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Kingdom Expansion and Transformation
A Framework for Luke's Use of Isaiah 49:6

By
Becky Schmidt

A Project Submitted to
the Faculty of Covenant Theological Seminary
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

Saint Louis, Missouri
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Dr. Aaron Goldstein
Faculty Advisor

Dr. David Chapman
Second Reader and Director of
MABTS program

Mr. Steve Jamieson
Library Director

Graduation Date May 15, 2026

Abstract

Much of the recent scholarship on the New Testament's use of Isaiah 49:6 has helpfully focused on new exodus themes. While Isaiah 49 is replete with images of a new exodus, the purpose of this exodus is to arrive in the kingdom of God at the end of the journey. This thesis explores how Luke's three citations of Isaiah 49:6 bring clarity to the New Testament understanding of the kingdom of God. In Luke 2:32, Simeon announces that the kingdom's agent of blessing had arrived. In Acts 1:8, Jesus expanded the apostles' conceptualization of the location of the kingdom. He commissioned them as his servants to expand the borders of the kingdom to the ends of the earth. Finally, in Acts 13:47, Paul transforms the expectation of who belongs to this kingdom. After being rejected by the Jews in Antioch of Pisidia, he turns his attention to the nations. The methodology for this research required both a broad and a narrow lens. First, the book of Isaiah is surveyed broadly for the lead agents of the kingdom, the place of the kingdom, and the people of the kingdom. Then the same approach is applied to Luke, with a particular interest in where he borrows from and expands Isaiah's expectations. Then, a narrow approach is taken to examine the context, grammar, and implications of Isaiah 49:6 and each of Luke's citations of it. As an outcome of this research, Luke's usage of Isaiah 49:6 can help the New Testament reader frame their understanding of where God's kingdom will be, who will be included, and who are his lead agents.

To my boys, Charlie, Elliot, and Tanner
May you each grow to behold wondrous things from God's word

Luke's use of Scripture is not static or backward-looking, as in the writings of Josephus, but rather dynamic with ongoing relevance for the hearer, who is in effect invited to participate in the continuing purposes of God.

— Peter Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts*

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Acknowledgements

In 2021, I sat across from the new Spiritual Formation Director at Christ Church to discuss our next women's Bible study. As I was silently praying, "Lord, please, don't let him say Acts," he was saying, "How about Acts?" I reluctantly agreed, but quickly fell in love with Luke's story. From that discussion, a 26-week Bible study was born, where I got to explore the heritage of our redemption story from the book of Acts alongside 300 faithful women. A few years later, after initially refusing, I agreed to attempt a Bible study through the book of Isaiah. As I studied, I was constantly struck by phrases and concepts of Isaiah that were echoed in my now-beloved book of Acts. This thesis is a product of those two studies. I am forever grateful to the pastors and leaders of Christ Church, who gave me a place to write and teach, and to the women who joined me in these studies.

Above all, I could not have completed this thesis without my husband. He has supported, discussed, and celebrated every step of my seminary journey. In the final intensive weeks of writing this thesis, he has taken over the management of our home and our boys with such grace and beauty. Ryan, the way you love me epitomizes Ephesians 5:25-28. Thank you for your love, your frequent forgiveness, and your care for my growth in holiness.

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Abbreviations

LXX	Septuagint
MT	Masoretic Text
STJ	Second Temple Judaism

Chapter 1

Introduction: A Story about God’s Kingdom

Thesis Statement

Many have suggested that God’s kingdom is the single unifying theme that ties together the grand narrative of Scripture.¹ At any point, the story is concerned with God’s reign over his people in his world or in some portion of the world. Andrew Abernethy has provided a helpful series of simple triangle diagrams to illustrate these three aspects of the kingdom throughout the story of Scripture.²

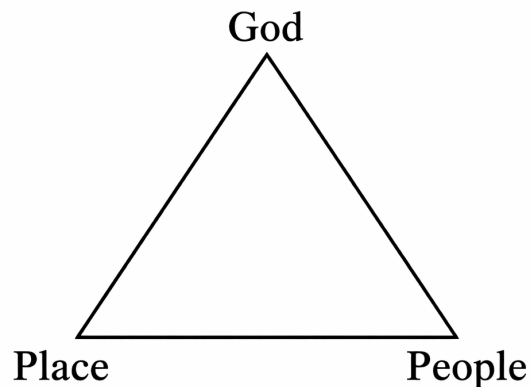


Figure 1. Kingdom of God at Creation

¹ Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2002); Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013); Patrick Schreiner, *The Kingdom of God and the Glory of the Cross* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 90-234.

² Andrew Abernethy, *Savoring Scripture: A Six-Step Guide to Studying the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2022), 96. Also see Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible’s Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2018). Figure recreated with ChatGPT.

The vision at Creation is that God’s kingdom would include all his image bearers who would reign over his ideal world. Man and woman are placed in a garden to expand the borders of the kingdom as they increase and multiply (Gen 1:27-28). But quickly, they rebel against the commandments of the Lord, and the kingdom falls into corruption. The ability for humanity to reign over creation is broken, and God’s kingdom is in jeopardy. The hope of kingdom restoration comes alive in God’s covenant with Abraham as illustrated in Figure 2.³

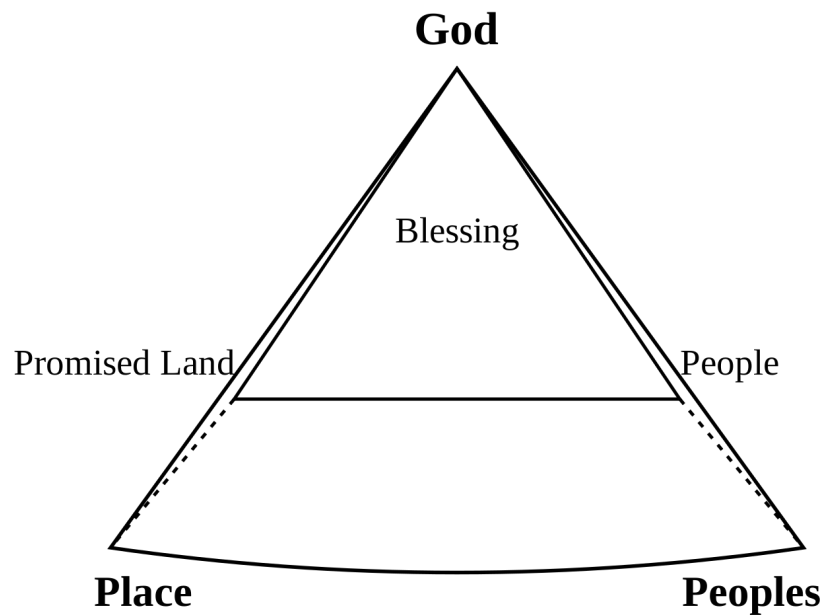


Figure 2. Kingdom of God through Abraham

³ Andrew Abernethy, *Savoring Scripture*, 101. Figure recreated with ChatGPT.

Now, God has, for a time, turned his blessing to Abraham. Still, his purpose was always for blessing to flow from Abraham and the Promised Land outward to all the peoples and all the earth (Gen 12:3). Centuries later, as Moses received the Sinai Covenant, we learn that blessing will come through obedience to the Torah. As the story progresses to David, we learn that within the nation of Israel, the blessing for God's people will be centered in David's royal line, who will rule from Zion. Andrew Abernethy now illustrates the kingdom this way:⁴

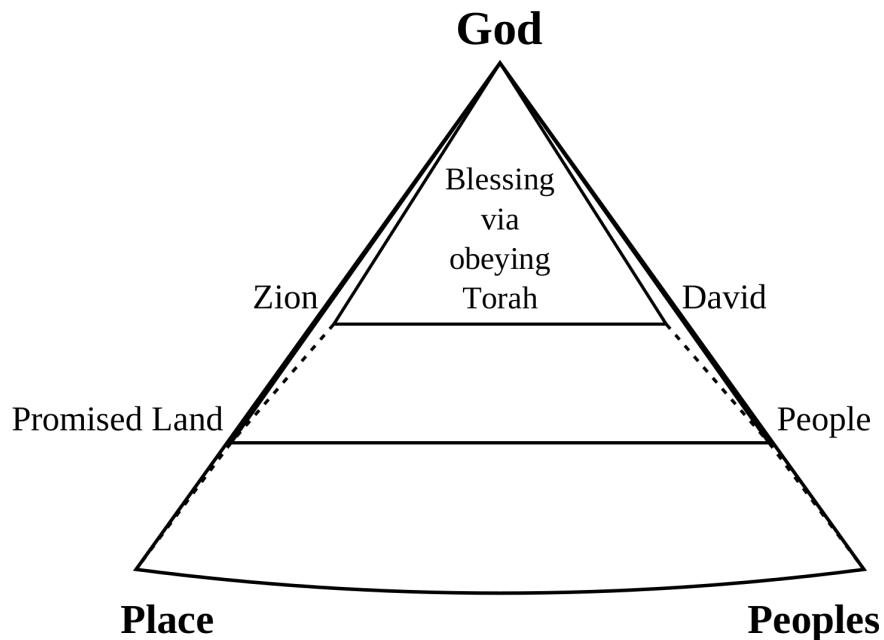


Figure 3. Kingdom of God through David

When Isaiah begins writing in the eighth century, David's kingdom is in jeopardy.⁵ God's purpose was to bless the world through Israel under a Davidic king, but

⁴ Andrew Abernethy, *Savoring Scripture*, 104. Figure recreated with AI.

⁵ This thesis assumes the unity and early dating of the book of Isaiah.

in Isaiah's time, the Davidic kings only reigned over two tribes of God's people. The other ten tribes are about to be conquered by Assyria, and Isaiah writes of the future conquest of the remaining tribes. But Isaiah's message of judgment is tempered with hope. God's initial plan to bless the world through a descendant of David will not be stopped.

My thesis takes one verse of hope from the book of Isaiah, Isaiah 49:6, and examines how Luke cites this verse three times in his two-volume work (Luke 2:32; Acts 1:8; 13:47).⁶ With each citation, Luke emphasizes a different aspect of how God is restoring his original kingdom vision through Jesus. In Luke 2:30-32, Simeon's prophecy announces that the agent of blessing and salvation has arrived, and his coming inaugurates the arrival of the kingdom. In Acts 1:8, Jesus commissions his apostles to be his witnesses to the ends of the earth, restoring the original borders of God's kingdom. And finally, in Acts 13:47, Paul takes up the task of the Isaianic servant to bring the message of salvation to all nations. His message is that the offspring of Abraham who will bring blessing to all the families of the earth is Jesus Christ. I have adapted Abernethy's diagram to illustrate my thesis this way:

⁶ This thesis assumes Luke's authorship of Luke and Acts, and assumes that they should be read in unity.

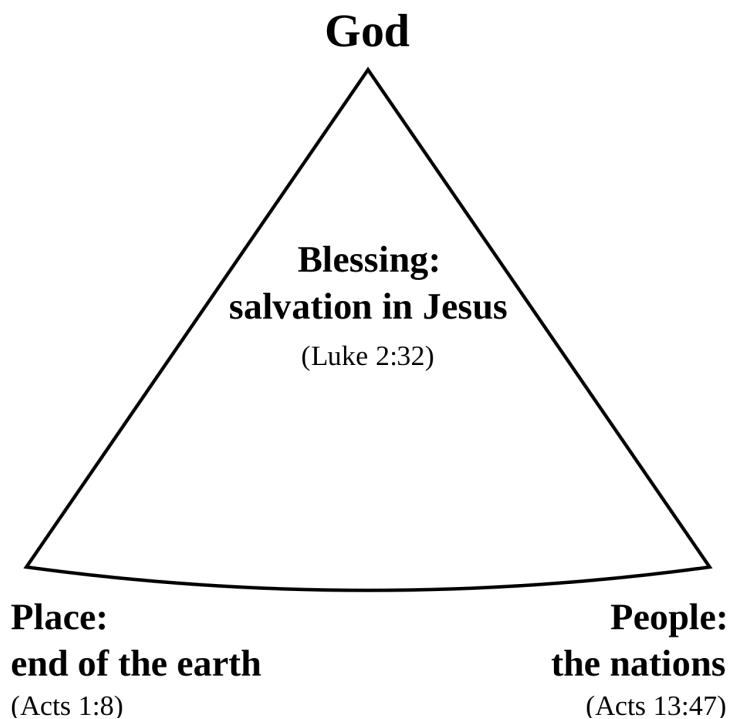


Figure 4. Kingdom of God through Luke’s Use of Isaiah 49:6

To fully demonstrate this thesis, I will first broadly describe the kingdom themes in Isaiah and Luke-Acts and survey some of the recent scholarship completed on Luke’s usage of Isaiah 49:6. In chapter two, we will seek to gain a full understanding of Isaiah 49:6 in its original context. Chapter three will concern itself with Luke’s general purpose in writing and his Old Testament understanding. Chapters four through six will look at a specific sub-motif of the kingdom (agent of blessing, place, and people). Each chapter will first examine its motif broadly in Isaiah and then in Luke-Acts, drawing, when possible, on Luke’s wide use of Isaiah’s allusions to craft his motifs. Then the chapter will examine a specific Lucan citation of Isaiah 49:6 in its context and draw conclusions about Luke’s kingdom theme. Finally, a brief conclusion will tie these ideas together.

Kingdom Themes in Isaiah

Andrew Abernethy's book, *The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom*, has served as a key guide for this research. In it, he suggests that, just as God's kingdom can be seen as the major framework for all of Scripture, it can also be a helpful framework for reading the book of Isaiah. He supports this theme with frequent mentions of God as king. Many of these visions of God as king happen at strategic points in the book (Isa 6, 24-25, 33, 40, 52, 59-63, 66). Frequent mentions of other regal words, such as kingdom (מַמְלָכָה), throne (כִּסֵּא), glory (כְּבוֹד), and justice (מִישֵׁפֶט) and righteousness (קִדְמוּת), add color to this theme. Essentially, Isaiah "addresses a people living amid a long trajectory of empires—Assyria, Babylon, and Persia—so it is no surprise that Isaiah casts its message in light of the notion of kingdom." To the three elements of a kingdom listed earlier (God, place, people), he adds a fourth to Isaiah's framework, the lead agents of the king: a Davidic ruler (Isa 1-39), a suffering servant (Isa 40-55), and a messenger (Isa 56-66). While each of these agents performs different tasks, they all function to bring blessing to the people of the kingdom.⁷

In each major section of the book, Isaiah envisions Yahweh as a powerful ruler. Isaiah 6 is programmatic to Isaiah's work and dramatically shows that Yahweh is the one true king. Isaiah shifts from poetry to narrative to establish coherence and orient the reader to what they have read in chapters 1-5 and what they will read in the chapters ahead.⁸ Isaiah 24-25 ends a unit of judgment by envisioning the Lord of hosts reigning

⁷ Andrew Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah and God's Kingdom: A Thematic-Theological Approach*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2016), 2.

⁸ Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 24.

from Mount Zion (Isa 24:21-23). In the next chapter, the Lord of hosts invites all peoples to an eschatological royal banquet. After another unit of judgment, Isaiah 33:17 promises that the people's eyes, which were blinded in Isaiah 6:9-10, will see the king in his beauty. Verse 22 makes it clear that this king is Yahweh. He will be their lawgiver, judge, and king.

The second section (Isa 40-55) of Isaiah begins with a song of comfort for the exiles (Isa 40:1) because, although the temple had been destroyed, Yahweh's kingly glory would once again be revealed (Isa 40:5) when he comes with a ruling (Isa 49:9) and tender (Isa 49:11) arm. In these chapters, we also see that Yahweh is sovereign over the whole earth (Isa 40:12-31), a righteous Savior (Isa 45:20-22), and supreme over other gods (Isa 46:1).⁹

In the final section of the book, Abernethy points out a chiastic structure with chapters 60-62 at its center.¹⁰ The heart of the message is that Zion is an international city filled with King Yahweh's glory (Isa 60:1-2; 19-20) and his servant (Isa 61:1-3).¹¹ Zion's glory only arrives when the warrior King Yahweh judges and saves (59:15-21; 63:1-6).

⁹ Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 53-81.

¹⁰ Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 84. The details of the chiasm are provided below.

A Faithful outsiders to be in God's service upon salvation (56:1-8)

B Confronting the faithless insiders with judgment and assuring the faithful with salvation (56:9-59:8)

C Prayer for forgiveness and restoration (59:9-15a)

D The warrior king judges the wicked and redeems the repentant (59:15b-21)

E Zion's international renown amid King YHWH's glory and his messenger (60-62)

D' The warrior king judges and saves the nations (63:1-6)

C' Prayer for forgiveness and restoration (63:7-64:12)

B' Confronting the faithless insiders with judgment and assuring the faithful with salvation (65:1:-66:17)

A' Faithful outsiders to be in God's service upon salvation and judgment (66:18-24)

¹¹ Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 83-117.

Isaiah's vision of Yahweh's victorious reign fueled the exiles with hope and shaped their worldview. Centuries later, Luke continues to rely on Isaiah's hopeful vision of a coming kingdom as he writes to tell expectant Israel all that had been accomplished.

