

# HOPE FILLED FULL

## Echoes of Scripture in the New Testament

Mako A. Nagasawa

### PART ONE: THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE HOPES OF THE PENTATEUCH

#### Introduction

The New Testament claims to fulfill the Old Testament, and quotes from it as proof. For example, Luke, out of all the Gospel writers, is most obviously concerned to root the Christian movement in the Hebrew Scriptures. Luke's Gospel is bracketed, beginning and end, by strong claims that Jesus and his heirs have the true interpretation of the Old Testament. In the beginning, Jesus is in the Temple at age 12, astounding the teachers of the Scriptures (Lk.2:41-52). In the finale of Luke's Gospel, Luke explains how the movement of Christian world evangelization is firmly rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures, as shown by his repeated references to Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms in his closing scenes (Lk.24:27, 44, 45, 46). Then, the speeches of Acts are expositions of the Old Testament by followers of Jesus who have been taught by him and empowered by his Spirit, and thus speak for him authoritatively. Luke claims that the Old Testament – in its entirety – is being fulfilled in the Christian mission to the world. The New Testament affirms the Old, arguing that the period of expectation described by the Old has been inaugurated by Jesus as king, is in process of unfolding in the world, and is guaranteed by God to be consummated in the new creation on the basis of Jesus' resurrection.

Various biblical scholars have argued that the New Testament writers show varied levels of concern for how they quote the Old Testament. In the view of the more extreme skeptics, the New Testament writers, especially the Gospel writers, take verses out of context simply to serve their agenda. Or, they call an Old Testament text 'prophetic' when it does not seem to be so. For example, Richard B. Hays of Duke University in his book *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* suggests that Paul quoted from the Old Testament quite strategically, though in ways that might have surprised the original Old Testament writer. However, Hays' study, in my mind, represents a more 'downstream' concern of the New Testament, since Paul wrote more often to defend his understanding of the church (ecclesiology), and not so much to defend his view of Jesus of Nazareth, who Paul did not have to defend to his churches. So, without another Scriptural explanation, one that is 'upstream' logically, for how Paul came to understand Jesus as Israel's Messiah, it is possible to interpret Paul as 'reading in' the Christian church into the Hebrew Scriptures where it was not originally present in the text. Thus, it is the Gospel writers who are my primary concern; how did they position Jesus in relation to the Hebrew Scriptures? If the Gospel writers used a similar method of 'reading in' Jesus into the Hebrew Scriptures where he was not originally present, that is deeper problem, one that is, in fact, distressing. If this is indeed the case, then the validity of the New Testament's claim about itself is certainly much weaker than it puts forward. This would be a significant step backward in arguing for the intellectual validity of the Christian faith. Moreover, the Christian community would have no way to dialogue with the Jewish synagogue community over the Hebrew Scriptures and should give up on this effort immediately.

But is such an assessment of the New Testament correct? I do not believe so. I will focus on the Old Testament and Luke in order to substantiate my view that the New Testament writers and in particular, Luke, are taking great care to respect the literary and theological integrity of the Old Testament. Consequently, I think it is very plausible to say that the New Testament has firm intellectual foundations, and that dialogue about the Old Testament with the non-Christian community can continue in earnest and with confidence. To demonstrate this, I will begin in the beginning – literarily, that is, with the Pentateuch.

#### The Pentateuch: The Nations, Israel, and Israel's King

The broadest theme in the Pentateuch is that of Israel and the nations. It begins with a diagnosis and explanation of 'the nations' in Genesis 1 – 11. Then immediately following this, God calls Abram and makes a commitment to 'bless' and 'curse' the nations ('all families of the earth,' Gen.12:1-3) based on how they treat Abram. Thus, from the outset of the Pentateuch, the destinies of Israel and the nations are intertwined. The Pentateuch also ends with a concern for Israel and the nations. The prediction of Israel's covenant failure and future exile in Deuteronomy 28-29 already starts to build the expectation of another deliverance, a return from captivity and exile (Dt.30ff.). This would have implications for 'the nations.' There is a peculiar reference to a people who are not a people who would later provoke Israel to jealousy (Dt.32:21) associated with the post-exilic renewal of Israel's covenant. And the

nations are called to rejoice alongside Israel at that time (Dt.32:43). Hence we find that the Pentateuch is not just an explanation of origins, or a code of laws, although it contains those items. It is fundamentally prophetic. As a whole, it anticipates and *foresees* Israel's failure and restoration. Even the material in the Genesis patriarchal life cycle anticipates the life cycle of Israel as a nation. So Israel's return from exile and its implications are spelled out, and the Pentateuch already looks forward to that time horizon.

