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# Aspects of Intertestamental Messianism

RALPH W. KLEIN

[In his study, the author documents both the changing nature of messianic hopes in the intertestamental period, as well as the persistence of the basic hope for a messianic deliverer.

The character of the hopes of intertestamental believers also suggests that these people did not distinguish between "earthly" and "heavenly" hopes, but rather expected a messiah who would drastically perfect their situation in life. The oppressive ingredients in that situation were very real, flesh-and-blood people, oppressive government, insulting national slurs, inflationary prices at the village bakery, the ever present problems of sin, death, and the devil. Against the background of that understanding, it is easier to see that Jesus also proclaimed a message of deliverance for man in his total situation. Later church fathers created the neat distinction between earthly and heavenly hopes. To make his message of messianic hope meaningful, the pastor must focus it on the conditions that his people believe are enslaving them. Nothing is gained by proclaiming deliverance from enemies that are not real to his people.

Klein's study also makes clear that God committed Himself in His Son completely to the historical situation of first-century Palestine. Jesus' friends and foes were the people of His day, and He addressed Himself to their needs and problems. He tied His Gospel message tightly to first-century Palestinian culture, but He did not mean to say thereby that the Gospel should forever be tied to that first-century culture. Rather His point was that the Gospel should be tightly and inseparably tied to the culture of the people to whom it is being proclaimed.

Thus Klein's study provides basic ingredients for designing the key elements in parish mission strategy.

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When we confess Jesus as Messiah we do so through the prism of His cross and resurrection. These events reveal the fulfillment as well as the transformation of Israel's messianic hope, a hope grounded in God's promise through Nathan to David and eschatologized through Isaiah and his successors in a series of well-known passages. (2 Sam. 7; Is. 9 and 11; Micah 5:2 ff.; Jer. 23:5 f.; Hag. 2:23; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; 9:9; and others)

In confessing Jesus as Messiah the early Christians, however, were not living in Isaiah's Assyrian crisis, in the disaster of the Exile, or in the heady days of Zechariah and Haggai. Part of their context was shaped by their brother Jews who had faithfully remembered and preserved God's promises and had freely adapted them for their own tumultuous times. It is this latter context of Jewish messianic expectations<sup>1</sup> that we shall explore in order to appreciate better the radical claim: Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah.

<sup>1</sup> No future Messiah is mentioned in the following major writings: 1 and 2 Maccabees, Tobit, Wisdom of Solomon, Judith, Ben Sirach, Jubilees, Enoch 1-36 and 91-104, the Assumption of Moses, 1 Baruch, and 2 Enoch. A useful survey of intertestamental messianic ideas is that of Ulrich Kellermann, "Die politische Messias-Hoffnung Zwischen den Testamenten," *Pastoral Theologie* LVI (1967), 362—377 and 436—449.

## MESSIANIC PRETENDERS

In many ways the Maccabees ushered in one of the greatest moments in Israel's religious history. Mattathias and his five sons were able to stymie the military forces of Antiochus Epiphanes (175—163 B.C.) and his successors and to rally the people around the Law and the rededicated sanctuary. For some this movement seemed to be the fulfillment of God's greatest promises; to others it became only an arrogant, presumptuous and oppressive establishment. The books of 1 and 2 Maccabees respectively give us both sides of the story.<sup>2</sup>

For our inquiry two events are of special importance. The first is Jonathan's usurpation of the high priestly office in 152 even though he was not a Zadokite; the other was the decision of the Jews and their priests in 140 to make Jonathan's successor Simon leader and high priest forever. This dynastic understanding of the high priestly office and the approval by the people of the non-Zadokite Hasmoneans for this office were the central provocations leading to the establishment of the Essene community at Qumran.<sup>3</sup> Together with these ecclesiastical power plays came the assumption of the political title "leader" which was to culminate in the claim by Aristobulus I (104—103) to be king. Thus people who could claim only Levitic ancestry assumed the functions of priest and king. The writer of the poem in 1 Macc. 14:4-15 was a political propagandist for the Hasmoneans. He suggested that the reign of Simon marked the dawn of

the messianic age and the fulfillment of a number of Old Testament prophecies:<sup>4</sup>

