

look to the forces of nature ("all the ends of the earth") for salvation, since nature is a creature of God, subordinate to his authority.

Amos 5:8: "He who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning, and darkens the day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea, and pours them out upon the surface of the earth, the Lord [Yahweh] is his name."

Isaiah: This Lord of the universe, "the Holy One of Israel," is our only Redeemer, the only true God – "there is no other."

A revival of the teaching of Moses: "Hear O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Dt 6:4-5).

The gods of paganism are false deities. From a Christian point of view, they are either deluding figments of the fallen human imagination or demons in the service of Satan. In either case, polytheism is a radical and dangerous departure from the theology of the prophets and of Holy Scripture in its entirety.

b. The Righteousness of God and the Meaning of Human History.

The Lord of the universe is also the Lord of history, "a God of justice who stands within history, and who will vindicate his truth and punish the cruel and rebellious nations of the world."

The prophets consistently explained the woes of Israel and of the world in general as evils following from the freely willed sins of men and permitted by God as retribution for those sins (e.g., see Am 1-2). The sufferings of ancient Israel, in particular, were interpreted as divinely ordained punishments for the transgressions of the chosen people against their God.

Amos 2:4-16: Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Judah, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they have rejected the law of the LORD, and have not kept his statutes, but their lies have led them astray, after which their fathers walked. So I will send a fire upon Judah, and it shall devour the strongholds of Jerusalem." Thus says the LORD: "For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment; because they sell the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes – they that trample the head of the afflicted; a man and his father go in to the same maiden, so that my holy name is profaned; they lay themselves down beside every altar upon garments taken in pledge; and in the house of their God they drink the wine of those who have been fined.

"Yet I destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and who was as strong as the oaks; I destroyed his fruit above, and his roots beneath. Also I brought you up out of the land of Egypt, and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. And I raised up some of your sons for prophets, and some of your young men for Nazirites. Is it not indeed so, O people of Israel?" says the LORD. "But you made the Nazirites drink wine, and commanded the prophets, saying, 'You shall not prophesy.' "Behold, I will press you down in your place, as a cart full of sheaves presses down. Flight shall perish from the swift, and the strong shall not retain his

strength, nor shall the mighty save his life; he who handles the bow shall not stand, and he who is swift of foot shall not save himself, nor shall he who rides the horse save his life; and he who is stout of heart among the mighty shall flee away naked in that day," says the LORD.

The sin of idolatry – the worship of false gods – the most grievous of Israel's many violations of the divine law.

Hosea compares the idolatry of the nation to the adultery of a faithless wife:

Hosea 2:1-7: Say to your brethren, 'My people,' and to your sisters, 'Mercy is shown.' 'Bring charges against your mother, bring charges; for she is not My wife, nor am I her Husband! Let her put away her harlotries from her sight, and her adulteries from between her breasts; Lest I strip her naked and expose her, as in the day she was born, and make her like a wilderness, and set her like a dry land, and slay her with thirst. "I will not have mercy on her children, for they are the children of harlotry. For their mother has played the harlot; she who conceived them has done shamefully. For she said, 'I will go after my lovers [the gods of paganism], who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drink.' Therefore, behold, I will hedge up your way with thorns, and wall her in, so that she cannot find her paths. She will chase her lovers [the false gods], but not overtake them; yes, she will seek them, but not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go and return to my first husband [God], for then it was better for me than now.'"

Amos interprets the sufferings of Israel as divine punishments aimed at motivating a sinful nation to return to its Lord:

Amos 5:4, 14-15: For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: "Seek me and live.... Seek good, and not evil, that you may live; and so the LORD, the God of hosts, will be with you, as you have said. Hate evil, and love good, and establish justice in the gate; it may be that the LORD, the God of hosts, will be gracious to the remnant of Joseph.

Both Hosea and Amos warned the kingdom of Israel that if the nation remained apostate and unrepentant, she would be swept away into oblivion. The northern kingdom did not heed these warnings and was utterly destroyed by the Assyrians in the late 8th century BC. The history of the northern kingdom is an icon of the dangers of idolatry and of the final destiny of those who fail to love the Lord above all things, to "have no other gods" before him.

The kingdom of Judah also guilty of the sin of idolatry.

Jeremiah 11:9-14, 17: There is revolt among the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. They have turned back to the iniquities of their forefathers, who refused to hear my words; they have gone after other gods to serve them; the house of Israel and the house of Judah have broken my covenant which I made with their fathers. . . . For your gods have become as many as your cities, O Judah; and as many as the streets of Jerusalem are the altars you have set up to shame, altars to burn incense to Baal. Therefore...the Lord of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced evil against you, because of the evil which the house of Israel and the house of Judah have done, provoking me to anger by burning incense to Baal.