A second concern in the Pentateuch is the coming king of Israel. When this theme is clearly seen together with the theme of Israel and the nations, we can more deeply appreciate the Pentateuch's prophetic nature. The future king of Israel is prophesied in Genesis 49 and Numbers 24. Incidentally, there are only three prophetic poems of the Pentateuch, occurring in similar places in the narrative: Jacob's poem in Genesis 49, Balaam's in Numbers 24, and Moses' in Deuteronomy 32 – 33. They are all predictive, and all are concerned about the future of both Israel and the nations. The first two of these prophetic poems deal with Israel's coming king.

The prophecy of Jacob over Judah involved a 'scepter' – a common symbol for kingly royalty and sovereignty – arising from a descendant of Judah (Gen.49:10).

- <sup>8</sup> Judah, your brothers shall praise you;  
Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies;  
Your father's sons shall bow down to you.
- <sup>9</sup> Judah is a lion's whelp;  
From the prey, my son, you have gone up.  
He couches, he lies down as a lion,  
And as a lion, who dares rouse him up?
- <sup>10</sup> The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,  
Until Shiloh comes,  
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.
- <sup>11</sup> He ties his foal to the vine,  
And his donkey's colt to the choice vine;  
He washes his garments in wine,  
And his robes in the blood of grapes.
- <sup>12</sup> His eyes are red from wine,  
And his teeth white from milk.

In part, this referred to King David, but it also refers to more than King David because it describes a perpetual dynasty, it would seem, more than an individual human king. Judah as a tribe will possess the kingship, and although the exile would disrupt the manifestation of the kingly rule in Israel, nevertheless from God's perspective, the divine claim to kingship in Israel belongs to Judah. The phrase concerning 'Shiloh' is difficult to translate, and Professor James Kugel of Harvard says that it could equally be 'until he comes to Shiloh' or 'until Shiloh comes,' in which case 'Shiloh' would be a title of this king. The word Shiloh has a range of meanings, but the word is deemed Messianic from ancient rabbinical sources. The name means 'peace' or 'the coming one' or 'he whose right it is.' Significantly, 'the obedience of the peoples,' i.e. the nations, will accompany this king.

Similarly, the prophecy of Balaam saw the king of Israel being higher than other kings, in an 'exalted' kingdom (Num.24:7 – 9). In this prophecy, Balaam also referred to the 'scepter' in Num.24:17 to indicate kingly royalty, and the author/redactor of the Pentateuch retained this word to invoke the prophecy concerning the tribe of Judah; this king of Israel will come from the loins of Judah. The nations, again, will be affected: 'He will devour the nations who are his adversaries' (Num.24:8). But he will take other nations as his 'possession': 'Edom shall be his possession; Seir, its enemies, also will be a possession...One from Jacob shall have dominion.' Apparently 'the Kenite' will have an enduring dwelling place but neither Amalek nor Kain would (Num.24:20-22). That Balaam's prophecy was still studied and seen as messianic is suggested, among other things, by Bar-Kochba's title, 'son of the star,' a reference to the term 'star' mentioned in this prophecy.

Most interestingly, in Num.24:9, the Abrahamic covenant apparently would re-center on this kingly figure, as he becomes the one that brings 'blessings' and 'curses' on the nations based on their response, not merely to Abraham and his descendants in general, but to himself in particular. Thus, as the Pentateuch narrative unfolds, Israel's

Scriptures already start to focus on a kingly, messianic figure from within Israel as the focal point of the covenant to Abraham. Integrating these two themes together, as the Pentateuch strongly suggests, yields the logical conclusion that the kingly figure from Israel will deliver Israel from exile and bless or curse the nations based on their response to him. He will re-center the Abrahamic covenant around himself. But I am getting ahead of myself here. Suffice to say that at this point, I think it is plainly easy to reject the notions that 'Israel does not need a Messiah,' or 'the idea of a Messiah is a late invention,' and so on.

Once the Davidic dynasty was established, David and his house clearly indicated (by their sins) that they were not the fulfillment of these prophetic expectations. In its then-current form, the house of David failed, although hope still rested in the Davidic line (e.g. Ps.89). Prophetic expectation looked to the reign of the kingly Messiah proclaimed from Jerusalem outward. Moreover, the Psalms view 'the nations' becoming the 'inheritance' or 'possession' of the king of Israel, just as Israel was already God's 'possession' according to Ex.19:5. Psalm 2 was recited at the coronation of every Davidic king in Jerusalem. It picks up the language of the nations being the king's 'possession' begun in the prophecy of Balaam. God encourages the king of Israel to 'ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your *inheritance*, and the very ends of the earth as Your *possession*' (2:8). Psalm 2 thematically anticipates the Messianic king of Israel, expecting his rule over the world to be fully enacted.

