

The World's Destiny

Themes in Isaiah and other prophets, as the background to Jesus' and Paul's saving Gospel about the Kingdom of God. Christian salvation — how to live forever and gain indestructible life when Jesus comes back.

Compiled by Anthony Buzzard. Theological Conference 2025

“The prophets...speak of little else than these **two topics**: how and why God's people may expect to be punished by a variety of disasters soon, and how and why they may expect to be rescued and **restored** eventually” (Douglas Stuart, *Word Biblical Commentary*, Hosea-Jonah, p. xxxii).

Cp. “The book of Ezekiel is occupied with **two great themes**: the destruction of the city and nation; and the reconstitution of the people and their eternal peace. The book thus falls into two equal divisions, 24 chapters each” (A.B. Davidson, *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, Ezekiel, p. ix).

Cp. “The prophecy of Zephaniah falls into **two general divisions**, first, 1:2-3:8, a threat of judgment on the world, on Israel and the nations; and secondly, a promise of salvation equally universal (3:9-20)” (*Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, Zephaniah, p. 104).

cp. Jer. 32:42: “For thus says the LORD, ‘**Just as** I brought all this great disaster on this people, **so** I am going to bring on them all the good which I am promising them.’”

cp. Isa. 9:1: “There will be **no more gloom** for her who was in anguish.”

The Eschatology of Isaiah

(from J. Skinner, D.D., *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, Isaiah 1-39, 1930)

“The belief in an impending cataclysmic dissolution of the existing **order of the world** appears to be of the essence of Hebrew prophecy.”

This idea stems from their ethical conception “about God's final purpose with the world...The general representation which meets us in the prophecy of the eighth century is that of a sudden and violent upheaval of the physical and social

conditions of human life, to be followed by **a new order of things** in which the divine rule on earth is realized [the Kingdom of God] and all nature becomes subservient to the needs of a renewed humanity...Nature is not so much superseded as **idealized**...[This is] not the result of a progressive amelioration of earthly conditions [i.e. positively not amillennialism] but as the immediate sequel to the political catastrophe which the prophets saw to be imminent” (p. lx).

Four Main Topics in Isaiah

1. The Day of the Lord
2. The Remnant
3. The Messianic King
4. The Inviolability of Zion (Jerusalem). It will be **the capital** of a new world order (“the inhabited earth of the future about which we speak,” Heb. 2:5)

1. The Day of the Lord. Isa. 2:12-21: “A ‘day’ of universal overthrow, in which ‘all that is high and lofty’ in nature or human civilization will be laid low, when men will fling their idols to the moles and rats and hide themselves from the ‘glory of Yahweh’s majesty when He rises up to cause the **earth to tremble**’...The fundamental conception [of the Day of the Lord] is that of the Theophany — a visible appearance of Yahweh, breaking through the material fabric of the universe, and revealing His immediate presence [cp. Parousia, Second Coming of Jesus, Son of God, as God’s agent]...The great Being whom Isaiah saw *seated* on His throne (ch. 6) is now seen *rising up* (3:13) in awful grandeur, to shake the earth; the veiled ‘glory’ which is the fullness of the whole earth (6:3) now breaks forth in dazzling and terrifying splendor...[This is] an integral element of his [Isaiah’s] eschatology” [teaching about the future] (p. lxi-lxii).

The Day of the Lord is often indicated by the phrase ‘in that day.’ “The Assyrians are conceived as Yahweh’s agents to punish the sin and humble the pride of Israel, and an overthrow of Judah is looked for at their hands [Assyria: this did not happen historically]. But that is not the complete manifestation of Yahweh’s purpose: behind it lies in Isaiah’s later vision **the destruction of Assyria itself**; and every anticipation of that crowning act of judgment shows that [Isaiah] regarded it as brought about by the personal and supernatural intervention of the Holy One of Israel. And when after the retreat of [the Assyrian] Sennacherib’s army [701 BC] he

still announces the doom of impenitent Jerusalem (22:1-14), it is clear that he did not think of his expectation of judgment as exhausted by the Assyrian invasion. Hence the essential idea of the Day of Yahweh remained with Isaiah till the close of his career [as it still does today], and pervaded all his forecasts of the approaching climax of human history” (p. lxii).

