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Jesus the Messiah*

by **Herbert W. Bateman, IV**

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

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

* Used by permission of Herbert W. Bateman, IV. This article is an adaptation of the introduction to the book authored by Herbert Bateman IV, Darrell L. Bock, and Gordon H. Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, forthcoming).

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

Others acknowledge Jesus' Jewishness but appear to ignore or reject His role as Messiah. He is a Jewish, but non-messianic, figure whose sole interest is social or religious reform. On the one hand, Gerd Theissen, Richard A. Horsley, and R. David Kaylor emphasize Jesus as a Jewish social reformer. On the other hand, E. P. Sanders, Geza Vermes, and Marcus Borg portray Him as a religious reformer. Thus, Jesus is some sort of Jewish reformer, yet non-messianic. Although His Jewishness is recognized, His claim to be "Messiah" is minimized.

Jesus: A Jewish Non-Messianic Reformer

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

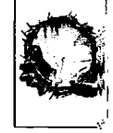
Still others portray Jesus as a Jewish Messiah, and yet ponder His messiahship. Numerous authors fall into this category. On the one hand, some stress that Jesus is a messianic prophet. Dale C. Allison, Maurice Casey, Bart D. Ehrman, and John P. Meier portray Jesus as a prophet who speaks primarily about the future millennium or kingdom. Yet, Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza and Ben Witherington III spotlight Jesus as a messianic sage, a teaching Messiah who speaks on many issues. On the other hand, N. T. Wright prefers to speak of Jesus as a Jewish Messiah of restoration. He is the one who will lead the nation of Israel out of exile. Others like Marcus Bockmuehl, Marcus de Jonge, and Peter Stuhlmacher underscore various aspects of His messianic sonship, namely whether that sonship is Davidic, human, or divine.

Jesus: A Jewish Messiah Figure[2]

Messianic Prophet	Major Proponent with a Selected Work
Jesus: The millennium prophet	Dale C. Allison: *Jesus of Nazareth: Millenarian Prophet* (1998)
Jesus: Eschatological or apocalyptic prophet	Maurice Casey: *From Jewish Prophet to Gentile God* (1991) Bart D. Ehrman: *Jesus: Apocalyptic Prophet* (2001)
Jesus: Eschatological prophet who ushers in the kingdom of God	John P. Meier: *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*, 4 vols. (1991, 1994, 2001, 2009)
Messianic Sage	**Major Proponent with a Selected Work**
Jesus: Egalitarian sage	Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza: *Jesus: Miriam's Child, Sophia's Prophet; Critical Issues in Feminist Christology* (1994)
Jesus: Prophetic and eschatological sage	Ben Witherington III: *Jesus the Sage: The Pilgrimage of Wisdom* (1994)
Messianic Restorer	**Major Proponent with a Selected Work**
Jesus: Eschatological Messiah who leads Israel out of exile	N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (1996)
Messianic Son	**Major Proponent with a Selected Work**
Jesus: Serving Son of David	Marcus de Jonge: *Jesus, the Servant Messiah* (1991)
Jesus: Martyred Son of Man	Markus Bockmuehl: *This Jesus: Martyr, Lord, Messiah* (1994)
Jesus: Divine Son of Man	Peter Stuhlmacher: *Jesus of Nazareth—Christ of Faith* (1993)

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

2 For an overview and bibliography for each view, see Appendix A in the book.



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

Foundations of Our Approach

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

So in this book, *as a historical matter*, the term "canonical" refers to a reading that uses the sacred books of the First Testament or Hebrew Scrip-

3 The earliest extant collection of the New Testament is found in p46 (*ca.* 200 CE), which includes most of Paul's writings and the book of Hebrews. The first extant manuscript to include all twenty-seven books of the New Testament is Sinaiticus (fourth century CE). It was Marcion (*ca.* 140 CE), the heretic, who compiled the very first "canonical" collection of New Testament works, which he limited to ten of Paul's writings and Luke's Gospel. The Muratorian Canon (*ca.* 160–80 CE) contains all twenty-seven books of the New Testament. The point is simply this: when people were wrestling with Jesus as Messiah, the only "canonical" Testament they had was the Hebrew Scriptures. So, *we must be willing to travel back to a time* when the Old Testament canon of Scripture had yet to be *formally fixed* and the theological developments we find in the New Testament concerning God's kingdom and God's Messiah were *not yet fully realized*.