- <sup>1</sup> Why are the nations in an uproar  
And the peoples devising a vain thing?
- <sup>2</sup> The kings of the earth take their stand  
And the rulers take counsel together  
Against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying,
- <sup>3</sup> 'Let us tear their fetters apart  
And cast away their cords from us!'
- <sup>4</sup> He who sits in the heavens laughs,  
The Lord scoffs at them.
- <sup>5</sup> Then He will speak to them in His anger  
And terrify them in His fury, saying,
- <sup>6</sup> 'But as for Me, I have installed My King  
Upon Zion, My holy mountain.'
- <sup>7</sup> 'I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD:  
He said to Me, 'You are My Son,  
Today I have begotten You.
- <sup>8</sup> Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance,  
And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.
- <sup>9</sup> You shall break them with a rod of iron,  
You shall shatter them like earthenware.'
- <sup>10</sup> Now therefore, O kings, show discernment;  
Take warning, O judges of the earth.
- <sup>11</sup> Worship the LORD with reverence  
And rejoice with trembling.
- <sup>12</sup> Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way,  
For His wrath may soon be kindled.  
How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

While Psalm 2 has some orientation to the future (v.8 – 9), it is not an explicit prediction about details of Jesus' life. Hence it is not really prophetic in the following two senses:

1. The kind of text that is short and explicitly predictive, but that can be intentionally fulfilled. For example, Jesus was certainly aware of Zechariah 9:9 and probably made an intentional effort to invoke it by riding into Jerusalem on a donkey.
2. The kind of text that is short and explicitly predictive that could not be fulfilled intentionally by Jesus. Isaiah 53 is one example, with its predictions of Jesus' death which were outside of Jesus' own control to fulfill. It is not likely that Jesus could have arranged to be 'with a rich man in his death.'

Psalm 2 is mostly focused on the current Davidic king of Israel and the legacy associated with/promised to the Davidic line. Having said that, though, it is quite significant – and quite telling – to note that Psalm 2 was only true in part for David. It was certainly not completely descriptive of the time period in which it was written. Nor was it ever more than partially true for any of King David’s descendants, even Solomon. None of the Davidic kings exercised quite this degree of influence and power over the Gentile nations around them. Yet Psalm 2 quite clearly anticipates such a time. Therefore, Psalm 2 falls into what I’m calling above another category of prophecy. It was partially realized in real history through one of Israel’s institutions, but was awaiting its greater fulfillment.

This observation points to the fact that there are other kinds of biblical prophecies. I will touch on two more types here.

3. The books of biblical narrative in their entirety. All of the narrative books of the Old Testament look ahead to something yet to come. The Pentateuch, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, etc. all look ahead, searching for a resolution to the stories they tell. These books do not simply *contain* smaller prophetic/predictive elements. They are in themselves and in their entirety prophetic, yearning for some greater resolution to the stories they begin. Psalm 89 is a good example of an entire Psalm that yearns for God to establish the preeminence of the Davidic king based on God’s earlier promise to David to do so.
4. The kind of text that was written to be partially true at an earlier point in time and fulfilled later. These tend to revolve around Israel’s institutional life, i.e. the land, the Temple, the kingship, etc. I use the kingship and Psalm 2 as an example.

Similarly, Psalm 110 picks up the word ‘scepter’ (v.2) and envisions the king of Israel ruling in the midst of his enemies and simultaneously being a priest in the order of Melchizedek, the first priest-king. Again, Psalm 110 was only true in part for David and his human heirs. But it became one of the focal points of expectation for a messianic king of Israel. It is more than merely historically plausible that any serious messianic claimant would engage with and quote from Psalm 110. It was a historical necessity; he would have had to engage it, even as he would have to, in some form, address the Gentile world.

The Gentiles’ response was enacted in a limited sense by Solomon, the first ‘son of David,’ receiving praise and honor from Gentile rulers like the Queen of Sheba in Jerusalem; this is especially significant to the Book of Chronicles. Within the Prophets, there is a dual message. On the one hand there are passages indicating how the Messiah’s reign over the Gentiles would bring destruction against those Gentiles who resist him (e.g. Joel 3:1-17). On the other hand, there are passages indicating that his reign will bring peace, at least to those who bow the knee to him (e.g. Isa.2:1-4; Mic.4:1-5). In both cases, Israel and her covenant with YHWH would be vindicated before the world. Hence, while Jews in Second Temple Judaism expected their Messiah to bless some nations and destroy others, a certain amount of ambiguity existed about how the Messiah would actually do all these things. At least some, if not most, Pharisees expected the Messiah to use military force against Rome in particular to establish his reign in Jerusalem, a reign that would eventually encompass the entire Gentile world. But by no means was this the only view, nor was it the only legitimate textual possibility for how that kingly reign would unfold. Jesus’ interpretation, as we will see, was quite different, but legitimate as claiming descent from the Old Testament.

