

Biblical Foundations for Missions

Narrative Dynamics in Matthew's Mission Theology

Rollin G. Grams, ©OCMS Lecture 13 May, 2003

Introduction:

Narrative dynamics in New Testament theology and ethics bring together different streams of recent scholarship. In exploring this in an intertextual reading of Isaiah and Matthew, I hope to suggest some avenues for further research on what I believe is the cutting edge of Biblical mission theology.

One recent development in Biblical studies, particularly over the past 20 years, is the interest in reading texts more as literature than as texts to be sorted through in the construction of history. This is what Paul Ricoeur called reading 'in the text' rather than 'behind the text.' Biblical studies has long been derided for its pre-theological interest of reading behind the text, not only because this is the wrong agenda for the Church but also because the results of such scholarship were often highly sceptical and left very little for any further use of the texts in constructing a theology for the Church. But such a point no longer needs to be footnoted, and further derision of Biblical studies as a discipline along such lines, even by scholars, simply shows that they have not kept up with developments in the field.

Both Isaiah¹ and Matthew,² in focus in this study, have been given attention from a more literary perspective. But there is more to looking at individual texts as literature rather than historical investigations. A second development in Biblical studies is in how we examine the relationship of literary texts to one another. Previously, attention in this area of Biblical studies was on historical models for the use of the Bible, such as rabbinic rules for interpretation. Citations tended to be taken less as indicators of the author's interpretation of the literature and more as brief texts whose wording could be put to different purposes. Today, there is an interest in *intertextuality* and *narrative substructures*, or in New Testament authors as interpreters of Old Testament narratives rather than as proof-texting scholars.³

Third, we might now suggest that theological exegesis has a respectable place in Biblical studies. This is in part due to the arguments against the historical-critical method in the 1970's, but it is also due to the sometimes radical arguments in philosophical hermeneutics about the location of meaning in a text (author, text, or reader?)⁴. Whatever one makes of this debate, space for a more theological approach to exegesis has been the result. This is now part of a project in the Two Horizons

¹ See the attempt at a literary approach using drama (discussed in the introduction) by John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1-33, Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 24* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1985). A perhaps more promising literary approach can be found in Edgar W. Conrad, *Reading Isaiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991).

² Jack Dean Kingsbury *Matthew As Story*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

³ Richard Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989).

⁴ A useful introduction and discussion to this matter can be found in Kevin Vanhoozer, *Is there a meaning in this text? The Bible, the reader and the morality of literary knowledge* (Leicester: Apollon, 1998).

Commentary series and is the focus of a collection of essays in *Between Two Horizons*.⁵

Fourth, there is an interest in what we might call 'theological dynamics' over against more systematic or doctrinal approaches to Biblical theology.⁶ The metaphorical merits and limitations of key Biblical notions has replaced treating those notions as hard and fast doctrines which need to be fit together into a unified system, however awkwardly. Such an approach was signalled with a move from speaking of a centre to Paul's theology to speaking of 'focal lenses.'⁷ But another way to capture this more dynamic approach to theology within Scripture is through the idea of 'narrative theology'.⁸

Apart from and even preceding a narrative approach in Biblical studies *per se*, there has been an interest in narrative dynamics in theology and ethics. This has been an emphasis in theology for some thirty years now. George Stroup marked the development of narrative theology on the theological landscape in 1981 with his oft-cited *The Promise of Narrative Theology*.⁹ This has broadened out into a variety of approaches in the time since, as Stanley Hauerwas's and Greg Jones' *Why Narrative?* demonstrates.¹⁰

Recently, mission theology has picked up narrative as a way of doing mission theology. Nancy Thomas advocates a narrative theology of mission:¹¹

One of the limitations of narrative theology as it has developed in the West is that the combination of narrative form with theological content has often left out the area of context.... A narrative missiology would look at the storied interaction of form, content and context--as people live out their stories of transformation in the specific contexts of their own cultures and faith communities.'

⁵ Joel B. Green and Max Turner, eds., *Between Two Horizons: Spanning New Testament Studies and Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000).

⁶ I have addressed this development in my 'Paul Among the Mission Theologians' lecture at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies, March 2003. Compare the narrative dimension of this essay to the description of mission in D. Senior and C. Stuhlmuehler, *The Biblical Foundations for Mission* (London: SCM, 1983).

⁷ Cf. Jouette Bassler, 'Paul's Theology: Whence and Whither? A Synthesis (of sorts) of the Theology of Philemon, 1 Thessalonians, Philippians, Galatians, and 1 Corinthians,' SPLSP (1989). Richard Hays uses this language in speaking of three focal images in the moral vision of the New Testament: cross, community, and new creation--*The Moral Vision of the New Testament* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1996).

⁸ Cf. Carey C. Newman, 'The Mystery of Paul's Theologizing: A Postmodern Experiment,' in *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, ed. David S. Dockery (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), pp. 173-189.

⁹ George W. Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1984; 1st publ. John Knox Press, 1981).

¹⁰ Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones, eds., *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989).

¹¹ Nancy Thomas' 'Conclusion: Following the footprints of God,' in *Footprints of God: A Narrative Theology of Mission*, eds. Charles Van Engen, Nancy Thomas, Robert Gallagher (Monrovia, CA: MARC, 1999), p. 226 (pp. 225-235). Also note Charles Van Engen, 'The Importance of Narrative Theology,' *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1996).

This use of 'narrative,' then, is quite different from narrative theology in that the missiologists are looking for a way to write theology by means of the lives of Christians and communities in real situations. In this respect, there is a similarity to James McClendon's use of biography in doing theology.¹² But for someone like George Stroup, a *narrative* theology must produce something *different* from dogmatic theology, not simply a contextual or human illustration of that dogmatic theology.¹³

A Narrative Taxonomy

Some scholars have found a particular narrative theory helpful in studying narrative dynamics in Biblical texts. This article will produce an illustration of this while not insisting on the theory itself. Theory can become an obstacle to one of the cardinal virtues of narrative approaches to Biblical texts: letting the text speak rather than imposing some construction upon the text. My own preference is to think of narrative theories less as some new kind of literary ideology and more as a taxonomy which may be used by interpreters to communicate the narrative dynamics within texts.

I intend to use the narrative theory of Algirdas J. Greimas within this essay for just such a taxonomical service in interpreting Isaiah 40-66 and Matthew's Gospel.¹⁴ Greimas' theory involves the following sequences, syntagms, and actants. The three syntagms are as follows:

	<i>Initial Sequence</i>	<i>Topical Sequence</i>	<i>Final Sequence</i>
<i>Purpose:</i>	To show or create a lack or deficiency	To enable a subject to perform a task	To alleviate the deficiency

Our focus on Isaiah 40-66 allows us to illustrate the three sequences rather well, and this illustration is also important for the thesis being described. But I contend that it is not Greimas' theory that leads to this argument: the text rather clearly offers three sequences in the narrative of Israel.

The *initial sequence*, which is the assumption of Isaiah 40-66 and well enough described in parts of Isaiah 1-39, is the history of Israel up to and including the exile. This illustrates the deficiency of Israel's righteousness in an unrighteous world and raises the question of whether Israel's God is unable to achieve His goals with this people.