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

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

Our answer is: "Yes, *eventually* a clear portrait emerges, but each inspired text is but a piece of a much larger puzzle in which the entire portrait gains clarity as the other inspired pieces are assembled, granting more clarity to what initially was often only *implicitly visible* within a given literary piece." The promise was in the original wording, as we hope to show, but it also became gradually connected to other texts of promise and pattern as they were revealed, reflecting back on the earlier text and giving it more context and clarity. Scripture assembles its doctrine as God inspires human authors to write it. God does not disclose everything at once, especially at the start. Seeing Scripture reveal itself progressively and with more detail and clarity is something the church has consistently affirmed. Thus, we seek to set forth one methodological model for how that progressive unfolding works and to show God's intentionality behind it. For the sake of illustration, the progress of messianic revelation is like pieces of a puzzle, a messianic puzzle of promise.

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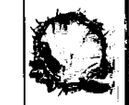

Puzzle Pieces of Messianic Promise

God provides pieces of the messianic puzzle very early in Jewish history. In the book of Genesis, God expresses it as a hope to Abraham with links to ideas of the seed that go back to Adam, expressed initially in general terms.[4] That same promise is given specifics in 2 Samuel, when God provides assurances to David about his descendants. Unfortunately, these sacred writings (the Old Testament) close with no one on David's throne due to Nebuchadnezzar's invasion of Judah in 586 BCE, when David's dynasty is dismantled.[5] Yet, the prophets provide glimmers of hope for its restoration (e.g., Amos, Micah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zechariah). This revelation progresses in the early sacred texts, as the book of Daniel makes clear. One day, a human figure (the Son of Man) comes with divine authority to establish God's kingdom and vindicate God's saints, completing the initial canonical picture of the hope of deliverance for God's people (Dan 2, 7, 9). Who exactly this figure was, where He fit, and how He connected to other pictures of deliverance opened up a discussion, along with a host of views, in Judaism that, through our survey of the extra-biblical Jewish literature, we shall show fueled the first-century conversation about messianic hope.[6] Unlike those who underestimate or perhaps even reject the significance of Hebrew Scriptures for understanding Jesus the Messiah, our starting point is the Hebrew Scriptures, because the sacred writings of the First Testament provide the essential pieces of a scriptural puzzle about Messiah that need to be joined and fitted together.

During the latter part of the Second Temple period (*ca.* 100 BCE), people collected, pondered, and pieced together this messianic puzzle. Although some people appear indifferent (e.g., Ben Sirach and Josephus), others reflect on the scriptural puzzle and attempt to fit the pieces together (e.g., the Qumran community). Gradually more and more scriptural pieces were linked together in a variety of configurations, some of which the early Christians used and others which they rejected. The confusion these opin-

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

5 Regarding our use of BC–AD or BCE–CE, we have opted to use the latter. The practice began to change in the eighties, and now, the use of BCE–CE tends to be the common practice in nearly all current biblical and Second Temple studies.

6 Why use the term "extra-biblical Jewish literature"? I prefer "Second Temple documents," but it lacks the needed separation from the New Testament canonical works. So, after some consideration, the description "extra-biblical" was adopted to communicate that later Second Temple texts of what is often called the intertestamental period are not read as inspired texts. Nevertheless, they contribute to the messianic ideas that are in play during Jesus' lifetime and during the time His followers write. Yet another good option, used by Craig Evans, is "noncanonical." Craig A. Evans, *Noncanonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992).

ions introduced, as well as some of the helpful connections they saw in the Jewish sacred texts, is part of the early Christian conversation about Messiah and why Jesus handles the category of Messiah with as much care as He does. So by the time of Jesus, key elements were in place to make a unity of it all—something Jesus and the early church presented as a grand fusion of what God had said in Scripture and accomplished in Jesus. Jesus' teaching, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, therefore, complete the messianic puzzle.[7] Yet, having demonstrated that the foundation of our approach begins with the Hebrew Scriptures, and thereby considers continuity with the New Testament, we might ask: "How does our approach differ from other approaches that also begin with the Old Testament?"