Let me take a cursory look at how Luke treats the kingship theme. Luke claims that Jesus is the heir of David, first through the angel Gabriel: ‘He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end’ (Lk.1:32 – 33). Luke is obviously concerned to show Jesus as the ‘king of Israel’ and to root the movement of world evangelization in Jesus’ name in the Hebrew Scriptures, as shown by his reference to Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms (24:44). Luke’s version of the Great Commission bring ‘the nations’ into view (24:47), just as Matthew’s version does. Luke claims that the Old Testament, properly understood, is being revealed and fulfilled in Jesus’ mission to the world.

Acts demonstrates thematic and structural similarities stressing Jesus’ kingship. Acts also begins by discussing Jesus’ enthronement, but this time in terms of Jesus’ actual ascension to his throne. Luke does this using language from Daniel 7:13 – 14, the ‘son of man’ coming ‘on the clouds’ to receive a kingdom that is an ‘everlasting dominion’ among all nations. In this sense, Acts is structured in the same way the Gospel of Luke is, except that Jesus’ enthronement, which is anticipated in the Gospel, is realized in Acts as the message about Jesus being ‘another king’ (Acts 17:7) ripples outward from Jerusalem.

Luke's use of Psalm 2 gives an example of how Jesus claimed to be the king of Israel. At the opening portions of Jesus', Peter's, and Paul's ministries in Luke's Gospel and the Acts, quotations of Psalm 2 appear. This is strategic in a literary composition stressing Jesus' claim to kingly authority. Following Gabriel's announcement about Jesus' coming enthronement (Lk.1:32 – 33), God Himself quotes from Psalm 2:7 at Jesus' baptism (Lk.3:22). He says, 'You are My Son,' to designate Jesus as the 'Son' anointed king over Israel. Given the history of the use of Psalm 2 within Israel, this is quite appropriate.

Second, in Acts 4, Peter and the disciples quote from Psalm 2 to describe the impact of Jesus' kingship engaging the Gentile political powers (Acts 4:25-26).

<sup>4:24</sup> And when they heard this, they lifted their voices to God with one accord and said, "O Lord...<sup>25</sup> who by the Holy Spirit, through the mouth of our father David Your servant, said,

'Why did the Gentiles rage,  
and the peoples devise futile things?

<sup>26</sup> The kings of the earth took their stand,  
and the rulers were gathered together  
against the LORD  
and against His Christ.'

<sup>27</sup> For truly in this city there were gathered together  
against Your holy servant Jesus ('His Christ'),  
whom You ('the LORD') anointed,  
both Herod ('kings of the earth')  
and Pontius Pilate, ('the rulers')  
along with the Gentiles ('the nations')  
and the peoples of Israel ('the peoples')

Third, Luke's next major character, Paul, discusses Jesus' kingship in his first recorded speech. Notably, Paul also quotes from Psalm 2 in Acts 13:33ff. The fact that each of Luke's major characters – Jesus, Peter, Paul – begin their ministries by quoting Psalm 2 is telling. Jesus' claim to be king of Israel and of the world is at issue.

Needless to say, the New Testament claim about Jesus' kingship does not depend on Psalm 2 alone. Psalm 110 became a frequently quoted Old Testament Scripture in the New Testament, not least when Jesus himself crafted a riddle from Psalm 110 concerning his claim to the Davidic throne (Lk.20:42-43). Since these Psalms really go back to the Pentateuch – through kingly motifs of the donkey, scepter, rule over the nations, blessing and curse, etc. – the New Testament, by quoting these passages and others like Zechariah 9:9, is firmly positioning itself in that entire chain of texts, not merely one or two. Thus, Jesus has inaugurated the age when he, as Israel's king, has sent forth his word to the coastlands to address and call the Gentiles into acknowledging him as king of the world.

With this brief example, I have demonstrated that prophetic expectation is not reducible to one isolated verse here and there. Rather, the entirety of the Pentateuch is prophetic, laden with concerns and expectations about Israel's future, not to mention the world's future. Furthermore, I have demonstrated that the Pentateuch, and other narrative books as well, are prophetic in their entirety. It almost goes without saying that the entire Old Testament is prophetic, for by itself, the Old Testament is a story without an ending. Particular verses giving not just theological but historical reference points puncture the surface of that expectation with unexpected clarity at times, but prophetic themes and expectations do not hang on those one or two verses. They are woven into the macro structure of the Old Testament. This is significant to our discussion because unless we are able to understand prophecy in this way, we will be left scrutinizing and hunting for isolated details rather than sweeping themes and hopes present in Israel's story. We will also be left suspecting that Jesus and his followers were utterly insincere, or at best weakly nominal, in their claims to fulfill the Old Testament, not least, for example, in Jesus' claim to create a new living Temple (the community of his followers) to replace the Temple in Jerusalem. It is to this very point that I turn.