Kingdom Themes in Luke-Acts

The kingdom themes in Luke-Acts are more explicit and readily apparent to the reader. Luke's story begins with the announcement that the long-awaited heir of David has arrived to set up his eternal kingdom (Luke 1:33). The word *kingdom* (βασιλεία) itself occurs 53 times in Luke-Acts, often at important events in the story: at the announcement of his birth (Luke 1:33); at the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry (Luke 4:43), at the beginning of his journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:60); at the commissioning of the seventy-two (Luke 10:9), at the Last Supper and inauguration of the new covenant (Luke 22:16), and on the cross (Luke 23:51). In the book of Acts the word βασιλεία is only used eight times, but each one is at an important part of the story. The book both begins with Jesus speaking about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3) and ends with Paul proclaiming the kingdom of God (Acts 28:31).

The same four features of the kingdom that Abernethy identified in Isaiah can be identified in Luke-Acts. Seeing these features is key to understanding a kingdom framework throughout the book, beyond where the word βασιλεία is used. This kingdom framework will provide a grid for thoroughly understanding Luke's threefold use of Isaiah 49:6. As we examine these four features of the kingdom in chapters 4-6, we will also notice that Luke often relies on Isaianic ideas or echoes. It is clear that his

worldview, particularly as it pertained to Jesus and his mission, was shaped by his knowledge of Isaiah and his expectation of a coming kingdom.

Isaiah 49:6 and Luke-Acts in Recent Scholarship

David Pao: Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus

Much recent scholarship on Luke-Acts has focused on the new exodus themes in Luke and, particularly, in Acts. David Pao's literary-critical study *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* argues that the book of Acts should be primarily read through the framework of Isaiah's new exodus theme.¹² He argues that Isaiah 40-55 takes the Exodus story and "eschatologizes" it, redefining and reforming God's people to include the entire created order. Isaiah uses the paradigm of God's salvation in Exodus and turns it into a future cosmological event in which God's people will be redefined and reformed. Luke's program in Acts relies heavily on Isaiah's expectations, and he uses key quotations from Isaiah to indicate that the redefinition of the people of God had been accomplished.¹³

While the new exodus theme is prominent in both Isaiah and Luke-Acts, Pao sometimes loses sight of the fact that this is a sub-motif of the kingdom. Michael Williams points out that the first exodus set a pattern of deliverance *from* Egypt and *to* the Promised Land. "Salvation is a negation of something and a positive possession of something," he says.¹⁴ Sometimes, Pao is focused on images of the wilderness journey,

¹² David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 10.

¹³ Pao, 57, 98.

¹⁴ Michael D. Williams, *Far As the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 35.

and he loses sight of the fact that the people are about to possess something positive.

While this paper will explore new exodus themes, I find this theme is most helpful when viewed as a submotif of the coming kingdom. The goal of the new exodus is not the journey but the final destination in the kingdom of God.

Peter Mallen: The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts

In a careful criticism of Pao's approach, Peter Mallen notes that a weakness of Pao's study is that he begins with Isaiah 40-55 and then, upon seeing these themes in Acts, assumes that Isaiah's new exodus must control the whole narrative of Acts. Additionally, he notes that one could better understand Isaiah's role in the Lucan program by studying Luke's entire writings.¹⁵

After completing his study, he proposes that, while new exodus themes are important in Luke-Acts, Luke seems more focused on the mission of the servant to bring salvation to all people. To support this claim, he states, "Endings in narrative often relate to established expectations at the start... The mission to extend salvation to all people (1:8) and the stubborn unbelief of Israel (28:25-27), both outlined in the book of Isaiah, effectively form bookends for Acts."¹⁶

While mission is an important theme in Luke-Acts, Mallen has missed an inclusion that is even broader than the one he points to. In Acts 1:3, Jesus speaks about the kingdom, and in Acts' final sentence, Paul is proclaiming the kingdom of God (Acts

¹⁵ Peter Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008), 44-45.

¹⁶ Mallen, 99.

28:31). Furthermore, Mallen extends this inclusion of mission to Simeon's prophecy in Luke 2; however, the theme of the kingdom is prevalent in Gabriel's announcement to Mary in Luke 1. These themes could be outlined as follows:

Main theme: Kingdom introduces the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:32)

Sub-motif: Mission is introduced early (Luke 2:32)

Main theme: Kingdom introduces the book of Acts (Acts 1:3)

Sub-motif: Mission is introduced early (Acts 1:8)

Sub-motif: Mission is revisited at the end (Acts 28:28)

Main theme: Kingdom closes the book of Acts (Acts 28:31)

If it is accurate that endings relate to expectations established at the start, then it would seem as though Luke's starting expectation is that Mary's child will inaugurate a new age where David's heir will be enthroned forever and will reign over the eschatological kingdom promised in Isaiah. The mission then seems to serve the program of the kingdom of God rather than serve as the main theme of Luke's work.

Holly Beers: The Followers of Jesus as the 'Servant': Luke's Model from Isaiah for the Disciples in Luke-Acts.

Holly Beers' work rightly identifies that Luke applies Isaiah's servant language to both Jesus and the disciples. We will look in detail at how he does this in Chapter 4. This dual embodiment of the servant figure finds its climax when Paul applies Isaiah 49:6 to himself in Acts 13:47. Beers often picks up on the kingdom language of Luke-Acts and says that these references have "Isaianic overtones"; however, her research is

intentionally focused on the servant motif in Luke-Acts.¹⁷ While she sees this motif best in light of the new exodus theme, her nod to Isaianic overtones of the kingdom leaves room for further research into how Isaiah's kingdom themes influenced Luke-Acts.

Conclusion

Isaiah and Luke are each writing a story that serves a larger story, a story about a kingdom. They each serve a unique role in telling that story. Isaiah writes to warn God's people that the kingdom is about to be lost because of their sin, but that, after a time of purification, Yahweh will reestablish a new age of the kingdom under his reign. Luke writes seven hundred years later to announce the dawning of this new age and to help them reinterpret their expectations for it. It should come as no surprise, then, that he uses a single verse from Isaiah's prophecies in multiple ways to show that the agent of kingdom blessing has arrived to establish God's kingdom on earth and grant citizenship into this kingdom to all peoples. But before we can examine Luke's use of Isaiah 49:6, we must study it in its original context.

¹⁷ Holly Beers, *The Followers of Jesus as the "Servant": Luke's Model from Isaiah for the Disciples in Luke-Acts* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 173.

Chapter 2

The Servant's Global Commission: Isaiah 49:6

To understand how Luke cites Isaiah 49:6 across his Gospel and Acts, it is essential first to consider its Old Testament context. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to conduct a thorough study of the book of Isaiah, it is helpful to grasp a few key themes and motifs in Isaiah 49. It is only when we grasp fully what is happening in Isaiah that we can begin to uncover why Luke would use this passage at key points in his narratives.

Context of Isaiah 49:6

The book of Isaiah can be broken into three major sections: Chapters 1–39, Chapters 40–55, and Chapters 56–66. The first section addresses the contemporary issues of Isaiah's time: an indictment of the people's sin; oracles of judgment against Judah and nearly all the major nations; an eschatological vision of salvation for Judah under a Davidic ruler; and the historical events surrounding the Syro-Ephramitic crisis and Sennacherib's invasion.

The shift in chapter 40 is so extreme that many modern theologians insist that different authors wrote the second and third sections of Isaiah at a much later time. While the first section addresses Isaiah's contemporary context, the second section seems to address a context and an audience 150 years in Isaiah's future. While the audience of the first section receives oracles of indictment and judgment because of their apostasy, the

audience of the second section receives oracles of hope because their situation seems hopeless.

As for the authorship of Isaiah 40-66, John Oswalt offers a simple solution for anyone willing to accept the divine and mystical nature of prophecy. Isaiah, under divine inspiration, was able to address the specific concerns of future generations. While Isaiah 40-66 was written during Isaiah's lifetime, it envisions a future time in Babylonian exile. Isaiah assures the exiles that, even though it seems the Babylonian gods have defeated Yahweh, Yahweh remains the Creator of the world and the most powerful god. The exiles can trust Yahweh because he foretold their exile and now promises to lead them out of it.¹⁸

The final section of the book, Chapters 56-66, offers a new vision of hope. It revisits many of the themes from previous chapters and ties the book together with a final message. Whereas in Isaiah 1-39, the people seemed incapable of living righteously according to the Law as Yahweh required, now Yahweh alone has enabled his people to live in his righteousness.¹⁹

A central focus of Isaiah 40-55 is on the servant whom Yahweh would raise up to lead the people out of exile and reconcile them to a right relationship with Yahweh. Four pieces of poetry within this section have become widely identified as the Servant Songs:

¹⁸ John N. Oswalt, "Who Were the Addressees of Isaiah 40-66?," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 169, no. 673 (January-March 2012), 33-37.

¹⁹ Katie Heffelfinger, *Isaiah 40-66* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024), 451, 462-463.

42:1-4 (sometimes 42:1-9²⁰); 49:1-6; 50:4-9; and 52:13-53:12.²¹ These Servant Songs take on a unique tenor or “an atmospheric change”²² in both the quality of their poetry and the content of their claims. While the servant is clearly identified as Israel or Jacob in multiple places outside of these poems (41:8-9; 42:19; 43:10; 44:2, 21, 26; 45:4; 48:20), his identity as a nation seems to shift to an individual by the second Servant Song.²³

In the first Servant Song, the coastlands are waiting for the law of Yahweh. In response, the Creator God will send his servant, presumably Israel here,²⁴ to be a light for these nations (see Isa 2:1-5). Israel is supposed to open the blind eyes of the nations (Isa 42:7), but Israel herself is blind and utterly unable to complete the task (Isa 42:19).

At the end of chapter 48, we hear a new voice, speaking in the first person: “And now the Lord GOD has sent me, and his Spirit” (Isa 48:16). It is possible that this is the voice of a different servant, an individual who embodies all Israel.²⁵

²⁰ Heffelfinger, 107.

²¹ These four passages were first identified as the Servant Songs by critical scholar Bernhard Duhm in 1875. He believed that these songs were inserted into Deutero-Isaiah much later and referred to an individual. With this approach, these passages are often studied as isolated texts. Conservative scholars, while acknowledging the unique poetic makeup of these texts, often prefer to study the Servant Songs within their broader context as part of the original text. This is the approach I will take as examine the various motifs presented in Isaiah 49:1-6 later in this chapter.

²² Heffelfinger, 108.

²³ While it is true that Isaiah 49:3 uses Israel as an appositive for the servant, a closer examination of this song leads us to believe that the subject of this poem cannot possibly be the nation of Israel. See comments later in this chapter.

²⁴ Oswalt argues that the emphasis of the servant bringing justice to the nations distinguishes the servant in Isaiah 42 from the nation of Israel. Oswalt, *Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 109. Others see continuity between the national servant in 41:8-10 and 42:1. Both are called the servant, upheld by Yahweh. Additionally, nearly all other mentions of the servant in Isaiah 40-48 refer to Israel. See Morales, 138-140; Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 138-142.

²⁵ L. Michael Morales, *Exodus Old and New: A Biblical Theology of Redemption* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2020), 138-140. It is also possible that Isaiah is referring to himself here as Oswalt suggests. Oswalt, *Isaiah Chapters 40-66*, 278.

Isaiah 48 concludes with a proclamation that goes out to the end of the earth, “The Lord has redeemed his servant Jacob!” (Isa 48:20). This song looks forward to a future day when Israel returns from Babylonian captivity. Just as God redeemed the Hebrew slaves from Egypt, he would free Jacob from Babylon and bring the Israelites home. The next chapter, Isaiah 49, begins to answer the question of how blind Jacob will experience Yahweh’s redemption. It will be through this new servant. He will restore blind Jacob, and he will also fulfill Jacob’s servant vocation by bringing salvation to the nations.

Translation of Isaiah 49:1-6

[1] Listen to me, all you coastlands!

And give attention, all you distant peoples.

[2] He made my mouth like a sharp sword.

In the shadow of his hand, he hid me.

He made me into a polished arrow;

He concealed me in his quiver.

Yahweh, in the womb,²⁶ called me;

From my mother’s belly, he made mention²⁷ of my name.

[3] And he said to me, “You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will glorify myself.”²⁸

²⁶ While placing the prepositional phrase “from the womb” between the subject and the verb sounds wooden in English, it attempts to keep the parallelism of the Hebrew intact. In Hebrew, each line of the couplet follows the same pattern prepositional phrase - verb. הָיָה is the subject of both lines.

²⁷ John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah, Chapters 40–66* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 289. הִזְכִּיר “carries with it the idea of making something memorable. Thus a name is not merely mentioned but carefully assigned and recorded.”

²⁸ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), 802, s.v. הִזְכִּיר (Hithpael).

[4] But I said,²⁹ “For emptiness I have toiled;
For nothing and vanity, my strength I have spent.
Yet surely my justice is with Yahweh;
My recompense is with my God.

[5] And now said Yahweh, who formed me in the womb to
be his servant,

In order to return Jacob to him,
and that Israel might be gathered to him,
For I have been honored³⁰ in the eyes of Yahweh,
And my God has been my strength.

[6] And he said, “It is but a small thing³¹ for you to be my
servant in order to raise up the tribes of Jacob,

In order to restore the preserved ones of Israel.

I will appoint³² you as a light to the nations

In order to be my salvation³³ to the end of the earth.”

²⁹ Franz Delitzsch, *Bible Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 2:238. “וְאֵי אֶמְרָתִי” introduces contrast.

³⁰ וְאֶכְבֵּד the weqatall Niphal verb leaves a few options for how to translate. First one might decide what word to use. Second what tense. ESV renders וְאֶכְבֵּד as “am honored.” Delitzsch also translates as “I have been honored.” (239). Oswalt translates as “will be glorified.” (286). BDB provides *honored* as the most common translation in the Niphal, 457.

³¹ The מִהְיֹוֹתָּהּ is a מ of comparison yielding the word “too.” See Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 286. But Delitzsch says this מ should not be logically pressed, rendering it “it is but a small thing that thou hast becomest...”

³² The verb in the MT is וְנָתַתִּי Qal Weqatal first person singular of נָתַן. In the LXX it is τέθεικά, Perfect Active Indicative first person singular from τίθημι. While “I will give” (KJV) may be an appropriate translation, I have translated it, “I will appoint” to keep a more consistent translation in Acts 13:37. The NASB20 uses “appoint” in Acts 13:14, but it uses “make” in Isaiah 49:6.

³³ ESV places salvation as the subject of the infinitive construct “that my salvation may reach the end of the earth,” but the infinitive construct of הִנֵּה can convey that the servant is not nearly the means of salvation. He actually is the salvation. See Oswalt, 294.

Overview of Isaiah 49:1-6

In this poem, the new individual servant is commissioned to restore both Israel and the nations. This Servant Song has two key parts: the servant's speech and the divine speech. We open with the servant's speech in verses 1-3, although he doesn't identify himself as the servant until verse 3. He begins by calling out to his audience, the coastlands and all the distant peoples.

He wants this distant people to know that he has a unique and important role in their future, which depends on Yahweh himself. The imagery of his mouth as a sharp sword highlights the prophetic nature of the servant's role to speak God's words. And his ministry will not be his own message, but Yahweh's. Not only will his words be Yahweh's message, but also, the timing will be Yahweh's. Delitzsch points out that arrows are concealed in a quiver until the particular time that one wishes to use them. Yahweh will unsheath his sword and lay the arrow to the bow in the fullness of time.³⁴

This servant's calling goes back to the womb. While Abernethy calls for caution in connecting the servant with the Davidic ruler promised in chapters 7-11, both Delitzsch and Oswalt question whether this calling and naming in the womb should prompt the reader to recall the Immanuel child of Isaiah 7 and Isaiah 9.³⁵ As an alternative possibility, Holly Beers suggests that the servant's calling from the womb merely points to the longevity of his mission.³⁶

³⁴ Delitzsch, 237.

³⁵ Delitzsch, 237; Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 289.

³⁶ Holly Beers, *The Followers of Jesus as the "Servant": Luke's Model from Isaiah for the Disciples in Luke-Acts* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 37.

But the servant laments that his toil has been in vain. Those to whom he ministers are rejecting his prophetic utterances. This lament sounds much like the failure of the prophetic mission throughout the Old Testament.³⁷ But the servant trusts his complaint to Yahweh, and we hear Yahweh's response in verses 5-6.

The servant introduces Yahweh's speech, but then uses several appositional phrases to prepare us for what we are about to hear. His reference to the womb recalls verse 1. The servant explains that his God-given task is to return the people of Israel to God. While Brueggemann says this task is to "end the exile and bring Israel home,"³⁸ Oswalt rightly clarifies that, according to the text, this is a return to God himself.³⁹ It is more than a return to the land; it is a great spiritual renewal.

