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A table of contents for *Journal of Biblical Literature* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_jbl-01.php

MESSIANIC PREDICTIONS

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THE words Messiah and Messianic are defined in several ways, and correctly so, when the variety of usage is considered. I am using the term Messianic prediction here as meaning any prediction of the coming of a future Davidic king or line of kings. It is a possibility that the usage might be extended beyond the line of David, but there is probably only one passage in the Old Testament where that might be the meaning.

The question of authorship in the Messianic passages of the books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel is one on which there is still much difference of opinion. I put all these after the exile. The most important Messianic passages in Isaiah are 9 1-6 (Eng. 2-7), and 11 1-5. Historically considered, these do not fit into any period in the life of Isaiah. In thought, they contemplate a rebuilding of the nation much more comprehensive than is found in the genuine utterances of Isaiah. Also, and this is a matter of no little importance, if spoken by Isaiah it is very strange that these predictions had no influence on the thought of later writers. The presentation of the rebuilding of the nation in the genuine utterances of Jeremiah is rather undeveloped, so that the Messianic predictions of the book of Jeremiah are not fully in accord with the thought of Jeremiah himself; they are also quite out of accord with his style. The Messianic passages in Ezekiel seem to be secondary, they are additions not fully in harmony with the immediate context.¹ This question of dating, obviously, affects

¹ This is especially urged by Hölscher, *Hesekiel, der Dichter und das Buch*.

very much the conclusions reached concerning the development of Messianic thought. Such views as those of Aytoun¹ rest upon a considerably different idea of the dating.

The prediction of the perpetuity of the Davidic dynasty, 2 Sam. 7 12, 14-16, which is the foundation of Messianic prediction, was probably in existence in a written form before the exile, or perhaps written during the exile. It seems best to call this the foundation of Messianic prediction, although it might be possible to use the term Messianic concerning it, although in a very broad sense.

Aside from this passage in 2 Sam., there are no Messianic predictions till after the exile. Some expressions of the prophets before the exile, in fact, are somewhat hostile to the Messianic idea. Isaiah speaks unfavorably of the house of David, 7 13, although the expression is too general to have much significance in this connection. Jeremiah's expressions are stronger and suggest the rejection of the idea of the perpetuity of the Davidic dynasty. In 13 13-14 Jeremiah specifically includes "the kings that sit upon David's throne" among those who are to be destroyed. In ch. 22 the perpetuity of the Davidic dynasty is made conditional, this being dependent upon the acts of the kings, see especially vv. 3-6, the alternative, which was evidently expected, being destruction. The pronouncement upon Jehoiachin does not necessarily mean a final end of the Davidic line, but it suggests it, 22 30: "Thus saith Yahweh, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no more shall a man of his seed prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling in Judah." It may be a result of this teaching of Jeremiah that there are no Messianic predictions from the exile. In Deutero-Isaiah, in fact, the promise to David, if already in existence, seems to be transferred to the people, 55 3: "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

Thus the earliest Messianic predictions are those of Haggai and Zechariah. It is evident that these are based on the

¹ "Rise and Fall of the 'Messianic' Hope in the Sixth Century," *JBL*, xxxix (1920), pp. 24-43.

passage in 2 Sam., being doubtless also prompted by the strategic position which Zerubbabel seemed to occupy, as well as by the weakness of the Persian empire at that time. The disappointment in this case must have discouraged similar predictions, but inevitably they revived again on the basis of the passage in 2 Sam.

After the exile, there are no Messianic predictions in Malachi, Trito-Isaiah, Obadiah, Joel, the Apocalypse of Isaiah, and Daniel, as well as in other small portions. The other principal productions of the postexilic period have Messianic elements. The principal ones, in the order in which I should arrange them, are: the Messianic addition to Amos, 9 11; that to Hosea, 3 5; the Messianic passages in Jeremiah; those in Ezekiel, all these probably from the Persian period. From the Greek period, Zech. 9 9-10; Mic. 5 2-5 a; Is. 9 1-6 (Eng. 2-7); 11 1-5. The predictions of the exile and after the exile which are not Messianic are theocratic, they forecast the direct activity of Yahweh in behalf of Israel. In the aggregate, the theocratic passages are much more extensive than the Messianic.³

The Messianic passages themselves are ordinarily more theocratic than Messianic, the principal activity is Yahweh's, the Messianic king being a figurehead. The work of deliverance and rebuilding of the nation belongs to Yahweh; after that is accomplished the Messianic king is put on the throne and attends to the administration of affairs. Is. 9 1-6 (Eng. 2-7) and 11 1-5, which present the most fully developed picture of the Messianic king, will be discussed separately at a later point, but it is to be noted that in 9 1-6 (Eng. 2-7) the work of deliverance belongs to Yahweh, while 11 1-5 makes no mention of deliverance.