### **The Pentateuch: Tabernacle and Veil**

From this point, I go on to show how expectations about king and Temple intersected, and why Jesus' claims are actually the most faithful to the Pentateuch out of all the alternatives. In his literary analysis of the Pentateuch, John Sailhamer has proposed that God chose to dwell in the Tabernacle to signify that He had to come veiled to Israel because of their initial failure to come up onto the mountain in Exodus 19. God wanted to relate to Israel as a whole 'face to face' as He did with Moses, but because they refused, He chose to come 'veiled' just as Moses then 'veiled' his own face.<sup>1</sup> It was, in effect, 'Plan B.' On God's part, the act of dwelling in the Tabernacle was both an act of faithfulness to His promise to be in the midst of His people, but was also as an act of judgment on the people's early response of unfaithfulness to Him.

The Pentateuch narrates a situation that is less than ideal from the perspective of Moses and Israel's God. In Exodus 19, God called for Israel to be a 'kingdom of priests' (19:6) but the narration quite obviously and quickly shifts to Israel becoming a kingdom *with* priests. There appear to be no 'laws' in the covenant initially offered to Israel (Ex.19:1 – 16a). They were simply to 'obey God' (19:5) and 'have faith' (19:9). To ratify the covenant, Moses and the people were to wait three days and then 'go up' onto the mountain and meet God there (19:10-13). Though this is not always reflected in English translations, there is little doubt that this is the view of the Hebrew text (and the NJPS has correctly rendered 19:13b, 'they may go up on the mountain'). This same view of the Sinai process can be found in Moses' reflection on this event in Deuteronomy 5:4 – 5: 'The LORD spoke to you face to face at the mountain from the midst of the fire, while I was standing between the LORD and you at that time, to declare to you the word of the LORD; for you were afraid because of the fire and did not go up the mountain.' Israel failed to go up the mountain, and God began to build into His covenant with Israel structures to stabilize His relationship with the people.

This is even more sadly ironic if I am correct in discerning the episode of the Tabernacle and Moses' veil as the center of a chiasm running through the entire Pentateuch:

---

<sup>1</sup> John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*. Also very pertinent to this discussion is N.T. Wright's study of Moses veiling his face in 2 Corinthians 3 in *The Climax of the Covenant*.

1. Primeval history dealing with all nations: Gen.1-11
2. Covenant inaugurated with Abraham, Blessings and Curses: Gen.12  
God's Faithfulness to the Patriarchs: Gen.12-50
3. Enslavement and Deliverance from Egypt, Arrival at Sinai: Ex.1-18
  4. Covenant Inaugurated, Broken, Re-Asserted: Ex.19:1-24:18
    - a. *God summons Israel to meet Him on the mountain on the third day: Ex.19:1-15*
    - b. *Israel's failure – to come up the mountain: Ex.19:16-23*
    - c. *God resumes with Moses and Aaron: Ex.19:24-25*
    - d. *God gives Israel the Ten Commandments: Ex.20:1-27*
    - e. *Israel's failure – Israel afraid of God's voice: Ex.20:18-20*
    - f. *God gives all Israel 49 laws (7x7): Ex.20:21-23:19*
    - g. *God and Israel agree to a covenant, and Moses, Aaron, and 70 elders see God, and eat and drink in His presence: Ex.23:2-24:11*
5. Tabernacle instructions given to house the **veiled** presence of God: Ex.24:12-31:11
  6. God commands Israel to observe the Sabbath and the Covenant is documented on stone tables: Ex.31:12-18
    7. Covenant broken; Israel worships Aaron's golden calves: Ex.32:1-29
    8. Moses mediates for Israel and restores the covenant: Ex.32:30-33:23
    - 7'. Covenant affirmed: Ex.34:1-17
  - 6'. God commands Israel to observe three annual feasts and the Covenant is documented on stone tablets again; **Moses veils** his face as a sign of judgment, hiding God's glory from the nation: Ex.34:18-28
- 5'. Tabernacle built to instructions; presence of God comes **veiled**: Ex.35:1-40:38
- 4'. Covenant Mediation Inaugurated, Covenant Broken, Re-Asserted: Lev.1:1-27:34
  - a. *God gives Israel's priests a Priestly Code for sacrifices: Lev.1:1-9:24*
  - b. *Priests' failure – two of Aaron's sons offer strange fire and are consumed: Lev.10:1-7*
  - c. *God resumes with Aaron's two others sons: Lev.10:8-20*
  - d. *God gives Israel's priests a Priestly Code for community and themselves: Lev.11-16*
  - e. *Israel's failure – God addresses worship of goat idols: Lev.17:1-9 (cf. Acts 7:42-43)*
  - f. *God gives all Israel the Holiness Code: Lev.17:10-25:55*
  - g. *God and Israel agree to a covenant: Lev.26:1-27:34*
- 3'. Departure from Sinai, Punishment and Deliverance from Wilderness: Num.1:1-36:13
- 2'. God's Faithfulness forms the basis for Moses' Exhortation: Dt.1-28  
Covenant offered to Israel, Blessings and Curses: Dt.27-28
- 1'. Future prophecies dealing with Israel and other nations: Dt.29-33