They farmed their land in peace,  
the land gave its produce,  
the trees of the plain their fruit.  
The elders sat at ease in the streets,  
all their talk was of their prosperity;  
the young men wore finery and armour.  
(Vv. 8-9)

Each man sat under his own vine and his  
own fig tree,  
and there was no one to make them afraid.  
No enemy was left in the land to fight  
them,  
and the kings in those days were crushed.  
He gave strength to all the humble folk  
among his people  
and cleared away every renegade and  
wicked man. (Vv. 12-14)

It is interesting to see how the blessings of the messianic age are understood in material terms. This reveals not only a wholesome attitude toward creation, but also the theological expectations of kingship. Psalm 72 records a prayer appropriate for every king, but especially for the ideal King of the future:

May he [the king] be like rain that falls  
on the mown grass,  
like showers that water the earth!  
In his days may righteousness flourish,  
and peace abound, till the moon be no  
more!  
May there be abundance of grain in the  
land;  
on the tops of the mountains may it wave;  
may its fruit be like Lebanon;  
and may men blossom forth from the cities  
like the grass of the field! (Vv. 6-7,  
16)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>2</sup> See George W. E. Nickelsburg Jr., "1 and 2 Maccabees—Same Story, Different Meaning," *CTM* XLIII (September 1971), 515—526.

<sup>3</sup> Frank M. Cross Jr., "The Early History of the Qumran Community," *McCormick Quarterly* XXI (March 1968), 249—264.

<sup>4</sup> See especially 1 Kings 4:25, Micah 4:4, Zech. 3:10 and 8:4-23.

<sup>5</sup> As time went on, others pretended to be the Messiah as well, often with fanatical revolu-

## NO! THE MESSIAH IS DAVIDIC

The pretensions of the Hasmonean house were not allowed to go unproved, especially as its internal corruption became more manifest. The Psalms of Solomon, for example, written in the second half of the first century B. C., express strong, Pharisaic (?)<sup>6</sup> opposition:

You, O Lord, chose David as king over Israel,  
 And swore to him . . . that his kingdom should never fail before you.  
 But, for our sins, sinners rose up against us; they assailed us and thrust us out; what you had not promised to them, they took away with violence.  
 They in no wise glorified your honorable name;  
 they set a [worldly] monarchy in place of [that which was] their excellency;  
 They laid waste the throne of David in tumultuous arrogance. (17:4-6)

The sinners listed here are the Hasmoneans who had pushed aside the (Pharisaic) author(s) of this Psalm. Although the Hasmoneans were Levitic in ancestry, they appropriated the throne of David. With almost undisguised glee the Psalm hails Pompey and the Romans for attacking Palestine and taking Aristobulus II and his children as hostages to Rome. But just as Isaiah changed his mind about the Assyrians—once he thought they were the tool

tionary intent: Theudas (Acts 5:36); Judas the Galilean (Acts 5:37); a false prophet from Egypt who wanted to storm Jerusalem; Menahem; Simon bar Giora; and Simon bar Kokheba.

<sup>6</sup> These psalms are customarily ascribed to the Pharisees, but Jerry O'Dell has demonstrated in them several departures from Pharisaic thought. He ascribes their authorship to a wider eschatological movement. See his "The Religious Background of the Psalms of Solomon," *Revue de Qumran* III (1961—62), 241—257.

of Yahweh, but then he threatened them with destruction for their arrogance—so now this psalmist prays for the coming of David's Son to destroy the Romans, using a collage of Old Testament citations:<sup>7</sup>

Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their king, the Son of David,  
 At the time in which you see, O God, that he may reign over Israel your servant.  
 Gird him with strength, that he may shatter unrighteous rulers,  
 And that he may purge Jerusalem from nations that trample her down to destruction.  
 Wisely, righteously he shall thrust out sinners from the inheritance,  
 He shall destroy the pride of the sinner as a potter's vessel.  
 With a rod of iron he shall break in pieces all their substance,  
 He shall destroy the godless nations with the word of his mouth;  
 At his rebuke nations shall flee before him and he shall reprove sinners for the thoughts of their heart. (17:21-25)

What is the function of this messiah? In a sense he is only a sign of and a pointer to God's reign since the psalm begins and ends with a prayer for God the king to come! For this reason little attention is given to the person of the king. Nor is mention made of his death or of a successor. God's kingship is renewed through this earthly king. Yet the human king will have responsibilities both toward the nations and toward Israel. He will overthrow the oppressing nations by his rod of iron,

<sup>7</sup> 2 Sam. 7, Ps. 2, and especially Is. 11 are very prominent. The latter passage in fact is one of the key texts for intertestamental messianism. A complete list of allusions can be found in Ulrich Kellermann, *Messias und Gesetz* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1971), pp. 98 to 99.

but trust in God, and not armaments, is the real source of his power:

For he shall not put his trust in horse and rider and bow,  
Nor shall he multiply for himself gold and silver for war.

The Lord Himself is his king. . . . (17:33-34)

One of his major weapons is his "word" by which he destroys nations and smites the earth,<sup>8</sup> although it is not completely clear from the context whether by this is meant a war cry or his authoritative word as judge. In any case, all nations will eventually be made subservient to him and will come from the ends of the earth to see his glory in Jerusalem.<sup>9</sup>

Toward Israel, on the other hand, he is a judge endowed with the Spirit just like the leaders in the Book of Judges. He is also a shepherd and a wise teacher of the Law who will allow none of his people to stumble. In fact, he can almost be called a scribe-king and the spiritual aspects of his reign receive considerable emphasis.<sup>10</sup> So he will be free from sin, without pride, the righteous king who saves his people, governs justly, and punishes the wicked. He is the leader and example who directs "man in the works of righteousness by the fear of God" (18:8). He will banish unrighteousness, purify Jerusalem, and gather a holy people.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Is. 11:4: "His word is a rod that strikes the ruthless" and Rev. 19:15: "From his mouth issues a sharp sword."

<sup>9</sup> This worldwide rule of Israel's King is common in the royal psalms and is part of the messianic promise of Is. 11:10: "The root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples. It will be sought out by the nations . . . ."

<sup>10</sup> M. de Jonge, "The Use of the Word 'Anointed' in the Time of Jesus," *Novum Testamentum* VIII (1966), p. 136.

Small wonder, then that the psalmist pronounces a benediction on anyone who lives to see his day ("Blessed be they that shall be in those days" [17:44]) and prays for God to carry out his deliverance through his anointed one speedily: "May the Lord hasten his mercy upon Israel!" (17:45)

This psalm documents the belief in a vindictive, nationalistic messiah, to whom all nations will come thronging in pilgrimage; it shows how the coming of the messiah is usually seen in tandem with and subservient to the Kingship of Yahweh; it highlights the spiritual qualifications of the king; and finally, it provides some of the earliest attestation for the technical use of titles like "Son of David" and "Messiah."<sup>11</sup>

#### MESSIAH OR MESSIAHS?

The Essene community at Qumran apparently shared in the antipathy toward the Hasmonean leadership; its founders may even have been among the first to disassociate themselves from it. Although the picture that emerges from the Qumran documents is vastly different from the Psalms of Solomon, it is equally instructive for students of late Judaism and of Christian origins.

Before turning to these texts several Old Testament passages must be briefly canvassed. In Jer. 33 a secondary hand has reworked an earlier text about the righteous Branch (Jer. 23:5). Instead of a single figure *yahweh sidqenu*,<sup>12</sup> the prophet

<sup>11</sup> Mark 12:35 and Luke 1:32 f. Although the Davidic origin of the Messiah is quite ancient, this title is unattested before the first century B.C.