Verse six provides Yahweh's speech. In this speech, he provides further clarity on what the servant understood to be his role. Spiritual revival among the tribes of Israel alone would not be enough for the servant; instead, he would reunite the entire world to their God. Indeed, God's vision for Israel since the beginning was to restore all the families of the earth to himself as he intended at Creation (Gen 12:3). This is the heart of the servant's message for the farthest coastlands: God had selected an agent and would send him as light and salvation for all peoples. Even though the people of Israel rejected

³⁷ Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 148-149.

³⁸ Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40-66* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1998), 112.

³⁹ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 292.

the prophets' messages, there was great hope that the ends of the earth would experience the salvation offered by the servant.⁴⁰

Motifs and Themes in Isaiah 49:6

When walking through any Isaianic text, it is important to keep the entire book in mind. Willem VanGemeran provides a guide to reading:

In reading Isaiah, one is continually reading backward and forward while connecting expressions, themes, motifs, and patterns (figurations). The text is like a mirror as it reflects on what has been read and anticipates what lies ahead. A prospective and retrospective reading connects aspects of the text into an ever-growing web.⁴¹

For this reason, it will be helpful to pause here and examine some of the motifs and themes in Isaiah 49:1-6.

End of the Earth / Coastland

In verse 1, the servant addresses the coastlands and all the distant peoples. חֲוֹצוֹת, translated here as coastlands, is used nineteen times in the book of Isaiah. When Isaiah uses it, it is a geographical term⁴² that “has the impact of magnifying the reach of the divine speaker’s claims.” In poetic imagery, it should evoke a sense of “cosmic distance,” as if God is addressing “the most distant peoples imaginable.”⁴³

⁴⁰ While this chapter is trying to stay focused on the Old Testament text only, already one can hear this same central message in Acts 13:46-69.

⁴¹ Willem A. VanGemeran, “Isaiah,” in *A Biblical-Theological Introduction to the Old Testament: The Gospel Promised* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016), 250.

⁴² J. Alec Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 304.

⁴³ Heffelfinger, 60-61.

Mentions of the coastlands frame the second half of Isaiah. In Isaiah 40:15, Yahweh can take these coastlands up as if they were fine dust, signifying God's great power as the Creator over the earth. As the book of Isaiah concludes, in Isaiah 66:19, Yahweh sends his messengers to declare his glory to the inhabitants of the coastlands who have never heard of his fame before. Thus, "as a poetic device, the coastlands exhibit the splendor of the Creator God who calls the earth into being and who thus can command the landscape of its furthest reaches."⁴⁴

The poem in Isaiah 49:6 concludes with salvation reaching to the end of the earth (עַד־קֵצֶה הַיָּמֹת). This phrase is synonymous with the coastlands and the nations,⁴⁵ bookending the second Servant Song with the theme of universal salvation. This phrase appears frequently in the second half of Isaiah and is often paired with the idea of salvation (Isa 42:10; 45:22; 48:6; 52:10; 62:11). It suggests that people throughout the world will experience the salvation that Yahweh offers.

Light / Salvation

The themes of light and salvation appear throughout the book of Isaiah. While they are used synonymously here to refer to "full offer of well-being offered by the Creator,"⁴⁶ it is helpful to trace the themes separately. The theme of light, which is more frequent and thematic in Isaiah than in other prophets,⁴⁷ signifies the "antithesis of

⁴⁴ Heffelfinger, 60-61.

⁴⁵ Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, 60.

⁴⁶ Brueggemann, 112.

⁴⁷ Motyer, 494.

darkness, disorder, and chaos.”⁴⁸ It signifies God’s creative work and his presence, and it appears in each of the three major sections of Isaiah. In Isaiah’s programmatic vision (Isa 2:2-5), when the nations arrive at the mountain of Zion, Jacob is called to walk in the light of the Lord. The salvation of the nations is supposed to motivate Israel towards devotion.

The exact phrase, “a light for the nations,” has been used in the first Servant Song. In Isaiah 42:6, this phrase lies at the center of a poetic unit in which Yahweh commissions his servant to be a covenant for the people and a light for the nations. This poem begins with a series of participles describing the speaker, Yahweh, which harkens back to Genesis 1. He is the God who stretched out the heavens, spread out the earth, and gave breath and spirit to the people on the earth. Before Yahweh’s speech, the reader is reminded that, as the Creator God, he alone brought order out of disorder. He commanded the light in Genesis 1, and he will do it again according to Isaiah 42:6. He will commission the servant to be a light to the nations, to open their blind eyes, and to free those who sit in darkness from prison. This brings great hope in light of Isaiah 6:9-10. At Isaiah’s commissioning, he would blind the eyes of the people, but the servant would open the eyes of the nations.

Salvation in Isaiah is best understood as the victorious overcoming of despair and oppression. The best paradigm for salvation in the scriptural story is that of the exodus, and Isaiah 40-66 is replete with exodus themes (Isa 40:3-5; 43:16-19; 48:20-21; 51:9-11; 52:11-12). In this new exodus, the exiles would return to their homeland and usher in an

⁴⁸ Brueggemann, 112.

eschatological era where God would reign victoriously and dwell with his people in Zion (Isa 65:17-25).⁴⁹

The ideas of salvation and light come together in Isaiah 60, as King Yahweh arrives to reign in Zion over Israel and the nations. There is no need for sun or moon in this kingdom, for Yahweh himself will be the light. God's presence with his people will be as certain and unchanging as the sun. The light of salvation is ultimately experienced in Zion by an international community in the safety of God's eternal reign.

The Servant

Who is this servant that will bring light and salvation to the farthest reaches of the earth? While Brueggemann points out that the identity of the servant in Isaiah 49 is "an enigma beyond resolution,"⁵⁰ it has not stopped theologians from trying to pinpoint his exact identity or who the nation should have expected this servant to be. Four servants have been named in the book of Isaiah: Isaiah (20:3), David (37:35), Cyrus (44:28; 45:1), and Israel (41:8; 44:1, 21; 45:4); but none of these is a satisfactory identity for the servant in Isaiah 49.

Some suggest that he is one and the same as the Davidic messiah,⁵¹ while others insist on keeping these two roles separate.⁵² It is beyond the scope of this paper to answer this question; however, while there are clearly similarities between the two, the Davidic

⁴⁹ VanGemeren, 265.

⁵⁰ Brueggemann, 109.

⁵¹ See Delitzsch 237-238; Oswalt, 288-295.

⁵² See Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 137-155; Brueggemann, 109-110.

ruler and the servant appear to function differently in the book of Isaiah. While the Davidic ruler powerfully establishes righteousness and justice in the land, the servant has an international mission to reconcile Israel and the nations. This reconciliation will be mediated through his suffering.⁵³ While it is tempting to conflate the two roles, it may be more helpful at this point in our study to focus on their distinctions.

We have seen in the first two Servant Songs that the servant will bring salvation to the nations. What has been observed about the servant's identity so far can be illustrated as in Figure 5.

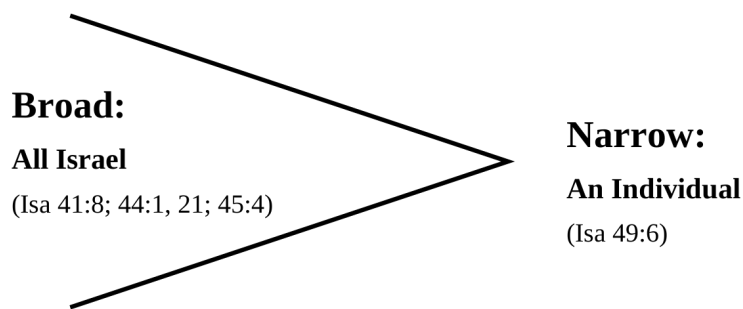


Figure 5: Servant's Identity (Isa 41-49)

In Isaiah 40-48, the servant's identity was primarily all Israel, and his role is to bring light to the nations. By the second song, the servant's identity was narrowed to an individual who would both restore Israel and bring light to the nations.

⁵³ Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 137.

In the final two Servant Songs, the servant suffers deeply. His back is beaten, and his beard is plucked (Isa 50:6), but he places his trust in Yahweh. He sets his face like flint, determined to fulfill Yahweh's mission (Isa 50:7). In the final Servant Song (52:13-53:12), his suffering intensifies. The second-person plural in Isaiah 53:1 indicates that this final Servant Song is sung by the choir of a renewed Israel. They ask, "Who will believe what we have heard?" They say that kings from the nations can see and understand a message that they had not heard (52:15). Again, we see a reversal of Isaiah 6:9-10. Israel, who was once deaf and blind, has now heard and calls out for others to hear.⁵⁴

The purpose of the servant's suffering becomes clear in verses 4-5. He suffered on behalf of the song's singers, the renewed community. He took the community's iniquity upon himself (53:6), experienced their judgment, and by so doing, he fulfilled his mission to restore Jacob and the nations to righteousness.

In Isaiah 54, we learn about the heritage of Yahweh's servants. There are now multiple servants established in righteousness (54:14). They will be both gathered together to Yahweh in his great compassion (54:7), and they will spread out to inhabit the earth (54:3). Through the atonement of the suffering servant, Israel, who was once blind, is now able to take up her vocation to be a light for the nations.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ Morales, 142.

⁵⁵ Morales, 141.

Now we can illustrate the identity of the servant as in Figure 6⁵⁶:

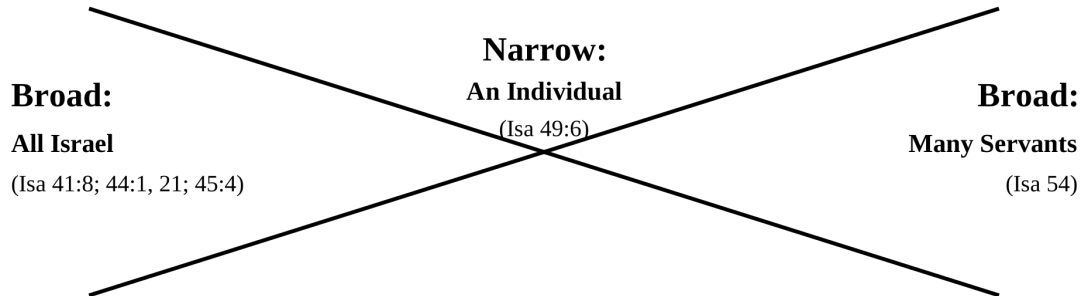


Figure 6: Servant’s Identity (Isa 41-54)

Isaiah figures his servant as the servant of the new exodus. Just as salvation in Isaiah 40-55 is best understood through the exodus paradigm, Isaiah’s servant will figuratively lead the people back to the promised land (Isa 42:6-7; 49:5, 8-10; 51:9-11; 52:11-12; 54:7-8). In this way, he serves as an antitype to Moses. Moses was raised up at a time when God’s covenant with Abraham appeared to be in jeopardy. The people were enslaved and oppressed in Egypt, but God would deliver them out of this slavery so that, as a community, they would serve him (Exodus 7:16, 8:1, 8:20, 9:1, 13; 10:3, 7-8, 11, 24, 26). God planned to make Israel into a community of his servants. To do so, he raised up an individual servant to lead them; this servant was Moses. On the day that Yahweh defeated the Egyptian army in the Red Sea, the people “believed in the LORD and his servant Moses” (Exodus 14:31). For the wilderness generation, to believe in Yahweh, one

⁵⁶ Figure created with ChatGPT.

had to believe that he would accomplish his plan through his servant Moses.⁵⁷ When the people arrived at Mount Sinai, they learned that their role as a kingdom of priests was to mediate God's blessings to the entire earth (Exodus 19:4-16).⁵⁸ Thus, God would mediate all his blessings for the people through Moses, so that the people could mediate God's blessings for the world.

In the same way as Moses, Isaiah's servant would lead the people of God into an eschatological kingdom. The servant, we will learn from the final two Servant Songs, will mediate God's blessings to the people through his atonement and create a servant community who will bring God's salvation to the world.

Conclusion

As we get ready to turn to Luke's two volumes, it will be helpful to keep the original context of Isaiah 49:6 in mind. In this Second Servant song, Isaiah's readers are introduced to an individual servant who, in the fullness of God's time, will restore Jacob in a great spiritual awakening and bring light and salvation to the farthest reaches of the earth. This salvation is best understood as the realization of Isaiah's programmatic vision of the last days, when nations flow into God's presence, and Israel walks in his light (Isa 2:1-5). This will become possible when the servant atones for the transgressions of a wider community of servants.

⁵⁷ Harmon, 41-59.

⁵⁸ Wright, *Mission of God*, 329-33

Chapter 3

The Kingdom of God and the Writings of Luke

In the first chapter, I suggested that some of the major themes observed in the book of Isaiah can also be found in the works of Luke. These themes of the king, his lead agents, place, and people are all necessary elements of a kingdom. Thus, when we see these themes in Scripture, we can identify them as part of God’s kingdom. To prepare us for Luke’s citations of Isaiah 49:6, this chapter will look at Luke’s usage of the Old Testament.

Luke’s Introduction: Luke 1:1-4

In Luke’s first sentence, he tells his benefactor Theophilus that he is writing a “narrative of the things that have already been accomplished (διήγησιν περὶ τῶν πεπληροφορημένων ἐν ἡμῖν πραγμάτων).” The perfect passive participle πεπληροφορημένων in Luke 1:1 has two important implications. First, it is not a mere accomplishment but a fulfillment. The verb πεπληροφορημένων is closely related to the more common verb πληρόω, which often denotes a fulfillment of prophecy.⁵⁹ Luke is writing to assure Theophilus that what he has already heard about Jesus fulfills the expectations of the Old Testament Scriptures.⁶⁰ As this paper is largely concerned with

⁵⁹ BDAG, “πληρόω.”

⁶⁰ Benjamin L. Gladd *From the Manger to the Throne: A Theology of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic, 2022), 20; Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 57. Joel B. Green argues that it is not necessary to understand πεπληροφορημένων as a reference to the fulfillment of prophecy; see Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 39.

Luke's quotations of Isaiah, it is important to keep in mind that demonstrating Old Testament fulfillment is part of his purpose.

Secondly, the use of the perfect tense indicates an ongoing impact of the fulfillment. Darrell Bock explains Luke's use of the perfect this way:

These fulfilled events from the past continue to color how one should view the present. The effect of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection lives on. Luke will chronicle one of the immediate effects, the rise of the church, in his second volume. In Acts, Luke makes the point that Jesus continues to work in the world as the exalted Lord (Acts 1:1-5).⁶¹

Luke is not simply creating a rhetorical argument. He is telling a worldview story, and he is writing to persuade his readers that they have a unique place in that story.

In the first chapter, we considered the theme of God's kingdom as the single organizing theme of all of Scripture. Luke now helps us orient ourselves within this story about a kingdom. As we will see, Luke will go on to announce that the promised eschatological kingdom is upon us, that Jesus is the Messiah who will reign forever over this kingdom, that the borders of this kingdom will extend to the ends of earth, that the Messiah's mission (which he delegates to his disciples in Acts) is to invite members of all nations to find membership in that kingdom. Luke's readers will hear that invitation and be expected to respond.

Luke's Old Testament Context

While a thorough investigation into Second Temple literature is beyond the scope of this project, a few things should be said about what this literature suggests about the

⁶¹ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke Volume 1: 1:1–9:50* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1994), 57.

beliefs and attitudes of Luke's readers.⁶² Peter Mallen has provided an overview of the key literature for understanding how Isaiah, widely quoted by STJ authors, shaped the widely held views of Luke and his readers. Isaiah was identified as a prophet who saw the last days. His eschatological vision included judgment of the nations and of unrighteous Israelites (i.e., Israelites from any sect other than the author's), salvation for righteous Israel, and possession of the land promised to Abraham. All of this would come about with the arrival of a kingly messiah. Some Qumran literature refers to two messiahs. A priestly messiah would teach the Law. Very little is written about this priestly figure. A kingly messiah would drive out all the unclean from Jerusalem and gather a holy people there.⁶³

The Jewish people living in Palestine at the beginning of the first century had returned from Babylon, just as Isaiah had promised. However, Jerusalem had not yet been cleansed from sinners or Gentiles, and God had not yet returned to Zion. Israel believed herself to be the true Adam, responsible for bringing both judgment and blessing to the world. But before completing this mission, God must restore the kingdom of Israel.⁶⁴ Into this community, "Luke has told a story which he intends to be the *true climax* of the story

⁶² It should be noted that by the first century, Judaism had divided into various sects with differing beliefs, so it cannot be assumed that every Jewish person held every belief outlined below. Nevertheless, N. T. Wright says, "It is not difficult to show, as many writers have done, that within the varieties of Judaism there is a set of *basic beliefs* which are more or less common to all groups." N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 245.

⁶³ Peter Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008), 36-50.