Differentiating Our Approach

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

7 Darrell L. Bock first used the puzzle metaphor in "A Progressive Dispensational Hermeneutic," in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism: A Comparison of Traditional and Progressive Views*, ed. Herbert W. Bateman IV (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1999), 85–101; and "Single Meaning, Multiple Contexts and Referents," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 105–51.

8 See Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., "The Single Intent of Scripture," in *Evangelical Roots: A Tribute to Wilbur Smith*, ed. Kenneth S. Kantzer (Nashville: Nelson, 1978), 123–41; *The Uses of the Old Testament in the New* (Chicago: Moody, 1985); and "Single Meaning, Unified Referents," in *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. Kenneth Berding and Jonathan Lunde (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 45–89; Elliott E. Johnson, "A Traditional Dispensational Hermeneutic," in *Three Central Issues in Contemporary Dispensationalism*, 63–76; John H. Sailhamer, *Introduction to Old Testament Theology: A Canonical Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995). For another discussion about Sailhamer see footnote 12 below.

9 As Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart note, "The primary difficulty for most modern readers of the Prophets stems from an inaccurate prior understanding of the word 'prophecy.' For most people this word means the same as the first definition in most dictionaries: 'Foretelling or prediction of what is to come.' It often happens, therefore, that many Christians refer to the prophetic books only for predictions about the coming of Jesus and/or certain features of the New Covenant age—as though prediction of events far distant from their own day was the main concern of the prophets. In fact, using the Prophets in this way is highly selective. Consider the following statistics: 'Less than 2 percent of Old Testament prophecy is messianic. Less than 5 percent specifically describes the New Covenant age. Less than 1 percent concerns events yet to come'" (Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible Book by Book: A Guided Tour* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1993], 165–66).

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

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

10 For a presentation and evaluation of four evangelical approaches to the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament see Darrell L. Bock, "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New: Part 1," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142 (July–September 1985): 209–23; "Evangelicals and the Use of the Old Testament in the New: Part 2," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142 (October–December 1985): 206–19.

11 See Wolter H. Rose, "Messiah," in *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 565–68. Sydney Greidanus, in *Preaching Christ from the Old Testament* ([Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999], 276), suggests seven different ways of preaching Christ from the Old Testament: "redemptive-historical progression, promise-fulfillment, typology, analogy, longitudinal themes, New Testament references, and contrast." Rather than simply referring to "messianic prophecies" in general, it is helpful to point out that there are numerous ways in which the Old Testament paves the way for the recognition of Jesus as Israel's Deliverer, Hope, and Messiah.

they are exclusively about Jesus ignores the prefiguring portraits that are also significant pieces of the puzzle, which have to be both recognized and appreciated as we look from this side of Jesus' resurrection and exaltation.

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

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Defining Our Approach

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

Concerning the *promises* of Israel's king (covered in part one of the book), we address the contextual-canonical reading of the First Testament.[12] In a

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

contextual reading, the interpreter seeks to understand the First Testament passage in its original historical setting. This is an important first, and often neglected, step when discussing God's promise of Messiah in the Hebrew Scriptures. Here, we are especially concentrating on what the original human author meant and understood in his original, historical setting. Furthermore, we focus on the exegetical meaning of a passage within its immediate theological and literary context. Thus, we read the passage as an ancient Hebrew might, in the light of his historical background, antecedent theology, and literary context. At the same time, we also pay attention to how the wording of God's promises has potential for development over a longer term.

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

The focus on the First Testament as a whole, and the unfolding of its messianic portrait, will help to set up both what was discussed in the latter part of the Second Temple period (beginning *ca.* 167 BCE) and what Jesus did with all of these options as He assessed them. Initial statements made by human authors allow the principle of God's design and activity to be appealed to again, at a later historical moment. Patterns of application of God's promise become clearer as salvation history unfolds in the sacred texts and as the patterns described in earlier texts reappear. Some prophets had the strong sense that whatever was happening to kingship in their time (and not all of it was good, by any means) would not stop God from accomplishing what He had promised. They knew that in the *eschaton* there would be a decisive deliverance. Later, when we read the same passages, we attempt to do so as though we were a Jew living during the early Second Temple (post-exilic) period (e.g., Genesis in light of the Psalms and Prophets, not just as a book on its own). Thus, we strive to draw on the understanding of messianic themes as they stood at the time of a later Jewish reading in Israel's history.