<sup>12</sup> Jeremiah is implicitly rejecting the messianic pretension of Zedekiah's admirers and making a pun on his name at the same time.

speaks of a whole new line of Davidites beside whom will function an unending line of Levitical priests. These promises are part of an irrevocable covenant. This promised structure for the future of Israel seems to be fulfilled in the fifth vision of Zechariah (6:1-14). There the prophet sees in symbolic fashion two olive trees, representing two sons of oil (anointed ones) or, more concretely, Zerubbabel and Joshua, the royal and priestly leaders of the postexilic community.<sup>13</sup>

This "dyarchic" leadership reappears — in somewhat altered fashion — at Qumran.<sup>14</sup> The clearest text comes from the Community Rule (= the Manual of Discipline). We are told that the members of the community are not to depart from the counsels of the Law until the "eschaton," that is, "until there shall come the Prophet and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel." One could debate whether the words Prophet and Messiahs should be capitalized and whether the latter might not be better rendered as "anointed ones." But the most important thing to notice is that three eschatological figures are to come

and that the two anointed figures correspond to the priesthood and to lay Israel.

A similar picture is presented by the Damascus Document, discovered over half a century ago in the Cairo Genizah but now conclusively linked to the Qumran community.<sup>15</sup> In a series of four texts the messiahs' advent again marks the inauguration of the new age:

"Those who follow these statutes in the age of wickedness [= this world] until the coming of the Messiah of Aaron and Israel shall form groups of at least ten men . . ." (XII, 23 f.). Or again, commenting on the words "star" and "scepter" in Num. 24:17, the document reads: "The star is the Interpreter of the Law who shall come to Damascus;<sup>16</sup> as it is written, 'A star shall come forth out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel.' The scepter is the Prince of the whole congregation, and when he comes he shall smite all the children of Seth." The star or interpreter of the Law corresponds to the anointed one of Aaron while the scepter or prince corresponds to the anointed one of Israel. A third document refers to these figures as the priest and the messiah of Israel. This text, known popularly as the Messianic Rule, describes a messianic banquet at the end time. Here after the priest blesses the bread and wine the messiah of Israel blesses the bread.

<sup>13</sup> If space permitted, this pattern of royal and priestly leadership could be documented from Ezek. 40—48 as well.

<sup>14</sup> The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs also speak of two anointed or messianic figures. T. Levi 18:2-3 refers to God's raising up of a new priest whose "star shall arise in heaven as a king." In T. Judah 24:5-6 we read of a stem from the root of Judah from which will come "a rod of righteousness to the Gentiles, to judge and save all who call upon the Lord." Some assert that both figures are original while R. H. Charles dismissed the passages about the Messiah from Judah as Christian interpolations. M. de Jonge believes that the Testaments are Christian compositions. Because of this lack of consensus, we have decided to limit ourselves in this article to Qumran.

<sup>15</sup> Several copies of this document were discovered in Cave IV. Reinhard Deichgräber has ably defended the presence of two messiahs in this document. See "Zur Messiaserwartung der Damaskusschrift," *ZAW* LXXVIII (1966), 333—343.

<sup>16</sup> Damascus has been plausibly explained as the "prophetic name" applied to the desert of Qumran. See Frank M. Cross Jr., *The Ancient Library of Qumran* (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1961), pp. 81—83.

The dyarchic eschatological structure is perhaps also reflected on coins from the second Jewish revolt of 132—135 which record the name of Simon bar Kokheba on one side and Eleazar the priest on the other. Even in the second century A.D., therefore, it was felt that God would effect his new age through two messianic figures.