⁶⁴ N. T. Wright, 267-272.

of Israel.”⁶⁵ It is “the story of Jesus as the fulfillment, the completion, of the story of David and his kingdom.”⁶⁶

Luke’s Old Testament Use

Luke relies heavily on the Old Testament to tell this story. It may be true that he uses fewer explicit quotations than Matthew,⁶⁷ and he does not use Matthew’s fulfillment formula. However, the attentive reader will notice that his Old Testament echoes are intricately woven everywhere into his narrative. One study shows that Luke’s Gospel alone contains 439 Old Testament allusions.⁶⁸ James Meek has analyzed fifty-seven key Old Testament citations in Luke-Acts and identifies five themes: christological, soteriological, judgment, rejection, and the universal offer of the Gospel.⁶⁹ These themes are consistent with those noted above in the STJ literature. It would seem that Luke addresses the concerns and expectations of his time.

Luke’s citations most frequently come from the Psalms, most often in speech material. His second-most-frequently cited Old Testament book is Isaiah. Peter Mallen points out the importance of the placement of these citations. They often come at strategic moments in the narrative, giving Isaiah a place of primacy for Luke’s writings. Luke

⁶⁵ N. T. Wright, 382.

⁶⁶ N. T. Wright, 381.

⁶⁷ David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 251. Pao and Schnabel note that Matthew’s gospel contains thirty-eight citations, whereas Luke’s contains twenty-five.

⁶⁸ Pao and Schnabel, 251.

⁶⁹ James A. Meek, *The Gentile Mission in Old Testament Citations in Acts: Text, Hermeneutic, and Purpose* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008), 20.

includes Isaianic citations in his introductory birth narratives (Luke 2:29-32) and in the conclusion of his entire story (Acts 28:26-28). He also uses Isaianic citations to introduce and set the pattern for the ministries of John (Luke 3:4-5), Jesus (Luke 4:17-19), the apostles (Acts 1:8), and Paul (Acts 13:47).⁷⁰ These citations help set the agenda and shape Luke's story. Out of these six strategic quotations, three come from Isaiah 49:6, the subject of our study, and will be examined in the subsequent chapters of this project.

Conclusion

Luke is telling a story meant to shape his readers' worldview and self-understanding. In his story, he claims that the prophets' expectations have been fulfilled in Jesus. As the Jews of this time longed to be finally released from exile, Luke presents Jesus as the one who has done exactly that. The rest of this thesis will focus on a single verse from Isaiah, Isaiah 49:6, which Luke uses three times to show his readers how, in Jesus, the kingdom is established, expanded, and transformed from first-century expectations.

⁷⁰ Mallen, 60-101.

Chapter 4

The Agent of Blessing Arrives: Luke 2:32

The advent of the kingdom of God envisioned in Isaiah would not begin until the lead agents of Yahweh arrived. While Isaiah portrays three lead agents, each with a specific task, Luke fuses these roles into one man: Jesus of Nazareth. At the end of Luke's birth narratives, Simeon holds the baby Jesus and makes an announcement that clarifies this child's role in salvation history.

The Lead Agents of the King in Isaiah

Isaiah's message centers on the hope that King Yahweh will arrive and establish his eschatological kingdom on earth. To do so, Yahweh will empower three lead agents with his Spirit and equip them with distinct tasks for his mission. While all of God's people, and even, to some extent, foreign nations will act as God's agents, Abernethy sees three distinct lead agents who take a prominent role in the book of Isaiah: a Davidic ruler (chapters 1-39), the servant of the Lord (chapters 50-55), and God's messenger (chapters 56-66).⁷¹ Each lead agent has a role in establishing God's kingdom, and while Christians readily accept that each of these agents is the Christ, Abernethy states:

I am not certain that these agents are necessarily understood to be the same individual throughout Isaiah. The book of Isaiah contains a range of expectations pertaining to the various roles God would need these lead

⁷¹ Andrew Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 119.

agents to fulfill in the course of time. Instead of forcing all these lead agents into one mould, it is better to allow the uniqueness of each figure to emerge.⁷²

He later calls the identity of the Davidic ruler and the servant in one man a “surprising merger”⁷³ in the New Testament. So, while Christians tend to identify the overlap in these roles quickly, it is helpful to recognize that Isaiah’s original readers would likely have understood them as distinct.

Lead Agent 1: Davidic Ruler

Chapters 1-39 give hope that a new Davidic ruler will be born of a virgin (Isa 7:14) and establish righteousness and justice in Israel (Isa 9:1-7; 11:3-5; 16:5; 32:1).

Lead Agent 2: Servant of Yahweh

As we saw in Chapter 2, the servant of Yahweh is featured in chapters 40-55. The climactic task of this servant is to procure atonement through suffering (Isa 52:13-53:12). While the Davidic king’s mission is focused on Israel, the servant will be a light to the nations. Since our study focuses on Isaiah 49:6, a verse about the servant, this chapter will give significant attention to the servant's identity and mission.

Lead Agent 3: Messenger of Yahweh

Finally, Abernethy identifies a messenger as a third lead agent in chapters 56-66. He is featured in Isaiah 61:1-3 as he proclaims the good news of God’s salvation and the

⁷² Andrew Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 120.

⁷³ Andrew Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 158.

in-breaking of God's kingdom. Some identify these verses as an ectopic Servant Song, but Abernethy, while seeing the similarities, also sees the distinction in their primary roles. The servant's mission is to reconcile the entire world to God, while the messenger's role is primarily prophetic. He is to announce the arrival of the eschaton to the newly formed community of reconciled servants.⁷⁴

The Lead Agents of the King in Luke-Acts

In Luke-Acts, and especially in Luke's Gospel, Abernethy's three agents are brought together in the person of Jesus Christ.

Lead Agent 1: Davidic Ruler

From the beginning, Luke makes it clear that Jesus is the Christ, the Davidic king. Luke's birth narratives are full of christological significance. The christological prominence somewhat drops into the background after the birth narratives. He seems to be showing these readers that Jesus is the Christ rather than telling them. After his resurrection, this theme returns to conclude his Gospel and introduce the book of Acts.

Gabriel's Birth Announcement to Mary: Luke 1:26-38

After Gabriel announces John the Baptist's birth to Zechariah (Luke 1:5-25), he announces Jesus' birth to Mary. Verses 32-33 are most significant for our study. In these verses, Gabriel announces that Mary's baby will be great, will be called Son of the Most High, that the Lord will give him the throne of his father David, that he will reign over

⁷⁴ Andrew Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 155-170.

the house of Jacob, and of his kingdom there will be no end. Luke has clearly identified this baby with the covenant made with David in 2 Samuel 7 and anticipated by Isaiah in Isaiah 9:6. Darrell Bock argues that the term Son of the Most High does not denote Jesus' kingship (see 2 Sam 7:14; Ps 2). Luke consistently uses sonship language to present Jesus as the deliverer and everlasting Davidic ruler (1:76, see especially Acts 13:33).⁷⁵

Throughout his gospel, Luke develops how nothing, not even death by crucifixion, will be able to end the reign of the Messiah.

Zechariah's Benedictus: Luke 1:67-80

After the birth of John the Baptist, Zechariah's mouth is opened to utter a prophetic blessing pregnant with Christological significance. In verse 69, he says, "and he has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of this servant David." We will see later in this chapter that Luke occasionally weaves together the idea that Jesus is both an Isaianic servant and a Davidic ruler in the same sentence. This may be his first instance. The horn of salvation is an Old Testament picture of a warrior (Deuteronomy 33:17) often associated with David's reign (2 Samuel 22:3; Psalm 18:2),⁷⁶ and here he calls him the Lord's servant.

The Birth of Jesus: Luke 2:1-21

The angel's announcement to the shepherds clearly states what Luke 1 has already alluded to: Mary's baby is "a Savior who is Christ the Lord" (σωτήρ ὃς ἐστὶν Χριστὸς

⁷⁵ Darrell L. Bock, *Proclamation from Prophecy and Pattern* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1987), 64.

⁷⁶ David W. Pao and Eckhard J. Schnabel, "Luke," in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 251–414, 263.

κύριος) (Luke 2:11). As Joel Green puts it, “The angel *tells* what the narrator has already begun to *show*.”⁷⁷ These titles, Savior, Christ, and Lord, are not seen together anywhere else in the New Testament. Darrell Bock maintains that none of these verses directly claim that Jesus is divine, but that each one closely ties Jesus to God. In the Old Testament, God is the primary Savior, credited with delivering Israel from all her enemies. He often uses secondary agents to bring about this salvation.⁷⁸ As we have seen above, Isaiah prepares us to look for these agents. Lord is best seen in apposition to Christ. Luke does not provide much explanation for what it means that Christ is the Lord in birth narratives. Still, over his two volumes, “these ideas will be developed to declare Jesus not only to be the Messiah but also to proclaim him as the sovereign who possesses unique authority over all men.”⁷⁹

After the Resurrection: Luke 24:44-47 and Peter’s Pentecost Sermon

In this significant passage, Jesus visits his disciples after his resurrection, and he opens their minds to understand the Old Testament Scriptures about Christ’s death, resurrection, and mission to the nations. Here, the resurrected Jesus clearly claims to be the Christ. Finally, the idea of Christ’s lordship and divinity is fully developed in the conclusion of Peter’s sermon at Pentecost, where he declares, “Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:26).

⁷⁷ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 132.

⁷⁸ Bock, *Pattern and Prophecy*, 78-79.

⁷⁹Bock, *Pattern and Prophecy*, 79.

Throughout the rest of the book of Acts Jesus' divinity and title of Christ are proclaimed and assumed.

Lead Agent 2: Servant of Yahweh

Luke's writings hinge on his persuasive belief that Jesus of Nazareth is Isaiah's promised servant. He announces that the kingdom of God is upon us, and the arrival of that kingdom comes with the arrival of the servant who will lead God's people into it. He ultimately does so by becoming their atonement and thereby offering a release. This release has been prefigured in Exodus as a release from physical captivity. Isaiah uses poetic language to reinterpret the exodus as a return home from Babylon, but he also sees a new thing in store for Israel (Isa 43:19). He sees a transformation of the people of Israel (43:19-24) and for all the earth (49:6) through the atonement of the servant (Isa 53:5-6). Luke, in turn, transforms the new exodus language into a reality in which God's people are released from the captivity of sin. Because of the importance of the servant's role in inaugurating God's kingdom, we will spend considerable energy in this chapter observing how Luke points to Jesus as the servant.

Luke's Servant Citations

Perhaps the clearest way Luke presents his belief that Jesus is the servant of Yahweh is by applying Isaiah's Servant Songs directly to Jesus. He first does this in Luke 2:32 within the words of the temple prophet Simeon, which we will examine more closely in the following chapter.

Next, he specifically links John the Baptist's ministry to the fulfillment of Isaiah 40:3-5 (Luke 3:4-6). As we saw in chapter 2, Isaiah 40 marks the beginning of a new section of Isaiah, focused on the restoration of God's people after their release from exile and their return to the promised land by the servant of Yahweh. While Matthew and Mark also quote this passage in relation to John the Baptist, only Luke takes the quotation one line further to include, "all flesh shall see the salvation of God." This extended citation sets an important and unifying agenda for Luke. He is not only concerned with the Jews but with "all flesh." Luke is not merely introducing John the Baptist; he is setting a hermeneutical framework within which Luke's readers can understand their moment in history. The time of salvation has arrived! The kingdom is about to be restored in fulfillment of Isaianic hopes.⁸⁰

At the Last Supper, Jesus explains that what is about to happen is the fulfillment of Isaiah 53 (Luke 22:37). Here, he clearly identifies himself with the servant of Isaiah, and he understands his role is to suffer for the atonement of his people.

Finally, and perhaps with the most clarity, Acts 8:26-35 tells the story of Phillip and the Ethiopian eunuch. As the eunuch is reading from the scroll of Isaiah, the Spirit sends Phillip to join him. The eunuch then reads Isaiah 53:7-8 to Phillip and asks Phillip to guide his understanding. Luke then reports, "beginning with this Scripture [Phillip] told him the good news about Jesus" (Acts 8:35). The good news is indeed that Isaiah's servant has arrived, that he is Jesus, and that he will establish his kingdom with a people from among nations.

⁸⁰ Pao and Schnabel, 275-278.

Luke's Servant Echoes

Robert O'Toole has pointed out a more nuanced way that Luke portrays Jesus as the servant of Yahweh.⁸¹ He calls out several subtle echoes from the Servant Songs in Luke's writings. These echoes are particularly concentrated in Jesus' passion prediction and passion narrative, and while there are a few echoes of the earlier Servant Songs, most come from the last two Servant Songs, which emphasize the servant's suffering. The table below summarizes the echoes observed by O'Toole.

Table 1. Echoes of the Servant Songs in Luke's Passion Narrative

	Luke/Acts	LXX
At the beginning of Luke's journey to Jerusalem he draws from the third Servant Song.	Luke 9:51 - When the days drew near for him to be taken up, he set his face (ἐστήρισεν) to go to Jerusalem.	Isaiah 50:7 - But the Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face (στερεᾶν) like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame.
In his passion prediction, Jesus drew from the third Servant Song to foretell that he would be spit upon in accordance with what was written about the Son of Man.	Luke 18:31-32 - And taking the twelve, he said to them, "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon." (ἐμπαυχθήσεται).	Isaiah 50:6 - I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting (ἐμπτυσμάτων).

⁸¹ Robert F. O'Toole, "How Does Luke Portray Jesus as Servant of YHWH," *Biblica* 81, no. 3 (2000): 328–346.

Table 1. Echoes of the Servant Songs in Luke’s Passion Narrative

	Luke/Acts	LXX
<p>Jesus says at the last supper that what was written about him must be fulfilled. Specifically, he would be numbered among the transgressors as stated in the fourth Servant Song.</p>	<p>Luke 22:37 - For I tell you that this Scripture must be fulfilled in me: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors.' (ἀνόμων ἐλογίσθη καὶ) For what is written about me has its fulfillment."</p>	<p>Isaiah 53:12 - Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors (ἀνόμοις ἐλογίσθη καὶ αὐτὸς); yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.</p>
<p>At the crucifixion the mockers tease that if he is the chosen one of God, he can save himself.</p> <p>God calls the servant his chosen one.</p>	<p>Luke 23:35 - And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, "He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One (ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐκλεκτός)!"</p> <p>Luke 9:35 - And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is my Son, my Chosen One (ἐκλελεγμένος); listen to him!"</p>	<p>Isaiah 42:1 - 1 Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen (ὁ ἐκλεκτός μου), in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.</p>
<p>Isaiah says the servant opened not his mouth as he was being afflicted.</p> <p>When Jesus was being questioned by Herod, he didnot answer his questions.</p>	<p>Luke 23:9 - So he questioned him at some length, but he made no answer.</p>	<p>Isaiah 53:7 - He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.</p>

Table 1. Echoes of the Servant Songs in Luke’s Passion Narrative

	Luke/Acts	LXX
Peter announces Christ’s exaltation in his Pentecost sermon.	Acts 2:33 - Being therefore exalted (ὕψωθεις) at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you yourselves are seeing and hearing.	Isaiah 52:13 - Behold, my servant shall act wisely; he shall be high and lifted up (ὕψωθήσεται), and shall be exalted.

Furthermore, O’Toole points out two verbs used repeatedly in the passion predictions and narration that echo Isaiah 53. The first is Luke’s use of the verb παραδίδωμι. Isaiah 53:6 in the LXX reads καὶ κύριος **παρέδωκεν** αὐτὸν ταῖς ἀμαρτίαις ἡμῶν or, “the Lord handed him over for our sins.” Luke uses this same verb ten times to refer to Jesus’ passion: twice in his passion predictions (9:44; 18:32), once for the scribes’ and chief priests’ plan to arrest Jesus (Luke 20:20), four times to refer to Judas’ betrayal (22:4, 6, 21, 28), once as the crowds asked Pilate to deliver Jesus over to their will (23:25), once as the angels at the tomb reminded the disciples what Jesus said (Luke 24:7), once as the disciples on the road to Emmaus described to the risen Jesus what happened in Jerusalem (24:20), and once in Peter’s retelling of the passion in his sermon after healing the lame man (Acts 3:13).

Luke also uses the verb ἄγω three times in the passion narrative as a probable echo of Isaiah 53:8: “like a lamb that is led (ἤχθη) to the slaughter.” This verse is used to tell how Jesus was led to the high priest’s house (Luke 22:54), to Pilate (Luke 23:1), and

away from Pilate (23:26). O’Toole concludes that Luke has used these echoes of Isaiah to build a robust christology that presents Jesus’s mission of atonement.

Luke’s παῖς Theology

Darrell Bock suggests that Luke developed a “παῖς theology” as a double word play to indicate that Jesus is both the Isaianic servant and the Davidic ruler.⁸² There are two Greek words available for our English word *servant*, δοῦλος and παῖς. In the LXX, these terms are used interchangeably to translate the Hebrew word עֶבֶד.⁸³ Most significantly for our study, it is worth noting the parallel passages that issue the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17. While the 2 Samuel passage consistently uses δοῦλος throughout its translation, the 1 Chronicles passage uses παῖς. The same is true of Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple. 1 Kings 8 consistently uses δοῦλος; whereas 2 Chronicles 6 uses παῖς.