Isaiah “felt that the hour of decisive conflict between Yahweh and the world power was at hand [cp. Jesus’ definition of the saving Gospel: ‘the Kingdom of God is at hand,’ Mark 1:14-15]; and he believed that in the last extremity Jerusalem would be saved by the intervention of the Almighty (29:7ff, 31:5). This thought finds expression in 31:8ff; and still more powerfully in an imaginative picture [so the author thinks, but Isaiah *predicted*; he did not fantasize!] of the judgment on Assyria in 30:27-33...The crisis of Jerusalem’s fate becomes the occasion of that final revelation of the majesty of God to which Isaiah had looked forward from the beginning of his work, and which he had with increasing distinctness connected with the overthrow of the Assyrian power. The whole history of redemption converges to this one event; it is the consummation of Yahweh’s work of judgment both on Israel and on Assyria, and the inauguration of the reign of holiness and righteousness and peace [the Kingdom of God, the Christian Gospel, Mark 1:1, 14, 15] reserved for the purified remnant of the nation” (p. xxxix).

2. The Remnant. “The doctrine of the Remnant first appears...in the name of [Isaiah’s] son ‘Shear-jashub’ [= ‘A remnant will return, repent’] who accompanied Isaiah in his memorable interview with Ahaz in 735 BC...The very idea of a remnant implies a certain continuity between the present order of things and the perfect order of the future...[There had been a remnant of 7000 who ‘had **not bowed the knee to Baal**’ in the time of Elijah.]

The boy’s name, ‘The remnant will return,’ indicates that “only **a remnant** of Judah would inherit the promise of the Messianic Age [the Kingdom, cp. ‘Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the Kingdom,’ Luke 12:32]... [When Ahaz refuses] the promise of salvation is restricted to **a remnant**, which might be larger or smaller according to the number of individuals who would **believe the prophet’s message** [faith or belief] and wait with him for the manifestation of the kingdom of God [i.e., believe the Gospel, Mark 1:1,14-15].

“The doctrine of the Remnant comes thus to have two aspects in the teaching of Isaiah. On the one hand it is a purely eschatological idea, as in 10:20-23...There the Remnant is identified with the ‘escaped’ of Israel in the final visitation [crisis]...But on the other hand...[Isaiah] gathered round him a band of ‘disciples’... ‘consolidating the Remnant,’ with the conscious purpose of forming an inner circle of religious fellowship which would be the nucleus of the future people of God [cp. Daniel and his friends]. [They are a] ‘kernel’...an indestructible germ of true godliness that gave to Isaiah the assurance that in spite of public failure his work had yet an abiding value for the perfect religion of the future” (p. lxiii-lxiv).

[Jesus, with his preaching of the Christian Gospel, assembles this remnant by the propagation of the creative seed message of the Gospel of the Kingdom, Luke 8:11, Matt. 13:19. See the parable of the sower, the essential parable, and note Luke 8:8.]

3. The Messianic King. This term designates the “ideal King of the house of David [the Messiah, cp. Acts 8:12: King and Kingdom]...The passages in the book of Isaiah where the figure of this ideal King appears are 9:2-7, 11:1-9, and 32:1-5 [and 7:14]... [In two of these passages] the destiny of the nation is made to turn on the birth of a child... the child upon the throne of 9:6ff...[Ahaz] is all that a king of Israel should *not* be, [but the Messiah will] take the place of the incompetent monarch.

[This drama can be acted out in every generation: bad ruler, prophet who challenges him, remnant, promise of the perfect King Messiah, and Kingdom.]

“In 9:6, he is endowed with attributes bordering on the divine; his fourfold name expressing some extraordinary and mysterious relation to Yahweh. He is called ‘Wonderful Counselor, Hero-God, Father of Eternity [the Coming Age], Prince of Peace.’ In 11:1ff, he is described as the shoot from the stock of Jesse, and as one uniquely endowed with the spirit of Yahweh for the perfect discharge of his kingly functions. And in 32:1 he appears simply as an ordinary good king, reigning in righteousness and associated with princes of a like spirit ruling in judgment.

[The NT develops the idea of Christians preparing for these positions of co-rulership with Jesus in the Coming Kingdom: Mat. 19:28, 1 Cor. 6:2, 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:1-6.]