The Qumran documents accord clear superiority to the priestly figure which no doubt shows their own strong priestly predilections. In the War Scroll, for example, the priest offers the prayer and says the blessing, arranges the battle lines, urges the troops to have courage, and praises God after the victory in the eschatological battle. The "king" is only a shadow figure in this text without an essential function. This priestly superiority is a reversal of Old Testament roles and is not continued in the Bar Kokheba incident.

The superiority of the eschatological priest is affirmed in other texts as well. Not only is he listed before the Messiah of Israel in both the Community Rule and the Damascus Document, but great stress is given to his priority in giving the blessings at the messianic banquet in the Messianic Rule. In fact, here he and all the other priests take precedence over the lay leader. The priests are to serve as the instructors of the "Branch of David" according to a commentary (*pesher*) on Isaiah and according to a collection of messianic passages known as 4Q Florilegium.

As for the Messiah of Israel, he is often presented in military dress, partly corresponding to his role in the Psalms of Solomon, and heavily drawing on the words of Is. 11. In the manuscript known as 1QSB, an appendix to the Community Rule, the

following blessing is given to the "prince of the congregation."

"[May you smite the peoples] with the might of your hand and ravage the earth with your scepter; may you bring death to the ungodly with the breath of your lips.

[May he shed upon you the spirit of counsel] and everlasting might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of God; may righteousness be the girdle [of your loins] and may your reins be girdled [with faithfulness]! [Cf. Is. 11:1-5]

May he make your horns of iron and your hooves of bronze; may you toss like a young bull [and trample the peoples] like the mire of the streets! [Cf. Num. 24:17]

For God has established you as the scepter. The rulers . . . [and all the kings of the] nations shall serve you." [Cf. Gen. 49:8-10]

According to the commentary on Isaiah from Cave IV the branch will rule and judge all nations.

In addition to these martial images, the messiah(s) will usher in the new age and will celebrate a banquet of victory with the people. A broken line in the Damascus Document even links the coming of this new messianic age with the bestowal of forgiveness: "This is the exact statement of the statutes in which [they shall walk until the coming of the Messiah] of Aaron and Israel who will pardon their iniquity."

We cannot quit our discussion of Qumran, however, without mentioning 4Q Testimonia.<sup>17</sup> The work consists of four Bib-

<sup>17</sup> My interpretation here is basically that of Cross, "The Early History of the Qumran Community," pp. 259—264.

lical citations: (1) Deut. 5:28-29 and 18:18-19; (2) Num. 24:15-17; (3) Deut. 33:8-11; (4) Joshua 6:6 plus a commentary from the Psalms of Joshua. The order of texts was unclear until P. Skehan demonstrated that the first set is really a proto-Samaritan text tradition of Ex. 20:21. Thus the ordering of texts follows their order in one recension of the Bible. In any case the first set of texts refers to the prophet like Moses who is to come, a figure whom some identified with John the Baptist in the New Testament (Mark 1:2), while at other places, especially in Luke-Acts, Jesus is declared to be that prophet (Luke 4:24-26 and Acts 3:22). With the cessation of prophecy in Israel (1 Macc. 4:46 and 14:41), Deut. 18 came to be understood eschatologically.

The second text is from the oracles of Balaam and refers to the star of Jacob and the Scepter of Israel, which are interpreted in other Qumran texts as the priestly and royal Messiahs. In the third text we read of one who "taught your judgments to Jacob, your teaching to Israel," presumably indicating the Righteous Teacher who had founded the eschatological Qumran community. The final text is a curse on anyone who would rebuild Jericho, a curse also involving that man's two sons. Since the Essenes believed that all Scripture was written for the end time and that they themselves lived in that end time, they would take this text as referring to their own days.<sup>18</sup> The most likely candidate for this cursed one is Simon the high priest who was painted in Messianic colors in 1 Macc. 14. He and his two sons were

<sup>18</sup> This hermeneutical principle, by the way, is similar to that employed in Matthew's citation of texts like Hos. 11:1 and Jer. 31:15.

killed by men of Ptolemy in the city of Jericho!