Another notable place of interchangeability is in Isaiah’s Servant Songs. עֶבֶד is translated eleven times as παῖς and four times as δοῦλος. Holly Beers suggests that there is no difference in connotation in the LXX and that the two terms are merely being used synonymously.⁸⁴ However, it seems that Luke uses these two synonyms with careful precision.

⁸² Darrell L. Bock, *Pattern and Prophecy*, 71.

⁸³ *Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Septuagint* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2012), Logos Bible Software.

⁸⁴ Holly Beers, *The Followers of Jesus as the “Servant”: Luke’s Model from Isaiah for the Disciples in Luke-Acts* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 56.

In the New Testament, δοῦλος is far more common. It occurs 126 times, opposed to παῖς, which is used only twenty-four times. The word παῖς only occurs in the Gospels and Acts, and fifteen out of its twenty-four occurrences are in Luke-Acts. Of those fifteen occurrences, Luke uses παῖς seven times to refer to a household servant or small child (this is a common translation of παῖς); twice to refer to David as the Lord’s servant, once to refer to Israel as the Lord’s servant, and four times to refer to Jesus as the Lord’s servant.

Luke also employs the term δοῦλος for servant, but never uses it to refer to Jesus, David, or Israel. Instead, he only uses παῖς in these instances. This usage begins in the birth narratives and becomes clearer in Peter’s sermons in Acts. The table below examines Bock’s suggestion of a παῖς theology by analyzing each instance in which Luke uses δοῦλος and παῖς.

Table 1. Luke’s Use of δοῦλος and παῖς

	δοῦλος	παῖς
Mary as the servant of the Lord	Luke 1:38, 48	
Simeon as the servant of the Lord	Luke 2:29	
Israel as the servant of the Lord		Luke 1:54
David as the servant of the Lord		Luke 1:69 Acts 4:25
Jesus as God’s servant		Acts 3:13, 26; 4:27, 30
General word for child		Luke 2:43; 8:54; 9:42; 20:12
Disciples	Acts 4:29; 16:17	

Table 1. Luke's Use of δοῦλος and παῖς

General word for household servant	Luke 7:2, 8, 10; 12:37, 43, 45, 46, 47; 14:17, 21, 22, 23; 15:22; 17:7, 9; 19:3, 15, 17, 22; 20:11, 22:50 Acts 2:18	Lk 7:7; 12:45; 15:26
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- In Luke 1:38, Mary identifies herself to Gabriel as the δοῦλος of the Lord.
- Luke 1:48 - Mary again identifies herself as God's δοῦλος in the Magnificat.
- Later in the Magnificat (verse 54), she refers to Israel as God's παῖς. This is significant since the servant is often referred to as Israel throughout Isaiah's Servant Songs.
- In Zechariah's Benedictus, he calls David the Lord's παῖς (Luke 1:69).
- Simeon refers to himself as a δοῦλος of the Lord and then gives the *Nunc dimittis*, a prophecy full of references to the Isaianic servant.
- In Acts, Luke again uses παῖς in significant ways. Immediately after healing a lame man (cf. Isaiah 35:6) in Solomon's portico of the Temple, Peter preached a sermon to explain what the people saw. In his introduction, he announced that God glorified his παῖς, Jesus. (Acts 3:13). Jesus is in apposition to παῖδα in this phrase, clearly identifying Jesus as the servant. Not only did Luke proclaim that Jesus was the servant, but this was also the heart of Peter's gospel presentation.
- Peter continues his sermon by proclaiming that the times the prophets proclaimed have begun. He preaches that Jesus is a better prophet than Moses and

the offspring of Abraham. Finally, he concludes as he began, that God has raised his παῖς, again linking him to the servant of Isaiah 40-66 (Acts 3:26).

- After Peter's sermon, the priests charged the disciples not to speak in the name of Jesus. This sparked a prayer meeting. In the prayer that Luke recorded, the people referred to David as the Lord's παῖς and to Jesus as the Lord's παῖς. And at the end of the prayer, they referred to themselves as the Lord's δούλοις.

By Luke's choice to refer to Jesus and David as παῖς rather than δούλος, he seems to suggest that he understands Jesus' unique role as the Isaianic servant.

Lead Agent 3: Messenger of Yahweh

Jesus began his ministry in Nazareth by reading the key text for Isaiah's messenger in Isaiah 61 (Luke 4:16-30). He then announced that Scripture had been fulfilled in their hearing. Jesus is the Messenger of Yahweh, announcing that the new age of the kingdom had arrived.

The Agent of Blessing in Luke 2:32

We have already observed that Luke's birth narratives are full of Old Testament significance, announcing that Jesus is the Messiah. Luke's first quotation of Isaiah 49:6 is found in Luke 2:32 in Simeon's prophecy. This prophecy comes in the final and climactic pericope of Luke's infancy narratives. In this prophecy, he brings together messianic and servant themes.

Translation of Luke 2:25-32

[25] Now a man was in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the comfort⁸⁵ of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. [26] And it had been made known⁸⁶ to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he saw the Lord's Christ.

[27] And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought⁸⁷ the child⁸⁸ Jesus to do for him according to the custom of the law, [28] he took him into his arms and blessed God and said,

[29] "Now you are dismissing your servant⁸⁹, Master⁹⁰, according to your word in peace

[30] Because my eyes have seen⁹¹ your salvation⁹²

[31] Which you prepared in the presence of all peoples.

⁸⁵ παράκλησιν echoes the LXX in Isaiah 40:1 παρακαλεῖτε παρακαλεῖτε τὸν λαόν μου λέγει ὁ θεός. Simeon is waiting for the fulfillment of the promises God made through the prophet Isaiah.

⁸⁶ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996). The imperfect form of εἶμι, ἦν combined with the periphrastic participle κεχρηματισμένον in the perfect tense yields a pluperfect translation. Wallace 647-649.

⁸⁷ τεισαγαγεῖν is an infinitive followed by two accusatives τοὺς γονεῖς and τὸ παιδίον. τοὺς γονεῖς is translated as the subject because it is closer to the infinitive. Also, common sense tells us that τὸ παιδίον as the subject does not make much sense. See discussion in Wallace 193-196.

⁸⁸ The Greek word παιδίον is possibly a nod to Luke's παῖς theology, but is more naturally translated child instead of servant in this verse.

⁸⁹ Simeon refers to himself as δοῦλός rather than παῖς.

⁹⁰ BDAG, "δέσποτα." δέσποτα is a term used by a slave to address his owner.

⁹¹ Every major translation has translated the aorist active indicative εἶδον in the English perfect tense. This is an immediate past aorist, referring to an event that happened recently, reflecting a stative perfect. See Wallace, 564-565.

⁹² Luke uses the unusual neuter form of σωτήριόν here.

[32] A light for revelation⁹³ to the nations⁹⁴ and a glory of your people, Israel.”

The Content of Simeon's Prophecy

Simeon's Use of Isaiah

Luke is well known for not simply citing a long Old Testament passage in his writing. Instead, he often weaves together intricate webs of Old Testament themes and echoes. Simeon's prophecy draws on multiple passages in Isaiah to communicate a single message. We will look at each echo individually to get a full understanding of Simeon's message.

Isaiah 40:1: Παράκλησιν

Luke alerts us to Isaiah in verse 25 by stating that Simeon was waiting for the παράκλησιν of Israel. This word draws from Isaiah 40:1, “Comfort, comfort (παρακαλεῖτε παρακαλεῖτε) my people, says your God.” These are the opening words of Isaiah's second section, announcing that a new era would dawn for the exiles. War would end; sin would be dealt with; blessing would be poured out from Yahweh's hand. (Isa 40:1-2). Simeon is waiting for this era to begin, and he would know that it had begun when he saw the Lord's Christ.

⁹³ φῶς, ἀποκάλυψιν, and δόξαν are all in the accusative case. As I will explain in the body of the paper, the translation reflects the understanding that φῶς is in apposition to σωτήριον. ἀποκάλυψιν and δόξαν are in apposition to φῶς.

⁹⁴ φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν is a near exact quotation from the LXX Isaiah 49:6 εἰς φῶς ἐθνῶν.

Isaiah 40:5: Σωτήριόν

In verse 30, Luke has used the neuter form σωτήριόν for salvation. Its feminine form, σωτηρία, is a much more common usage in both the LXX and the New Testament. The neuter form appears only five times in the New Testament; three of those uses are in Luke-Acts. This neuter form is also found in the LXX in Isaiah 40:5, which concludes the unit announcing that comfort (παρακαλεῖτε) would arrive in Israel. The insertion of σωτήριόν is a slight variation of the MT. The MT reads וְיִרְאוּ כָּל-בָּשָׂר יְהוָה. The verb יראו takes no object; however, the ESV supplies the ambiguous pronoun “it” as the direct object of “shall see,” rendering this phrase, “and all flesh shall see it together.” The LXX supplies the word σωτήριόν as the direct object in its translation, rendering the phrase καὶ ὄψεται πᾶσα σὰρξ τὸ σωτήριον τοῦ θεοῦ, or “and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

Simeon's phrase, “my eyes have seen your salvation (σωτήριόν),” seems to be announcing that the comfort of Israel for which he was waiting (2:25) has now arrived. But his eyes have not *actually* seen salvation; they are looking at a *baby*. Luke's entire birth narrative communicates that this is not just any baby. In this child, Luke presents salvation not as a concept, but as a person.

We have already seen that for Isaiah, salvation meant overcoming oppression so that the community could flourish as God intended. In Luke-Acts, we find that salvation is more comprehensive than overcoming political oppression, as much of the STJ literature seemed to have expected. Salvation for Luke means flourishing for both body and the soul. When Jesus began his ministry, he healed demoniacs, lepers, blind men, and

paralytics. He even raised the dead. Luke often uses the verb σώζω in his accounts of healing (Luke 6:9; 7:3; 8:36, 48, 50; 17:19; 18:42). His healings are often associated with the faith of the person being healed. In Luke 8:48, 50, and 17:19, it is the person's faith that makes them well (σέσωκέν). Jesus' salvation reverses the curse of Genesis 3, restoring humanity to wholeness and right relationship with God.

In Luke 9:24, Jesus has just foretold his passion for the first time (Luke 9:21-22). He is about to give up his life and atone for the sins of his people as the Isaianic servant. Then he tells his disciples that the way to save (σώζω) one's life is to lose it. Salvation for Luke is experienced paradoxically by identifying with Jesus even in his sufferings.

By the early chapters of Acts, Peter is preaching that salvation comes through identifying with Jesus. He opens his Pentecost sermon with an allusion to Isaiah's vision of the last days (Isa 2:1-5) and a quotation from Joel 2:28-32. His quotation includes the phrase, "everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord (κυρίου) shall be saved." In Joel 2:32, the people will call on the name of Yahweh (יהוה). Peter's sermon transforms the Old Testament expectation of salvation. He concludes his sermon with this powerful statement: "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord (κυρίου) and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (Acts 2:36). Peter is proclaiming Jesus as both the Messiah and as Yahweh, himself.⁹⁵ It is the name of Jesus that one must call upon to be saved; there is no other (Acts 4:12).⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Aaron Valdizan, "The Significance of the Divine Name in Peter's Pentecost Sermon," *The Master's Seminary Journal* 35, no. 2 (Fall 2024): 257-72.

⁹⁶ Darrell L. Bock, *A Theology of Luke and Acts*, Biblical Theology of the New Testament, ed. Andreas J. Köstenberger (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 227-237.

For Luke, salvation is forgiveness of sins (Luke 4:18; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43), eternal life (Acts 27-28; 5:20; 13:46-47), peace (Luke 1:79, 2:14; Acts 10:36), grace (Acts 11:23; 13:43; 14:3), and righteousness (Acts 13:39).⁹⁷ This is what Simeon saw when he looked in the face of the infant Jesus.

Isaiah 49:6: φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν

Finally, Simeon quotes a phrase from the key text for this study. He has added ἀποκάλυψιν (a revelation), which is not represented in the MT or LXX. In this verse, φῶς, ἀποκάλυψιν, and δόξαν are all in the accusative case. Many commentators suggest that φῶς and δόξαν are both in apposition to σωτήριον. Taken this way, φῶς is specifically for the Gentiles, and it is a δόξαν for Israel. Instead, Darrell Bock suggests that φῶς is in apposition to σωτήριον in verse 30 and that ἀποκάλυψιν and δόξαν are in parallel as direct objects of εἰς. This view slightly changes the meaning. The light is for all peoples. It is a revelation for the Gentiles and glory for Israel.⁹⁸ The grammar of the verse can be visualized as in Figure 7:⁹⁹

⁹⁷ Bock, *A Theology*, 268-272.

⁹⁸ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1994), 244.

⁹⁹ Created with biblearc.com.



Figure 7. Grammar of Luke 2:32

Seen this way, light is a picture for salvation, just as in its Isaiah context. His mention of both the Gentiles and Israel also calls to mind Isaiah 49, where the servant’s task is to restore Israel and bring salvation to the nations. Commentators have difficulty identifying an Old Testament passage from which καὶ δόξαν λαοῦ σου Ἰσραήλ comes, but Isaiah 60:1-2’s use of light and glory has been suggested.¹⁰⁰ If this is correct, it would seem that Simeon is suggesting the eschatological age has arrived with the birth of Jesus.

The Message of Simeon’s Prophecy

Simeon’s message is clear. As he holds the infant Jesus, he realizes that he is holding the Lord’s Christ. He can now depart from the earth in peace because the Holy Spirit has kept its promise to him. With the arrival of this baby, the eschatological age was beginning. He would bring salvation for all peoples, both Gentiles and Israelites.

¹⁰⁰Pao and Schnabel, 273.

Luke's narrative has something important to say about who Jesus is. When referring to Jesus as $\phi\tilde{\omega}\varsigma$ εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν, we will recall from Isaiah 49:6 that this is what Yahweh was making his servant. Thus, Simeon was announcing that the baby in his arms was the Isaianic servant. What is more, he also implies that this baby is the Christ (Luke 2:26).

If it was unclear to the Old Testament reader that the servant is the Davidic ruler, there is no question for Luke that Jesus fulfilled both roles. There are several other instances where Luke applies both servant language and Davidic language to Jesus: at his baptism (Luke 3:22), at the transfiguration (Luke 9:35), in his teaching after his resurrection (Luke 24:46-47), in Peter's temple sermon (Acts 3:13-18), and in the early believers' prayer (Luke 4:25-30). Peter Mallen notes that this is a surprising juxtaposition. The Messiah was expected to be a triumphant and victorious king (Psalm 2; Isaiah 11:1-5), but the servant was expected to suffer. Luke then transforms the first-century expectations of each role: the Messiah would suffer, and the suffering servant would be victorious.¹⁰¹

Conclusion

In this first citation of Isaiah 49:6, Simeon draws on a rich tapestry of Old Testament themes to announce that the King's chief agent had arrived. He is both the Davidic ruler and the servant, and with his arrival, he will bring salvation and blessing.

¹⁰¹ Peter Mallen, *The Reading and Transformation of Isaiah in Luke-Acts* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2008), 44-45.

In the subsequent chapters of Luke's Gospel, Luke's burden is to show through story how Jesus is both servant and Christ.¹⁰² He recounts Jesus' ministry in Galilee (4:1-9:50), his final journey to Jerusalem (9:51-19:27), and his suffering and vindication as the servant (19:28-24:53). In his ministry, he brought healing and the good news of the kingdom. On his journey to Jerusalem, he tried to prepare the disciples for what was about to happen: that he would suffer, just as the Old Testament Scriptures had foretold. In his death, he completed his servant mission by making an atoning sacrifice. In his resurrection, he triumphed victoriously over sin and death. Now the nations are ready to hear the message of forgiveness.

¹⁰² If the lead agent of Isaiah 55-66 is taken to be a messenger as a third agent, Luke 4 clearly shows that Jesus fulfills this role. If Isaiah 61 is taken to be the servant, Luke 4 strengthens his claim to be the servant.

Chapter 5

The Realm of the Kingdom Expands: Acts 1:8

For a kingdom to be a kingdom, the king needed a land to dwell in with his people. Otherwise, the people were just a bunch of refugees, and that is exactly how the Jewish person viewed himself in the first century. So where would this kingdom be? How would God cleanse and reclaim the land of their kingdom? And how does Luke-Acts transform his readers' expectations of how the kingdom would arrive and where its borders would be? Specifically, how does he use Isaiah 49:6 to expand the expected borders of the kingdom?

In this chapter, I will first explore the Old Testament pattern and promises regarding the land of the kingdom, focusing primarily on Isaiah. Then I will show broadly how Luke incorporates Isaiah's expectations into his writing. Finally, I will zero in on Luke's second use of Isaiah 49:6 to show how it both universalizes the realm of the kingdom and provides the apostles with a new set of marching orders for claiming the land of God's kingdom.

