is expressed in 1 Chronicles 29:23.

[61] Asa, Joash, Amaziah, and Uzziah were good early in their reigns, but later went astray.

[62] For example, Uzziah was afflicted with leprosy when he sought to offer incense in the temple (2Chr 26:16-21).

6. The Mosaic Law and Covenant are foundational.
   People are judged according to their obedience to God's law (1Chr 15:15; 22:13; 2Chr 7:17; 12:1; 19:10; 25:4; 33:8; 35:6). Asa sought to bring about the people's obedience (2Chr 14:4).
   Early in his reign, Jehoshaphat sent priests and Levites to teach God's law throughout the towns of Judah (2Chr 17:7-9). Josiah instituted wide-ranging reforms (2Chr 34 – 35). With Assyrian power waning, these reforms extended to the northern tribes (2Chr 34:6-7, 33). Josiah instigated repairs to the temple.
   The discovery of the Book of the Law became the springboard for further reforms (2Chr 34:29-33).[63]
7. The Chronicler emphasizes the temple's vital role.
   The temple symbolizes God's presence amongst his people (1Chr 28:2-3; 2Chr 6:5-10, 41; 7:16; 33:4, 7).[64]
   The Chronicler's account of David's reign focuses on his preparations for the temple's construction (1Chr 22:2-16; 29:2-5) and of its personnel (1Chr 23 – 26). David's conquests (1Chr 18 – 20) provided the necessary rest and security for the temple's construction (1Chr 22:17-19).
   For Solomon's reign too, the focus is on the temple's construction and dedication (2 Chr 2:1 – 8:16).
   The temple plays a similar pivotal role in the reigns of Hezekiah (2Chr 29 – 30) and Josiah (2Chr 34 – 35).
8. The Chronicler further emphasizes the temple's personnel: their roles in offering up praise (1Chr 6:31-47; 9:33; 15:19-22; 16:4-6; 25:1-31; 2Chr 5:12-13; 7:6; 8:14; 20:21; 30:21; 35:15), utterance of prophecy or encouragement (1Chr 25:1; 2Chr 20:14-17), support of the priests (2Chr 29:34; 35:11-14), safeguarding of the temple's holiness (1Chr 9:17-27; 26:1-19; 2Chr 23:19), and other types of administration and teaching (1Chr 9:28-32; 26:20-32; 2Chr 17:8-9; 24:4-5, 11; 29:3-19; 31:11-19; 34:9-13).
   And so, the rebuilt temple and its service marked the restored nation as God's people whose election has not been annulled.
9. The author shows a concern, not merely with kings and priests, but with ordinary Israelites.
   The people generously supported the temple (1Chr 29:6-9; 2Chr 31:4-10).
   They participated in religious reform and worship (2Chr 15:9-15; 17:9; 23:16-17, 20-21; 31:1; 34:29-32).
   They responded to Jehoshaphat's call to seek God (2Chr 20:4), and they responded to Hezekiah's call to trust in God (2Chr 32:8).
10. The importance of seeking God and being devoted to him.
    Wholehearted devotion is emphasized in 1 Chronicles 28:9; 29:19; 2 Chronicles 6:14; 16:9; cf. 25:2.
    Time and again the Chronicler shows that seeking God is the wise and sensible option:
    See 1 Chronicles 16:10-11.
    See 2 Chronicles 7:14; 11:16; 14:4, 7; 15:2, 12, 15; 19:3; 20:3-4; 26:5; 30:18-20; 31:21; 34:3; cf. 12:14.
    All who seek God find him, and are blessed (1Chr 28:9; 2Chr 15:4, 15; 17:3-6; 26:5; 31:21; cf. 16:12; 24:20).
    The Chronicler shows the benefits of humbling oneself and turning to God in repentance (2Chr 6:36-39; 7:13-14; 30:6-9, 11; 34:27). Indeed, he relates the repentance of Rehoboam (2Chr 12:6-7, 12) and of the wicked King Manasseh (2Chr 33:12-13, 19) — both accounts being absent in 1 and 2 Kings.
    God gave Uzziah success so long as he sought him (2Chr 26:5, 15), but the king was punished with leprosy when he became proud and rebellious (2Chr 26:16-21).
    The Chronicler no doubt wanted the people of his day to do likewise — to seek God, and enjoy his blessing.