Thus this series of texts refers to a number of figures of the eschatological age in which the Qumran community believed it was living. The Righteous Teacher and Simon (the wicked priest?) were figures of the very recent past. The others — prophet, priestly messiah, and royal messiah — were figures whose advent would mark the beginning of the new age.

#### THE MESSIAH AND HIS TEMPORARY KINGDOM

A final type of Messianic expectation occurs in the apocalyptic writings of Enoch, 4 Ezra, and 2 Baruch. Almost all these texts expect the messianic age to be a time of peace, prosperity, and joy, but an added feature that distinguishes them is that they are set in the context of the final apocalyptic judgment. The Messiah functions in a kind of "*Zwischenreich*" or millennial period before the final judgment. Many scholars believe that this structure of an intermediate messianic period followed by the final judgment is a conflation of two sets of ideas: (1) the Old Testament expectation of the prosperity to be brought by the coming Davidic prince and (2) the apocalyptic picture of the world according to which the present age is locked in a hopeless struggle between good and evil that will only be resolved with God's coming in judgment.<sup>19</sup>

Enoch 85—90 portrays the history of

<sup>19</sup> In some apocalypses the Messiah disappears from consideration while in others the Messiah becomes a figure in the age following the judgment. For a helpful synthesis see Josef Schreiner, *Alttestamentlich jüdische Apokalypsis* (München: Kösel Verlag, 1969), pp. 141 to 147.



the world from Adam to the judgment with transparent symbolism: all people are represented as animals. Enoch (the pseudonymous name used by the author) rehearses the history of the Jews and announces a final onslaught of the Gentiles. Then judgment will be rendered on the stars or angels who intermarried with women (cf. Gen. 6) and on the 70 wicked shepherds or kings from the fall of Jerusalem to the end. All apostates are cast into Gehenna before a new temple is provided and the Gentiles are converted. After all this — that is after the judgment — the messiah is born as a white bull and all generations likewise become white bulls in imitation of him. He is later further transformed into a white lamb.

Note that the usual "messianic works" are here done by God himself and the messiah has no specific function. He is merely the king who is self-evidently needed in the new age. According to the symbolism of this apocalypse his depiction as an animal is a way of emphasizing that he is human. All beasts of the field and all birds of the air (= the Gentiles) will make petition to him all the time. Although various items could be correlated with the New Testament, the primary interest of this passage in our discussion is to demonstrate one way in which the messiah is included in an apocalyptic program. The idea of an intermediate age has not yet developed.

Another series of such attempted correlations occurs in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, two Jewish works written later than the destruction of Jerusalem but which are not anti-Christian and consequently can be used for understanding the type of Jewish

thinking on the Messiah current about the time of our Lord.

In 4 Ezra 7 the messiah is revealed after the messianic woes, that is, the period of final persecution. Accompanied by immortal companions (perhaps Elijah, Enoch, Ezra, Baruch, and Jeremiah) he makes the survivors rejoice for 400 years.<sup>20</sup> At the end of this *Zwischenreich* he dies, together with all human beings. Significantly, this is the only certain place in all of Jewish literature where the Messiah dies. Here, however, it is without any kind of atoning significance. After 7 days of primeval silence, there follows the general resurrection and judgment by the Most High (= God). We are not told what is to happen to the Messiah in the new age, but we can see how His former royal function of providing good things for the people has now been transferred to the intermediate age.<sup>21</sup>

The eagle vision (4 Ezra 10:60—12:35) provides another glimpse of Jewish messianic thought. In this case the messiah is represented as a lion who upbraids, rebukes, and finally destroys an eagle, a symbol for the Roman empire. The eagle vision differs from the animal apocalypse and 4 Ezra in that the messiah himself brings an end to the present world order. His

<sup>20</sup> Neither Elijah nor Enoch died, according to the Bible. A similar blessing is ascribed to Ezra in 4 Ezra 14:9; to Baruch in 2 Baruch 76:2 and to Jeremiah in 2 Macc. 2:1. The number 400 seems to derive from a combination of Gen. 15:13 and Ps. 90:15. Rev. 20:3 expects a 1,000-year reign. In the apocalypse of Elijah, from the third century A.D., the number is set at 40.