The Realm of the Kingdom in Isaiah

Isaiah takes a "bifocal view"¹⁰³ of the realm of the kingdom. There is, first, a universal lens on the realm of the kingdom. In the throne room scene of Isaiah 6, the angels call out, "The *whole earth* is full of his glory!" (Isa 6:3). Indeed, he is not only king of the earth but also of the entire cosmos (Isa 40:26; 66:1). While Isaiah makes it

¹⁰³ Andrew Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 171.

clear that God is presently reigning and in control of all the heavens and earth, he simultaneously is looking forward to a day when God's reign will become a visible reality (Isa 24:23; 59:15-63:6; 66:18-24).¹⁰⁴

We can then see Jerusalem as a picture of the “particularized realm of God's reign.”¹⁰⁵ This bifocal view has overtones of Genesis 1-2. At creation, God created an ideal world in which he reigned over all, but he placed Adam and Eve in Eden, a specific place where they would serve and worship him. About these opening chapters of the Bible, T.D. Alexander explains, “Interpreted against their ancient Near Eastern background, the opening chapters of Genesis anticipate that God's plans for the earth center on the creation of an extraordinary temple-city where God will dwell in harmony with humanity.”¹⁰⁶ As their family grew, the borders of this particular place would grow until it filled the whole earth.

In the story of Scripture, Jerusalem becomes a new temple-city which takes on special significance as the center of God's kingdom and the location of his reign.¹⁰⁷ In Israel's history, it was one of the final Canaanite strongholds defeated by David early in his reign (2 Samuel 5:6-10). David built his palace there and brought the ark of the covenant to permanently reside in Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6:1-19). Later, Solomon built the temple in Jerusalem, making it a symbol of both the presence of Yahweh on earth and of

¹⁰⁴ Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 174-175.

¹⁰⁵ Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 175.

¹⁰⁶ T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2022), 9.

¹⁰⁷ T. Desmond Alexander, *The City of God and the Goal of Creation*, ed. Dane Ortlund and Miles V. Van Pelt (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 67, 83.

the Davidic king. However, it cannot be understood as a symbol only. It was a real place, a holy city inhabited by sinful humans. In the Old Testament, Jerusalem is at a perpetual crossroads. While she is the center of God's presence and reign, she also stands condemned because his presence is essentially taken for granted by the city's inhabitants.¹⁰⁸ Isaiah bemoans "How the faithful city has become a whore" (Isa 1:21). It has become a city of idolaters, murderers, and thieves, which requires God's judgment (Isa 1:21-25). Jerusalem is no longer as inviolable as she believed herself to be. Not only would she be judged by God, but he would use Babylon to carry out his justice. (Isa 39:5-8). The city founded in Genesis 11 as a rebellion against Yahweh's reign on earth would now rise to conquer Yahweh's city, seeming "to set in reverse God's plan to inhabit the earth."¹⁰⁹

Where Abernethy calls Jerusalem a "microcosm,"¹¹⁰ Jacques Ellul calls her a "first fruits."¹¹¹ We can expect that whatever happens in Jerusalem will happen in the rest of the world. "She is a witness city because she enables us to see now, here on earth, what God is doing in secret and will do openly as soon as his kingdom is realized."¹¹² This is true of God's judgment, which is pictured as a refiner's fire in Isaiah 1:25-26.¹¹³ All that

¹⁰⁸ Jacques Ellul, *The Meaning of the City*, trans. Dennis Pardee (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 94-97.

¹⁰⁹ Alexander, *City of God*, 90-91.

¹¹⁰ Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 177.

¹¹¹ Ellul, 104.

¹¹² Ellul, 104.

¹¹³ Also see Isaiah 48:10.

is impure will be melted away, leaving only what is holy. Jacques Ellul puts it beautifully:

Her presence is there to announce that she is not final, that she is not the standard for all else, that she is not righteousness and truth, but that she is only there to be changed, transformed into that city where righteousness and truth and security dwell. Her presence announces that all that she is must disappear.¹¹⁴

A city is coming to replace her. She will be a strong city where God has set up his salvation (Isa 26:1).

Thus, Jerusalem is also a microcosm of God's grace and restoration. In his closing chapters, Isaiah gives us a picture of a future Jerusalem in which God emerges again as the Creator-God of Genesis 1-2, creating a city full of joy and gladness (Isa 65:17-25). We can expect this picture of a New Jerusalem to represent the entirety of God's future kingdom.

Isaiah expects that after a time of judgment, God will again reign in a holy, purified Jerusalem (Isa 33:21-24) and that the nations will stream into Jerusalem as the capital of the world (Isa 2:2-4).¹¹⁵ But he also paints a contrasting image in which God's servant will take the message of God's reign outward to the nations (Isa 42:6, 43:10-12, 49:6), expanding the borders of God's kingdom much as originally designed in Genesis 1-2.

¹¹⁴ Ellul, 109.

¹¹⁵ Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 177-178.

The Realm of the Kingdom in Luke-Acts

It can be easy for the modern reader of the New Testament to conflate the people of God's kingdom with its geographical place. Indeed, in redemptive history, "the nations" often functions as a metonymy for the people of those nations. Still, Luke pays close attention to geographical details, which should indicate something important about the physical location of God's kingdom. It has been suggested that the geography of Luke-Acts has a chiasmic structure with Jesus' ascension in Jerusalem as the fulcrum of the two volumes. Kenneth Wolfe has organized the chiasm this way:

A Galilee, Luke 4:14-9:50

B Journey to Jerusalem (through Samaria and Judea), Luke 9:51-19:40

C Jerusalem, Luke 19:41-24:49

D Ascension, Luke 24:50-51; Acts 1:1-11

C' Jerusalem, Acts 1:12-8:1a

B' Judea and Samaria, Acts 8:1b-11:18

A' To the ends of the earth, Acts 11:19-28:31¹¹⁶

While this structure is imperfect and leaves some questions, it is helpful in that it points out a general movement toward Jerusalem in Luke 4-24 and a general movement away from Jerusalem in the book of Acts. It also provides some insights into Luke's own bifocal lens on the kingdom. As Isaiah has done, Luke also tells the story of the kingdom through both the particular lens of Jerusalem and her temple and the universal lens of the ends of the earth. Luke is clear from the beginning of his story that God has always

¹¹⁶ Kenneth R. Wolfe, "The Chiasmic Structure of Luke-Acts and Some Implications for Worship," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 22, no. 2 (1980): 67.

intended to offer universal salvation, but as he tells the story, the particular city of Jerusalem takes center stage.

As we have already seen, much of the hope of the Old Testament rests in Jerusalem, the place where God dwells and the Davidic king reigns. Luke gives more attention to Jerusalem and the temple than any other gospel writer.¹¹⁷ Luke's introductory material, which is not included in Wolfe's chiasm, portrays the temple in an optimistic light. It is the location of Zechariah's visitation (Luke 1:5-25) and of Simeon's and Ana's prophecies (Luke 2:25-28). Luke is the only Gospel writer to narrate Jesus' trip to the temple as a boy (Luke 2:41-52).

Jerusalem is the place where the Jews rightly waited for salvation. In Luke's telling of the transfiguration, he includes a fact unique to his account. Luke 9:31 tells us that the topic Jesus discussed with Moses and Elijah was his "departure (τὴν ἔξοδον) which he was about to accomplish (πληροῦν) in Jerusalem." Luke's project aims to demonstrate that Jesus is the fulfillment or accomplishment of the Old Testament promises (see Luke 1:1). Here, Luke says the promises will be fulfilled in Jerusalem through his ἔξοδος, which is best understood as "the entire death-parousia career of Jesus."¹¹⁸ Luke envisions this career as a new exodus.

But Jerusalem takes a disappointing turn in Luke's gospel. Jesus laments over her rejection of the prophets and her rejection of his salvation plan. He would protect her as promised in Isaiah 31:5, but she was not willing (Luke 11:33-35). A second time, Jesus

¹¹⁷ Blomberg, Craig L. 2018. *A New Testament Theology*. Waco: Baylor University Press, 438.

¹¹⁸ Bock, *Luke*, 870.

laments over Jerusalem and foretells her destruction (Luke 19:41-44). His pronouncement sounds like a reversal of Isaiah's vision in Isaiah 2:2-5. In Isaiah's vision, Yahweh will be established on the highest mountain in Zion, but in Jesus' prediction, every stone in Zion will be torn to the ground. Luke 21 records an additional foretelling of the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem, making her continual role in salvation history impossible to sustain.

P. W. L. Walker summarizes Jerusalem's role in the gospels well:

This becomes a key window through which to perceive Jerusalem from the standpoint of Jesus: the city which missed its moment of destiny; the city prepared by God to welcome his presence but which now rejects him who embodies that presence; in sum, the 'city of God' which does not recognize its visitation by the Son of God.¹¹⁹

Despite her rejection, Jesus made it his aim to get to Jerusalem. He set his face toward her (Luke 9:51, 53; cf. Isaiah 50:7). Jerusalem is indeed the place where Jesus accomplishes what he set out to do, as foretold by Isaiah. Here he dies, rises, and ascends to heaven. As noted earlier, Jesus' ascension is the center point for Luke's two volumes. It is how the Gospel of Luke ends (Luke 24:51) and how Acts begins (Acts 1:10-11). It is by his ascension that the place of God's kingdom gains a universal focus. When Jesus stood trial before Pilate, the issue was whether Jesus claimed to be King of the Jews (Luke 23:3; see also 23:37-38), but in the ascension and session, Jesus claimed kingly authority, not only over the Jews in Jerusalem, but over the entire cosmos. Patrick Schreiner explains, "Certainly, Jesus had authority on the earth: he forgave sins and

¹¹⁹ P. W. L. Walker, "Jerusalem," in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology: Exploring the Unity & Diversity of Scripture*, edited by T. D. Alexander and Brian S. Rosner, 590-592. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 200), 591.

overpowered demonic forces. But at his ascent, Jesus received power over the whole cosmos and was installed as the king of both heaven and earth.”¹²⁰ Now that Jesus’ universal, cosmic reign is established, Luke’s geography moves outward from Jerusalem toward the ends of the earth.¹²¹ Jesus’ words in Acts 1:8 are programmatic for this movement as we see the apostles witness in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-8:1), then Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1b-11:18), and finally to the end of the earth (Acts 11:19-28:31).

Jesus instructed his disciples to wait in Jerusalem. This choice was not arbitrary, for Jerusalem was to be the stage for one final scene in the redemption drama, the arrival of the Holy Spirit.¹²² In the opening lines of his Pentecost sermon, Peter announces that the “last days” have arrived (Acts 2:17). These are the days of Isaiah’s vision (Isa 2:1-4), the days when the nations flow into the presence of Yahweh, and the days when the word of Yahweh will go forth from Jerusalem.¹²³

Jews and Jewish converts from across the diaspora who had gathered in Jerusalem for Pentecost heard Peter’s sermon. The table of nations represented in Acts 2:9-11, geographically form a circle around Jerusalem, placing her in the center of God’s salvation story on the first day of the last days (Acts 2:17; Isa 2:2-5). But in Acts 8:1,

¹²⁰ Patrick Schreiner, *The Ascension of Christ: Recovering a Neglected Doctrine*, ed. Michael Bird (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 89.

¹²¹ Ben Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 69-71.

¹²² The Holy Spirit’s empowerment is a closely related theme to the themes I am exploring in this paper. The Spirit was promised by Isaiah to rest on Immanuel (Isa 11:2), on the servant (Isa 42:1), on the Lord’s Messenger (Isa 61:1), and on all his people (Isa 59:21). By way of fulfillment the Holy Spirit empowers the birth of Immanuel (Luke 1:17); he gave Simeon his prophecy (Luke 2:25-26); he rested on Jesus at his baptism and the voice from heaven announced him to be the servant (Luke 4:14); he empowered the apostles’ mission (Acts 1:8), and he is poured out on flesh (Acts 2:17). Sadly, the scope of this paper does not allow for further investigation on this theme or its relationship to the story of God’s kingdom.

¹²³ I. Howard Marshall, “Acts,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, ed. G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing Group, 2007), 534.

Jerusalem fails one final time. The church experienced such severe persecution in Jerusalem that the believers were forced to seek refuge in Judea and Samaria, bringing the message of the gospel with them. The story of Acts will soon turn its attention away from Jerusalem and outward to witness the spread of salvation to the ends of the earth. Then, after Acts, the geographical land motif essentially disappears from New Testament writings because of its universality.¹²⁴

The Realm of the Kingdom in Acts 1:8

Jesus' Commission in Context

Luke's second usage of Isaiah 49:6 comes in the first chapter of Acts. Since we are reading Luke and Acts in unity, it will be helpful to briefly examine the end of Luke's gospel to set the context for Acts 1.

After Jesus had risen from the dead, he appeared to the eleven remaining disciples in Jerusalem. Jesus' words in Luke 24:44 conclude the gospel by confirming that Luke had done what he set out to do in Luke 1:1. His task was to put together an orderly account of what had been accomplished (*πεπληροφορημένων*), and in his final words, Jesus states that all that was written about him in the Law of Moses, Prophets, and Psalms must be fulfilled (*πληρωθῆναι*). In verses 46-47, Jesus explains what exactly was written in the Old Testament Scriptures. For our study, the most important item on this list is that "forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from

¹²⁴ Michael D. Williams, *Far as the Curse Is Found: The Covenant Story of Redemption* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2005), 257.

Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). Then he ascended to heaven. Acts 1 retells this story with a few more details.

Translation of Acts 1:1-8

[1] In the first volume,¹²⁵ O Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach [2] until the day when he was taken up, after giving orders to the apostles through the Holy Spirit whom he had chosen. [3] To these also he presented himself alive after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them through forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.

[4] And while gathering together [with them], he commanded them not to leave Jerusalem but to wait for the promise of the Father, which [he said], “You have heard from me. [5] For John, on one hand,¹²⁶ baptized with water, but, on the other hand, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit, not many days from this day.”

[6] So, on one hand,¹²⁷ when they had come together, they were asking him, saying, “Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”

[7] But he, on the other hand, said to them, “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in place by his own authority. [8] But you will

¹²⁵ BDAG, “λόγος.”

¹²⁶ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 57. The μὲν... δὲ construction can be translated to show contrast.

¹²⁷ Bock, *Acts*, 61. The μὲν... δὲ construction appears again in verses 6-7, demonstrating a contrast between the disciples’ question and Jesus’ answer.

receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and as far as¹²⁸ the end of the earth.”¹²⁹

[9]And after he said these things, he was lifted up as they were watching, and a cloud received him out of their sight. [10] And while they were staring into heaven as we went, behold, two men were standing by them in white clothing. [11] And they said to them, “Men of Galilee, why are you standing, looking into heaven? This Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come in just the same way as you watched him go into heaven.”

The Apostles' Commissioning

Acts 1:6: The Apostles' Question

For forty days, Jesus had been speaking about the kingdom of God. Then he told the apostles that in a few days they would be baptized with the Spirit. This is exciting news for them because the prophets promised that the pouring out of the Spirit would happen when Israel returned to the land (Isa 32:15; 44:3).

The apostles ask Jesus whether this is the time he will restore (ἀποκαθίστημι) the kingdom to Israel. The word Luke uses here for “restore” occurs only one other time in Luke’s writing (Luke 6:10), where Jesus restored (ἀπεκατεστάθη) a man’s withered hand. This word means “to change to an earlier good state or condition,” and it is often used in medicine as a term for a cure.¹³⁰ The word is used in the LXX as a promise that Israel

¹²⁸ Bock, *Acts*, 61.

¹²⁹ ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς is a word-for-word citation from LXX Isaiah 49:6.

¹³⁰ BDAG, ἀποκαθίστημι.

will be restored to what she used to be (Jer 16:15; 23:8; 24:6; Hos 11:11). In our key text, Isaiah 49:6, Yahweh told the servant that he would restore (שׁוּב) the preserved ones of Israel. The Hebrew word שׁוּב is translated in the LXX as ἀποκαθίστημι in several texts, giving it a similar connotation.

C. K. Barrett says that the apostles are asking about “the wide dominion that [Israel] enjoyed in the time of David.”¹³¹ They are anticipating that the nation and the land of Israel will be restored as foretold by the prophets. About Israel’s land, N. T.

Wright says:

The virtual absence of the Land as a major theme in the New Testament has led most New Testament scholarship to bypass it as a topic for full discussion. But if we are to understand first-century Judaism, we must rank Land along with Temple and Torah, as one of the major symbols. It was YHWH’s Land, given unalienably to Israel... It was the place where, and the means through which, YHWH gave to his covenant people the blessings he had promised them, which were all summed up in the many-sided evocative word *shalom*, peace. It was the new Eden, the garden of YHWH, the home of true humanity. And it was now being laid to waste.¹³²

The apostles hoped that, with the coming of the Spirit, the kingdom of Israel would be restored to its role as the home of true humanity. For this to happen in their minds, “control and cleansing were what was required.”¹³³

¹³¹ C. K. Barrett, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, vol. 1, *Preliminary Introduction and Commentary on Acts I–XIV*, International Critical Commentary (London: T&T Clark, 2004), 77.

¹³² N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 226-227.

¹³³ N. T. Wright, 227.