My point here does not hang on the validity of the chiasmic structure; while it is easier to visually see the points I am making with the chiasm, Sailhamer makes the same points without it simply by following the narration. What is significant here is that, looking at the narrative as a whole, especially Exodus 24:12 – 40:38, we see that the covenant at Sinai was stabilized by Moses, and more extensively (by anticipating Moses' death) by creating a hierarchy of priests who would mediate the covenant on behalf of all Israel. As a result, Israel remained outside the Tabernacle and never met with God in the way God intended in Ex.19 and in the way He did in fact meet with Moses in Ex.34. Subsequently, only the High Priest of Israel was allowed to enter through the 'veil' of the Holy of Holies, and only in great peril at that, once a year on the Day of Atonement when the sins of the nation were addressed for that year (Lev.16). But this institution seems to have been a 'Plan B'. God's original desire was not to create a system of partitions and veils between Himself and His people. We already sense in the Pentateuch the anticipation of when this situation would be resolved after Israel's return from exile. In Dt.30:6, Moses foresees that the return from exile would also be the occasion when God would bring about an inner transformation that would change the hearts of the Israelites. 'The LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.'

David's later move from Tabernacle to Temple was therefore laden with irony. It made 'Plan B' look like it was 'Plan A' by firming it up and making it apparently more permanent. Notice that, when at long last, David became

king and offered to build God a physical house in Jerusalem and Nathan blanketed David with blessing, God responded by *correcting* both Nathan and David. The narrative gives us a contrast between Nathan's disposition and God's in 2 Samuel 7:4, 'But (the oppositional contrast is significant) it came about in the same night that the word of the LORD came to Nathan.' God then sent Nathan to David, saying, 'Are you the one who should build Me a house to dwell in? For I have not dwelt in a house since the day I bought up the sons of Israel from Egypt, even to this day; but I have been moving about in a tent, even in a Tabernacle.' (2 Sam.7:5-6). God made it clear that He had not initiated the selection of Jerusalem or the building of Jerusalem's Temple. Someone might argue (weakly) that God's words sound like a proud compliment to David for his originality and initiative in proposing the idea. This notion dovetails with the naïve view that Samuel's main thrust was to merely legitimate the Davidic monarchy and the Jerusalem Temple. Both the immediate and the cumulative data within Samuel, however, throw that interpretation into question. Immediately afterwards, God asks, 'Wherever I have gone with all the sons of Israel, did I speak a word with one of the tribes of Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'' (7:7) which in common parlance, would sound like this: 'Did I say that? Where did you get that idea? Not from Me.' God did not comment any further on David's intent. Instead, He promised to build His own house through David's eventual descendant without validating David's notion of what God's house would be. The statement suggests at the very least that, at that moment, God preferred His wandering Tabernacle to a fixed house.

All this is quite significant with respect to Second Temple Judaism and our discussion of Jesus. Jews from David onward had clear expectations of the king of Israel building/rebuilding and/or cleansing the Temple. They expected this to be one of the 'signs' that the king would do to show that he was indeed the king. As N.T. Wright points out, this was the reason why both the Maccabean revolution attempted to cleanse the Temple, and why Herod the Great tried to rebuild the Temple. King and Temple went hand in hand. Yet it is quite clear from Sailhamer's (and my) analysis of the Pentateuch (and, I would argue, Samuel) that the Tabernacle and its more set-in-stone successor, the Temple, were *never meant to be permanent*. Both Tabernacle and Temple were temporary measures meant to be surpassed. They were meant to become irrelevant and obsolete.

In particular, God's veiling of Himself was a temporary measure that would become obsolete in and through Jesus. Jesus first claimed that he was the true Temple, God's new dwelling place (Jn.2:11-22). And then, significantly, both the Gospel of Mark and the Epistle to the Hebrews both describe Jesus' death and resurrection in terms of the Day of Atonement, the scapegoat sacrifice appropriate to that event, the tearing of the veil in the Jerusalem Temple, and the new covenant. This symbolizes, the New Testament argues, what God always wanted to enjoy with His people, a state where He would relate to all His people 'face to face,' not through a hierarchy of priestly mediators, exactly Paul's point in 2 Corinthians 3 when he discusses Moses and his veil, the glory of the new covenant, and the equality of all believers rather than additional status and prestige given to exceptional leaders. 2 Corinthians 3:14 – 18 reads 'But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.'