Concerning the *expectations* of Israel's king (covered in part two of the book), we focus attention on reflections about messianic promise evident in later, extra-biblical Jewish writings. Jewish interpreters read, explained, pieced together, and applied sacred texts within a later, Second Temple

context (*ca.* 167 BCE–70 CE). This involved interpretive, theological, and hermeneutical reflections that emerged during, and possibly as a result of, major historical events: the rebuilding of the second temple (515 BCE), the desecration and rededication of the second temple (167, 164 BCE), the rise and fall of the Hasmonean dynasty, which ruled Israel (143–63 BCE), etc. Although there remains a mysterious element about God's messianic promise, namely what and who was to come, some Jewish interpreters occasionally got it right in that they put some aspects of the messianic portrait together in helpful ways. They understood that Old Testament trajectories could be interpreted as *ultimately* pointing to an eschatological Messiah.

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

Concerning the *coming* of Israel's king (covered in part three of the book), we address christological readings of the Old Testament. In a christological approach, we look at the messianic portrait again, but as a Christian, bringing scriptural hope together with the light of the ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus, the Messiah. In some cases, passages are reused in ways that make their full force clear. In many cases, the messianic understanding is assumed as present by revelation and vindicated by God, so that the portrait is developed with a fullness and clarity that it had lacked, but now can be seen to have been there all along. In other words, we widen our context again—to Jesus and His inauguration of the new covenant. Here we discover both continuity and discontinuity with the variety of elements in early Jewish hope and with Second Temple Judaism. Pieces of the First Testament disclose the messianic identity and activity in Jesus' mission. Some of these elements were reflected upon and anticipated during the Second Temple period, but reaffirmed, unified, and fulfilled in the Second Testament.

So it should not come as a surprise that Second Temple interpretive approaches to the First Testament are often reflected in the Second Testament. Both Second Temple Jews and first-century Christians were trying to make sense of what God had said. This is certainly the case in Hebrews 1:5–13, where the author links seven Old Testament passages together to present Jesus as God's divine Davidic Son.[14] We may also say that apostolic readings of the Old Testament often connected new covenant truth with old covenant texts, making a revelatory step through the Spirit that brought together what had not yet been assembled into a coherent portrait. In doing so, they complete a unified picture with the earlier pieces. Sometimes the picture is completed in unanticipated ways, but nevertheless, in ways that show a single hope is at work. This is why we find Second Testament writers sometimes engaged in literal, contextual exegesis (*peshat*), but other times in what some argue wrongly is christological eisegesis (*midrash*). This is not, however, eisegesis because the text is being handled appropriately in light of additional revelation, namely, an inclusion of the original fullness of the First Testament along with what took place in Jesus, utilizing a larger historical and revelatory context. The difference is simply this: they are not dealing with exegesis of a specific book in its initial context alone, but rather performing exegesis across a collection of books, seeing God's Word as still active, alive, and speaking to the new historical setting.[15] Furthermore, they are dealing with more than an individual verse. Instead they are dealing with theological concepts that appear throughout the Hebrew Scriptures and were reflected upon and written about during the latter part of the Second Temple period. Unlike traditional readings that argue for an explicit exegesis of specific passages in a singular context, we contend for a unified reading, involving canonical considerations of themes, reflections of which extend into the time of Jesus.