Acts 1:7-8: Jesus' Answer

Commentators disagree whether Jesus' words in Acts 1:7-8 are in response to the apostles' question, or if he ignored the question altogether. The $\mu\epsilon\nu\dots\delta\epsilon$ particles, which are usually left untranslated, can help us here. Bock suggests that the $\mu\epsilon\nu\dots\delta\epsilon$ construction implies that the question and the response are related and that they stand in contrast to one another.¹³⁴ Jesus answer does not deny the coming of the kingdom; instead, it expands their idea of its location. It will extend from Jerusalem, then to Judea and Samaria, and finally to the end of the earth. Again, N. T. Wright explains the Jewish conceptualization of the land:

Jerusalem was obviously the major focal point of this Land. But the holiness of the 'holy land' spread out in concentric circles, from the Holy of Holies to the rest of the Temple (itself divided into concentric areas), thence to the rest of Jerusalem, and thence to the whole Land.¹³⁵

Perhaps we could illustrate N. T. Wright's statement this way:¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Bock, *Acts*, 61.

¹³⁵ N. T. Wright, 227.

¹³⁶ Figure created with ChatGPT.

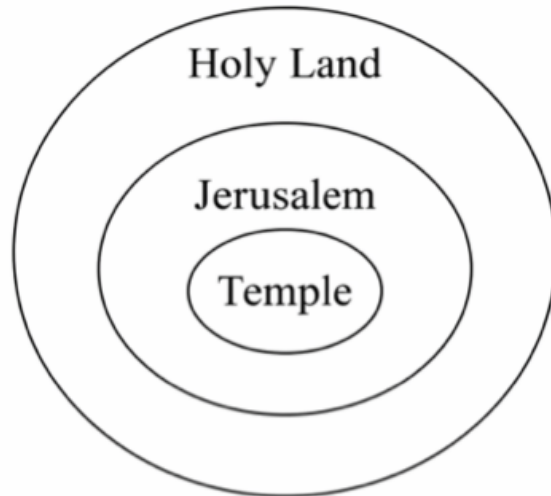


Figure 8. STJ Conceptualization of the Land

This conceptualization follows the same pattern that dates back to the garden in Genesis 1-2. G. K. Beale has illustrated Eden as a temple using concentric circles. Eden, a unique place in the garden where God dwells, is at the center. The rest of the garden lies in the next circle, and the outer world lies in the final circle.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ Figure created with ChatGPT.

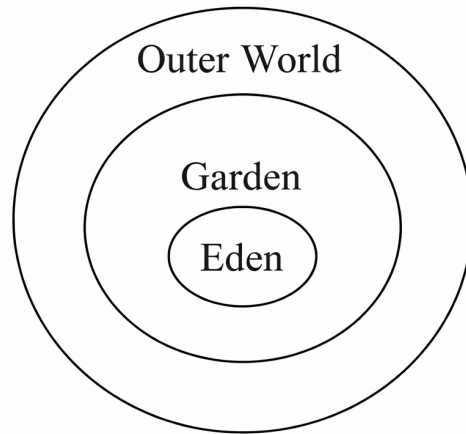


Figure 9. Genesis 1-2 Conceptualization of the Land

In the disciple's worldview, the land ended at the borders of the Davidic kingdom, but in the ideal of the garden, the land had no endpoint. Adam and Eve were to fill the entire earth (Gen 1:28). Jesus answer in Acts 1:8 takes the STJ expectation of the land and places it into the garden ideal. Beginning in Jerusalem, the theological centerpoint of all Israelite expectations, the land of the kingdom would move out in concentric circles until it filled the earth (see Genesis 1:28). The next step in Jesus' plan to build the kingdom was not to restore geopolitical Israel but to expand the borders of his metaphysical reign. The rest of Acts tells the story of this expansion from Jerusalem (Acts 2-7) to Judea and Samaria (Acts 9-12) and to the end of the earth (Acts 13-28). While Luke does not cite Genesis in his commissioning of the apostles in Acts 1:8, he frequently echoes Genesis 1:28 at strategic moments of the story with summary statements. "And the word of God continued to *increase*, and the number of disciples

multiplied greatly in Jerusalem,” (Acts 6:7), and in Judea and Samaria (9:31; 12:24) and in the ends of the earth (13:49; 16:5; 19:20). The kingdom of God is expanding to fill the whole earth as the word of Yahweh goes forth from Jerusalem (Isa 2:3).¹³⁸

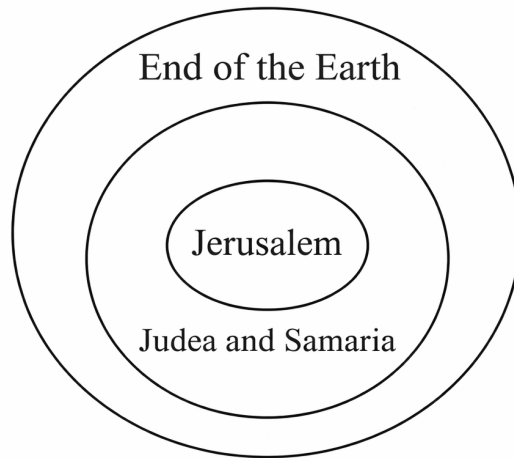


Figure 10. Acts 1:8 Conceptualization of the Land

The Commission and the Servant’s New Identity

In his instructions for building the kingdom, Jesus alluded to Isaiah 49:6, making clear that the plan is to go to the “end of the earth.” In light of the disciples’ question, one can almost hear Isaiah 49:6 in its entirety as a response.

The disciples asked, “Lord, is it at this time you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”

¹³⁸ Marshall, 526. Figure created with ChatGPT.

And in Jesus' response, the student of Isaiah hears, "No, is it too light a thing that you should be my servant to restore Israel. I have something much bigger in store. I am going to appoint you as a light to the nations that my salvation may reach the end of the earth."

In Isaiah's Servant Song, these words are spoken by Yahweh to the servant, and we have already seen that Luke has clearly established that Jesus is the Isaianic servant. But here in Acts, Jesus is speaking Yahweh's words to the disciples. It seems then that just as Yahweh commissioned his individual servant in Isaiah 49:6, Jesus is now commissioning a community of servants to take over his mission.¹³⁹ This seems consistent with the pattern from Isaiah. After the servant made atonement for the sins of his people and was vindicated by Yahweh (Isa 53), he gathered a community of righteous servants (Isa 54).

We saw Luke weave together intricate echoes to present Jesus as the servant in his Gospel. Now, Holly Beers suggests that he has woven a similar pattern of echoes to show that Jesus has commissioned his apostles to serve him. Table 3 summarizes her observations.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹ Holly Beers, *The Followers of Jesus as the "Servant": Luke's Model from Isaiah for the Disciples in Luke-Acts* (London: T&T Clark, 2015), 131-133.

¹⁴⁰ Beers, 128-131.

Table 3: Echoes of Isaiah in Acts 1-2

	Luke/Acts	LXX
Just as Yaheweh chose his servant, Jesus chose his apostles.	Acts 1:2 - until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen (ἐξελέξατο).	Isaiah 49:7 - Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nation, the servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you (ἐξελεξάμην)."

Table 3: Echoes of Isaiah in Acts 1-2

	Luke/Acts	LXX
<p>Yahweh tells his servant Israel that they are his witnesses just as Jesus called his apostles his witnesses.</p> <p>Peter takes up this role quickly. At the end of the Pentecost sermon Luke says that he bore witness with many other words.</p>	<p>Luke 24:48 - You are witnesses (μάρτυρες) of these things.</p> <p>Act 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses (μάρτυρες) in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."</p> <p>Act 2:40 - And with many other words he bore (διεμαρτύρατο) witness and continued to exhort them, saying, "Save yourselves from this crooked generation."</p>	<p>Isaiah 43:10 - "You are my witnesses (μάρτυρες)," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen (ἐξελεξάμην), that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me.</p> <p>Isaiah 43:12 - I declared and saved and proclaimed, when there was no strange god among you; and you are my witnesses (μάρτυρες)," declares the LORD, "and I am God.</p> <p>Isaiah 44:8 - Fear not, nor be afraid; have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are my witnesses (μάρτυρες)! Is there a God besides me? There is no Rock; I know not any."</p>
<p>The servant would be anointed with the Spirit as Jesus followers were.</p>	<p>Act 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit (πνεύματος) has come upon (ἐπί) you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."</p>	<p>Isaiah 42:1 - Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit (πνεῦμά μου) upon (ἐπί) him; he will bring forth justice to the nations.</p>

These echoes show that Luke draws on Isaiah to demonstrate that Jesus commissions his apostles to take up his servant role, and this should not surprise us, given Isaiah's expectation. Illustration 11 updates the illustration used in Chapter 2. Luke has made it clear that Jesus is the individual servant, and now he commissions many servants to bring salvation to the nations.¹⁴¹

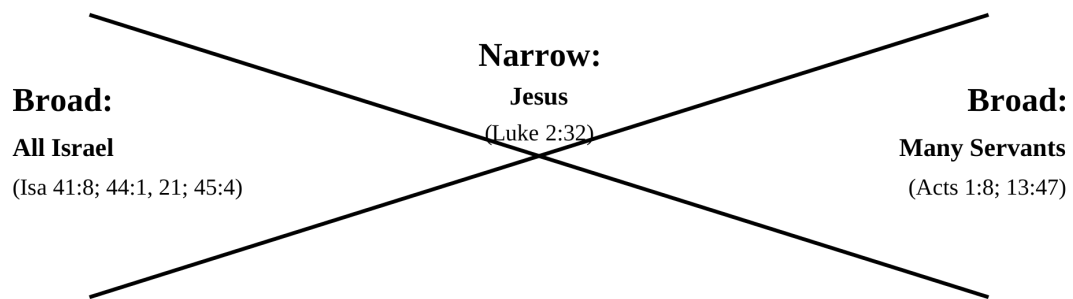


Figure 11. Identity of the Servant in Acts

The Ascension and the Servants' Continued Task

After Jesus spoke these words of commissioning, he did something completely unexpected. He left! He fulfilled the atoning mission of the servant, but now, he leaves the task of carrying the good news about that atonement to his newly commissioned servants. *Where* Jesus went is important. He ascended to the right hand of the Father, where he reigns over the entire earth. Patrick Schreiner writes that Jesus' departure from earth was essential to the mission:

¹⁴¹ Figure created with ChatGPT.

The spread of the gospel *geographically* and the birth of the church are inseparable from Christ's cosmic reign in the heavens. Earthly space was reordered by the heavenly Christ. Christ's reign in the heavens became the primary setting for the New Testament, forming the theological and narrational perspective for the rest of the story. Without the ascension there would be no mission.¹⁴²

Schreiner continues to explain how the ascension marks a confirmation and climax of Christ's threefold office. As a prophet, Jesus received the prophetic Spirit for his ministry on earth, and now, he pours out that Spirit on his followers. His prophetic teaching continues through the preaching of the gospel and the writing of the Scriptures. As a priest, he now continually makes intercession for his people. And as a king, he is now exalted at the Father's side and enthroned over every spiritual being.¹⁴³

We have already seen that both Moses and David have served as types of the servant of Yahweh. Matthew Harmon has observed how each servant of Yahweh also held a threefold office. As the servant of Yahweh, Moses led the people victoriously out of Egypt in a kingly role. Most notably, he was the greatest prophet of the Old Testament. He received the Torah on Sinai and delivered it to the people. In Exodus 33, he intercedes for the people in a priestly role.¹⁴⁴ David was the greatest king of the Old Testament. As he gathered the items for the temple and prepared its construction, he acted in a priestly

¹⁴² Patrick Schreiner, *The Ascension of Christ: Recovering a Neglected Doctrine*, ed. Michael F. Bird (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020), 14.

¹⁴³ Schreiner, 19-98.

¹⁴⁴ Matthew S. Harmon, *The Servant of the Lord and His Servant People: Tracing a Biblical Theme through the Canon*, ed. D. A. Carson (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2021), 43-59.

role; when he received inspiration from Yahweh and recorded his words in the Psalms, he acted in a prophetic role.¹⁴⁵

One must admit that Harmon's argument is somewhat unsatisfying. It is clear that Moses is a prophet and David is a king, but their other roles are much weaker. However, when Jesus arrives as the servant par excellence, he perfectly fills all three roles on earth, and even now fills them at a climactic and cosmic level. Patrick Schreiner says we should have expected this shift:

Readers should have expected a shift in the Messiah's three-fold office, for the Old Testament presents these offices as incomplete and flawed. They were shadows of the substance to come. Key stories told of a day when an ascent would open the floodgates of the prophetic-priestly-kingly blessings.¹⁴⁶

And so it should come as no surprise that as Jesus commissions his servant-witnesses, he departs to take up his threefold office in the heavenly realm and, by pouring out his Spirit, he opens the floodgates of these prophetic-priestly-kingly blessings on earth through his servants.

Conclusion

Luke's second use of Isaiah 49:6 transforms the apostles' expectations about the location of God's kingdom. The good news of Jesus' atonement and vindication was not meant to be limited to the boundaries of the kingdom of Israel. It was meant to explode outward from Jerusalem to the end of the earth. As Jesus, the servant par excellence,

¹⁴⁵ Harmon, 79-108.

¹⁴⁶ Schreiner, 116.

ascended to heaven, he assumed his cosmic offices as prophet, priest, and king, and he commissioned his apostles as his servants to continue his mission. To do that, the Spirit would empower them to assume the earthly offices of prophets, priests, and kings, so that they may flood the entire earth with his blessings. Throughout the book of Acts, apostles and others take on this role to transform the earth with the gospel.

Chapter 6

People of the King Transform: Acts 13:47

Every kingdom must have a people living in the land who are loyal to their king. From the time of Abraham's call, we see a particular focus on the people of Israel, but always with a universal goal (Gen 12:1-3; Exod 19:6; Deut 4:4-6). Isaiah anticipates this universal people, and Luke enters the story at a time when the universal goal becomes the main focus.

In this chapter, after exploring Isaiah's anticipation of a worldwide community of God's people, I will look at Luke's themes of the people of God's kingdom. Then we will look at Luke's final citation of Isaiah 49:6 to show how it transforms the expectations of who is included in the people of God.

The People of the King in Isaiah

The people of the kingdom are closely related to its realm. In the early chapters of Isaiah, we see an unrighteous people who need purification (Isa 1:2-25). They are blind and deaf to God's message (Isa 6:9-10). By the end of the book, God has brought righteousness for the people and enabled them to live obediently. A new community is formed in Isaiah 56-66. This community comprises righteous Israelite and foreign servants of God (Isa 56:6). Indeed, the kingdom Isaiah envisions is for all peoples. The book begins and ends with a focus on people from every nation (Isa 2:2-4; 66:18-19) joining the kingdom.

The People of the Kingdom in Luke-Acts

In that final section of Isaiah, King Yahweh remains high and lifted up, just like in Isaiah 6, but now he dwells with the lowly (Isa 57:15). Luke's opening birth narratives create a similar expectation now that Jesus has come. In Mary's song, she sings "he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate" (Luke 1:52). Throughout the book of Luke we see the lowly lifted up in the ministry of Jesus: lepers (Luke 5:12-16), paralytics (Luke 5:17-25), tax collectors (Luke 5:27-32), women (Luke 8:1-3). Jesus welcomes people from every social status.

In Acts, Luke focuses on the nations. In his story, we see Jews in Jerusalem repent and believe by the thousands (Acts 2:41). Hellenists and Hebrews come together to form a new community of God (Acts 6:1-7). And then we see "almost Jews" come to faith in Jesus. Samaritans and an Ethiopian proselyte who would have been banned from the temple because he is a eunuch are accepted by Jesus (Acts 8:26-40). Even the greatest persecutor of the church is received into this community (Acts 9:1-22). In chapter 13, the mission to the nations begins, and people from all over the earth join the community of God's people.

The People of the Kingdom in Acts 13:47

Context of Acts 13:47

In Acts 2-12, the apostles have taken up their role as servants and witnesses from Jerusalem, through Judea, and into Samaria, in obedience to Jesus' commission in Acts 1:8. Chapter 13 marks a major transition point in the book of Acts. The story now shifts

from Peter to Paul's ministry. In Acts 13, Paul departs on his first missionary journey. The passage of our study comes at the end of Paul's sermon in the synagogue in Antioch of Pisidia. It is the longest sermon recorded in the book of Acts,¹⁴⁷ and it has many close parallels to Peter's Pentecost sermon. It is also replete with the Old Testament story, Old Testament citations, and Isaianic overtones.

The Story of the Kingdom in Paul's Sermon

In Chapter 1, we used a triangle diagram to tell the story of the kingdom. Paul's sermon begins by essentially retelling this story. Luke often summarizes Paul's teaching by simply saying that he proclaimed the kingdom (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). This first recorded sermon of Paul's likely serves as a pattern for all of his kingdom proclamation, and therefore, it is a right impulse to look for kingdom themes in the sermon at Antioch of Pisidia. The themes that have already appeared on the triangle diagrams of the kingdom also appear in Paul's sermon and are summarized below:

God as King

God is the major actor in the story. He chose the patriarchs (v. 17), made the people great in Egypt, led them out of Egypt (v. 18), gave the people their land (v. 19), gave the people judges (v. 20), gave Saul as king (v. 21), removed Saul (v. 22), raised up David as king (v. 22), and brought to Israel a Savior (v. 23). God is the sovereign king who is orchestrating the entire story.