This analysis of the Pentateuch helps to explain why the New Testament applies 'Temple' language to 'Jesus and his followers' in Ephesians 2:11 – 22, 1 Corinthians 3 and 6, and 1 Peter 2. It also explains why the New Testament can say that we are a kingdom of priests (1 Pet.2), and why we can speak of 'the priesthood of all believers.' This is not just a clever rationalization for Jesus' apparent failure to cleanse Jerusalem's Temple. It is the claim that this was what God's intention was all along, and it is manifest in the narration (and, if you will, the literary structure) of the Pentateuch itself. The New Testament seems to be quite firmly and uniformly right on this issue.

### **The Pentateuch: The Laws**

What about following all the Mosaic laws? Was Jesus right or wrong about setting (at least some of) them aside? Here again, an examination of the Pentateuch is very helpful. One major point of the Pentateuchal narrative is that Israel failed to trust and obey God at the outset, from Ex.19. In response to this, God gave Israel laws. Sailhamer observes that the number of laws is disproportionately larger in the latter half of the story because God responds to Israel's progressive failures with more laws. This is apparently the apostle Paul's own understanding: 'The Law was added because of [Israel's] transgressions.' (Gal.3:19) In other words, laws were God's stopgap response to Israel's failure, to point out, and continue to point out, their sin to them until a future time when God would resolve the situation.



In other words, it seems apparent that this whole corpus of laws were in fact a 'Plan B,' given in response to Israel's failure to step into 'Plan A,' meeting God on the mountain. Jeremiah, repeating Israel's history back to the people of his time, said: 'For I did not speak to your fathers, or command them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this is what I commanded them, saying, 'Obey My voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.'" (Jer.7:22 – 23) In fact, Isaiah foresaw how Israel's return from exile (and all of what that meant) would overturn at least certain aspects of Mosaic laws. The eunuch and the foreigner would be admitted into the fullness of the community and of God's presence (Isa.56:3-6), things that were forbidden under Moses' commands (Dt.23:1-4).

By direct extension, from this analysis of the Pentateuch, we must conclude that law-keeping of the Mosaic code was never meant to be used as a permanent basis for Jewish self-justification (individual self-righteousness) or for ethnic distinctiveness from a theological standpoint (national self-righteousness). The Mosaic code was not even a permanent set of ethics! The Pharisees were wrong on all of those counts. So were their heirs, the first century rabbis. Here is where we enter into sensitive ground, which I will elaborate more on below.

Thus, when Jesus gave his followers a different set of ethics than Moses, reflecting how his followers were to not be land-bound but incredibly mobile and generous, not to be concerned about ethnic purity but to embrace the Gentiles in love and mission, not to focus on their own land as an inheritance but to call the nations to be his own inheritance, not to accommodate Moses' allowance for divorce due to Israel's 'hardness of heart' (Dt.24) but to hold to the higher standard of the creational marriage ideal because he would take away 'hardness of heart,' he was indeed doing what can legitimately be said as anticipated by the Pentateuch itself. Jesus set aside the Sinaitic commandments as a theological authority (Eph.2:15). The Law was not something that was meant to be followed blindly; it was meant to be 'filled full' just as the Prophets were meant to be 'filled full' (Mt.5:17). And this was not arbitrary, as if just anyone could simply decide on a whim to set aside the Mosaic commands; the Pentateuch foresaw the 'king of Israel,' and/or 'a prophet like Moses,' and/or the mediator of a better covenant, or maybe someone who was all of those things, which Jesus was. Now, circumcision, Sabbath keeping, etc. could continue to serve as a Jewish cultural legacy, but this Jewish messianic movement could be much more flexible and not insist on their ethnic distinctions with a theological imperative.

This leads me to a rather bold claim – but one that I stand by nevertheless. I believe that Christianity is on more solid ground than rabbinical Judaism (not to mention Zionism) as the true intellectual and spiritual heir of the Old Testament, not only of the 'Prophets' but also, in fact, of the 'Law.' Rabbinical Judaism represents the retreat from the real socio-political world of the Second Temple period into a disappointed introverted piety. As N.T. Wright and others have shown in great detail, the rabbinical movement became the mainstream form of Judaism after the events of 70 and 135 AD. For centuries afterwards, the observant portion of the Jewish community emphasized study of the Torah (Pentateuch) at the expense of the Prophets, since the maintaining of ethnic traditions became the focal point and purpose of rabbinical Judaism. Sadly, this only made too much sense since the Prophets, although they frequently call for justice, often do not contain laws per se that could serve as ethnic identity markers. That is the emphasis and purview of the Torah. This is why I can say, in general but in nonetheless accurate terms, that Christianity simply does more justice to the entirety of the Old Testament because it draws from the Law, *and* the Prophets, *and* the Writings. No other descendant of Second Temple Judaism does this.