The *topical sequence* entails the enablement of Yahweh's 'Servant' (=Subject) to perform the task of redeeming Israel from exile. It can also be seen in Isaiah's call in Is. 6 and in the prophetic announcement of a deliverance after judgement and exile (e.g., Is. 40). There may be more than one topical sequence--a point which is important to note in the multiple identities of Yahweh's servant.

¹² James William McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974). Belief is understood through a look at actual lives and communities, such as when we come to understand a theology of atonement through the lives of Dag Hammarskjöld, Martin Luther King, Jr., Clarence Jordan, and Charles Ives.

¹³ Stroup, *Ibid.*, pp. 87ff.

¹⁴ A. J. Greimas *Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method*, trans. D. McDowell et. al. (Lincoln: Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1984).

The *final sequence* involves the various oracles describing God's salvation, glory and redemption of Israel and all nations. Here the work of the servant for Israel is taken over by Israel for all nations.

Greimas' theory further describes three 'syntagms' (logical and temporal parts) of each sequence involving six 'actants' (the spheres of action, sometimes the same as characters). The 'actants' of a sequence are as follows:

Axis of Communication:	Sender: setting up the task (contract, mandate, etc.)	Object: what the subject wishes to deliver or accomplish	Receiver: the recipients of the object which the subject wishes to deliver
Axis of Conflict:	Help: what helps the subject in his/her task	Subject: character who receives the task ('protagonist')	Opponent: what opposes the subject in his/her task

Each sequence has three syntagms. The *Contract Syntagm* involves setting up the narrative by explaining the conflict, problem, issue, task--whatever term is appropriate for that particular narrative. There is an arrangement ('contract') between the Sender and the Subject, what Greimas calls the *mandating/accepting contractual statement* (the protagonist is charged to perform a task) and the *communication/reception contractual statement*, involving the Subject's being given what is needed to fulfil the contract. In Isaiah's first sequence, Israel stands among those accused by God (e.g., Is. 1-2), an unworthy subject who failed in the mission task among the nations.¹⁵ But God had given Israel this mandate through calling her to be His righteous people in an unrighteous world.

The *Disjunctive/Conjunctive Syntagm* involves arrival and departure of the protagonist in order to fulfil his or her task. In Isaiah's sequence, this can be seen, e.g., in Is. 5.1-4, where Israel is described as a vineyard prepared by God which failed to produce the fruit of righteousness. There is no actual departure on a quest, but there is a mission.

The *Performance Syntagm* entails the protagonist's performances of *confronting* the antagonist, *dominating/submitting* to the antagonist, and *attributing* (delivering) the object to the receivers. The final performance is, of course, not present in the initial sequence, and in Isaiah's first sequence Israel submits to the antagonist, becoming like the sinful nations rather than reforming them. This sets up the lack which calls for the topical and final sequences in the narrative.

Applying this description to Deuteronomic history, we might now illustrate the Initial Sequence of the story of Israel.

Axis of Communication	Sender: God	Object: Redemption/	Recipients: Israel
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¹⁵ The mission to the nations is first announced in Is. 2.1-4. Here it is a future mission, but it is announced in the context of Israel's failure and so demonstrates that it had been Israel's mission all along. Thus this is not a new mission for Israel but one which she has failed to accomplish but will accomplish in the future. This sets up a narrative substructure to the oracles of Isaiah.

		Election	
Axis of Conflict	Help: Miracles, God's presence (glory) going before Israel, the giving of the Law	Subject: Moses	Opponent: Egyptians (Pharaoh) and Wilderness (Testing)

Appropriately, this initial sequence concludes in Deuteronomy with the recipients not yet redeemed and delivered into their new land: the final performance is not present in the initial sequence. But there is a further reason for this in the story of Israel, also pointed out clearly in Deuteronomy: Israel's redemption becomes elusive because she has become her own antagonist in the story, failing the wilderness tests due to her own sinfulness. This Deuteronomic reading of Israel's history is continued in the negative assessment of the history of Israel's rulers in what is termed the 'Deuteronomistic' history of Judges and 1 and 2 Kings.¹⁶ This history figures in the programmatic first chapter of Isaiah, and it is the subject of the oracles of judgement on Israel in Isaiah: her whole history is one of failure.¹⁷

Israel's history at the end of her wilderness wanderings should have led to a new syntagm in the narrative in which Israel became the subject of God's story to bring redemption to all nations. The topical syntagm would have involved her being chosen and sent out for this task, and then the final syntagm would have involved the action of accomplishing this contract. But the failure of the initial sequence changes the topical syntagm: God must redeem Israel again, this time from sin. The initial sequence ends not with Mt. Zion as the raised city drawing all nations to God's presence (Is. 2.1-4) but with Israel in exile for her sins.

Israel's sin, not the nations' sin, becomes the lack that must be overcome in the topical sequence. Isaiah has unclean lips and dwells among a people of unclean lips. He has no right to be in the presence of the glory of Yahweh. Yet he is chosen and enabled with a coal from the altar of the Temple placed on his lips: he can now perform the task of his initial mission to deliver oracles of judgement to Israel and the nations. This task is accomplished in Isaiah 1-39. But Isaiah's second task is to announce a renewed contract for a righteous remnant of Israel: Israel, restored from captivity and sin, will be used after all to redeem all nations.

This gives rise to the New Exodus narrative of Isaiah. But there needs to be a distinction between the topical and final sequences in this narrative. The topical sequence is as follows:

Axis of Communication	Sender: God	Object: Redemption from exile and sin	Recipients: Israel
Axis of Conflict	Help: God's presence and power.	Subject: Servant	Opponent: Israel's sin

¹⁶ Cf. Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, trans. D. M. G. Stalker (NY: Harper, 1957), pp. 334-347.

¹⁷ The failure of Israel's rulers is particularly noted in Is. 28.

In this sequence of the narrative, there is a confusion over the identity of the subject: is the servant an individual, the righteous remnant of Israel, or Israel?¹⁸ If an individual, is the servant Isaiah, Cyrus, or some other (a Moses figure, e.g.)? The answer to such questions is that the servant in Isaiah is all of these: different ones pick up the role of the servant in the narrative. 'Servant' is a place marker for those involved in God's mission. Individual servants in Isaiah are Isaiah himself (20.3), Eliakim ben Hilkiyah (22.20), David (37.35) and Moses (63.11). Israel can be God's servant in a role to the nations (judgement, 41.8-9; justice, 42.1; 43.10; 44.1, 2, 21, 26). A remnant can pick up the prophetic role to bring redemption to Israel (52.13; 52.11) or to the nations (49.3, 5, 6). Such a role can involve substitutionary suffering (50.5-10; 52.13-53.12).

The middle and final sequences, then, have as their subject one called a 'servant'. This permits the blending of the sequences together in a single mission of redemption. The middle or topical sequence involves an individual or remnant of Israel fulfilling this function on behalf of Israel and beyond. The final sequence focuses more on restored Israel fulfilling this function among the nations. But it should be noted that Isaiah concludes with the remnant--the survivors--as the ones going to the nations on God's mission (Is. 66.18f).

