

Isaiah 6 in Its Context

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Introduction

Scholars have long observed that between Isa 5 and 10 there appears to be an interpolation of diverse material into a previous whole and unbroken sequence. Indeed, a series of woes in Isa 5 (הוי) and the refrain so-called of Isa 5:25 cease at the end of the chapter, only to begin again in Isa 9:11, 16, 20 and 10:1, 5.¹ The “woe” (הוי) oracles are repeated in Isa 5:8, 11, 18, 20, 21, 22, but cease until appearing twice more in 10:1, 5, leaving the impression that the intervening material of chapters 6–9 has been spliced into it. Isaiah 5:25 contains what turns out to be a refrain by its repetition in 9:11, 16, 20, and 10:4: *בבבל זאת לא שב אפר ועור ידו נטויה*.² In addition, since Isaiah’s presumed call appeared not in chapter 1 but in chapter 6 (unlike Jeremiah and Ezekiel), the present arrangement has been considered secondary or “of accidental interpolation.”³

Consequently attempts have been made to reconstruct the “allegedly original literary sequence within a historical setting,”⁴ largely ignoring the canonical arrangement. Childs’ diagnosis of such a reconstruction is that,

it substitutes a different theological trajectory for these chapters and thus runs in the face of the canonical intent . . . a critically reconstructed redactional scheme that runs roughshod over the canonical shape of the biblical text itself . . . The obvious weakness in this older literary-critical approach is in failing adequately to deal with the present literary form of the text as a literary composition with its own integrity, which may well

1. See Brevard Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville, KY: WJK, 2001), 42–44, for a brief description and history of the *Denkschrift* hypothesis.

2. Note that this repetition links the judgment context of chapters 5 and 9–10 closely together, but as will be seen here, common phraseology and terminology concerning judgment also link chapters 5 and 6.

3. Childs, *Isaiah*, 43.

4. *Ibid.*

have intended something of semantic significance in positioning Isaiah's experience at chapter 6 rather than chapter 1.⁵

His suggestion that the present position of chapter 6 had significance for meaning turns out to be correct, as will be argued here. The weakness of traditional literary critics consists principally in failure to deal adequately with the present form of the text. In fact, the possibility that the book's present canonical shape could exhibit a coherent message should be considered from the beginning, before dissection into what are ultimately theoretical sources. As will be seen here, what appears at first glance to be a misplaced or chaotic juxtaposition of texts turns out to be part of a purposeful, cohesive, and coherent composition with major consequences for interpretation. Furthermore, the New Testament's reading of Isaiah 6 will also be examined and found to be remarkably consistent with the literary context.

Isaiah 6 in Context

Berlin also describes the "isolation of units" approach in her commentary on Zephaniah, and her remarks are fitting for Isaiah studies and indeed, the prophetic books in general.⁶ She rightly decries a particular commentator who,

views prophetic books as collections of oracles, analogous to collections of sermons, and stresses that one should not necessarily expect logical ordering or coherence in such collections . . . takes the basic unit of interpretation to be the individual oracle (assuming that it can be isolated) rather than the pericope, chapter, or book as a whole . . . sees little purpose in searching for a line of thought sustained or developed over several contiguous oracles because he views the ordering of these oracles as more or less random; or even if there is a logic to the ordering (chronological or thematic), it is secondary and not to be used in understanding the meaning of the original unit . . . denies or minimizes the existence of the book *qua* book, a work in its own right with a coherent design.⁷

Indeed, the approach described represents a reading of prophetic texts that ignores the *context* in which the writer located them. Berlin's diagnosis of the Zephaniah commentator applies *mutatis mutandis* to the case of Isaiah 6.

The focus of the present study will be on the function of the text of Isaiah 6 as it is in its canonical shape. Diachronic reconstructions of a separate source separating a supposed original unity of chapters 5 and 10 may appear cogent on the surface, but analysis of the linguistic evidence linking not only 5 and 6 but the entirety of chapters 2 through 12 reveals an overarching unity and continuity throughout. The

5. Ibid., 43, 44, 49. Childs' use of the term "composition" is appropriate as opposed to "redactor" or "editor" in this case given the numerous and persistent examples of linguistic ties across these chapters. The evidence, as will be shown below, belies a straightforward stitching at the seams of preexistent sources.

6. Adele Berlin, *Zephaniah* (AB 25A; New York: Doubleday, 1994), 21.

7. Ibid., 21-22.

so-called “seams” begin to fade as the depth of consistency and coherence between presumed discrete textual chunks are recognized.

Further comments by Berlin addressing the concept of context are incisive and bear repeating:

most if not all compilers, ancient and modern, have a purpose and seek to make their compilations coherent . . . most readers . . . read as though the compilers did . . . rejecting the claim that the juxtaposition of units affects their meaning . . . denies . . . readers a powerful interpretive device—the use of immediate context to make sense of an oracle . . . telling us . . . to look only to the original context of the oracle, the prophet’s first utterance of it, and to discount its present context in the prophetic book. But the original context is lost to us; we do not know exactly, when, where, and why the prophet delivered a particular oracle. The only context we have is in the book.[. . . the] primary task of the exegete is to explain the *book*, not only its pieces. The exegete will therefore assume coherence (as readers do for all texts), until all attempts to find it fail.⁸

While we do know the “when” of Isaiah 6 (year of Uzziah’s death), the book’s composer has indicated that these words should be understood and received by his *readers* (who receive it after the fact of the vision) as pertinent to them. As will be seen, the entirety of Isa 2–12 is wrapped in an eschatological time frame, indicating their particular relevancy for yet future generations,⁹ and Isaiah 6 in particular is the culmination of the divine exaltation first promised in chapter 2. Repeated themes and language across these chapters suggests authorially motivated coherence, which is confirmed upon further reflection.

Rendtorff addresses the topic of Isaiah 6 in a chapter concerning “the framework of the composition of the book,” and poses the question, “what is its context?”¹⁰ He suggests first the “memoir” of 6:1–8:18/9:6 and specifically 8:17,¹¹ but not its relation to chapters 5 immediately previous and 7 following. The bulk of discussion centers on connections, undoubtedly legitimate, between the hardening verses of chapter 6 and chapter 40 ff.¹² He does note the fact that the Hebrew term *שממה* of 6:11 is found also twice in 1:7 and then again in chapters 49 and 54.¹³ However, *לשממה* in 5:9 and the numerous verbal links between this verse and 6:11, as will be discussed below, are overlooked, as are the repeated terms and topics stretching from chapters 2 through 5 that culminate in chapter 6. His neglect of the preceding chapters and their possible connections to chapter 6 is undoubtedly

8. Ibid., 22.

9. The entire book of Isaiah ends as it began with an eschatologically restored Zion/Jerusalem—Isa 2:2–5 and Isa 65:18–25–66:10–14.

10. Rolf Rendtorff, *Canon and Theology: Overtures to an Old Testament Theology* (Minneapolis: MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 170–80, 173.