The evil pronounced by God against the southern kingdom: the Babylonian captivity of the 6th century BC. However, Judah was not totally annihilated by the Babylonians. The nation survived and lived on to continue its mission in bringing God's message of salvation to the world.

Key points in the prophets' "philosophy of history":

The history of ancient Israel is a revelation of the righteousness of God, of humanity's need for communion with God through faith and obedience, and of the ultimate meaning of human history.

The God of Israel is present in history, and it is through the historical process that he unfolds his plan for the redemption of mankind and the world.

The history of Israel is an object lesson for the whole human community. Unbelief in God, the practice of idolatry, and immorality are the primary causes of the sufferings of Israel and of the human race. Only through repentance and a renewed and obedient faith in God's redemptive purpose will humanity arrive at the intended goal of history: a kingdom of peace and harmony under the lordship of God.

The righteous sufferer again.

The upheavals and sufferings of human history result from the judgment of a righteous God upon a sinful world; but what of the sufferings of those who struggled against their own sinful selves, who avoided idolatry, and who continued to trust in the promises of the Lord? Why do the righteous lovers of God, such as Job, come under the oppression of evil?

The prophets of the OT struggled with this problem and sought to account for the plight of "the righteous sufferer."

Habakkuk on the problem of undeserved suffering (in the tradition of the book of Job):

The suffering of the innocent and the righteous is a testimony to "the cost of discipleship" in a fallen world, and that suffering will be rewarded in the kingdom of God which is to come at the end of days.

God's punishment of Israel and the other nations of the world for their sins takes the form of historical crises and political calamities that inevitably affect the righteous as well as the unrighteous (see Hab 1-2).

However, God will make good the suffering of the innocent in the long run. But this mysterious recompense is hidden beyond the prophet's comprehension in the future:

Habakkuk 2:3-4: For still the vision awaits its time; it hastens to the end – it will not lie. If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay. Behold, he whose soul is not upright in him shall fail [on the day of judgment], but the righteous shall live by his faith.

This analysis of the problem of the righteous sufferer clearly implies the reality of life after death. For how will the righteous who have died

throughout the ages of history gain their reward in God if there be no resurrection of the dead? Habakkuk does not make this point explicitly but simply places his trust in the ultimate and redemptive righteousness of God.

The theme of hope beyond death was not fully expressed in the writings of the prophets, but only on the basis of a fully developed doctrine of personal resurrection and immortality for all mankind could it be said, with St. Paul, that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rm 8:18).

Isaiah's "Suffering Servant":

Still another dimension of the problem of the righteous sufferer was addressed by the prophet Isaiah. The suffering of the righteous is a living historical symbol of the sufferings of the Messiah who was to redeem mankind and the world from sin and death.

The Messiah is depicted by Isaiah as the "Suffering Servant" of God who was to save "all things" from the tyranny of evil (see Is 49-57). "Christians of all ages have interpreted this as a prediction of the sufferings of Christ," through which atonement was made once and for all for the sins of the whole world. In Christ, the righteousness of God and the sufferings of the innocent are made one, and the full meaning and goal of human history are made decisively and finally explicit. In the kingdom of God, the righteous will be vindicated and will enter into the everlasting glory of heaven.

c. True Religion.

What True religion is not:

- not legalistic moralism.
- not merely a love of beautiful rituals and impressive ceremonies.
- not primarily a passion for elegant liturgical form.

What True religion is: a real and personal encounter with God, which issues in an obedient faith.

An obedient faith: good moral works as well as in liturgical worship.

A lover of God must strive to live a righteous and holy life, devoting himself to prayerful worship of the Lord and to the service of his fellow man. His love for God must show itself in "works of love" – i.e., in efforts to share the love of God with others, to assist those who are in spiritual or material need, to institute the conditions of justice wherever possible.

Good works – the expression of an authentic and living faith.

The OT prophets were scathingly critical of the empty, formalistic, and merely ceremonial religion of their time.

The prophet Amos, for example, denounced the social injustices that prevailed in the 8th century BC in both Judah and Israel. And he made it

clear that the Lord would not accept the liturgical worship of his people in the absence of a real passion for moral righteousness. The moral wantonness of Judah and Israel made their elaborate religious services into a mockery with no spiritual significance.

Amos 5:21-24: I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

God expects us to express our faith both in liturgical worship and in works of righteousness. A merely ceremonial religion, expressing itself in the grandest liturgical forms, is spiritually insufficient. A faith that does not result in moral works as well as in devotional form is not a real or authentic faith. The Bible commands the believer "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:6-8).