¹⁴⁷ Stephen's speech in Acts 7 is longer, but is generally not considered a sermon.

Promised Land

In verse 19, Paul situates this story in the promised land, where the people received it as an inheritance. Jesus arrived in Israel as promised by the prophets (v. 23). Paul emphasizes Jerusalem's failure. The people of Jerusalem did not recognize Jesus or understand the prophets. The irony is that Jerusalem's rejection of Jesus actually fulfilled the prophets (v. 27).

David

David was raised to be the king. He was a man after God's own heart who would do God's will. In ancient Israel's political system, blessing came to the people when the king obeyed the Torah. In Paul's understanding, David's role in the story was superseded by the birth of his promised offspring, Jesus (vs. 22-23).

Blessing

The story of Jesus brings blessing to all who believe through the forgiveness of sins. This key development in the story has already been recorded in the book of Acts in the speeches of Peter, Stephen, and Philip, but Luke records it again through the words of Paul. No longer will blessing come through the Torah. By Jesus' work, "everyone who believes is freed (δικαιωθῆναι) from everything from which you could not be freed (δικαιοῦται) by the law of Moses" (vs. 38-39). The word for *freed* speaks of justification or being made righteous.¹⁴⁸ This is reminiscent of Isaiah's theme of righteousness. The

¹⁴⁸ See Schnabel, 583.

unrighteous people in Isaiah 1 became righteous because of all that the Lord would accomplish.

The people

People receive special emphasis in the sermon. This prepares the reader for the shift from ‘people’ to ‘peoples’ in verse 47. Paul addresses his audience as men of Israel (v. 16), brothers (v. 26, 38), sons of the family of Abraham (v. 26). John the Baptist’s message of repentance was for the people of Israel (v. 24). The story Paul tells is meant to be a “word of encouragement” (v. 14). It is a worldview story meant to shape the identity, beliefs, and behaviors of its listeners.¹⁴⁹ He connects the people into the ancient story with these words: “what God promised to the fathers, this he has fulfilled to us, their children” (vs. 32-33).¹⁵⁰ He ends the sermon with a warning from Habakkuk. Jesus offers forgiveness of sins to everyone who believes (vs. 38-39), but Paul knows it is unlikely that his audience will believe, even though he told them (vs. 40-41).

Paul’s Use of Isaiah 55:3

Paul’s citation of Isaiah 55:3 in Acts 13:34 may prepare us for his citation of Isaiah 49:6. There is a fair amount of debate among commentators as to whether or not Isaiah 55:3 should be understood as a messianic prophecy.¹⁵¹ If it is a messianic prophecy, the verse promises that God will make a new covenant through a Davidic ruler.

¹⁴⁹ Witherington, *Acts*, 406-407

¹⁵⁰ It should be observed that Paul also addressed “those among you who fear God,” most likely addressing Jewish converts attending synagogue.

¹⁵¹ Bock, Oswalt, and Moyter see it as messianic.

The other possibility is that God is extending the covenant he made with David to all people.¹⁵² The main reason to support this second reading is that in the phrase, “I will make with you (אִתְּךָ) an everlasting covenant,” the prepositional phrase “with you” is plural, referring to the people rather than a messianic figure. Another reason is that, in verses 4-5, he seems to paint a picture in which the people of Israel represent God’s glory to the nations. With this reading, the verse is “envisioning how the future glory of God’s people under an everlasting covenant will be akin to David’s earlier international renown.”¹⁵³ It seems that the blessing mediated through David to the people of Israel will now be mediated through Israel to the nations.¹⁵⁴ This calls to mind what we saw in Chapter 1: God’s plan for the kingdom. It was always God’s intent to bless the nations through David and the people of Israel, as Illustration 3 reminds us again:

¹⁵² Bruggeman (159), Abernethy (156-157) and Williamson (113-131) see it this way

¹⁵³ Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 157.

¹⁵⁴ See Williamson’s discussion, 113-131.

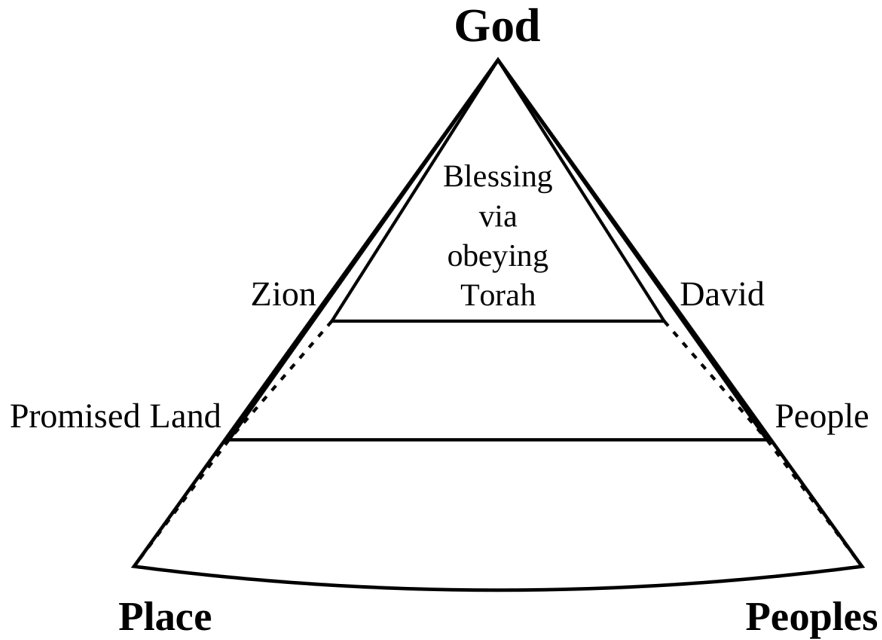


Figure 12. Kingdom of God through David

When read in the context of Paul’s sermon, the message is that “the faithfulness of God to David will continue to be shown to a later generation by God’s raising up of Jesus to be the author of forgiveness.”¹⁵⁵ The people who had seen the risen Jesus were now serving as his witnesses to the people (Acts 13:31), just as envisioned in Isaiah 55:3-5. With this interpretation, we can see that the message of Isaiah 55:3 is closely connected to Isaiah 49:6,¹⁵⁶ and it should not surprise the reader to see the Isaiah 49:6 citation a few verses later.

¹⁵⁵ Marshall, 586

¹⁵⁶ Pao notes that Acts 13:47 a near exact quotation from the LXX, with the exception that the phrase εις διαθήκην γένους has been removed. This seems to be a scribal addition to the MT, but it perhaps strengthens the connection between Isaiah 49:6 and 55:3. Pao, 96-97.

Translation of Acts 13:44-49

[44] And the next Sabbath, nearly all the city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. [45] But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with zeal, and they were speaking against what was being spoken by Paul by using slander.

[46] Paul and Barnabas were boldly speaking, and they said, “It was necessary that the word of God be first spoken to you. Since you all are rejecting it and judging yourselves not worthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the nations. [47] For thus the Lord has commanded us, ‘I have appointed you as a light for the nations, in order that you might bring salvation to the end of the earth.’”

[48] And when [the people from] the nations heard, they were rejoicing and glorifying the word of the Lord, and as many as had been ordained to eternal life believed. [49] And the word of the Lord was being spread through the whole region.

Exegesis of Acts 13:44-49

At the invitation of the people, Paul and Barnabas returned to the synagogue the following Sabbath. They wanted to hear the word of the Lord. This reminds us again of Isaiah 2:2-5. Acts is the story of Isaiah’s latter days; it traces the trajectory of the word of the Lord going forth from Jerusalem outward to the world.¹⁵⁷ But the Jews in Pisidian Antioch did not heed Paul’s warning. It is unclear what caused their zeal. They may have been jealous of the missionaries’ success. Possibly, they were zealous for the law and the ways of the old covenant,¹⁵⁸ so they contradicted or spoke against the word of the Lord,

¹⁵⁷ Marshall, 526.

¹⁵⁸ Bock, 462-463; Schnabel, 586-587.

which Paul was speaking. The heartbreak of this passage is that, in Isaiah 2, the jealousy the Jews felt when the nations turned to Yahweh was supposed to provoke them to walk in the light of the Lord (Isa 2:5), but instead the Jews in Antioch Pisidia were turning away from the Lord.¹⁵⁹ Isaiah's vision seems to be in jeopardy. How can the word of the Lord go forth from Jerusalem if the Jews themselves speak against it? Who will respond to the call to walk in God's light, to be in his presence?

In the face of Jewish rejection, Paul cites Isaiah 49:6 and turns his attention to the nations. When approaching Acts 13, the reader may initially be struck that Paul and Barnabas would take a verse from about Isaiah's servant and apply the role to themselves. Wasn't it Jesus who fulfilled the role of the Isaianic Servant? How can Paul and Barnabas take over this role now? But as we saw in the previous chapter, this should not surprise us. Luke seems to have already prepared us for this shift.

A fuller understanding of the servant's role in Isaiah will help gain even more clarity into these questions. In his study on the lead agents of Isaiah, Andrew Abernethy explains why he has selected the term "lead agents:"

The term 'agent' describes how these figures are in the service of one another, namely King YHWH. Furthermore, the use of 'lead' as a qualifier acknowledges that all of God's people and even foreign nations can to some extent be God's agents, though there are some select figures who rise to the fore by taking on a more prominent role of agency in God's Kingdom.¹⁶⁰

Abernethy sees that there are others besides these lead agents who are used to accomplish God's plan. We saw in chapter 2 that in Isaiah 40-55, the servant sometimes

¹⁵⁹ Oswalt, 118.

¹⁶⁰ Abernethy, *The Book of Isaiah*, 120.

refers to all Israel and sometimes refers to an individual. We also saw that in Isaiah 56-66, there are multiple servants. Christopher Wright summarizes that Jesus fulfilled Israel's role as servant to the nations.¹⁶¹ By doing *for* Israel what Israel was unable to do, Jesus has now restored Israel and enabled her to take up her rightful task as the servant of God who brings the gospel to the nations.

But even though Paul and Barnabas take up this task to be the Lord's witnesses to the nations, many Jews once again rejected this role. The Gentiles' response to hearing the word seems to provide an additional layer of justification to Paul's choice. When they heard the word of the Lord, they rejoiced. In continuity with the original vision for creation (Gen 1:27-28) and with Isaiah's vision for the last days (Isa 2:2-4), the word of the Lord spread throughout the region.

Conclusion

In Acts 13, Luke uses Isaiah 49:6 to expand the Israelite understanding of which people belong to God's kingdom. I would suggest three reasons why the people are the focus of this citation. First, in the sermon that immediately precedes the Isaiah 49:6 citation, Paul keeps a constant focus on the people of Israel in his audience. He makes eight references to the people of Israel. In contrast, the land and the king each receive two references. The previous rejection of Jesus by the Jews in Israel (Acts 13:27) and Paul's warning from Habakuk (Acts 13:41) seem to prepare us for the rejection by the diaspora Jews as well. We are therefore not surprised when Paul's message goes to the nations, for

¹⁶¹ Wright, *Knowing Jesus*, 166-167.

this message must go out. Second, the forgiveness and righteousness Jesus offers are the climax of Paul's sermon. The Jews should have rejoiced as the Gentiles did in verse 48. However, while this was the first time the message of Jesus' salvation was being preached outside of Palestine, it is not new to Luke's story. This sermon is simply a beautiful recapitulation of what the reader read multiple times in previous chapters. What is new to the story is the turn to the nations. At this point in the narrative, the final phase of the Acts 1:8 program is decisively put into motion. Finally, the Gentiles' response moves the story forward. Even though some Jews rejected their Savior, redemptive history cannot be stopped. The story of Salvation must be shared with all who are appointed to eternal life.

Chapter 7

Luke's Final Words as Conclusion

Luke has bookended Paul's mission to the Gentiles with two Isaianic citations. Between these two citations, Paul has actively taken the message of the gospel to many nations. The reader becomes invested in his story, falls in love with this character, and roots for his success. But in the final chapter, he sits in house arrest in Rome. The casual reader may find Luke's ending unsatisfying. We want to know what happens to Paul, but Luke was never writing a story about Paul. Luke was writing a story about a new age of salvation which Isaiah envisioned centuries earlier, and so it is fitting that he ends with a final citation from Isaiah.

Paul is visited by a large number of Jews and tries to convince them about Jesus from the Old Testament. This final scene in Acts mirrors the final scene in Luke, where Jesus opened the disciples' minds to understand how the Old Testament proved he was the Christ. But the scene in Acts departs sharply from the one in Luke 24. The Jews in Rome did not believe, and so, Isaiah is quoted one more time from Isaiah 6:9-10.

The book of Isaiah starts with the statement that God's people will be blind, deaf, and without understanding. But there is hope all throughout the book of Isaiah. Their eyes were supposed to see their king coming in all his beauty (Isa 33:17). They were supposed to see Jerusalem become an immovable tent (Isa 33:20). Yahweh commissioned the

servant to open blind eyes (Isa 42:7), to be a light (Isa 49:6) so that God's people could see these things.

But as the book of Acts closes, we find the Jews are just as blind as they were in the beginning of Isaiah. In a final statement of hope, Paul says, "Therefore let it be known to you that this salvation (σωτήριόν) of God has been sent to the Gentiles; they will listen." Here, Luke closes Acts with the same unusual neuter form of σωτήριόν from Simeon's prophecy, turning the readers' minds again to Isaiah 40:5. "All flesh shall see salvation" (ὄψεται πᾶσα σὰρξ τὸ σωτήριον). All flesh will listen to the cry that their warfare is ended, their iniquity is pardoned (Isa 40:2). Isaiah would blind the eyes of the people, but the servant would open the eyes of the nations.

In this thesis, we have seen that God's vision for his kingdom becomes clearer with Luke's three citations of Isaiah 49:6, as was illustrated in Chapter 1:

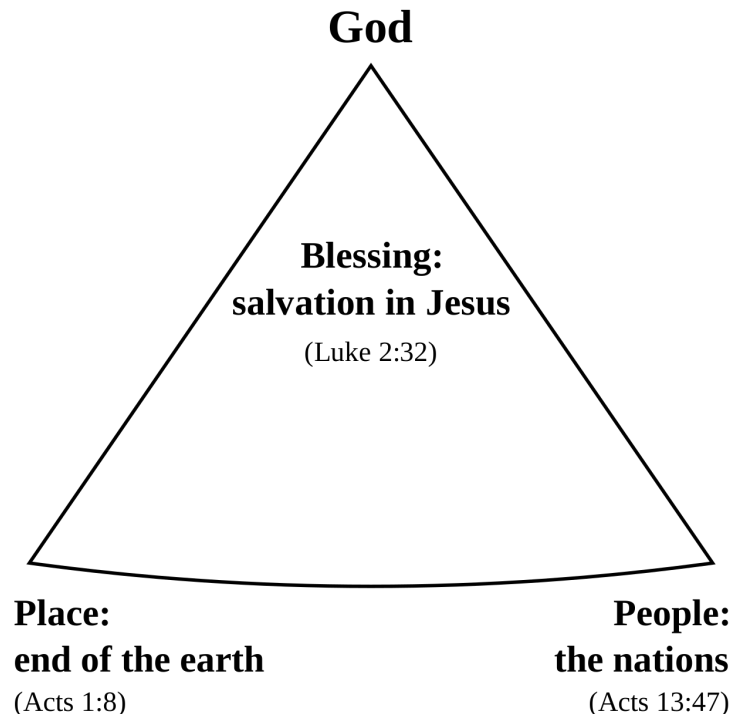


Figure 13. Kingdom of God through Luke’s Use of Isaiah 49:6

Yahweh commissioned a servant to restore Jacob and bring light to the nations (Isa 49:6), and we have seen Luke expand this commission along with his understanding of the kingdom. Simeon announced the servant’s arrival and made clear that this servant is also the Christ who came to bring blessing to the nations. Before taking his post in the heavens, Jesus commissioned a community of servants to take the good news of salvation to the ends of the earth, and Paul took up that commission to invite people from all nations into God’s kingdom.

In the final verses of Acts, Paul is living at the ends of the earth, but there is still farther to go. He is welcoming anyone who comes to him, but still more nations must hear. He is teaching about the Lord Jesus, who came as the agent of the king to be the source of blessing, who has now been crowned king of the cosmos. This is the

proclamation of the kingdom, and Luke gives hope that this proclamation will continue without hindrance through the mouths of Jesus' servants until he returns. Luke has told a worldview story intended to shape his readers' understanding of who they are and the times in which they live. He intends for his readers to listen to the proclamation of the kingdom, respond to the invitation, and take up their place in the kingdom's mission until the salvation Isaiah foresaw reaches the ends of the earth and the kingdom of God is fully revealed.

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