11. Ibid. 174.

12. Ibid. 177–80.

13. Ibid. 176–77.

due to acceptance of the memoir-as-interruption theory: “between there is a connected body of texts with *quite a different set of themes* (6.1–9.6),” (emphasis mine).¹⁴ On the contrary, there is in fact a discernible continuity of language and theme from chapter 5 into 6.

Williamson’s study on the composition and redaction of the book also includes a discussion of Isaiah 6.¹⁵ Defending the notion that “speculations about the growth of the book of Isaiah” are legitimate he confidently dates 6:13bβ to the post-exilic period and on that basis he removes it from further consideration.¹⁶ This is followed by the assertion that “with the exception of the final clause of the chapter, the whole was in place before the closing years of the exilic period,” and as a result “virtually the whole of Isaiah 6” can be used for “examining the possible influence of the first part of Isaiah on the later chapters.”¹⁷

As with Rendtorff’s analysis, Williamson’s discussion is focused primarily on the relationship of chapter 6 with Isaiah 40–55 and not the immediate context.¹⁸ One exception to this is the observation of links between Isa 2:12, 14 and 6:1 which will be explored further here, along with many further connections throughout Isa 2–5. However, the excision of 6:13bβ overlooks its role in the transition to material in chapter 7 immediately following. A remaining stump with a holy seed in it is a fitting precursor for the idea of a returning remnant (name of Isaiah’s son in 7:3) and the child born in 7:14 whose diet (7:15) is that of desolation (7:22). Desolation and exile as described in Isaiah 7 are anticipated already in the preceding chapter 6 and before. Furthermore, this child’s unique blamelessness (7:15–16, cf. opposite of the people at large in 5:20) qualifies it as holy (6:13) and the latter adjective (קדוש) suggests a link to the threefold holiness of the deity in 6:3 (קדוש). As will be discussed below, the seemingly enigmatic vision of the deity as king in blatant anthropomorphic form of 6:1 is further explained in 7 by a child named עֲמֹנוּאֵל.

The effect of the traditional chapter division often results in the same isolated reading at the popular or homiletic level. Isaiah 6 is a favorite text of contemporary preachers but rarely if ever is the full context of previous or following chapters taken into account.¹⁹ The division does reflect a recognizable change in style and reference from oracle in chapter 5 to the more prosaic account of the call of the prophet in chapter 6, also introduced by a specific date. Likewise the ancient scribe responsible for 1QIsa^a recognized the seam and left a lengthy space at the end of

14. Rolf Rendtorff, *The Canonical Hebrew Bible: A Theology of the Old Testament* (trans. David E. Orton; Leiden: Deo, 2005), 172.

15. H. G. M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah: Deutero-Isaiah’s Role in Composition and Redaction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994. repr. 2002), 30–56.

16. Ibid. 35, “can hardly be conceived before the time of Ezra . . . therefore, be discounted from the remainder of our analysis.”

17. Ibid. 37.

18. Ibid. 39.

19. One exception to this may be the connection sometimes drawn between the series of woes (הוֹי) across chapter 5 directed to the people at large, and the woe (אוי) in 6:5 directed by the prophet against himself.

5:30,²⁰ being probably an ancient form of אֲחֻתָּפִי.²¹ Nonetheless, it is shortsighted to erect high walls of interpretive isolation at these junctures. While chapter divisions certainly aid in ease of reference, their effect can be deleterious for interpretation, as is certainly the case here.

Other attempts have been made in the past to explain the present location of chapter 6. Liebreich asserts that chapter 6 “was placed in its present position because it was felt that it constitutes an appropriate climax to the five preceding chapters, which are linked together by a similar opening and closing (1:4 and 5:24).”²² He observed that while the divine title “Lord of hosts” (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) occurs nine times throughout all the first five chapters (1:9, 24, 2:12, 3:1, 15, 5:7, 9, 16, 24) excepting chapter 4, the epithet “Holy One of Israel” (קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל) is repeated only in 1:4 and 5:19, 24.²³ In the case of 5:24, it is the object of the same verbal predicate as 1:4,²⁴ and thus envelopes the first five chapters:

נִאֲצָר אֶת קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל – 1:4
וְאֵת אֲמֵרֵת קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל – 5:24

Chapter 6 then unites these two epithets into one in v. 3 by predicating three times the holiness (קְדוֹשׁ) of the Lord of hosts (יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת). Thrice repeated as well is the same adjective קְדוֹשׁ in the immediately preceding 5:16, 19, 25.²⁵ From this evidence Liebreich concludes that chapters 1–5 particularize God while 6:3 universalizes Him.²⁶

Seitz sees hints of the call of chapter 6 in the preceding 5:9, understanding the clause בְּאָזְנֵי יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת as reference to the divine council, translating it as “the Lord of Hosts has sworn in my hearing.”²⁷ So chapter 5 gives us clear intimations of the call of Isaiah, which then receives fuller expression in chapter 6.²⁸

Childs offers reasons for the juxtaposition of chapters 5–6, as well as of 6–7.²⁹ He sees a transition to judgment in chapter 5 where Israel the vineyard is to be destroyed, which destruction chapter 6 reiterates from another point of view.³⁰ Reference to the destruction of Israel (5:25) because it despised the Holy One of Israel (קְדוֹשׁ יִשְׂרָאֵל) in 5:24 precedes revelation to the prophet himself of its

20. John C. Trever, *Scrolls from Qumran Cave I* (Jerusalem: The Albright Institute of Archaeological Research and The Shrine of the Book, 1974), 12. If the space in 1QIsa^a here is compared with those between 5:25 and 26, between 5:19 and 20, 5:20 and 21, or 5:21 and 22, it becomes clear that the ancient tradition recognized it as a major break.

21. Marked in the MT by פ, see BHS.

22. Leon J. Liebreich, “The Position of Chapter Six in the Book of Isaiah,” *HUCA* 25 (1954): 38.

23. *Ibid.*

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*, 39.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Christopher Seitz, *Isaiah 1–39* (Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1993), 52.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Childs, *Isaiah*, 49, 57–59.

30. *Ibid.*, 57.

enduring hardening and destruction in chapter 6 and of the glory of the same Holy One (קדוש קדוש קדוש, 6:3). So both Childs and Liebreich see significance in the use of distinct divine epithets as a bridge between chapters 5 and 6. Childs notes as well how the divine eschatological rule of chapter 6 resonates with the same in 2:1–4 and 4:2–6.³¹

Oswalt understands chapter 6 as a suitable conclusion to what precedes and introduction to what follows, a hinge of sorts.³² He finds the “broad issues” such as sin of the nation in chapters 1–5 finding a solution in the experience of Isaiah in chapter 6, and the more specific occasions in 7–12 are a fulfillment of what the prophet had seen in his call of chapter 6.³³ However, the numerous linguistic correspondences permeating these chapters and their interpretive implications are not addressed.