To engage in moral effort without worshiping God is, of course, a spiritually dangerous indifference to the supreme glory of the Lord; but to engage in a ceremonial religious worship of no practical and moral consequence in our daily lives is to treat God as a mere ornament of no real significance to human conduct in the world.

d. The New Covenant, the Last Judgment, and the Kingdom of God.

God's covenant with Israel through Abraham: In Abraham, Israel was elected as the people of God (Gn 12), and through faithful obedience to God's law she was to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation," calling all mankind to the Lord (Ex 19-24). By accomplishing her priestly mission to the nations, Israel was to be vindicated in the sight of all the world, and was to enter into possession of the "promised land" forever (Gn 17).

In the writings of the OT prophets, the theme of Israel's election and covenant relationship with God, her mission to the world and her ultimate vindication, are reinterpreted in eschatological terms.

(1) The salvation of Israel is understood as a future event that will include all the nations of the world.

(2) Human history is viewed as moving toward a final day of judgment – "the day of the Lord" – when the unfaithful will be separated from the faithful.

(3) The "promised land" is conceived in spiritual terms as the kingdom of God, in which "all things" will be made new and will be in harmony with the Lord.

(1) The New Covenant.

The classical prophets lamented Israel's failure to accomplish her mission to the world, and they sought to reawaken the nation to her priestly call.

Isaiah: Israel was given by God "as a light to the nations, that . . . [the salvation of the Lord] may reach to the end of the earth" (49:6).

God's covenant with Israel was to be a covenant with all mankind: "I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness" (42:6-7).

Micah 4:1-3: God's covenant with Israel was a promise of the ultimate salvation of all faithful people – both Jew and Gentile – in the coming kingdom of God.

Ancient Israel did not keep the terms of her covenant with God. Instead of acting as "a light to the nations" and witnessing to the universal lordship of God, the people of the Old Covenant abandoned their priestly mission to the world and went chasing after the false satisfactions of pagan culture and religion. As we have seen, this apostasy led to the overthrow and destruction of the ancient Hebrew kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

On the basis of this historical failure by Israel to fulfill her divinely ordained mission, the classical prophets began to look toward the advent of a "new covenant" between God and the "remnant" of Israel – that is, between God and those few descendants of Abraham who, after the Babylonian exile, continued to witness to God's truth and to hope for his coming kingdom.

Jeremiah 31:31-34: Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the [remnant of] the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and teach his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

In the new covenant, which God will make with his people, the law of God will not be written on tables of stone, but rather in the hearts of men (see Rm 11:26-36 and Heb 8:8-12).

Isaiah 66:18-20: Through the remnant of Israel and the new covenant, "all nations and tongues" will be gathered and will see the glory of the Lord (Is 66:18). The righteous remnant will be a sign to the nations of the world, and they will bring converts from all lands "as an offering to the Lord . . . just as the Israelites bring their cereal offering in a clean vessel to the house of the Lord."

It would appear, then, that the bringing of an unbeliever to belief in God is as significant an offering to the Lord as the offerings made in religious services.

Through the new covenant, which will be an everlasting covenant, people from all nations will come to know that the God of Israel is the Lord of all creation: his "dwelling place shall be with them," and he "will be their God," and they shall be his people (see Ezk 37:26-28).

The Orthodox understanding of these prophecies concerning the remnant of Israel and a "new covenant" between God and mankind: premonitions of the advent of Christ and of the foundation of his Church.

The first followers of Christ, almost all of whom were Jews, were expecting the coming of the Messiah and recognized Jesus as the fulfillment of their expectations. After his death, resurrection, and ascension, this "righteous remnant," the early Church, proclaimed God's message of salvation through Christ to all the world and brought people of all nations to trust in the divine promises of the new covenant.

The Church, then, is the New Israel, made up of descendants of Abraham and of many other peoples. Membership in the Church is based upon faith, not upon genealogical lineage; the Church is an Israel of the spirit, not an Israel of the flesh.

St. Paul: For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. (Rm 2:28-29; see also 9:6-8).

(2) The Last Judgment: "The Day of the Lord."