In the final sequence, the 'Object' could be described in various ways, including redemption, salvation, election or in images depicting restored or reconciled creation, such as the wolf feeding with the lamb and the lion eating straw (65.25). But a strong case can be made for emphasising 'God's glory' as the object delivered to the recipients in the narrative because this is indeed a major theme throughout Isaiah. God's glory over the world He created can imply judgement (cf. Is. 2.10, 19-21) or salvation (cf. Is. 4.2-6). The revelation of God's glory is the goal of God's action through Israel (Is. 40.5); the result will be that the nations will give glory to God (Is. 42.8-12; cf. 45.22-25). No wonder that as God's servant, Isaiah is shown the glory of God (ch. 6). The fact is that the nations have assumed their own glory (e.g., Is. 23.9) and have given place to their idols rather than to God (Is. 42.8-12). Israel's glory stems from giving God the glory that is His, and her glory will attract the nations to God (Is. 60.1-6, 19). What makes this narrative so intriguing is that the subject in the final sequence to deliver God's glory over all nations is the very subject that dishonoured God's glory among the nations in the first sequence: Israel. This fact makes the glory of God all that more amazing: only He can turn such a situation into one which establishes His glory on the earth.

<i>Axis of Communication</i>	<i>Sender:</i> God	<i>Object:</i> God's glory	<i>Recipients:</i> All nations
<i>Axis of Conflict</i>	<i>Help:</i> God's presence and power, seen in the deliverance of Israel from sin and	<i>Subject:</i> Israel	<i>Opponent:</i> Idolatry

¹⁸ I would agree with Edgar Conrad's discussion of a division within Israel in Isaiah between the nation and the 'survivors', a righteous remnant. See his discussion in *Reading Isaiah*, ch. 4, especially pages 92-94. Conrad also argues that from Is. 40 the community takes the place of the king in Israel as God's servant.

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This brief interpretation of Isaiah could be filled out in much greater detail, particularly in the interpretation of specific texts or oracles. But such a narrative approach highlights the *mission* theology of Isaiah.

New Exodus Narrative in the New Testament

If we are to explore the Biblical foundations for mission theology, we need to establish a connection between the Old Testament narrative and the New Testament narrative.¹⁹ A Biblical theology requires proceeding in terms of texts, both exploring individual texts on their own terms and establishing whether there is an overt connection between these texts (quotations, allusions, intertextual echoes). So far I have explored one Old Testament text, and I am aware that there is more such work to do in the Old Testament's theology of mission. But having outlined a way to proceed in that work, I turn next to illustrate the way forward in exploring textual relationships in working towards a *Biblical* theology of mission. The way forward in this next step is also a narrative approach.

There are various attempts to explore a narrative theological approach in New Testament authors. In Pauline theology, a narrative approach in one form or another has been taken by Richard Hays,²⁰ myself,²¹ Stephen Fowl,²² N. T. Wright,²³ Ben Witherington,²⁴ James Scott,²⁵ James D. G. Dunn,²⁶ J. Ross Wagner,²⁷ Florian Wilk,²⁸ Sylvia Keesmaat,²⁹ and is most recently discussed among scholars in the United Kingdom in a work edited by Bruce Longenecker.³⁰ In Jesus studies, we should cite

¹⁹ Cf. Martin Goldsmith, *Matthew and Mission: The Gospel Through Jewish Eyes* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001). The book explores at a lay level the theme of mission throughout Matthew's Gospel. There is no intertextual examination of the themes in Mt. related to mission, but the book is helpful in emphasising the theme of mission in Matthew's Gospel.

²⁰ Richard Hays, *The Faith of Jesus Christ: An Investigation of the Narrative Substructure of Galatians 3.1-4.11*, SBL Dissertation Series, Vol. 56 (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983; 2nd ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001). Also see his *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale, 1989) and 'Who Has Believed Our Message?' Paul's Reading of Isaiah,' *SBLSP37* (1998): 2-5-225.

²¹ Rollin G. Grams, *Gospel and Mission in Paul's Ethics*, Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1989. This dissertation explores the Gospel as 'story' and the mission of Paul and the Church as an entering into the Gospel story.

²² Stephen Fowl, *The Story of Jesus in the Letters of Paul*, JSNTSup 36 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990).

²³ N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1991); *The New Testament and the People of God* (London: SPCK, 1992).

²⁴ Ben Witherington, III, *Paul's Narrative Thought World: The Tapestry of Tragedy and Triumph* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994).

²⁵ James M. Scott, 'For as Many as are of Works of the Law are under a Curse' (Galatians 3.10),' in *Paul and the Scriptures of Israel*, JSNTSS 83, eds. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993) pp. 187-221.

²⁶ James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul the Apostle* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998).

²⁷ J. Ross Wagner, Jr., 'Who Has Believed Our Message?': Paul and Isaiah 'In Concert' in the Letter to the Romans,' Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1999.

²⁸ Florian Wilk, *Die Bedeutung des Jesajabuches für Paulus*, FRLANT 179 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998).

²⁹ Sylvia C. Keesmaat, *Paul and his Story: (Re)Interpreting the Exodus Tradition*, JSNTS 181 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999).

³⁰ Bruce W. Longenecker, ed., *Narrative Dynamics in Paul: A Critical Assessment* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 2002).

N. T. Wright as the primary example of interpreting Jesus in terms of the New Exodus theme.³¹ In Markan studies, one might turn to Rikki Watt's *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*, among others.³² In Lukan studies, one might turn to David Pao's *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus*,³³ as well as other earlier narrative approaches to Lukan theology.³⁴

I will proceed in this article with a look at the relationship of Isaiah to Matthew's Gospel.³⁵ The tendency in narrative approaches to Gospel studies has been to explore narrative dimensions of Matthew's *Christology*, but Greimas' consideration of narratives *per se* suggests ways in which to explore narrative theology in other ways as well, such as Matthew's understanding of Israel, discipleship, and the nations. This broader approach allows the interpreter to take note of Matthew's mission theology.

The New Exodus Narrative of Isaiah and Matthew's Mission Theology

Take note of each of these 'actants' or spheres of action in Isaiah as they appear in Matthew's narrative.

1. **Object or Mission:** The mission in Isaiah and Matthew involves (a) God's glory or coming reign as King; (b) the redemption of Israel; (c) the redemption of the nations; (d) a reign of compassion, reconciliation, justice, righteousness and peace on the earth.

a. God's coming reign as King

The mission is nothing other than to establish God's reign over the whole earth. Conrad argues that the role of King in Isaiah is taken over by the

³¹ N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (London: SPCK, 1996).

³² Rikki E. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus and Mark*, WUNT 2.88 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997). Cf. O. Davidsen, *The Narrative Jesus: A Semiotic Reading of Mark's Gospel* (Copenhagen-Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1993); R. Schneck, *Isaiah in the Gospel of Mark, I-VIII*, Bibal Dissertation Series 1 (Berkeley: Bibal, 1994).

³³ David W. Pao, *Acts and the Isaianic New Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002; orig. publ. 2000).