Alter reads the immediately preceding Isa 5:26–30 as shifting “from the here and now to the end of things that recall the beginning . . . the poetic transformation of history into the stuff of apocalypse.”³⁴ The here and now in his view is “a concrete historical menace—the armies of Assyria or Babylonia, or even a natural disaster like locusts.”³⁵ Indeed, his observation of reference to “the end of things”³⁶ is correct, but the equivocation on which historical situation might be in view is telling.³⁷ There is no explicit reference to a historical entity, and the writer, as will be shown, seeks to portray the oracles of chapters 2–5 (ביום ההוא, note 5:30) and 6 as eschatological in thrust, pointing far beyond the particular contemporary circumstances.

Beuken discusses the relationship between chapters 1 and 6 and asserts what a reader might logically expect: chapters 1–5 “provide the readers with information that is absolutely necessary for the understanding of chapter 6.”³⁸ His focus, however, is limited primarily to comparing chapters 1 and 6.³⁹ A brief comment given on the role of Isaiah 1–5 concerns the repeated indictments of sin found therein, culminating in the hardening of 6:9–10.⁴⁰ He also appends to his study an impressive list of vocabulary items common to chapters 1 and 6.⁴¹ Further examples of semantic links noted are common references to desolation (שׁממה) in 1:7 and 6:11,⁴² restoration (שׁורב) in 1:25–26 and 6:10, 13, and the oak simile (כאלה) in 1:30

31. Ibid., 59.

32. J.N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah: Chapters 1–39*, NICOT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986), 171–77.

33. Ibid.

34. Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (New York: Basic Books, 1985), 151.

35. Ibid.

36. Ibid.

37. Alter seems to opt for an “Assyrian invasion” (p. 152).

38. Willem A. M. Beuken, “The Manifestation of Yahweh and the Commission of Isaiah: Isaiah 6 Read against the Background of Isaiah 1,” *CTJ* 39 (2004): 72–87, (78).

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid., 78–79.

41. Ibid., 84, 24 items in the list.

42. As noted above, the form לשׁממה is found in 5:9 as well.

and 6:13.⁴³ For the latter, burning (בער) brings destruction in either case (1:31, 6:13),⁴⁴ but nevertheless a holy seed survives in 6:13.⁴⁵ So, chapter 1 portrays vividly the destruction of the land and city, which is then reaffirmed in chapter 6. However, left unmentioned are numerous preparatory topics in chapters 2–5 that lead into chapter 6. Furthermore, chapter 5 itself shares a number of vocabulary items, even entire phrases with the following chapter 6, as will be seen.

Beuken's argument that the use of terms "cognate" to חצרי (1:12) in chapter 6 (לְבֵית וְהַיְכָל), outweighs the identical use of בֵּית and נִשְׂא in 6:4 and 2:2–3 is unconvincing.⁴⁶ Crucial to understanding chapter 2 is the constellation of terms repeated in 2:2–4 (exaltation of Zion) and 2:5–17 (exaltation of the Lord).⁴⁷ The house of the Lord (2:2) and the Lord Himself (2:11ff.) will be exalted. The latter is described especially by the repeated use of רוּם and נִשְׂא (2:9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 17) and thus prepares for the same two verbal roots in 6:1. Likewise thematic and lexical material from 2:5ff. permeates the sequence of chapters 2–5 (e.g., גְּבוּהָה in 2:11, 15, 17, 3:16, 5:15, 16, cf. especially 2:9 and 5:15) and so provide linkage between chapters 6 and 2.⁴⁸

Young holds that the position of chapter 6 is to present first, "the heart of his message" followed by, "an account of his prophetic call."⁴⁹ He sees it not only as a description of his initial call but also introducing the "Messianic trilogy" which follows.⁵⁰ The prophetic call account "reinforces what he has already proclaimed" in previous chapters and his preaching in them of final judgment is proven to have been given to him directly by God Himself.⁵¹ Included is a list of unifying language and themes across chapters 2–5 but also between 5 and 6 specifically.⁵² Indeed, the evidence he lists is impressive and demonstrates the compositional coherence across the "seam" of chapters 5–6.⁵³ Nonetheless, the interpretive implications resulting from this data are not explored. Furthermore, the vital connection between 5:26, 6:1 and 11:10, 12 is overlooked, along with the eschatological thrust (אֲוִדְהָה סוּיָה) from chapters 2 through 12. Perhaps for this reason Young does not wholeheartedly endorse John the apostle's identification of Adonay as Christ

43. Ibid.

44. But note also the same root in 4:4, 5:5. Chapter 6 indeed is consistent with chapter 1 but the intervening chapters 2–5 are of vital importance in its understanding.

45. Reference to a remnant is also found in 1:8, 9.

46. Beuken, "The Manifestation . . ." 79.

47. רוּם – vv. 2, 3 and 14; נִשְׂא – vv. 2, 4 and 9, 12, 13, 14; גְּבוּהָה – 2:2, 14; הֶלֶךְ – 2:3, (2), 5; and last but not least בְּאֲחֵרֵית הַיָּמִים in 2:2 which is antecedent to בְּיָוֶם הַהוּא in 2:11, 17.

48. Cf. felled oak/s (אֶלֶךְ) in 2:13 and 6:13. Two parallel themes – debasement of the proud and the Lord's exaltation – are found in chapters 2 and 6.

49. Edward G. Young, *The Book of Isaiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1965, repr. 1992), 232–33.

50. Ibid., n. 3.

51. Ibid., 234.

52. Ibid., 233, n. 4.

53. 3:4 compared with 5:5; 2:9, 11, 17 with 5:5; 5:9, 10, 13, 14, 17 with 6:11–13; 5:9 with 6:11; 5:5 with 6:13; 5:24 with 6:13b; 5:26 with 7:18; 5:5, 6 with 7:23–25; 5:30 with 8:22.

(John 12:41).⁵⁴ Isaiah “does not stress the person of Christ” and yet “this appearance we learn *from John* was an appearance of Christ” (emphasis mine).⁵⁵

The preceding examples represent the scholars who make rather minimal attempts to consider the context of Isaiah 6. However there is much more linguistic evidence to be noted along with its “semantic significance” to use the words of Childs.⁵⁶ Furthermore, the meaning of chapter 6 should be considered in light, not only of those chapters preceding but also those immediately following.

From the initial superscription of the book are topics that find expression throughout the ensuing chapters including 6. Isaiah 1 opens with a sequence of four Davidic kings, with Uzziah, the king mentioned in 6:1 being the first. The initial vision portrays a desolate land and its capital Zion (1:8), although not without a surviving remnant (1:9) and promise of restoration (1:26–28).⁵⁷ The “last days” of 2:2 (בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים)⁵⁸ although not entirely specific, do clearly point to a distant future, i.e., eschaton, in which Jerusalem/Zion is not only restored but exalted and elevated to an unprecedented position and condition. In addition, the language of universal worship at Jerusalem (2:2–3) and absolute peace between all nations (2:4) is unparalleled and cannot be understood simply as “strongly continuous with the present,” nor as “the end of days as they are currently experienced.”⁵⁹

Similarly 4:2–6 portrays a Jerusalem *fundamentally* transformed,⁶⁰ and the description is introduced by the ubiquitous phrase “in that day”: בְּיוֹם הַהוּא. This shorter phrase is anaphoric to the initial “last days” of 2:2.⁶¹ However, the material

54. Ibid., 237.

55. Ibid.

56. Childs, *Isaiah*, 43.

57. Chapter 1 ends with burning judgment much as does the entire book, although Jerusalem is restored (66:10). Cf. וְאֵין מִכְבָּה . . . פְּשָׁעִים in 1:28, 31 with 66:24 – לֹא תִכְבֶּה . . . הַפְּשָׁעִים.