In looking toward the establishment of a new covenant, the OT prophets also spoke repeatedly of the coming kingdom of God and of "the day of the Lord," which would precede the advent of the kingdom. The "day of the Lord" is the day of the last judgment, a day which is announced again and again in the writings of the prophets. The words of Zephaniah are representative of the prophetic proclamation of the last judgment:

Zephaniah 1:14-18: The great day of the Lord is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the Lord is 'bitter, the mighty man cries aloud there. A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness, a day of trumpet blast and battle cry against the fortified cities [of our lives] and against the lofty battlements [of our selves]. I will bring distress on men, so that they shall walk like the blind, because they have sinned against the Lord; their blood shall be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold shall be able to deliver them on the day of the wrath of the Lord. In the fire of his jealous wrath, all the earth shall be consumed; for a full, yea, sudden end he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth. (See also Jl 2:1-2, 3:2, 2:12-13, 2:32; and Am 5:18-20)

The words of the prophets concerning "the day of the Lord" are vivid and powerful. To escape the wrathful judgment of God at the end of days, we must recognize our sinfulness, repent, and "call upon the name of the Lord" (Jl 2:32). Only then will we stand a chance of being saved from final condemnation and eternal separation from our heavenly Father on the great and dreadful day of judgment.

(3) The Kingdom of God

Following the day of judgment, the kingdom of God will be established. The coming of the kingdom is depicted in the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 11:6-9: The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

Isaiah 2:2-4: It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

Isaiah 12:1-6: You will say in that day: "I will give thanks to thee, O Lord, for though thou wast angry with me, thy anger turned away, and thou didst comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid; for the Lord is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation." With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And you will say in that day: "Give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name; make known his deeds among the nations, proclaim that his name is exalted...for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel."

There are many such glimpses of the kingdom of God in the OT prophetic literature. What is most interesting about these prophecies is the way in which the Old Israel's quest for the "promised land" is transfigured into the New Israel's entry into the heavenly kingdom. This theme of God's coming kingdom, in which there will be "new heavens and a new earth" (Is 65:17), is the ultimate object of the eschatological vision of the OT prophets.

e. The Coming of the Messiah.

The prophets look to the Messiah, God's anointed one, for the salvation of Israel and of all the world. The messianic proclamations of the OT prophets are, from the standpoint of historic Christianity, announcements of the coming of Jesus, who was the expected Christ.

Three major images of the Messiah in the writings of the prophets: (1) He is spoken of as a great king like David, who will bring about the deliverance and vindication of Israel. (2) He is depicted as one who will suffer (and even die) in order to atone for the sins of the human race. (3) He is described as the very presence of God himself in the midst of his people.

(1) The Messiah as Davidic king.

Isaiah speaks of the Messiah as "a shoot from the stump of Jesse [that is, David's father]," a king of David's line (11:1).

The image of the messianic king is also developed in the books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel.

Jeremiah 33:14-16: Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to . . . [my people]. In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous branch to spring forth for David; and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days . . . [the people of God] will be saved and . . . will dwell securely

Ezekiel 34:23-24, 37:24: And I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken. . . . My servant David shall be king over them; and they shall all have one shepherd. They shall follow my ordinances and be careful to observe my statutes.

The prophets also tell us that the kingly Messiah will be born in the town of Bethlehem – David's birthplace (Mi 5:2), and that he will one day ride humbly into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey (Zc 9:9).

Jesus, proclaimed by the New Testament as the Christ, was descended from the house of David (Mt 1:1-17), was born in Bethlehem (Lk 2:1-7) and made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding on a donkey (Mt 21:1-11).

(2) The Messiah as the "Suffering Servant" of God.

Isaiah 42:1-4: Behold my servant, whom I, uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. (Is 42:1-4)

And the Servant of God, the Messiah, will make God's salvation available, not only to the descendants of Abraham and Jacob, but also to all peoples of the world (see, for example, Is 49:6).

The sacrificial suffering of the Servant of God, through which the salvation of the whole world is to be effected, is predicted in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (see also 50:4-11). Christians have always understood this passage to be a prophecy of the passion and death of Christ (see, for example, Ac 8:26-40).

Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high [as a result of his suffering]. . . . He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their

faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was . . . like a lamb that is led to the slaughter. . . . He poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Adding to Isaiah's description of the sufferings of Christ, Zechariah speaks of the piercing of his body (12:10), and the book of Psalms refers to the piercing of his hands and feet (22:16). The writers of the New Testament saw these texts from Isaiah, Zechariah and Psalm 22 completed in the death of Christ (see Mt 8:17; Rm 4:25; Heb 9:28; 1 Pt 2:24).

(A close reading of Isaiah's prophecies concerning the Servant of God will reveal a certain ambiguity of reference in the prophet's vision. Sometimes the Servant is depicted as the entire nation of Israel, sometimes as the righteous remnant of the post-exilic era, and sometimes as the Messiah who will bring God's plan of salvation to its climax. According to Adam W. Miller, Isaiah's "Servant Songs" present the Servant as "the chosen instrument of God through which his will and purpose are revealed. . . . Israel as a nation is looked upon as the servant. Her sufferings were to benefit the world. Also, the faithful remnant of Israel is thought of as a servant. This faithful remnant constituted the servant through which true religion would be kept alive and disseminated throughout the world. But Israel as the servant, and the faithful remnant as the servant, are steps leading to the climax of introducing the suffering Servant of Yahweh as an individual. The Servant is first the nation, then the true Israel or faithful remnant, and finally the One who suffers for the world's sin and misery.")