### **Prophecy Revisited**

Having now given a brief analysis primarily of the Pentateuch, with elaborations on some other related passages on the 'big' themes, let me suggest some directions. First, Christians ought to be glad to discuss 'prophecy' with others. However, we must insist on treating 'prophecy' as larger than categories 1 or 2 (above). 'Prophecy' is a larger phenomenon than simply one verse or even one chapter, even if that chapter is the majestic Isaiah 53. I say this not to escape the burden of careful verse-by-verse exegesis – we can certainly do this as well – but to establish that we can make a larger case for Jesus and the relation between the New Testament and the Old Testament without being encumbered by that.

Second, and correspondingly, I don't think that the most compelling 'prophecies' of Jesus have to do with small little details of Jesus' life and death. The details are interesting, and as I have said before, reflect points at which aspects of the future become clear. However, the most significant prophecies are those that are anchored in the

major themes of Israel's literature, which also happen to be the major institutions of Israel's history, which happen to look quite far beyond the little details of Jesus' life and death. They relate directly to the substance of Jesus' purpose and mission: Jesus is a new Temple, Jesus is the king that addresses the nations, Jesus inaugurated the fulfillment of the Pentateuch's prophetic hopes, etc. Thus, we need to widen our lens as we ask for 'proof' for Jesus. We must ask others to engage with us on these larger themes and issues, not just because it deals with all the data and is the more thorough method anyway, but because this is quite precisely the way a Second Temple Israelite would have reasoned and would have been persuaded by Jesus or one of his apostles. In conjunction with the sociological and historical analysis of N.T. Wright, I think this line of 'proof' is quite compelling. For instance, Wright provides the historical and sociological reasons for why Jesus had to, in some form and fashion, 'rebuild the Temple,' even though he did it in a way that had nothing to do with the physical Temple in Jerusalem. I provide the literary and theological reasons for why, in calling himself and 'his people' the new Temple, Jesus was absolutely right.

Third, I think this begins to explain why the Septuagint already reflects a greater degree of messianic expectation, and why on many occasions those expectations *were correct*. While the process of how the Septuagint arrived at made of its textual decisions is uncertain in some cases, in others there is some rhyme and reason. Where the Septuagint already senses that God would have to resurrect the seed of David in 2 Sam.7, it is understandable: the scholars during the exilic period saw that something extraordinary must happen in order to restore the fortunes of the Davidic house. The issue of the Septuagint is a much larger issue to tackle, though, and I will address it in Part Four.

Fourth, we are not locked into a mindless circle where we accept the New Testament because of the Old Testament, then accept the Old Testament because the New Testament tells us to. This type of circular reasoning is an intellectual shortcut, a pious invention that cannot be used in serious dialogue with others outside the Christian community. But in reality, there is a 'way in' epistemologically. We can merely take the Old Testament as a historical given because *we know that it existed historically, both in Hebrew and Greek (Septuagint) forms*. This enables us to say that the Old Testament did indeed exist as a literary unit known to Israel and the world well before the arrival of Jesus and the New Testament. Notice what happens when we do this: We do not need to get hung up on questions about the canonization process of the Old Testament within Israel, or to even debate that much about the dating of individual Old Testament books. Of course, it is possible to discuss that, but for our purposes here, *we do not have to*. All that matters is that the Old Testament existed in its entirety well before the arrival of Jesus and the New Testament. The significance of this is seen in the next point.

Fifth, if the Old Testament is going to be a significant prior factor as a condition of the validity of the New, then a skeptic also needs to offer an alternative to Christianity as a better fulfillment of the Old Testament. That is, if the Old Testament is at all significant as a criterion, which it should be, one cannot simply say, 'Ah, Jesus doesn't fit this or that,' and then not attempt to figure out a *better* explanation to how the Old Testament was, or can be, fulfilled. If the Old Testament is to be taken seriously, then what are the intellectual alternatives to Christianity? When the Pentateuch cries out for a king from Israel who will re-center the Abrahamic blessings and curses in himself, how is it that blessings and curses are still centered in ethnic descent from Abraham? When the Pentateuch cries out for people to encounter God in a face to face way, pointing out how the Mosaic legislation from Sinai and the Temple-aspirations are both 'Plan B's' meant to be surpassed, then what else has happened to resolve that tension and return to God's 'Plan A'? When the Pentateuch cries out for Israel to be brought out of exile to bless the nations, in what other ways has this happened? The Old Testament cries out for an ending, and that ending is found in...rabbinic Judaism?