58. Note the following three descriptions of the phrase in scholarly dictionaries:

(1) “*the end of the days*, i.e., the latter days, the future [Gen 49:1; Num 24:14 . . . Isa 2:2; Mic 4:1],” *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. I, s.v. אַחֲרֵית.

(2) “אַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים – לְרוֹב – קֶץ הַיָּמִים (בְּמוֹבֵן אֶסְכֵטוֹלוֹגִי).” מִנְחֵם-צְבִי קֶדְרִי, מְלוֹן הָעֵבְרִית הַמְקֵרָאִית (רִמְת-גֵּן תּוֹצֵאֹת-אוֹנִיבֵרְסִיטֵת בִּרְ-אֵילָן, 2006), 29.

(3) “La expresión puede adquirir sentido escatológico: tiempo último, final, definitivo Is 2,2 Ez 38,16, Os 3:5.” Luis Alonso Schoekel, *Diccionario bíblico hebreo-español* (Valencia: Institución San Jerónimo, 1990), s.v. אַחֲרֵית.

59. H. G.M. Williamson, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Isaiah 1–27* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2006), 180. Furthermore, individual members of the construct chain (אַחֲרֵית) this phrase represents cannot be analyzed in isolation (ibid., p. 179). The city’s description here in Isa 2 simply does not qualify as part of the writer’s experience.

60. Note that Isa 2:3 and 4:3, 4–5 mention the restored Zion/Jerusalem directly. Another portrayal of the eschatological Jerusalem appears in Isa 65:18, where it is transformed (בּוֹרָא) in conjunction with the recreation (בּוֹרָא) of the heavens and earth (v. 17).

61. As already noted, the repeated phrase בְּיוֹם הַהוּא continues through chapter 12:1, 4. Isaiah 12 portrays a restored Zion (v. 6) and exalted Lord (נִשְׁגַב שְׁמוֹ, v. 4), exactly as was promised in 2:11, 17 – וְנִשְׁגַב יְהוָה לְבָרוּ בְּיוֹם הַהוּא – 17. From chapters 2 to 12 there is then a continuity and cohesiveness across what may at first glance appear to be disparate material. A closer reading reveals compositional integration in spite of the seams, whether real or imagined. It is worthwhile to

intervening from 2:6–4:1 and following in 5:1–30 reveal that “in that day” a great end-time judgment on the proud will precede restoration as well as an enduring desolation. In that same time period the Lord alone will be exalted “in that day” (ביום ההוא – 2:11) of wrath on all pride, a theme repeated in 2:17, 20. That sorrowful period ends in the eschatological (ביום ההוא) salvation of 4:2.

Chapter 5 is another extended discourse on the coming judgment and it ends with the same reference (ביום ההוא) in the final v. 30, immediately followed by the vision of divine exaltation in 6:1. The entirety of chapters 2 to 5 are thus to be read as visions of the final judgment and also eventual restoration “in that day.” As noted above, this temporal phrase is again repeated in chapter 7 (vv. 18, 20, 21, 23) and likewise through 12, so that the eschatological focus permeates entirely the content of these oracles. While chapter 7 twice identifies the king of Assyria (vv. 17, 20) as the immediate agent of destruction described in these contexts, he is simply initiating a desolation that will endure long into the future, and which was already described since chapter 2. By repetition of common themes and vocabulary across chapters 2–7, and even beyond up to chapter 12 as well, the composer of the book of Isaiah has left evidence of a consistent message of judgment and eventual restoration in “that day” across various seams and segments that make up their content.

Proof that chapter 6 reiterates the same eschatological judgment seen in 5 is found by the numerous verbal parallels concentrated in 6:11–13 and 5:9–10. For example, the inhabitant-less houses of 5:9 (מאין יושב . . . בבית) correspond closely with the inhabitant-less (מאין יושב) cities and houses (ובתים מאין אדם) of 6:11. Likewise the desolation of the same in 5:9 (לשמה) is reiterated in 6:11 (שממה). A remnant tenth of 6:13 (ועוד בה עשריה) after its destruction recalls the ten sections of a vineyard (כי עשרת צמדי כרם) in 5:10 required to produce one measure of wine. Exile for God’s people is due to their lack of knowledge (מבלי דעת) in 5:13, and previous to that (5:12) they did not see the deeds of his hand (לא ראו). In fact, they ask to see and know in 5:19 in an apparently sarcastic manner (ונראה . . . ונראה), and are thus condemned. This situation persists, or is described again in chapter 6:9–10 with further details (פן יראה) . . . פן יראה). Consequently the ignorance and blindness of chapter 5 is seen as well in chapter 6, but now divinely induced and persisting to an indefinite future. In fact, 5:25 had already hinted at the enduring judgment upon his people ועוד ידו נטויה, a phrase that probably anticipates those in chapter 6 such as ועוד בה עשריה (v. 13), and the question עד מתי, along with its answer עד אשר (v. 11). Such concrete linguistic parallels demonstrate continuity in chapter 6 with the previous material.

Chapter 2 also initiates another running theme that culminates deliberately in 6:1. Just as the *mountain* of the house of the Lord will be *exalted* above the *hills* in (2:2) so the Lord himself will be raised over the *mountains*, and *exalted hills*:

2:2 – יהוה הר בית יהוה בראש ההרים ונשא מגבעות
2:14 – ועל כל ההרים הרמים ועל כל הגבעות הנשאות

note how the same reference (אחרית הימים) of Hos 4:1 (vv. 1–3 essentially repeat Is 2:1–4) is carried on likewise as in Isaiah by ביום ההוא (Hos 4:6, 5:9).

His exaltation is eschatological in 2:11 (ביום ההוא) even as is the exaltation of his house of 2:2 (באחרית הימים). As already noted, the former is anaphoric to the latter and begins a sequence continuing through chapter 12. Every proud thing, be it human or material will be debased in that day (2:9–19). This idea is repeated again in 3:16–26 where the exalted pride of the daughters of Zion (כי גבהו בנות) ציון, 3:16) is removed “in that day,” i.e., the eschatological judgment day (ביום ההוא, 3:18). In “that day” Jerusalem will be restored (ביום ההוא, 4:2), repeating essentially the promise of its eschatological (באחרית הימים) exaltation. Here then is further evidence that the phrase in question, (ביום ההוא) found first in 2:11 and repeatedly through chapter 12, resumes באחרית הימים of 2:2.