³⁴ Such works are surveyed by Pao and include such works as: Thomas L. Brodie, *Luke the Literary Interpreter: Luke-Acts as a Systematic Rewriting and Updating of the Elijah-Elisha Narrative* (Rome: Pontifical Univ. of Thomas Aquinas, 1987); David Moessner, *Lord of the Banquet: The Literary and Theological Significance of the Lukan Travel Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989); Mark Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and Its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology*, JSNTSup 110 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Max Turner, *Power from on High. The Spirit in Israel's Restoration and Witness in Luke-Acts* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); Rebecca Denova, *The Things Accomplished Among Us: Prophetic Tradition in the Structural Pattern of Luke-Acts*, JSNTSup 141 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997);

³⁵ Who might be listed as precursors in a narrative theological approach to Matthew? I will not here list narrative approaches to Matthew or even Matthew's theology *per se* (Jack Dean Kingsbury would be the starting point for such an inquiry--see his *Matthew As Story*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988). I have in mind a narrative theological approach which explores the relationship of the Old Testament and Matthew along intertextual, theological lines. Two helpful such approaches are: Chs. 5 and 6 of R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1989); Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992). Ronald Thiemann offers some discussion of Matthew and narrative in the Old Testament in 'The Promising God: The Gospel as Narrated Promise,' in *Why Narrative? Readings in Narrative Theology*, eds. Stanley Hauerwas and L. Gregory Jones (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1989), pp. 320-347.

restored community.³⁶ Yet it must also be said that what follows Davidic Kingship is God's Kingdom reign.³⁷ In Isaiah, we have seen the mission as Israel's mission to the nations and the Servant's mission to Israel and to the nations, and we have described this as taking or revealing God's glory to the whole earth. For the Kingdom of God to come, the glory of God must fill the whole earth.³⁸

Isaiah 24.23 Then the moon will be abashed, and the sun ashamed; for the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before his elders he will manifest his glory.

Isaiah 41.21 Set forth your case, says the LORD; bring your proofs, says the King of Jacob....

Isaiah 43.15 I am the LORD, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King.

Isaiah 44.6 Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.

Isaiah 52.4 For thus says the Lord GOD: Long ago, my people went down into Egypt to reside there as aliens; the Assyrian, too, has oppressed them without cause. 5 Now therefore what am I doing here, says the LORD, seeing that my people are taken away without cause? Their rulers howl, says the LORD, and continually, all day long, my name is despised. 6 Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I. 7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." 8 Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the LORD to Zion. 9 Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the LORD has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem. 10 The LORD

³⁶ 'With Uzziah's death comes Syro-Ephraimite invasion; with Ahaz's death comes Assyrian invasion; and with Hezekiah's death will come Babylonian invasion. This structuring of Isaiah's vision indicates the failure of kingship to bring lasting peace and security.... The implied death of Hezekiah in the Book of Isaiah suggests the death of the Davidic kingship itself.... For the LORD's people who dwell in Zion, however, there will be no new Uzziahs, Ahazes, or Hezekiahs. The last reference in the book to a conventional Davidic king is in 37.35.... Where once an everlasting covenant (*bryt wlm*) was made with David, who would be a witness (*d*) to the nations, this covenant is now to be made with the community (55.3-5), who will be the LORD's witnesses (*dym*) to the nations (43.10 and 44.8). In 37.35 the LORD referred to Hezekiah, the Davidic king, as 'my servant' (*bdy*), but after the vision of Isaiah it is the community Jacob-Israel who is addressed in the royal war oracles (41.8, 9; 44.1, 2) and elsewhere (42.1, 19; 44.21; 45.4; 49.3; 52.13, and 53.11) as 'my servant' (*bdy*) and as 'my chosen one' (*bhyry*, in 42.1; 43.20; 45.4), a title used in other places in the Old Testament for the Davidic king' (Edgar Conrad, *Reading Isaiah*, pp. 144f).

³⁷ It seems to me that this is a more significant connection between the acts of God on behalf of Israel in Isaiah and the message of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels than a narrower Yahweh-Warrior imagery allows, as in R. Watts, *Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark*, pp. 140ff.

³⁸ Cf. Bruce Chilton, *Pure Kingdom: Jesus' Vision of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996). Chilton explores five 'coordinates' of the Kingdom in the Psalms, one of which is 'radiance'. The Psalms see God as King and involve a vision of the Kingdom in terms of God's 'power within the world, glorious splendor at the divine center, and sovereignty over the people of God' (32).

has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

The glory of the Lord as a missiological goal of a restored, remnant community also features in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5.13-16). The glory of Jesus in Matthew is related to the coming of the Kingdom (16.27; 17.1-8 (Transfiguration); 19.28; 24.30; 25.31; 28.18).

b. *The Redemption of Israel*

John the Baptist, fulfilling the role of Is. 40's desert prophet, announces the coming of the Kingdom of heaven (Mt. 3.1-3). Jesus' message is also about the Kingdom of Heaven (4.17), but he equally inaugurates it by bringing Israel's survivors (Mt. 10.5f) out of exile to the Temple (note the blind, lame and children brought into the Temple by Jesus, Mt. 21.14f):

Is. 56.3 Do not let the foreigner joined to the LORD say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and do not let the eunuch say, "I am just a dry tree." 4 For thus says the LORD: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, 5 I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. 6 And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant-- 7 these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. 8 Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.

This prophecy equally points to a further mission to the Gentiles. Matthew omits 'for all peoples' in his quotation 'my house shall be called a house of prayer' (Mt. 21.13), despite the fact that his source, Mark, includes the phrase (Mk. 11.17). By doing so, Matthew emphasises that the fulfilment at the Temple is that pertaining to the restoration of Israel. More is to come when Jesus sends the survivors on a mission to the nations (Mt. 28.18-20).

c. *Redemption of the Nations*

The mission of Isaiah 40-66 also entails that the one true God be known throughout the world, where idolatry is practised. Israel is to be God's Servant to accomplish this mission. The problem with this is that Israel is in exile for their sins. So God promises to redeem her by His mercy and make her His Servant. The mission of God's Servant is to show the nations the One true God. This is stated in the following ways:

- ***Glory:** all people shall see the glory of the LORD (40.5)
- ***Judgement:** threshing and winnowing others (41.15f)
- ***No idolatry:** [care for Israel means that 'all may see and know..the

hand of the LORD has done this [over against what idols can do] (41.17-29)

***Witnesses:** God's people are His witnesses to those who worship idols (44.6-9, e.g.)

Is. 45.22 Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.'23 By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return: "To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear." 24 Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me, are righteousness and strength; all who were incensed against him shall come to him and be ashamed.

Is. 48.20: Go out from Babylon, flee from Chaldea, declare this with a shout of joy, proclaim it, send it forth to the end of the earth; say, "The LORD has redeemed his servant Jacob!"

Isaiah 49.6 *"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."*

Isaiah 55.3 *Incline your ear, and come to me; listen, so that you may live. I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David. 4 See, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples. 5 See, you shall call nations that you do not know, and nations that do not know you shall run to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you. 6 Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; 7 let the wicked forsake their way, and the unrighteous their thoughts; let them return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

Isaiah 60:1 *Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. 2 For darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will appear over you. 3 Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. 4 Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms. 5 Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and rejoice, because the abundance of the sea shall be brought to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.*

The mission's breaking out beyond the boundary of Israel to the nations is foreshadowed in Matthew's Gospel before the actual commissioning of the disciples to go to all nations (28.18-20).