The ordinary representation in the Messianic predictions is

³ The complete chronological arrangement of the Messianic passages which I favor is as follows. From the Persian period: Hag. 2 23; Zech. 3 8; 4 6-10; 6 9-12; Amos 9 11; Hos. 3 5; Jer. 23 5-8; 30 9; 33 14-20 (especially vv. 15, 17, 21-22, 26); 17 25; 22 4; Ez. 17 22-24; 21 37; 34 23-24; 37 24-25; Is. 16 5; 32 1. From the Greek period: Zech. 9 9-10; Mic. 5 2-5 a; Is. 9 1-6 (Eng. 2-7); 11 1-5, 10.

dynastic. It is often thought that there are two quite distinct classes of Messianic predictions, the dynastic and the individual. It seems to me, however, that with the possible exception of Is. 9 1-6 (Eng. 2-7) and 11 1-5, all these predictions should be considered dynastic. In none of them is the dynastic meaning inappropriate, and it is, of course, evident in many cases, especially from the frequent use of the term "David" as descriptive of the Messiah, doubtless to be understood as metonymy, meaning a descendant of David, and from such descriptive phrases as "for ever" in Ez. 37 25. This dynastic expectation is reflected in Ps. 89 and 132, the former probably belonging in or near the exile, and the latter considerably later.

Is. 9 1-6 (Eng. 2-7) and 11 1-5 are the most elaborate of all the Messianic representations and need somewhat more detailed consideration.

In Is. 9 5 (Eng. 6) the phrases translated "mighty god, everlasting father, prince of peace," are wanting in the Vatican manuscript of the Sept., and in other manuscripts. They are very peculiar; the last phrase $\square\text{ל} \text{ל} \text{ל}$ is a combination of the Hebrew words without precedent elsewhere. Although it is denied by some, the phrases obviously describe a divine being. This is a feature which is without analogy elsewhere in the Old Testament Messianic predictions, being found first in the "Parables" of the Book of Enoch, ch. 37-71, of the probable date of 94-64 B. C. These reasons seem sufficient for denying the genuineness of the phrases and regarding them as later additions, the additions being made, perhaps, for dogmatic reasons, at about the time of the "Parables" of Enoch. With these phrases removed, the picture is still somewhat ideal, the phrase "wonderful counsellor" being similar to language used elsewhere of God, Is. 28 29 (not by Isaiah), although not in itself indicating divinity. The translation of v. 6 (Eng. 7), with an obvious correction of text, should be, with Gray (ICC): "Great is the dominion, and endless is the peace, upon the throne of David and throughout his dominion," this being dynastic rather than individual. This phraseology does not directly ascribe Davidic descent to the Messiah, neither does

it forbid it; this is, according to my view, the only Messianic passage in the Old Testament in which there is any doubt of the Davidic descent. This passage, as here interpreted, although somewhat ideal, is not materially out of harmony with the other Old Testament Messianic predictions.

In Is. 11 1-5 the picture of the Messianic king is considerably idealized. The thought centres about the figure of the king, the people being quite overshadowed by his personality. It is implied, to be sure, that the time in mind in the forecast is to be a period of general prosperity for the people, but this idea is not developed in detail. This is the only representation of the Messianic king in the Old Testament in which he is to be actually the central figure in the picture. Here also, however, the qualities of the Messianic king are to be his because he is inspired by the spirit of Yahweh. He is to be essentially a judge, exhibiting perfect justice. The people under his administration are to be righteous, inasmuch as the wicked are to be destroyed out of the kingdom. This destruction is apparently to be understood as miraculous, by the utterance of the word of power, the only miraculous act of the Messiah in the Old Testament. This passage thus suggests a measure of individual emphasis upon the figure of the Messiah, it being the only Messianic prediction in which this is the case.

The discussion may be thus summarized. The Messianic predictions all belong after the exile. They are much less numerous in that period than the theocratic predictions, the dominating thought being thus theocratic. The dominance of the theocratic element is also found, expressly or by implication, in all the Messianic passages except Is. 11 1-5. All are clearly dynastic except Is. 11 1-5, and that is not out of accord with the dynastic idea, although the personality of the Messiah as an individual is somewhat emphasized. They are thus based upon 2 Sam. 7 12, 14-16, and are principally a reaffirmation of that passage. The Messianic king is thus a figurehead, added to complete the picture of the rebuilding of the nation, regarded as a needed detail by some of the prophets, and not by others. He has thus only a subordinate importance in the presentation of the ideal of the future of Israel. The ideal with which his

figure is connected is always that of the material kingdom, the passages with a distinctly higher spiritual ideal have no Messianic references. His figure is introduced principally because of 2 Sam. 7, and also, in the later prophets, because this prophetic tradition has been formed. His figure is unreal, it is literary rather than historical, it is not related to historical conditions and does not arise from special historical circumstances. Messianic prediction, therefore, when considered from the standpoint of Old Testament interpretation, has a significance much less than that which is usually assigned to it. Is. 11 1-5 is in some measure an exception in that the Messiah is somewhat individualized and idealized. This, probably the latest Old Testament passage, thus reflects the late apocalyptic tendency and forms a transition to the Messianic elements in the non-canonical apocalyptic literature of a century and a half before Christ.