The refrain promising divine exaltation and human debasement appears again in 5:15 with identical terminology and it repeating verbatim the entire clause of 2:9:

וישח אדם וישפל איש – 2:9a
וישח אדם וישפל איש – 5:15a

The humiliation of man is then followed in 5:16 with the exaltation (ויגבה) of the Lord, the holy God in judgment, as previously declared in chapter 2:10–22 (cf. the same root גבה in 2:14, 15, 17).

In this way, chapters 2–5 sustain the promise of ultimate divine exaltation and debasing of human achievement and pride. Following immediately in 6:1 is a vision of the Lord being exalted using verbs (רם ונשא) found repeatedly in chapter 2, sometimes the complete pair (2:9, 11, 12-both, 13, 14-both). Undoubtedly 6:1 is to be read in context as a vision of that ultimate eschatological exaltation of the Lord promised repeatedly between chapters 2 and 5. Additionally the vision is of a decidedly anthropomorphic and visible king representing the ultimate elevation of the Lord himself. Within exalted Zion (ונשא, 2:2) will sit an exalted (ונשא, 6:1) monarch of visible (ואראה, 6:1, cf. also עיני ראו, v. 5) anthropomorphic features.

Immediately preceding chapter 6 the verb נשא (“to raise,” 5:26) is found, repeating the same root seen in 2:9–14 (vv. 9, 12, 14) to condemn human pride. Isa 2:11, 17 had declared the Lord alone would be exalted (ביום ההוא) inn that day and the exaltation of the sign (ונשא נס) of 5:26 takes place in the same “day” (ביום ההוא, 5:30). Undoubtedly the נס of 5:26 also represents that repeated promise of eschatological divine exaltation. This is confirmed by the fact that immediately following in 6:1 the same verb is found in the pair רם ונשא (“high and exalted”) describing the exaltation of Adonay. Implied is an identity between the raised signal of 5:26 (נס) and the raised Lord (אדני) of 6:1. Furthermore, the evident consonance between נס and נשא in 5:26 highlights the intrinsic attribute of exaltation to a נס, the signal, banner, or standard. This figure, and its association with exaltation, links implicitly to the concrete and actual person: the king of 6:1. Additional support for this identification of 5:26 and 6:1 derives from their similar worldwide dominance. Thus the signal of 5:26 is to distant nations (לגוים מרחק) and to the end of the earth (מקצה הארץ). The king’s glory in 6:3 fills the earth (מלא כל הארץ כבוד) in similar fashion.

Further information is given in chapter 11 on the נס seen first in 5:26. In 11:10 the root of Jesse will stand as a sign to the peoples (לנס עמים), again in “that day” ביום

ההוא. This text is clearly resumptive of the first reference of the sign to the nations (ההוא, *וּנְשָׂא נֶס לְגוֹיִם*, 5:26) also in “that day” (*בְּיוֹם הַהוּא*, 5:30). Confirmation is found then two verses later in 11:12 where the language is even closer to 5:26:

5:26 – וּנְשָׂא נֶס לְגוֹיִם מֵרְחוֹק
11:12 – וּנְשָׂא נֶס לְגוֹיִם

The ubiquitous temporal reference “in that day” of 5:30 is also found in 11:11, adding further support to the identification. Furthermore, the repeated refrain across chapters 2–5 announcing the exaltation of the Lord and debasing of man finds its parallel as well in the immediate context of chapter 11. So in 10:33 (as in 2:9–17), the exalted ones will be debased, *וּרְמֵי הַקּוֹמָה גְרוּעִים וְהַגְבָּהִים יִשְׁפָּלוּ*, and Lebanon will also fall, *וְהַלְבָּנוֹן בְּאֵדִיר יִפּוֹל*, (10:34), which 2:13 had already previously predicted *עַל בְּיוֹם הַהוּא* in 10:27 with 2:11, 20).

Given that the *נֶס* of 5:26 can be identified as the root of Jesse by comparison with 11:10, then it follows that the same is true of the king in 6:1, to which 5:26 is linked expressly through the verb *נָשָׂא*. Indeed, the similarity of expression between 6:3 and 11:9cd confirms the association:

6:3 – מְלֵא כֹל הָאָרֶץ כְּבוֹדוֹ
11:9cd – כִּי מְלֵאָה הָאָרֶץ דַּעַת אֶת יְהוָה

Identification of the divine king in 6:1 as the Davidic root of Jesse from 11:10 raises the distinct possibility that intervening material, such as the immediately following chapter 7, provides further comment regarding the same. Suffice it to say at this point that the promised eschatological elevation of the Lord and his divine judgment on pride and haughtiness of chapters 2–5 is fulfilled in the vision of an exalted human, and yet at the same time divine, Davidic king/priest in 6:1. Eschatological desolation precedes the vision of 6:1–7 in chapter 5 and also follows in 6:9–13, as already noted, with identical terminology and expression. Consequently the vision of 6:1 is to be read likewise as representing the eschatological exaltation of Israel’s deity in a context of fiery judgment and desolation. Chapter 7 will also describe devastation in language identical to chapter 5 (cf. 7:23–25 and 5:6), as will be discussed shortly. The obvious continuity maintained throughout this sequence of texts implies reading chapter 7 in the context of the preceding 6, with important consequences for interpretation. As an example, the desolation of 6:11–12 (*הָאֲדָמָה*) and of 7:16 (*תַּעֲזֹב הָאֲדָמָה*) are one and the same likewise, and so indicate further evidence for the integration of chapters 6 and 7.

So the controverted identity of the son of 7:14 must be read in the context not only of chapter 7, but also of chapter 6 and those previous. Since it has been shown that 6:1 is the vision of a divine and exalted root of Jesse, it is most probable that the son given as a miraculous sign (*אוֹת*)⁶² to the house of David in 7:14 is

62. Found in both vv. 11 and 14. These two verses also highlight through consonance the miracle of divinely caused conception and birth of a son to a young unmarried woman

further comment on his identity. Note in addition the linkage between the king of 6:1 (על כסא) and the monarch of 9:6 (על כסא), both of whom occupy the throne, presumably Davidic in both cases.⁶³ Indeed, the darkness of 8:22–23 precedes the birth of a divine, Davidic child in chapter 9, being identical to that darkness of 5:30, which also precedes the appearance of a divine Davidic monarch in 6:1, and child in 7:14.