“The chief point here raised is the question of the superhuman nature and origin of the Messiah...He is in some sense a divine, or semi-divine, being...**This is not to say**

that the Messiah is God, or even a God-man in the Christian sense; such a conception would have been impossible in the time of Isaiah [or at any time!] — but neither is he an ordinary mortal [certainly not a ‘mere man’!] distinguished from other men only by the office which he holds...The Messiah was God’s gift to the nation in the crisis of its destiny, and the pledge that the whole power of God would be put forth for the establishment of His kingdom (‘The zeal of Yahweh of hosts will perform this,’ 9:7)...The kingly perfection of the Messiah is ascribed, in accordance with the common teaching of the Old Testament, to the indwelling of the Spirit of Yahweh, which imparts to him **the insight and energy and piety necessary for the discharge of his high functions**...The perfect discharge of the ethical functions of royalty is a task of such transcendent importance as to require the unique endowment of divine virtues which is the distinctive feature in the more ideal portraits of the Messiah” (p. lxiv-lxvii).

4. The Inviolability of Zion (Jerusalem). The idea that Jerusalem “is to be the centre of the future kingdom of God appears in a large number of the prophecies of Isaiah (1:26ff, 2:2-4; 4:2-6; 8:18; 10:32ff; 14:32; 18:7; 28:16; 29:1; 30:19, 29; 33:5, 14, 20ff; 37:32)...The thought that Zion would occupy the same central position in the ideal age as in the present is a natural and inevitable consequence of the general principle that the future dispensation is always represented under forms derived from the present...

Jerusalem “will be spared in the impending crisis of judgment, and form the refuge for those who are saved from the wreck of the nation, so that its sanctity becomes, along with the permanence of the Davidic Kingdom, a pledge of the indestructibility of the true Israel...14:32: ‘Yahweh has founded Zion and there the poor of His people will find refuge’...In 10:12 the destruction of Assyria is spoken of as *following* the chastisement of Jerusalem...The annihilation of the Assyrians on the soil of Palestine [is predicted]” (p. lxvii-lxix).

The brain thrives on the big picture of the glorious future, such as Isaiah 14:7.

Compare Obadiah for the same story:

From T.T. Perowne, *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, Obadiah and Jonah, p. 19-24:

The “destruction of Edom and restoration of Israel shall eventually issue in the promised, though still future and long looked for consummation, when ‘the Kingdom shall be the Lord’s’ (v. 21).

“The prophecy has undoubtedly a wider range, and a more distant scope: A typical or allegorical meaning has very generally been ascribed to *Edom* in this and other Old Testament prophecies. When their ancient foe had passed away, the Jews, not unnaturally perhaps, recognized Rome, their latest oppressor, in the Edom of their prophets, and comforted themselves with the belief that on this second Edom, as on the first, the predicted vengeance would one day fall. Thus we find their Rabbis asserting that ‘Janus, the first King of Latium, was grandson of Esau,’ and that both Julius Caesar and Titus were Edomites. When the Roman Empire became Christian, then Christians generally came to be regarded as **Edomites** by the Jews. The persecutions which Christians have heaped upon them [the Jews] go far, it must be confessed, to justify the reference [!], and it is scarcely surprising that with modern Jews it is a canon of interpretation that by the Edomites are meant the Christians. Their Messiah when he comes is to gather Israel from all the countries of their dispersion into their own land, and destroy their Edomite, that is Christian, oppressors. Within the Christian church Edom has been held to represent the enemies of herself and of her Lord, while the restoration of Israel to their own land and their diffusion throughout its limits have been interpreted to signify the spread of Christianity throughout the world. That such an allegorical (Gal. 4:24) or as it has sometimes been called *spiritual* interpretation of Old Testament prophecy, is rightly recognized by the Church we cannot doubt...Her children are the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29). All the promises are theirs (2 Cor. 1:20). To her and to them all the glowing future belongs. They shall share His throne and His dominion when ‘the Kingdom shall be the Lord’s.’

“But the question still remains, whether beyond not only those first literal fulfillments of this and similar Old Testament prophecies, which may be traced in the past or present history of the world, but beyond also that spiritual or allegorical fulfillment of them which the Church of Christ is warranted in claiming and enjoying for herself, there may not lie yet another fulfillment of many of them which...may fully satisfy the conditions and exhaust the terms of those ancient predictions. [This is a wonderful truth which has never been widely recognized.]