<sup>21</sup> A perceptive analysis of the messianic passages in 4 Ezra has been provided by Michael Stone, "The Concept of the Messiah in IV Ezra," in *Religions in Antiquity*, edited by Jacob Neusner (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968), pp. 295—312.

function, however, is only quasi-military for the eschatological battle has merely been "legalized" or turned into a judicial situation. His activity for Israel in the intermediate age is described as follows:

"But my people who survive he shall deliver with mercy, even those who have been saved throughout my borders, and he shall make them joyful until the End come, even the day of Judgment, of which I have spoken unto you from the beginning" (12:34).

Thus he delivers the people and makes them rejoice, just as Israel hoped every king would do. Only now this is fitted into an apocalyptic understanding of history. Several other features are worthy of note. It is explicitly stated that the messiah is preexistent (12:32) and that he is of Davidic descent. He makes his appearance in Palestine when the wickedness of the last kingdom is at its peak. His function resembles in part that of an Old Testament prophet although the power of his word also has precedents in such messianic texts as Isaiah 11. His kingdom is temporary — "until the End come, even the Day of Judgment" — and no assignment is listed for him in the new age.

A strikingly similar understanding is reflected in the vision of the vine in 2 Baruch 36—40. The vine represents the messiah and from beneath it issues a stream symbolizing his dominion. After the stream overwhelms a forest and destroys it except for one last cedar, the vine scolds the cedar for its wicked rule and pronounces a curse on it: "Recline in anguish and rest in torment till your last time come, in which you will come again, and be tormented still more" (36:11). After this the cedar bursts into flames, while the vine continues

growing in a field full of unfading flowers. This vision is then given an interpretation. The forest represents the Babylonians, Persians, Diadochi, and the Romans who will be rooted out by the principate of the Messiah.<sup>22</sup> After this victory the last pagan leader will be bound and taken to Mt. Zion. "My Messiah will convict him of all his impieties, and will gather and set before him all the works of his hosts" (40:1). Then the messiah will kill this ruler and protect the rest of the people as he rules them during the intermediate age. This age lasts only until "the world of corruption is at an end and until the times aforesaid are fulfilled" (40:3). The picture of the messianic age as a temporary time of bliss between the final outbreak of evil and the great day of judgment differs only slightly from 4 Ezra.

2 Baruch 27—30 also asserts that a time of terrible tribulation, divided into twelve parts, will ensue, threatening even the elect. Only Palestine (this land) will be spared. After the messiah has been revealed he will provide food for all the survivors by serving them Behemoth and Leviathan. This idea has roots as deep as ancient Canaan. After defeating the Sea or Leviathan, Baal presented a victory banquet for all his retainers. Now at the messianic banquet, the main course will be the chaotic monsters themselves, although here their subservience to God is indicated by the assertion that God made them on the fifth day of creation. In this messianic age the vine will produce a thousandfold and more — each grape in fact will yield 120

<sup>22</sup> This is an updating of the four kingdom expectations. In Dan. 2 and 7 the kingdoms are the Neo-Babylonians, Medes, Persians, and Greeks.