*The four women of the genealogy (Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, the wife of Uriah, ch. 1)

*The Magi (ch. 2, with respect to Is. 60.1ff)

- *The Centurion's faith (ch. 8)
- *The Canannite Woman (ch. 15)

In Matthew, Jesus' disciples are to go to all nations (24.14). This mission is inaugurated at the end of the Gospel in the Great Commission (28.18-20).

d. *A Mission of Social Compassion and Justice*

Isaiah 58 changes the perspective on what restoration will mean: not of a cultic piety never rightly practised but of social justice and compassion never rightly established. Thus repentance for social evils leading to concrete actions is itself a beginning of mission.

Is. 58.6 Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin? 8 Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. 9 Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am. If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, 10 if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

Matthew:

Jesus twice quotes Hos. 6.6 (mercy, not sacrifice). Jesus' ethic in Matthew is tied to the larger vision of Isaiah 40-66 and the prophets as a whole: the disciples are concerned to live by the Lord's commands, not simply believe in God's gracious act. Thus making disciples includes teaching them all that Jesus has commanded (Mt. 28.20). But mission for Jesus was not only teaching about how to live (Mt. 5-7); it also entailed miraculous actions of restoration--miracles (Mt. 8-9).

2. Receivers:

As we have already noted, the first group to receive the work of God's servant are the Israelite exiles. Matthew's Jesus clearly draws this distinction between a work of restoration of Israel and a work of restoration of the nations: Jesus' adoption of the role of the Servant of Isaiah leads him to a work focused on Israel as the receivers (Mt. 10.5-6; 15.22-28), although this sharp distinction between Israel and the nations is already breaking down in his ministry. One might say that the topical sequence is collapsing into the final sequence in his ministry. Even so, the intentional thrust of a mission to the nations becomes the work of the disciples (Mt. 28.18-20). This is not a new dimension of mission theology but one that has now reached its time of fulfilment. Not only Isaiah, but throughout the Old Testament such a universal mission is envisaged, as we can see from Appendix I.

Yet the point is that Matthew follows Isaiah in the separation of the mission to Israel from that to the nations.

3. The Object of the Mission

a. Sin

We also need to note that Israel's exile is not just a problem in terms of their being *in exile* but in terms of their being in exile *for good reason*. They have sinned, and their restoration from exile is not something that can take place without dealing with sin. This depiction of Israel is presented in a rich variety of images: Israel is a prisoner, a barren woman (destroyed nation = having no children), a beaten servant, an abandoned wife, a sacrificed lamb, a diseased person.

Is. 48.18 O that you had paid attention to my commandments! Then your prosperity would have been like a river, and your success like the waves of the sea; 19 your offspring would have been like the sand, and your descendants like its grains; their name would never be cut off or destroyed from before me.

Is. 50.1b: No, because of your sins you were sold, and for your transgressions your mother was put away.

Matthew:

In Matthew's Gospel, Matthew clearly establishes as his first theological point that Jesus is identified with Israel; Jesus 'substitutes' for Israel. He takes on Israel's identity and role in his own mission.³⁹

*genealogy

*name 'Jesus'

*Magi come to Jesus

*Jesus goes to Egypt

*Jesus is baptised to fulfil all righteousness

*Jesus is tempted but does not sin Israel's sins

*Jesus' Last Supper reinterprets Israel's Exodus in terms of Jesus' death

The prisoner in exile, Israel, needs to be released from prison, but he must not be released as an escaped convict. He needs to be released as a righteous person. Different oracles in Isaiah handle this problem differently.

The exile can be understood as sufficient punishment.

Is. 40.2 Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.

But Israel's sin can also be understood as something God forgives:

³⁹ A good discussion of this can be found in Christopher J. H. Wright, *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992).

God says that He *'blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins'* (Isaiah 43.25)

This is the perspective adopted in Matthew.

*Jesus forgives sins (e.g., paralytic, ch. 9)

*Jesus' death is as a 'ransom for many' (Mt. 20.28)

b. The Great Reversal

There is a combination of '**reversal**' and '**salvation**' for the Gentiles. The Jews in captivity will be returned by Gentiles, who will treat them well once they know that they are God's. In this there is **hope** for the Gentiles. But there is also **judgement** (*Is. 49. 26 I will make your oppressors eat their own flesh, and they shall be drunk with their own blood as with wine. Then all flesh shall know that I am the LORD your Savior, and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob*).

Is. 49.22 Thus says the Lord GOD: I will soon lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my signal to the peoples; and they shall bring your sons in their bosom, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders. 23 Kings shall be your foster fathers, and their queens your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.

Reversal as God's judgement on the earth is poetically pictured in Is. 63. Chapters 64-66 continue to describe the reversal in God's new heaven and earth. There will be judgement and restoration. The result is announced in the 2nd last verse:

Is. 66.23 From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the LORD.

Israel's suffering in exile (which the 'servant' takes on himself) is to be reversed.

Is. 51.21 Therefore hear this, you who are wounded, who are drunk, but not with wine: 22 Thus says your Sovereign, the LORD, your God who pleads the cause of his people: See, I have taken from your hand the cup of staggering; you shall drink no more from the bowl of my wrath. 23 And I will put it into the hand of your tormentors, who have said to you, "Bow down, that we may walk on you"; and you have made your back like the ground and like the street for them to walk on.

Isaiah 52.14 Just as there were many who were astonished at him-- so marred was his appearance, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of mortals--15 so he shall startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which had not been told them they shall see, and that which they had not heard they shall contemplate.

Matthew:

*Jesus teaches that the first will be last and the last will be first. Surprisingly, this is not applied to the Gentiles.

*Jesus takes on himself the suffering of Israel in his passion, so reversing their plight.

4. Help:

Thus the help God brings in the story is both release from captivity and dealing with Israel's sin.

1. Release from captivity:

Isaiah 40: Israel's return is depicted in terms of prisoners being set free by God's servant, and fed and watered along the way back to the land.

Matthew:

*The preparation in the wilderness of Is. 40 is treated with reference to John the Baptist's ministry in Mt. 3.2.

*The imagery of the nations' helping Israel, the least among the nations, return to the land from captivity is captured in Mt. 25.31ff.⁴⁰

Is. 42.7 to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness..... 22 But this is a people robbed and plundered, all of them are trapped in holes and hidden in prisons; they have become a prey with no one to rescue, a spoil with no one to say, "Restore!" (cf. 49.9; 61.1).