Beuken suggests an intertextual connection between Isaiah's cleansing with a coal from the *incense altar* in chapter 6 (vv. 5–7) in the year of Uzziah's death and the Chronicler's reference to Uzziah's punishment with leprosy for offering *incense* on the *altar*.⁶⁴ Indeed it is not coincidence that the vision of Adonay as priest king in 6:1 should be dated to the year in which another king, Uzziah, attempted unsuccessfully to function in both roles. Isaiah's vision of a divine monarch dressed in sacerdotal garments and seated in the temple resonates with the Chronicler's narrative of Uzziah's hubristic attempt to offer incense as a king. He also recognizes correctly the sacerdotal language from Exod 28:33ff., 39:24ff. used for the king's robes in Isa 6:1.⁶⁵

It appears then that the date of this vision to the year of King Uzziah's death is a very calculated and considered reference. Uzziah was the epitome of pride according to 2 Chronicles 26:16 (גבה לבו). The verb גבה is found repeatedly in Isa 2–5, namely, 2:15, 17, 3:6, to describe human pride, while in 5:15 of haughty eyes and finally in 5:16 it is predicated of the Lord's exaltation in judgment. In 2:15 it is used to describe the pride of all lofty towers (כל מגדל גבה) and edifices which Uzziah constructed in 2 Chron 26:9, 15. Immediately following in (Chron 26:16) his prideful heart (גבה לבו), is shown as the cause of his downfall. Verse 21 then records his death (מותו), as in Isa 6:1: מות המלך עזיהו. Furthermore, in 2 Chron 26:22 we read that Isaiah himself recorded all the events of King Uzziah's life. He was a fitting example of human pride rebelling treacherously against the Lord as is mentioned twice in 2 Chron 26, וימעל ביהוה in v. 16, מעלת in v. 18. Isaiah's eschatological vision is thus appropriately dated to the year of that king's death.

Historical notice of that year served not simply chronological or historical purposes, but rather those illustrative, contrastive, and indeed theological. His pride led him to offer incense in the temple, a duty reserved exclusively for the priests (2 Chron 26:16–19). By contrast, the vision of the Lord in Isa 6:1 as a king wearing priestly garments is of his ultimate exalted state: ישב על כסא רם ונשא רשוליו מלאים in Isa 6:1. He is able to perform both sacerdotal and royal duties in direct contrast with Uzziah.

(העלמה – fornication is excluded by its divine origin and so virginity is required) by reference to the sign's elevation (למעלה) and depth (העמק).

63. The throne of 6:1 is in the temple, but as will be argued below, represents rule in contrast and in place of the Davidic King Uzziah who also sought to function as priest and king. Note as well the identification of the Davidic throne as divine in 1 Chron 28:5, 29:23, and eternal in 1 Chron 17:12, 14.

64. W. A. M. Beuken, *Jesaja 1–12*, (trans. Ulrich Berges; Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 167–68.

65. *Ibid.*, 168.

Along with the location within the temple, the particular form for Adonay's garments in this verse supports a sacerdotal emphasis. In six out of eleven total instances in the MT the term שׂוּלִי (שׂוּלִי) refers to the high priest's robes (Exod 28, 39).⁶⁶ So his priestly dress and designation as "the king" (הַמֶּלֶךְ, v. 5) seated on a throne indicates he is the ultimate replacement of Uzziah. Uzziah, the epitome of human pride is now dead while the Lord will be the ultimate exalted monarch. His sin of transgressing the bounds of a king's authority contrasts with and serves to highlight the coming divine, eschatological, and Davidic monarch.⁶⁷

Alexander notes that if the vision took place after the death of Uzziah then it also took place in the first year of Jotham's reign.⁶⁸ Why then did the writer not date it to the son's first year? Such an observation underscores the writer's intention and purpose in the choice of proud and now dead Uzziah who sought to occupy both positions, as a foil for the now exalted divine, and yet indubitably human, priest-king Adonay. Dating it to the first year of Jotham would not have had the desired effect.

There are further evidences of the eschatological nature of Isaiah 6 beyond those mentioned previously. Isaiah 4:2–6 is undoubtedly a vision of the ultimately restored Jerusalem (cf. again in v. 2 the anaphoric phrase בְּיָמֵי הַהוּא). There the

66. H. M. Wolf, *Interpreting Isaiah: The Suffering and Glory of the Messiah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1985), 86: "The long, flowing robe is reminiscent of the garb of the high priest (Exod. 39:24)."

67. Hans Wilderberger, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary* (trans. T. H. Trapp: Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 259, who quotes Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology II* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker: New York: Harper, 1965), 363, as follows, "The way in which the prophets give the exact time at which they received certain revelations, dating them by events in the historical and political world, and thereby emphasizing their character as real historical events, has no parallel in any other religions," may be true. But this misses the entire point of the dating of the vision to Uzziah's death. It is the contrast between attempted and failed royal sacerdotal function through pride and the true king/priest's exaltation, which explains this specification of the vision to this year. This can be shown by his extended historical discussion (p. 259) of this particular year, while ignoring the real reason for its inclusion. Knowing the exact day and hour of this vision would not shed any light on its use here in the text at hand. John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 1–33* (WBC 33: Waco, TX: Word Book, 1985), 73, states that "the co-regencies of Judean kings makes the precise date difficult to determine," which if it were possible to ascertain with specificity would not make the meaning any more transparent at all. He then assumes a chronological sequencing of these oracles by stating that the vision here marks the close of events portrayed in chaps. 1–5. Of that there is no evidence, but he overlooks the abundant linguistic evidence that accounts for their textual order. G. B. Gray, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Isaiah*, I–XXVII, (vol. 1: Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd., 1912), 102, is likewise interested in chronological and calendrical questions in comments on 6:1. For Wolf, *Interpreting Isaiah*, 85, the transition from chapter 5 to 6 is simply an illustration of Isaiah's many contrasts, which in this case is from one "about darkness and sin to one about glory and holiness." Concerns with chronological issues in 6:1 has a long history among commentators dating to Ibn Ezra, *The Commentary of Ibn Ezra on Isaiah*: (vol. I, trans. and ed. M. Friedländer; New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1873), 34. For another modern example, R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39* (New Century Bible Commentary; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1980), 70–74.

68. Joseph A. Alexander, *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah*, (rev. ed. John Eadie, 1875; repr. Grand Rapids: MI: Zondervan, 1980), 146.

branch (צמח) in the midst of a remnant (לפליטת ישראל והיה הנשאר), vv. 2–3), has been purified by burning (לבער, v. 4) in a new Jerusalem where a cloud by day and smoke (עשן, v. 5) by night are present. Chapter 6 then characterizes the temple and priest/king in similar fashion. So there is smoke (עשן, v. 4) and a purification of the prophet in a fiery context of burning coal by fiery beings (שרפים), as well as purification of a future remnant of one-tenth by burning (לבער, 6:13). The purified remnant in chapter 4 is called holy (קדוש, v. 3) while in chapter 6 only the Lord, the king—not even the prophet, is holy (קדוש קדוש קדוש, v. 3). So the fiery vision of the Lord in the temple of chapter 6 is a further revelation of the flame-purified atmosphere of Jerusalem in chapter 4, the ultimate eschatological sanctuary.⁶⁹

Another element common to both chapters 4 and 6 is the term “glory” (לכבוד) in 4:2, כבוד in 4:5, and כבודו in 6:3). The צמח of 4:2 possesses glory while the same is attributed to the Lord in 6:3, implying the divinity of the former. To the branch in 4:2 is attributed another divine characteristic, “majestic exaltation” (גאון). Twice in preceding texts this is attributed to the deity himself (גאון, 2:10, 21), in his eschatological judgment. So the branch in the restored temple of chapter 4 possesses divine characteristics attributed to the sanctuarily-seated anthropomorphic Adonay in chapter 6, and to the Lord of hosts in chapter 2.