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

Relevance of Our Approach

Needless to say, all three backgrounds (contextual-canonical introductions, messianic reflections, and christological conclusions of God's promise of "Messiah") are relevant to understanding how these texts ultimately are read and are a part of the historical process by which these passages came to be understood as affirming Jesus. No one approach trumps the others; *all three work in concert*, but in distinct ways. The First Testament sets the stage for the discussion, by introducing and presenting the promise, giving us many of its key revelatory elements. The messianic reflections are really a period of contemplating messianic options. They wrestle to make sense of all elements of these promises and put them together with varying degrees of success and failure. This period shows the variety of ways the Jewish audience of the first century might contemplate the topic, and

14 Herbert W. Bateman IV, "Two First Century Messianic Uses of the Old Testament: Hebrews 1:5–13 and 4QFlorilegium 1:1–19," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (1995): 11–27; and "Psalm 45:6–7 and Its Christological Contributions to Hebrews," *Trinity Journal* n.s. 22 (2001): 3–21.

15 For other New Testament examples, see Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New: An Introduction*, Continuum Biblical Studies Series (New York: Continuum, 2001); Richard N. Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis in the Apostolic* Period, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Craig A. Evans, "The Function of the Old Testament in the New," in *Introducing New Testament Interpretation*, ed. Scot McKnight (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989); E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1957).

what options a messianic discussion of the first century needed to address. The time of a christological reading of Jesus and His followers renews the revelatory activity, missing since the early Testament, and puts the material together into a unit that also adds additional features and emphases to the portrait. Thus, we emphasize equally a contextual-canonical, messianic, and christological reading of the text. That means we neither underestimate Jesus' connection with His Jewishness and/or His cultural understandings of "Messiah" derived from the First Testament, nor do we simply make the conceptual connection of "Messiah" in the Old and New Testaments a mostly exclusive link. Herein lies the uniqueness of *Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King*: we present a median approach to discovering who Jesus the Messiah is, and how Jesus Himself, in the progress of revelation, fits together the pieces of God's messianic puzzle.

Although initially, key elements about "Messiah" were often present only as *the culminating part of a more comprehensive discussion in the First Testament*, some promises were seen more clearly by later interpreters as more revelation appeared. In addition, some later reflections and presentations of various elements of the end times and the messianic portraits generated during the Second Temple period were often valuable. As historical events unfolded, a look back on earlier texts of Hebrew Scripture provided fresh elements that could make more explicit what had initially been only implicit. With the coming of Jesus, the fulfillment of these promises became unified and clear. Authors of the Second Testament, influenced by their historical milieu, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, proclaimed these fulfillments. Consequently, the Second Testament does not say less than the First Testament did, but it certainly tells us more about God's promise of "Messiah." Yet, God knew where these passages and patterns were going. As He revealed pieces of the messianic puzzle throughout history, God was well aware of how they would fit together. Our approach, therefore, represents a threefold hermeneutical reading strategy (periods of promise, expectation, and coming). It takes into consideration First Testament canonical texts and appropriate ancient Near Eastern material, Second Temple history, and Jewish literature of the period—as well as that of Jesus and the apostles.[16]

Our Threefold Approach

We begin with an equal emphasis concerning the human author and the divine Author. We focus on kingship, because the anointed Deliverer is tied to a kingdom and the rule of a King. To be sure, other topics such as salvation and the *eschaton* also can, and do, have messianic meaning. However, the bulk of the key features about Messiah surface in claims tied

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

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

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

Therefore, we trace God's progress of revelation through the writings of human authors: what God has told them, what they wrote, and what they understood. We do not collapse all of redemptive history into a single statement about Jesus the Messiah that does not appreciate the progressive nature of God's revelation. There is a relationship and connection to the concept of Messiah in sacred scriptures, while there is also development as Jewish history unfolds and God provides more and more pieces of His messianic puzzle. Thus, methods for determining the multiple human authors' histories about a Messiah (i.e., historical-exegetical) as well as methods for coming to grips with the divine Author's revelation about Messiah (i.e., theological-canonical) are embraced and employed throughout this work.

Part One: "Promises of Israel's King"

In this portion of the book, Johnston addresses the contextual and canonical introductory dimensions that are foundational for the Davidic dynasty of Israel. The contextual dimension focuses on the original, historical, exegetical meaning of key passages. The canonical dimensions identify trajectories, which innerbiblical development in later Old Testament passages unpack. Contextual analysis indicates that Old Testament promises of royal dynasty and victory are clear—yet open enough to allow for later development of a diversity of eschatological messianic roles and expectations. Canonical analysis reveals how the ancient dynastic promises come to be interpreted. This canonical usage also provides the segue to the develop-

17 See footnote 4.

ment of various forms of eschatological messianism, evident in Second Temple literature and in the early church.