Is. 49.7 Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." 8 Thus says the LORD: In a time of favor I have answered you, on a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages; 9 saying to the prisoners, "Come out," to those who are in darkness, "Show yourselves." They shall feed along the ways, on all the bare heights shall be their pasture; 10 they shall not hunger or thirst, neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down, for he who has pity on them will lead them, and by springs of water will guide them. 11 And I will turn all my mountains into a road, and my highways shall be raised up. 12 Lo, these shall come from far away, and lo, these from the north and from the west, and these from the land of Syene. 13 Sing for joy, O heavens,

⁴⁰ I read this passage as the nations being judged by how they received the mission of Israel's survivors from exile. Cf. the helpful discussion and similar position to mine in Donald Carson, *Matthew*, Expositor's Bible Commentary, vol. 8, ed. Frank Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984, *ad loc*); also Donald Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, Word Biblical Commentary 33b (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1995), *ad loc*.

and exult, O earth; break forth, O mountains, into singing! For the LORD has comforted his people, and will have compassion on his suffering ones.

b. Dealing with Sin:

Isaiah 51.11 So the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The term 'ransom' for the restoration of Israel from captivity is used in Mt. 20.28 (cf. Mk. 10.45): Jesus has come to give his life as a ransom for many.

5. The Subject (Hero, Protagonist):

- a. The hero in Is. 40-53 is often called *God's servant*. This is a rich metaphor:
 1. A servant or slave can be mistreated by others, just as Israel was mistreated in captivity.

In Is. 50, this servant-teacher faces beating and opposition in bearing God's message.

Is. 50.5 The Lord GOD has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. 6 I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. 7 The Lord GOD helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; 8 he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront me. 9 It is the Lord GOD who helps me; who will declare me guilty? All of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up. 10 Who among you fears the LORD and obeys the voice of his servant, who walks in darkness and has no light, yet trusts in the name of the LORD and relies upon his God?

2. But, as *God's servant*, Israel has a mission from God, a task to perform (see below).
 - a. Here we note only that **Israel is usually the servant** of these chapters in Isaiah. E.g., Is. 42 shows the conflicting identity of Israel as God's servant with the awesome task of bringing forth justice to the nations but also as God's servant who has not listened. All this is the topical sequence of God restoring His servant so that the servant can perform this task or mission to the nations.

God will be glorified in Israel: Is. 49.3 And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified."

- b. In Is. 49 and 50, the servant is distinguished from Jacob and Israel. His task is to bring them back and bring salvation to the nations, to the ends of the earth.

Is. 49.5 And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength--6 he says, "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

In Matthew, Jesus is the Servant of God:

*Jesus' baptism and transfiguration ('son/servant', Spirit, mission)

*Jesus is identified in Mt. 12.17ff as God's Servant of Is. 42.

As Richard Beaton argues, this identification need not immediately be tied to the *suffering* Servant motif.⁴¹ Is. 42.1-4 highlights the compassionate mission of the Servant in bringing justice to the nations.

Matthew's first task (in chapters 1-4) of establishing Jesus' identity with or representation of Israel makes possible the various 'servant' and 'mission' links between Isaiah and Matthew.⁴²

- c. As an exilic people, Israel has suffered, and this suffering theme can be applied to Israel as God's Servant or to a righteous individual or remnant that has suffered on behalf of Israel. The servant's role is not just restoration: he fulfils his mission *through* suffering.

Israel's reversal from despised, beaten exile to redeemed, chosen one of the Lord is, at the same time, a witness in the world. Israel's return from exile is a witness for God. But more is claimed: Israel's exile, a 'death' of a nation and a servitude, is now interpreted as a sin-offering for the nations. The Gentiles seem to speak in the following quotation about the role of the nation Israel, but it is equally possible to argue that the Servant is an individual whose mission is to all the nations, including Israel, as in Is. 49-50.

⁴¹ Cf. Richard Beaton, *Isaiah's Christ in Matthew's Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). This is actually a narrower study on the use of Is. 42.1-4 in Matthew.

⁴² Cf. Martin Goldsmith, *Matthew and Mission: The Gospel Through Jewish Eyes* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 2001). The book explores at a lay level the theme of mission throughout Matthew's Gospel. There is no intertextual examination of the themes in Mt. related to mission.

Isaiah 52.10 The LORD has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.... 53:1 Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? 2 For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. 3 He was despised and rejected by others; a man of suffering and acquainted with infirmity; and as one from whom others hide their faces he was despised, and we held him of no account. 4 Surely he has borne our infirmities and carried our diseases; yet we accounted him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was wounded for our transgressions, crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the punishment that made us whole, and by his bruises we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have all turned to our own way, and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth. 8 By a perversion of justice he was taken away. Who could have imagined his future? For he was cut off from the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. 9 They made his grave with the wicked and his tomb with the rich, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth. 10 Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him with pain. When you make his life an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, and shall prolong his days; through him the will of the LORD shall prosper. 11 Out of his anguish he shall see light; he shall find satisfaction through his knowledge. The righteous one, my servant, shall make many righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will allot him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out himself to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

The New Testament:

Jesus as the suffering servant of God is a key identification of the early Church. This idea is *the* message of the Passion of Jesus in the Gospels.

- d. The anointed prophet of Is. 61 does the same as the servant of earlier chapters.
He is presented as an individual with news of redemption from exile for Israel as well as righteousness for the nations.

Isaiah 61:1 The spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to

the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners; 2 to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; 3 to provide for those who mourn in Zion-- to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit. They will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, to display his glory. 4 They shall build up the ancient ruins, they shall raise up the former devastations; they shall repair the ruined cities, the devastations of many generations.... 11 For as the earth brings forth its shoots, and as a garden causes what is sown in it to spring up, so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.

Matthew:

Jesus' identity with this passage comes through his beatitudes and healing ministry in Matthew (5.3-12; 11.5)

The Servant of the LORD is both protagonist and antagonist in this story. God will turn this sinful people into His servant. The message of redemption from exile and forgiveness of sins is not the main action in this drama, as wonderful as it is. This is only a means for a much greater action: God's dealing with all humanity.

Matthew:

Jesus chooses *Twelve* disciples, who call Israel to the Kingdom, who, after the resurrection, go to call all nations. Thus Matthew ends in the same way as Isaiah: the survivors go to the nations (Is. 66.18-23); the surviving disciples (the eleven) go to the nations (Mt. 28.16-20). This mission of the disciples is a mission of an exile people among the nations: they are the 'least', hungry and thirsty, strangers in foreign lands, naked, sick, and imprisoned (Mt. 25.31-46). They pick up the role of the Servant first in a mission to Israel (ch. 10) and then in a mission to the nations. Thus Matthew resolves the question of a future mission to Israel: it has taken place in Jesus' and his disciples' ministry in Israel. Now, in the time after Jesus' resurrection and before His return, the mission goes forth to the nations. Yet, just as Isaiah depicts a restoration of Jerusalem under God's rule, Matthew holds out hope for future repentance in Israel (Mt. 23.39). The mission to the Gentiles does not mean a rejection of Israel: the restoration of survivors from exile has already meant a restoration of a remnant of Israel. More may still come, but the decisive moment in Isaiah's restoration of Israel has, for Matthew, taken place.