[63] References to divine wrath and "curses" (2Chr 34:21, 24) suggest that the Book of the Law was a scroll of Deuteronomy, or at least the portion of it that included the covenant curses of chapters 27 – 28.
[64] Notice how throughout Chronicles the temple is consistently referred to as a house for God's "name" (1Chr 22:10; 2Chr 2:1, 4; 6:5-10, 20, 34, 38; 7:16; 20:8-9; 33:7). Yet God's presence in the temple is real, for his "name" stands in for and represents all that he is. But in reality, and as Solomon also acknowledges, God dwells in and answers prayer from heaven. See 2 Chronicles 6:21, 23, 25, 30, 33, 35, 39; 7:14. See also Deuteronomy 12:5-7, 11; 14:23; 16:2, 11; 26:2.

11. **2 Chronicles 20** relates an episode of special interest to the Chronicler because the restored community was being harassed by the descendants of these same peoples (see Nehemiah 2:19; 4:1-3, 7-8; 6:1ff.).
    In his account of Jehoshaphat's victory against overwhelming odds, the Chronicler relates:
    - How Jehoshaphat sought God (20:3-4).
    - How he appeared before God at the temple (20:5).
    - His prayer, which (a) emphasized God's sovereignty over the nations (20:6), (b) recounted God's purposes for his people (20:7), and (c) recalled God's presence with his people in the temple (20:8-9).

    The Chronicler wanted his post-exilic readers to derive encouragement from all these facets — to understand their own context and not lose hope. God's purposes were still on track!
12. **2 Chronicles 22:10 – 23:21** relates the story of Queen Athaliah, the widow of King Jehoram of Judah, and her eventual overthrow in a coup orchestrated by the priest Jehoiada.
    King Jehoshaphat had allied himself with Ahab by marriage: his son Jehoram married Ahab's daughter Athaliah (2Chr 18:1; 22:2). Urged on by his wife, King Jehoram promoted Baal worship (2Chr 21:6; cf. 24:7). Then, after Jehoram passed away aged 40 to "no one's regret", their 22-year-old son Ahaziah became king of Judah (2Chr 21:20 – 22:2).
    Ahaziah's personal wickedness, aided by his mother and some evil counsellors (22:3-5), resulted in swift judgment and a reign of just one year. Then when Ahaziah and his uncle, King Joram of Israel, died at the hands of Jehu, Athaliah proceeded to destroy the entire royal family of Judah in order to secure the throne for herself (22:10). By this time the royal family had already been decimated:
    Her late husband had previously succeeded in killing all his brothers (2Chr 21:4).
    Ahaziah's older brothers had earlier been killed by marauding Arabs (2Chr 21:16-17; 22:1).
    And Jehu had just recently slain an additional 42 members of the royal family (2Kgs 10:13-14; 2Chr 22:8-9).
    Athaliah's six-year reign (841-835 BC) represents the only break in the continuity of the Davidic dynasty.
    Her plot to destroy the house of David was a serious attack on God's redemptive plan and promises.
    So, it is not surprising that the Chronicler devotes considerable attention to the thwarting of her plan:
    Jehosheba, the wife of Jehoiada the priest, saves the rightful heir — one-year-old prince Joash, who is also her nephew — by hiding him with them in the temple complex for six years (22:11-12).
    Then in the seventh year of Athaliah's reign Jehoiada organizes a coup that results in her overthrow and death, and the restoration of Davidic kingship.
    In comparison with the parallel account in 2 Kings 11, the Chronicler:
    - emphasizes the presence and role of the Levites in the coup (23:2, 7-8, 13, 18-19).
    - emphasizes the widespread popular support for the coup (23:2-3, 5, 8, 10, 16-17).
    - shows concern for the sanctity of the temple (23:6, 19).
      Non-Levites remained in the courts and did not enter the temple itself (23:5).