“That such a [future] fulfillment was contemplated, and is to be expected still, it seems reasonable to believe. [This is classic premillennialism.] The canon of interpretation which excludes the Jew, as such, from any participation in the promised future, breaks down continually when we apply it to the prophetic writings of the Old Testament...We cannot, without doing violence to language and connection, dissociate the blessing and the curse, heaping all the one upon the ‘Ebal’ of the Jewish nation, while we crown with all the other the ‘Gerizim’ of the Church of Christ...The New Testament would step in to forbid the process. There too the future of the Jew, as such, is painted in glowing colors (Rom. 9-11)...It is a standing prophecy not only of their destined conversion [a remnant]...but of their **future restoration** to their own land... As it is written, ‘There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.’ And then ‘the Kingdom shall be the Lord’s’” (Obad. 21).

This is the end-point of the Gospel of the Kingdom. What an excellent statement!

Compare the theme of Amos: “Chapter 9:11-15 forms an epilogue, containing the promise of a brighter future. The dynasty of David, though now humbled, will be reinstated in its former splendor and power (9:11-12); and the blessings of peace will be shared in perpetuity by the entire nation (9:13-15)” (S.R. Driver, *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges*, Joel and Amos, 1907, p. 97).

Why is this extraordinary information, held in common by the prophets and developed by Jesus, about the **big picture** future of our world not believed and taught by the churches claiming to be the custodians and expositors of Holy Scripture? Note the Apostolic authority for the great restoration to be expected in the future: “Heaven must retain the Messiah until the **restoration** of all things of which God has spoken through the mouth of all His holy prophets” (Acts 3:21). Are you prepared for a place in this glorious restoration (*apokatastasis*) “of which all the prophets speak”? This is the challenge of the Christian Gospel (Mark 1:14-15; 4:11-12; Luke 8:12).

“Unless they believe the Gospel [about the Kingdom, Matt. 13:19; 24:14, “*This well-known gospel*”] they cannot repent and be forgiven.” The information above will lend new and clear meaning to Jesus’ main message: “Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand!” (Mark 1:14-15). In contemporary terms: “Change your thinking

and understanding drastically, because (as the prophets of Israel announced and Jesus confirms) God's world government is about to take over the world and introduce a new era of history." You are being challenged to train for reigning and to be schooled for ruling (I Cor 6:2). Meanwhile, since conversion, you were snatched from the realm of darkness and transferred into the realm of the Kingdom of the beloved Son (Col. 1:13-14). You and I must at present, now, receive a downpayment on the future Kingdom. We must live now as Kingdom people.

Listen to Paul in I Corinthians 6:2: "Don't you know that the saints are going to manage the world?" Do *you* know this? "And if the world is going to come under your jurisdiction, what sort of people ought you to be now?" Then this warning against getting rid of the future! "Some of you think you are ruling as kings now! I wish indeed that you were all ruling so that we might be ruling with you" (1 Cor. 4:8). That is what it means to inherit the Kingdom, based on Daniel 7:1-27. The time will come when the saints will possess the Kingdom and all the nations will serve and obey the saints (as Dan. 7:27 reads). There will be "praise, glory and honor **for you**" (1 Pet. 1:7).

The Devil is busy trying to rob you of the vision of the Kingdom preached as Gospel by Jesus and Paul. No wonder then that "when anyone hears the Gospel of the Kingdom, the Devil is ready to snatch away that Gospel of the Kingdom, so that you cannot believe it and be saved" (Luke 8:12). No wonder that Jesus stated that his whole purpose was "to preach the Gospel about the Kingdom" (Luke 4:43), not just the very important truth of Jesus' atoning death and resurrection. "He who is ashamed of me **and my teaching and Gospel, I will be very ashamed of him when I come back**" (Mark 8:38).

In summary we can say: There can be no discussion of who God is apart from the Shema, which Jesus called the most important of all commandments (Deut. 6:4; Mk. 12:29). And there can be no intelligent discussion of the Gospel without a thorough discussion of the Gospel about the Kingdom (Mark 1:14-15). If you don't start "at the beginning" (Mark 1:1, Heb. 2:3) you have no foundation!

"This Gospel about the Kingdom," Jesus said, "will be preached in the whole world, and then the end will come" (Matt. 24:14).