Conclusion:

Using A. J. Greimas' discussion of the structure and function of a narrative, we have applied this to a study of mission in Isaiah and Matthew. Our purpose has been to show the intertextual connection between Isaiah and Matthew on the mission of Jesus and the people of God. In doing so, we have noted how closely Matthew follows Isaiah to describe this mission. This explains why Matthew is so careful to show how Jesus represents Israel in the initial Christological argument of his Gospel (chs. 1-4). One interesting correspondence is in the separation between stages of the mission entailing the restoration of Israel and then the mission to the Gentiles. Another important result of this study is in discovering that Matthew's mission theology is not a 'word' versus 'social justice' understanding of mission: because Matthew understands mission in terms of a restored community (let alone his emphasis on the compassionate servant (Is. 42.1-4), the ethics of this community, and 'righteousness'), his understanding of mission is wholistic.

Appendix I

Old Testament and Jewish Texts Mentioning the Future Blessing of the Nations/Gentiles

Genesis 12.3 I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you *all the families of the earth* shall be blessed."

Genesis 17.5 No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the *ancestor of a multitude of nations*.

6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and *I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you*.

Psalms 113.1-3 For this I will extol you, O LORD, *among the nations*, and sing praises to your name.

Psalms 117.1 Praise the LORD, *all you nations!* Extol him, *all you peoples!*

2 For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!

Psalms 22.27 *All the ends of the earth* shall remember and turn to the LORD; and all the families of the nations shall worship before him. 28 For dominion belongs to the LORD, and *he rules over the nations*. 29 To him, indeed, shall all who sleep in the earth bow down; before him shall bow all who go down to the dust, and I shall live for him. 30 Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord, 31 and proclaim his deliverance to a people yet unborn, saying that he has done it.

Psalms 47. 2 For the LORD, the Most High, is awesome, a *great king over all the earth*. 3 He subdued *peoples* under us, and *nations* under our feet. 4 He chose our heritage for us, the pride of Jacob whom he loves. Selah 5 God has gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet. 6 Sing praises to God, sing praises; sing praises to our King, sing praises. 7 *For God is the king of all the earth*; sing praises with a psalm. 8 *God is king over the nations*; God sits on his holy throne. 9 *The princes of the peoples gather as the people of the God of Abraham*. For the shields of the earth belong to God; he is highly exalted.

Psalms 68.29 Because of your temple at Jerusalem *kings bear gifts to you*....31 Let bronze be brought from *Egypt*; let *Ethiopia* hasten to stretch out its hands to God. 32 Sing to God, O *kingdoms of the earth*; sing praises to the Lord, Selah.

Psalms 86. 9 *All the nations* you have made shall come and bow down before you, O Lord, and shall glorify your name.

Psalms 96. 3 Declare his glory among the *nations*, his marvelous works among all the peoples.... 7 Ascribe to the LORD, O *families of the peoples*, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. 8 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; bring an offering, and come into his courts. 9 Worship the LORD in holy splendor; tremble before him, *all the earth*. 10 *Say among the nations, "The LORD is king!* The world is firmly

established; it shall never be moved. He will judge the *peoples* with equity." 11 Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice; let the sea roar, and all that fills it; 12 let the field exult, and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy 13 before the LORD; for he is coming, for he is *coming to judge the earth*. *He will judge the world* with righteousness, and the *peoples* with his truth.

Isaiah 2.2 In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; all the nations shall stream to it. 3 *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 instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 4 He shall *judge between the nations*, and shall *arbitrate for many peoples*; 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 11.9 They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for *the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD* as the waters cover the sea. 10 On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a *signal to the peoples*; *the nations shall inquire of him*, and his dwelling shall be glorious. 11 On that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. 12 He will raise a *signal for the nations*, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Isaiah 14. 1 But the LORD will have compassion on Jacob and will again choose Israel, and will set them in their own land; and *aliens will join them and attach themselves to the house of Jacob*. 2 And *the nations will take them and bring them to their place*, and *the house of Israel will possess the nations as male and female slaves in the LORD's land*; they will take captive those who were their captors, and rule over those who oppressed them.

Isaiah 18:6 They [Ethiopia] shall all be left to the birds of prey of the mountains and to the animals of the earth. And the birds of prey will summer on them, and all the animals of the earth will winter on them. 7 At that time *gifts will be brought to the LORD of hosts* from a people tall and smooth, from a people feared near and far, a nation mighty and conquering, whose land the rivers divide, to Mount Zion, the place of the name of the LORD of hosts.

Isaiah 19.22 *The LORD will strike Egypt, striking and healing*; they will return to the LORD, and he will listen to their supplications and heal them.

23 On that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian will come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. 24 *On that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth*, 25 whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, "*Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my heritage.*"

Isaiah 25.1 O LORD, you are my God; I will exalt you, I will praise your name; for you have done wonderful things, plans formed of old, faithful and sure. 2 For you have made the city a heap, the fortified city a ruin; the palace of aliens is a city no more, it will never be rebuilt. 3 Therefore *strong peoples will glorify you; cities of ruthless nations will fear you.* 4 For you have been a refuge to the poor, a refuge to the needy in their distress, a shelter from the rainstorm and a shade from the heat. When the blast of the ruthless was like a winter rainstorm, 5 the noise of aliens like heat in a dry place, you subdued the heat with the shade of clouds; the song of the ruthless was stilled. 6 *On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-aged wines strained clear.* 7 *And he will destroy on this mountain the shroud that is cast over all peoples, the sheet that is spread over all nations;* 8 *he will swallow up death forever.* Then the Lord GOD will wipe away the tears from *all faces*, and the disgrace of his people he will take away *from all the earth*, for the LORD has spoken.

Isaiah 40.3 A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. 5 Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and *all people* shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

Isaiah 42:1 Here is 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.* 2 He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; 3 a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established *justice in the earth;* and *the coastlands wait for his teaching.* 5 Thus says God, the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: 6 I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; *I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations,* 7 to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. 8 I am the LORD, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. 9 See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them. 10 Sing to the LORD a new song, his praise from *the end of the earth!* Let the sea roar and all that fills it, *the coastlands and their inhabitants.* 11 Let the desert and its towns lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar inhabits; let the inhabitants of Sela sing for joy, let them shout from the tops of the mountains. 12 Let them give glory to the LORD, and declare his praise *in the coastlands.*

Isaiah 45.20 Assemble yourselves and come together, draw near, you survivors of the nations! They have no knowledge-- those who carry about their wooden idols, and keep on praying to a god that cannot save. 21 Declare and present your case; let them take counsel together! Who told this long ago? Who declared it of old? Was it not I, the LORD? There is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is no one besides me. 22 Turn to me and be saved, *all the ends of the earth!* For I am God, and there is no other. 23 By myself I have sworn, from my mouth has gone forth in righteousness a word that shall not return: "*To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.*" 24 Only in the LORD, it shall be said of me, are righteousness

and strength; all who were incensed against him shall come to him and be ashamed.
25 In the LORD all the offspring of Israel shall triumph and glory.