    Jehoiada also made a covenant: That he and all the people and the king would be the Lord's people.
    Then they went and destroyed the temple of Baal and killed its priest (23:16-17) — part of Athaliah's evil legacy.

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Appendix: The dating of Isaiah's prophecies

Isaiah's prophecies are for the most part impossible to accurately date.
The kings referred to in Isaiah 1:1 reigned as follows (not including their time as co-regents):
Uzziah: 767-740 BC; Jotham: 740-735 BC; Ahaz: 735-715 BC; Hezekiah: 715-686 BC.
According to tradition, Isaiah died by being sawn in two during the reign of King Manasseh (686-642 BC).
(Hebrews 11:37 seems to allude to this.)

Dates can be assigned to the following:

- Isaiah 1 – 5: Around the time of his commissioning vision of chapter 6. The "woe" Isaiah pronounces on himself in 6:5 thematically completes the six preceding "woes" of chapter 5 (5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22).
  A date just prior to King Uzziah's death (in 740 BC) therefore seems likely (cf. 1:1; 6:1).
- Isaiah 6: The prophet's commissioning in 740/739 BC (6:1).
- Isaiah 7:1: The invasion of Judah by Syria and Israel. This occurred in 735/734 BC, at the start of Ahaz's reign.
- Isaiah 7:16: Syria and Israel will be laid waste — foretelling the Assyrian campaigns of 733/732 BC.
- Isaiah 8:4: Damascus and Samaria will be plundered by the Assyrians within about two years.
  This prophecy was given ca. 734 BC.
- Isaiah 15 – 16: Prophecies against Moab given in 718 BC, three years prior to the Assyrian campaign under Sargon II (16:14).
- Isaiah 19 – 20: Prophecies against Egypt and Cush. Chapter 20 was given in 711 BC (20:1-2).
  These were fulfilled some 40 years later with the Assyrian campaigns under Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal.[65]
- Isaiah 28:1-4: A prophecy of the fall of Samaria, given prior to the Assyrian siege of 724-722 BC.
- Isaiah 32: A prophecy given one year prior to Sennacherib's invasion of Judah (32:10) — therefore, 702 BC.
- Isaiah 36 – 37:
  Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and threat to Jerusalem in Hezekiah's 14th year (36:1) — 701 BC.
- Isaiah 38 – 39: Hezekiah's illness probably occurred just prior to the Assyrian invasion of 701 BC (38:6).
  Hezekiah's life was extended by 15 years (38:5); he reigned until about 686 BC.
- Babylon's ascendancy and Judah's exile are foretold in 39:6-7.
  These two verses provide a bridge to Isaiah's final section:
  Chapters 40 – 66 anticipate events of the distant future — Judah's eventual return from Babylon.
  The prophecies of this section were probably given post-701 BC.
- Sennacherib's assassination in 681 BC is reported in 37:38.
  Either Isaiah was then still alive, or this represents a later editorial updating.

We may note that the book of Isaiah does not have the prophet's messages arranged in strict chronological order.

[65] Isaiah 19 – 20 is anticipating one or other of the Assyrian campaigns against Egypt: Esarhaddon conquered Egypt in 671 BC. Then, following an Egyptian revolt, his successor Ashurbanipal reinvaded in 667 BC, and again in 663. Isaiah 20:3-4 is likely foretelling the brutal 663 BC sacking of Thebes: the city was thoroughly plundered and its inhabitants deported. So memorable was this sacking that Nahum later (ironically) references it in his prophecy against Nineveh (Nah 3:8-10).