The specific transition of 5:30 to 6:1 is not unique in the book. The same is found in the transition between the end of chapter 8 and beginning of 9, as noted above:

5:30 – וַיִּבְטַח לָאָרֶץ וְהָנָה חֹשֶׁךְ וְאֹר חֹשֶׁךְ בְּעֵרִיפֶיהָ

“and he looked to the earth and behold there was distressing darkness and light became darkness in its clouds”

8:22 – וְאֵל אֶרֶץ יִבִּיט וְהָנָה צָרָה וְחֹשֶׁכָה מֵעוֹף צֹקָה וְאִפְלָה מִנְדָּח
9:1 – הָעָם הַהֹלְכִים בַּחֹשֶׁךְ רָאוּ אֹר גָּדוֹל

“and he looked to the earth and behold distress and darkness . . . the people walking in darkness saw a great light”

So a general situation of darkness and distress in chapter 8 is dispelled by the birth of a divine Davidic son in chapter 9 (cf. אל גבור in 9:5 and 10:21) who reigns forever. The same gloom in chapter 5 is followed by a vision of a reigning divine and yet human in form king/priest in chapter 6 (in contrast to once proud but now debased King Uzziah who sought to function as priest), followed by further details regarding his birth in chapter 7. Undoubtedly the book’s composer located the two similar descriptions of darkness and distress as a purposeful prelude to the visible appearance of Adonay in 6:1 and the light-bringing son of 9:5.

Immediately following the highly anthropomorphic vision of God in chapter 6 is the account in chapter 7 of the birth of a child bearing the name עמנואל, “God is with us.” This child rejects evil and chooses good (מאוס ברע ובוחר בטוב, 7:15–16)

69. The imagery drawn from the wilderness tabernacle in 4:5 implies a sanctuarial context for both chapters 4 and 6.

in stark contrast to the people of 5:20, who choose the very opposite (האמרים לרע טוב ולטוב רע, 5:20). Thus this child partakes apparently of the same holiness as the divine king of 6:1. The child appears during a time of desolation (תעוזב האדמה, 7:15–25), the same already foreseen in 6:11–13 (האדמה . . . עזובה). That time of abandonment is predicted in chapter 7 but foreseen already in the likewise eschatological context of 6:11–13.

The writer has also closely bound these two chapters by linking Ahaz back to Uzziah his grandfather through Jotham in 7:1 – “Ahaz, son of Jotham, son of Uzziah.” Uzziah’s patrilineality is never mentioned in 6:1, nor is Ahaz’ in 14:28, nor Hezekiah’s in 36:1. So the three royal names in 7:1 do not simply link Ahaz genealogically with his grandfather, but rather function to bind closely the content of chapters 6 and 7 together. Common terminology between these two chapters, along with their overall cohesive nature, confirm such a purpose for the threefold genealogical sequence.

These two kings resemble each other in unfaithfulness as well. Uzziah was the proud rebel against God who dies as a result, and Ahaz is the unbelieving king who will not be established (7:9), and who will not see the child. This is due to the fact that 65 years later (Isa 7:9) the land of Ephraim will be destroyed and this will take place before the child of 7:14 is grown (7:16). The historical references to Assyria in 7:19, 18, 20 (also 8:7) as the agent of destruction of these two powers Ahaz feared (7:16) do not lessen the eschatological thrust maintained throughout since chapter 2. Assyria will do away with these two kingdoms feared by Ahaz, but sixty-five years down the road (7:8), beyond his lifetime. So the prophet is already directing his message beyond Ahaz himself in 7:8 and the use of consistent terminology since chapter 2 tying all these chapters together confirms the long-term perspective. Assyria is the immediate agent of destruction upon both the powers threatening Ahaz and upon the Judean king himself. However it inaugurates a desolation that extends far into the future, as repeated patterns of language from previous chapters reveal. It is only the beginning of a devastation that still endures in 8:22, 23 (and already seen in 5:30), only to be dispelled by the birth of a divine child (9:1–5). But further desolation and judgment is implied in 9:7ff. by the use of the same refrain seen in 5:25 (בכל זאת לא שב אפוד ועוד ידור נטויה).

Language expressing restoration also links both chapters 6 and 7. The possibility of a return/repentance in 6:10 (ושב) appears remote, but v. 13 confirms its ultimate reality (ושבה) in spite of further judgment. Immediately following in 7:3 this hope is reiterated by the otherwise otiose naming of the prophet’s son שאר ישוב. Subsequent to this ray of hope linking the end of chapter 6 and beginning of 7 there is little optimism expressed before 8:23ff. apart from the birth of the child of 7:14–16. Promise of a remnant (שאר) in the son’s name recalls the same in 4:3 (והיה הנשאר). Both the general context and *wegatal* verbal predicate of 4:3 are explicitly eschatological (note ביום ההוא in 4:2), and so the resumption of the remnant theme here in 7:3 indicates the same. Repetition of identical terms to 7:3 in 10:21, 22 (שאר ישוב) confirms it again. The latter verses (10:21, 22) are also placed in that distant eschatological day (ביום ההוא, 10:20).

Further linguistic parallels also connect chapters 6 and 7. In 6:4 the threshold of the temple shook (וינער) from the sound of the seraphs and the house (הבית) was filled with smoke (עשן). Likewise in 7:2 the heart of the house (הבית) of David shook (וינע) from the threat of attack by the northern coalition, like the shaking (כנרע) of leaves before the wind. The two threatening kings are characterized in 7:4 as two smoking (העשנים) firebrands. Within the first house (the temple) sits the root of Jesse as divine priest/king (6:1), while the second house (of David) will be given a son whose name signifies God's presence with his people. Here are echoes of the well-known covenant with David (2 Sam 7), in which the divine residence is contemplated.

The prophet Isaiah himself sought to know how long the desolation would last (ער מתי, 6:11) and was told only that there would be a remnant. No specific timetable is given in response to his question. Indeed, this desolation will endure until "that day," as its repetition in the judgment context of 7:20, 21 and 23 reveals. Assyria is identified in chapter 7 as the initial cause, but that darkness will endure until a light dispels it (8:22–9:6).