gallons!<sup>23</sup> Winds from God will bring the fragrance of aromatic fruit and the fertile dew of evening. The end time will bring back the good old wilderness days: "The treasury of manna shall again descend from on high, and they will eat of it in those years, because these are they who have come to the consummation of time" (29:8). After the messiah's departure in glory, the general resurrection will occur. From then on the righteous will rejoice while the wicked waste away more and more. It is not specifically stated that the messiah will bring all the good things of the intermediate kingdom; his presence, however, is the sign of the time of salvation. With the end of the intermediate kingdom, his importance ceases. A final reference comes from the Cloud Vision of 2 Baruch 53—76. Through an alternating sequence of black and white waters the author traces the 12 bad and good periods of world history from Adam to the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the erection of the second temple. There follows a period of terrible tribulations, the so-called messianic woes. Men will hate one another, the impious will exalt themselves over the heroic; the wise will be silent and only the foolish

will speak. War, earthquake, fire, and famine will utterly decimate the ranks of men. Then the messiah will appear as bright lightning.<sup>24</sup> He will spare the nations that have not known Israel or oppressed the seed of Jacob. All others will be given over to the sword. When all this has taken place it shall come to pass "that joy shall then be revealed and rest shall appear. And then healing shall descend in dew . . . and anxiety and anguish and lamentation pass from amongst men, and gladness proceed through the whole earth. . . . And wild beasts shall come from the forest and minister unto men [cf. Is. 11: 6-9!], and asps and dragons shall come forth from their holes to submit themselves to a little child." Even the curse of Eden will be reversed: "And women shall no longer then have pain when they bear, nor shall they suffer torment when they yield the fruit of the womb."

Those who wrote this literature longed for this great messianic day. They were sure that the course of history was determined (12 periods, followed by a period of intense tribulation), that the length of this aeon was fixed, and that they were living immediately before the end.

#### CONCLUSION

Our survey of intertestamental messianism outlines the matrix within which the early Christians confessed: Jesus is the Messiah! To correlate this data with the New Testament evidence would be a ma-

<sup>23</sup> This belief in the fecundity of the vine became current also in Christian tradition. The following quotation from Irenaeus is interesting, not only because the statistics have been considerably inflated, but also because it is stated to be a saying of Jesus Himself! "As the elders who saw John, the disciple of the Lord, related that they had heard from him how the Lord used to teach in regard to these times and say: The days will come, in which vines shall grow, each having ten thousand branches, and in each branch ten thousand twigs, and in each true twig ten thousand shoots, and in every one of the clusters ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed will give five and twenty metretres of wine." (Irenaeus Against Heresies, Book V, Ch. XXXIII)

<sup>24</sup> While this sequence fits perfectly with our other patterns, there is some evidence that 72 to 74 are secondary from a literary point of view. See Wolfgang Harnisch, *Verhängnis und Verheissung der Geschichte* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969) p. 261.

for article in itself, but the following four observations can be made:

1. There is a great deal of continuity between certain aspects or details in late Jewish messianic thought and the New Testament. The expectation of a priestly and royal messiah is fulfilled by Jesus the Christ, the high priest after the order of Melchizedek, according to Hebrews. The belief in the messiah within an apocalyptic context unlocks the code of Rev. 20. The feeding of the 5,000, the eucharistic banquet, Jesus' care for the physical needs of people are all signs of continuity.

2. Almost every messianic expectation of the Old Testament and the intertestamental period is shattered and refracted in Jesus of Nazareth. His renunciation of power and vindication and especially His death and resurrection confounded those who expected the messiah to reinforce nationalistic hopes or to annihilate the wicked.

3. His death, his embodiment of the Suffering Servant, shows another change

within continuity. Instead of a series of figures — Priest, Prophet, King, Son of Man, Son of God, Servant — God sent one Man who combined in His person and work all of Israel's eschatological expectations.

4. Finally, we must say a positive word about the way in which the messiah was confessed in Jewish circles. They believed that God was faithful to His old promises and relationships, but they also confessed that God was free to adapt these promises to fit their new situation and their new and unique needs. In bearing witness to this faithful and free God they saw from afar the same God whom we believe was manifested in Jesus the Messiah.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> I have demonstrated this essential confessional and hermeneutical principle elsewhere. See my article, "Yahweh Faithful and Free — A Study in Ezekiel," *CTM*, XLII (September 1971), 493—501.