(3) The Messiah as the presence of God in the world – as a divine being.

Micah 5:2: The Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, and his "origin [or going forth] is from old, from ancient days" (Mi 5:2). The fathers of the Church interpreted this prophetic text as a confirmation of the New Testament claim that Jesus Christ was the incarnation of God the Son, who was begotten of God the Father from all eternity (see Jn 1:1-18).

In a passage from the book of Daniel which has been read as a messianic prophecy by both Jews and Christians, the following vision is recorded:

Daniel 7:13-14: [B]ehold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an ever-lasting dominion,

which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed.

Here, he who should come into the world as the Messiah is a divine being in human form, closely associated with "the Ancient of Days" (God the Father); and to this divine "son of man," eternal dominion over all things is given. The many New Testament references to Jesus as "the Son of Man" (see, for example, Mt 12:8; Lk 26:64; and Jn 3:13-14) are intended to show that Daniel's vision of a divine Messiah has been fulfilled in Christ.

The divinity of the Messiah is also strongly suggested in the book of Malachi, where God's messianic "messenger" is presented as intimately involved in the divine judgment of the world.

Malachi 3:1: "Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts."

Isaiah tells us (according to the Greek text) that "a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel [or Immanuel]" (7:14). St. Matthew applies this verse to the miraculous birth of Jesus, and points out that the name "Emmanuel" means "God with us" (Mt 1:23). Jesus, whose name means "Yahweh is salvation," is also "Emmanuel" – God with us!

Isaiah 9:6-7: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to up-hold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this. (Is 9:6-7)

Thus, the prophets of the OT looked forward to the coming of a Messiah who would reign as a king in the tradition of David; who would, through his own suffering, make atonement for the sins of Israel and all mankind; and who would, in his own person, make the power and presence of God manifest in the world. And it is the faith of the historic Christian Church that, in Christ, these prophetic expectations have been more than fulfilled.

f. The Resurrection of the Dead.

A final element in the theology of the prophets is the theme of life after death – of resurrection and immortality. We have touched upon this theme earlier in this chapter, but we must return to it now, for it is a significant aspect of the prophetic conception of the new covenant and the coming kingdom of God.

The prophets' belief in the condemnation of the unrighteous on "the day of the Lord" and in the salvation of the righteous in the kingdom of God presupposes the resurrection of the dead and personal immortality. This presupposition – this article of faith and object of hope – receives explicit formulation in the books of Isaiah, Daniel and Ezekiel.

Isaiah 25:6-9, 26:19: Describing the salvation of the faithful, Isaiah prophesies that the Lord will ultimately destroy the curse of death which covers all peoples: "He will swallow up death for ever. . . . Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. Oh dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy!"

Daniel 12:2: referring to both the saved and the damned, proclaims: ". . . those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and ever-lasting contempt."

Ezekiel 37:1-14:

Ezekiel was taken, by "the Spirit of the Lord," to a great valley full of dry bones.

The hand of the LORD was upon me, and he brought me out by the Spirit of the LORD, and set me down in the midst of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me round among them; and behold, there were very many upon the valley; and lo, they were very dry. And he said to me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" And I answered, "O Lord GOD, thou knowest." Again he said to me, "Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the LORD. Thus says the Lord GOD to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD." (vv. 1-6)

And then the Lord lifted the veil of the future and revealed to Ezekiel the final resurrection of the dead:

So I prophesied as I was commanded; and as I prophesied, there was a noise, and behold, a rattling; and the bones came together, bone to its bone. [Ezekiel 37:8] And as I looked, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, "Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceedingly great host. (vv. 7-10)

Ezekiel presents God's promise of resurrection in the following terms:

Then he said to me, "Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, 'Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are clean cut off.' Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I will open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you home into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the LORD, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land; then you shall know that I, the LORD, have spoken, and I have done it, says the LORD." (vv. 11-14)

With this remarkable verbal icon of the final entry of God's people into the eternal life of the kingdom of God, the covenant-kingdom theology of the OT prophets is completed.

The next stage in the biblical record of the mighty acts of God will proclaim the fulfillment and transcendence of the OT revelation of the Lord's redemptive purpose in the "new covenant" established by "the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Rv 1:1).