Part Two: "Expectations of Israel's King"

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

Part Three: "Coming of Israel's King"

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

Here, he discusses the "already–not yet" developments in the fulfillments of what Messiah Jesus does, as Jesus presents a Messiah in two comings (suffering and then glory). He also shows how this portrait is presented gradually in the Synoptic Gospels, emphasizing four mysteries that both make the presentation possible and unify the portrait. In two chapters, "Jesus the Messiah in the Gospels" and "Jesus the Messiah in Acts and the Early Church," Bock first identifies how the kingdom that Jesus the Messiah brings grows. It is *not large all at once* but grows from small to large. Second, he shows that the major opponent is Satan, not political structures as such. Third, Gentiles will be present in a way equal to Jews and yet in a way that connects the covenant promise. Finally, and most crucially for Jesus' ultimate messianic identity, is how He ties together the kingdom, His role, and His identity with the figure of the Son of Man. This results in a unique combination of divine-human authority for the delivering figure that had been seen previously in Judaism. So we see how Jesus represented the concept of Messiah, or the core figure of the new era, in ways that nuanced the older presentation by bringing certain distinct images more closely together.

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

Our Audience

Jesus the Messiah: Tracing the Promises, Expectations, and Coming of Israel's King is not intended to be an overly technical work. And though it addresses issues of interpretation, it is written for anyone seriously versed in Scripture. More specifically, it is written for all those who wrestle with how the messianic portrait and claims of Scripture for Jesus work within human history and divine revelation. It is intended to help those who fail to see any connection between promise in the Old Testament and fulfillment in the New Testament about Messiah, as well as to nudge others to consider moving beyond the notion that all Old Testament readings about "Messiah" were fixed and only spoke directly about Jesus. Thus, we neither minimize nor maximize the connection with the Old Testament and/or first-century Jewish cultural understanding of Messiah, but rather offer an approach somewhere between the two.

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

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though we are twenty-first-century followers of Jesus, the One through whom God's kingdom program has been inaugurated, who have far more revelation than people of the first century, do we have all the pieces of the messianic puzzle necessary to determine the consummation of God's kingdom program yet to come through the second coming of His anointed one, Jesus? Today, we may have a more complete canonical portrait, but we still do not have all the pieces of God's messianic puzzle. That is because ultimately God wants us to trust Him for the time when He will complete His kingdom program.

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

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A Conversation with Michael Rydelnik

Dr. Michael Rydelnik, professor of Jewish studies at Moody Bible Institute, recently wrote *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* (Nashville: B & H Publishers, 2010). In that book, he makes the case that the Hebrew Bible was intended to be a messianic text and, therefore, should be read as such. Rather than have him restate the arguments he laid out in that book, we interviewed him about his thoughts on the exegesis of messianic prophecy.

***Mishkan*: Do you advocate the use of a list of messianic prophecies with their New Testament fulfillments?**

Proof texting has been the standard approach to presenting messianic prophecy from the age of the apologists until today. Nevertheless, the problem with using this approach is that often it disregards or misunderstands the context.

I think Jesus' emphasis was not just on the individual verses but rather on the overall understanding of the biblical books. In Luke 24:25–27, Jesus said, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in *all* that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary for the Messiah to suffer these things and to enter into His glory? And beginning with Moses and with *all* the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in *all* the Scriptures." Note his emphasis on *all* the Scriptures. He was not saying that the Hebrew Bible was messianic in fifty or sixty isolated passages but rather that it was messianic in its intent. It went even deeper—according to Him, the Hebrew Bible was messianic down to its DNA, in the fiber and fabric of the text. Jesus saw the Messiah, not merely in occasional, isolated texts, but in all the Scriptures. This is what He taught His disciples, and therefore Peter made the same case. The apostle quoted Moses' words in Deuteronomy 18:15–19, and then argued that "all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, have also announced these days" (Acts 3:24). Not surprisingly, this is similar to the Talmudic dictum, "Every prophet prophesied only of the days of the Messiah" (b. Ber. 34b).