Isaiah 49:1 Listen to me, O *coastlands*, pay attention, you *peoples* from far away! The LORD called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me. 2 He made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me away. 3 And he said to me, "You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified." 4 But I said, "I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and vanity; yet surely my cause is with the LORD, and my reward with my God." 5 And now the LORD says, who formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be gathered to him, for I am honored in the sight of the LORD, and my God has become my strength-- 6 he says, "*It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*" 7 Thus says the LORD, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the slave of rulers, "*Kings shall see and stand up, princes, and they shall prostrate themselves, because of the LORD, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you.*" ...22 Thus says the Lord GOD: I will soon *lift up my hand to the nations, and raise my signal to the peoples*; and they shall bring your sons in their bosom, and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders. 23 *Kings* shall be your foster fathers, and their *queens* your nursing mothers. With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the LORD; those who wait for me shall not be put to shame.

Isaiah 51.4 Listen to me, my people, and give heed to me, my nation; for a teaching will go out from me, and *my justice for a light to the peoples*.

5 I will bring near my deliverance swiftly, my salvation has gone out and my arms will rule the peoples; *the coastlands wait for me*, and for my arm they hope.

Isaiah 56.3 Do not let the *foreigner joined to the LORD* say, "The LORD will surely separate me from his people"; and do not let the eunuch say, "I am just a dry tree." 4 For thus says the LORD: To the eunuchs who keep my sabbaths, who choose the things that please me and hold fast my covenant, 5 I will give, in my house and within my walls, a monument and a name better than sons and daughters; I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off. 6 And the *foreigners who join themselves to the LORD*, to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD, and to be his servants, all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it, and hold fast my covenant-- 7 *these I will bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer*; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples. 8 Thus says *the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered*.

Isaiah 60.3 Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn. 4 Lift up your eyes and look around; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from far away, and your daughters shall be carried on their nurses' arms.... 9 For the coastlands shall wait for me, the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your children from far away, their silver and gold with them, for the name of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he has glorified you. 10

Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in my wrath I struck you down, but in my favor I have had mercy on you.

Isaiah 62.2 The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give.

Isaiah 66.18 For I know their works and their thoughts, *and I am coming to gather all nations and tongues; and they shall come and shall see my glory, 19 and I will set a sign among them.* From them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Put, and Lud-- which draw the bow-- to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory; and they shall declare my glory among the nations. 20 *They shall bring all your kindred from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses, and in chariots, and in litters, and on mules, and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring a grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.* 21 And I will also take *some of them as priests and as Levites,* says the LORD. 22 For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, says the LORD; so shall your descendants and your name remain. 23 From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, *all flesh shall come to worship before me,* says the LORD.

Jeremiah 3: 17 At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem, and they shall no longer stubbornly follow their own evil will.

Ezekiel 36. 36 Then the *nations* that are left all around you shall know that I, the LORD, have rebuilt the ruined places, and replanted that which was desolate; I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will do it. 37 Thus says the Lord GOD: I will also let the house of Israel ask me to do this for them: to increase their population like a flock. 38 Like the flock for sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem during her appointed festivals, so shall the ruined towns be filled with flocks of people. *Then they shall know that I am the LORD.*

Micah 4.1 In days to come the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised up above the hills. *Peoples shall stream to it, 2 and many nations 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 instruction, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. 3 He shall *judge between many peoples,* and shall arbitrate between *strong nations* far away; 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....

Zephaniah 3.8 Therefore wait for me, says the LORD, for the day when I arise as a witness. For my decision is to *gather nations,* to assemble *kingdoms,* to pour out upon them my indignation, all the heat of my anger; for in the fire of my passion all the earth shall be consumed. 9 At that time I will *change the speech of the peoples to a pure speech,* that all of them may call on the name of the LORD and serve him with one accord. 10 From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia my suppliants, my scattered ones, shall bring my offering. 11 On that day you shall not be put to shame because of all the deeds by which you have rebelled against me; for then I will remove from your

midst your proudly exultant ones, and you shall no longer be haughty in my holy mountain.

Haggai 2.6 For thus says the LORD of hosts: Once again, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land; *7 and I will shake all the nations, so that the treasure of all nations shall come*, and I will fill this house with splendor, says the LORD of hosts.

Zechariah 2.10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter Zion! For lo, I will come and dwell in your midst, says the LORD. *11 Many nations shall join themselves to the LORD on that day, and shall be my people*; and I will dwell in your midst. And you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent me to you. *12 The LORD will inherit Judah as his portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.*

13 Be silent, all people, before the LORD; for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.

Zechariah 8. *20 Thus says the LORD of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, the inhabitants of many cities; 21 the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, "Come, let us go to entreat the favor of the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am going." 22 Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to entreat the favor of the LORD. 23 Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from nations of every language shall take hold of a Jew, grasping his garment and saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you."*

Zechariah 14.16 Then [after the battle of the nations against Israel and their defeat] *all who survive of the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the festival of booths.* *17 If any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain upon them.*

Tobit 13.11 A bright light will shine to *all the ends of the earth; many nations will come to you from far away, the inhabitants of the remotest parts of the earth to your holy name, bearing gifts in their hands for the King of heaven.* Generation after generation will give joyful praise in you, the name of the chosen city will endure forever. *12 Cursed are all who speak a harsh word against you; cursed are all who conquer you and pull down your walls, all who overthrow your towers and set your homes on fire. But blessed forever will be all who revere you.* *13 Go, then, and rejoice over the children of the righteous, for they will be gathered together and will praise the Lord of the ages. 14 Happy are those who love you, and happy are those who rejoice in your prosperity. Happy also are all people who grieve with you because of your afflictions; for they will rejoice with you and witness all your glory forever.*

Tobit 14.5 "But God will again have mercy on them, and God will bring them back into the land of Israel; and they will rebuild the temple of God, but not like the first one until the period when the times of fulfillment shall come. After this they all will return from their exile and will rebuild Jerusalem in splendor; and in it the temple of God will be rebuilt, just as the prophets of Israel have said concerning it. *6 Then the nations in the whole world will all be converted and worship God in truth. They will all abandon their idols, which deceitfully have led them into their error; 7 and in*

righteousness they will praise the eternal God. All the Israelites who are saved in those days and are truly mindful of God will be gathered together; they will go to Jerusalem and live in safety forever in the land of Abraham, and it will be given over to them. Those who sincerely love God will rejoice, but those who commit sin and injustice will vanish from all the earth.

Psalm of Solomon 17.34b: And he (the Lord) will show mercy to all the nations [gathered] before Him in reverence. (my translation)

Sibylline Oracles 3.702-4, 710-20: But the sons of the great God will all live peacefully around the Temple, rejoicing in these things which the Creator, just judge and sole ruler, will give....And then all islands and cities will say, 'How much the Immortal loves those men! For everything fights on their side and helps them, heaven, divinely driven sun and moon' (but the all-bearing earth will be shaken in those days). They will bring forth from their mouths a delightful utterance in hymns, 'Come, let us all fall on the ground and entreat the immortal king, the great eternal God. Let us send to the Temple, since he alone is sovereign and let us all ponder the Law of the Most High God, who is the most righteous of all throughout the earth. (Trans. J. J. Collins)

Sibylline Oracles 3.772-75: From every land they [those God raises up as a kingdom for all ages among men—lines 767f] will bring incense and gifts to the house of the great God. There will be no other house among men, even for future generations to know, except the one which God gave to faithful men to honor (for mortals will invoke the son of the great God). (Trans. J. J. Collins)