Reading Isaiah 6 Eschatologically

Support for the ultimate and eschatological thrust of Isaiah's utterance in chapter 7 is supported by further evidence. Within 7: 8–17 are the two phrases, שמיר ושית (vv. 23, 24, 25), and the ubiquitous ביום ההוא (vv. 20, 21, 23), that provide a direct connection to the eschatological time period of chapters 2–5 (ביום ההוא, 2:11, 20, 3:7, 4:2, 5:30, 7:18–23), and to its conditions (שמיר ושית, "thorns and thistles") as described already in 5:6. For good reason then the prophet addresses the "house of David" at large in 7:13, 14 (לכם . . . מכם) and not Ahaz directly as in 7:11 (לך). The eschatological thrust and focus, seen since 2:2, continues by means of explicit reference to that day through chapter 7. The miraculous child will not appear until after the destruction of the land of the two kings (7:16), which is itself sixty-five years in the future (7:8). Indeed his diet as described in 7:15 as חמאה ודבש is identical to the meager fare remaining in the judgment context of 7:22 (חמאה ודבש), food of the type produced by a land filled with שמיר ושית. So the linguistic evidence points to his birth occurring during the desolation of "that day." Prophecies given in the days of the historical kings Uzziah (ch. 6) and Ahaz (ch. 7) inform the reader of events that stretch into the distant future, "in that day."⁷⁰ The evidence indicates that the book's composer and writer reflected upon and recognized the ultimate and eschatological import of these prophetic events and words, providing comfort for generations yet to come.

In the same context of the word pair שמיר ושית of 5:6 and 7:23–25 is found another lexical parallel (the root עדר, "to till") that again deliberately ties the desolation of chapter 5 with that of 7. So the vineyard of Isa 5 will be made a waste, not pruned "and not tilled" (ולא יעדו, 5:6). Likewise in chapter 7 among the multiple

70. As noted already, the same can be said of chapters 2–5.

references to “thorns and thistles” (שמיר ושיית) it is said that on the mountains where “they till with a hoe” (במעדר יעדורון), will be for grazing of cattle and sheep. Only in these two places in the entire book is this particular root found, and thus constitutes a dislegomenon (or trislegomenon if the noun is included from 7:25) in Isaiah. So again there is a deliberate placement of the desolation of chapters 5 and 7 in the identical ultimate time period.

Finally, as noted previously, Isa 6:10 (along with Isa 53:1), is cited in the New Testament Gospel of John, in a context emphasizing unbelief among the people. Isaiah 53 addresses this subject in the rhetorical question of 53:1, which presumes few believers, and 6:9–10 in the same vein foresees a general hardening of the nation. Vocabulary of hearing and healing is common to these two texts (רפא in 6:10, 53:5; שמע in 6:9, 10, 53:1). Furthermore, the collocation of the two roots רם ונשא (6:1) is also found in the opening description of the Lord’s servant in 52:13, implying the divinity of the latter as well. These verbal roots נשא and רם expressing exaltation occur again in Isa 33:10 and 57:15 for a total of four instances in the entire book. Since the first three examples are predicated of the deity the same is implied for the fourth. The first example (6:1) is accompanied by highly anthropomorphic language including the prophet’s claim to have seen (ואראה in v. 1 and ראו עיני in v. 5) the Lord. The last example in 52:13ff. repeats the same root three times, מראה in 52:14, 53:2, ונראה in 53:2. Consequently the linking of these two texts by the Gospel writer is amply supported beyond the common context of faithlessness.

John 12:41 declares that Isaiah saw δόξαν αὐτοῦ, “his glory.”⁷¹ The referent of this pronoun is clear from the context. The immediately following clause declares that the prophet spoke “concerning him” (περὶ αὐτοῦ), as does the preceding αὐτοῦ of v. 37, whose referent in each case is Christ. Indeed the antecedent to “his glory” is unambiguous, but it is not immediately clear why John refers to his glory, not to the Lord himself, as stated in Isa 6:1 and 5. In the latter two verses the verbal root ראה expresses the prophet’s direct (cf. עיני in v. 5) vision of the deity.

The Targum of Isa 6:1 reads חזיתי ית יקרא דיהוה (“I saw the glory of the Lord”) and so removes the offensive anthropomorphism.⁷² Traditions found in the later written Targumim may have been known to the first century Gospel writers but this cannot be proven. Neither is there any reason to believe the writer of Christological statements such as those found in John 5:18, 23, 26, 6:46, 10:30, 14:9, etc., would seek to diminish the force of the anthropomorphism found in 6:1.

71. John’s use of glory in 12:41 (οὗτι εἶδεν τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ) can also be compared to 1:14: καὶ εθεασαμεθα τὴν δόξαν αὐτοῦ. The latter follows immediately upon reference in the same 1:14 to his incarnation among them (καὶ ἐσαρκώσεν ἐν ἡμῖν). So John has seen him incarnate in form and yet through the eyes of faith seen his divine glory (δόξαν ὡς μονογενούς παρὰ πατρός). What John and his fellow faithful saw (John 1:14), Isaiah likewise perceived. The prophet has seen him in very human or anthropomorphic form (6:1), affirmed his glory (6:3) and confessed whom he saw (6:5) with his very own eyes. It is the people who cannot see (6:9–10), and likewise in John 12 the inability of the people to see and believe is emphasized (12:37–40).

72. J. F. Stenning, *The Targum of Isaiah*, (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1949), ix, xii, 20.

Before dealing with the use of $\delta\omicron\zeta\alpha\nu$ in 12:41, it is of interest that the last clause of this verse affirms that Isaiah the prophet spoke of Christ, immediately after citing Isa 6:10 in v. 40. The subject of the latter is the people (cf. לַעַם הַזֶּה in Isa 6:9) but the voice speaking is of אֲדֹנָי, as 6:8 demonstrates explicitly. Apparently John is indicating that the words of Isa 6:10 are those of Christ. The foregoing analysis of the discourse of Isa 1–12 supports the identification of Adonay in 6:1 as the king descended from Jesse and consequently the same must be said for 6:8. Indeed, 6:8 repeats the same divine name found in 6:1, and thus the prophet “saw” Adonay (וַאֲרָאֵהוּ, 6:1), first and then “heard” his voice (וַאֲשָׁמַעוּ, 8:1).⁷³

John’s particular wording ($\epsilon\iota\delta\epsilon\nu$ τῆν $\delta\omicron\zeta\alpha\nu$ αὐτοῦ) may be a deliberate summation of Isa 6:1–5. The Hebrew verb רָאָה, corresponding to $\epsilon\iota\delta\epsilon\nu$ is repeated at the outset in v. 1 and again in v. 5. Between them is found the Hebrew noun כְּבוֹדוֹ, which corresponds precisely to John’s expression. Thus the twofold use of רָאָה nicely envelopes the prophet’s vision whose essence was the glory of Adonay.

The apostle’s reference to glory may also have a wider scope in view when the context of both John 12 and Isa 5–11 is considered. First of all, the term מְלֵא, referring to the fullness, (or filling)⁷⁴ of all the earth in Isa 6:3 reiterates the same root of v. 1 (מְלֵאִים). Not only is the temple filled with his presence (6:1), and smoke (6:4), but also his glory permeates the earth.⁷⁵ Filling of the entire earth in 6:3 (כָּל הָאָרֶץ), not only links to the filled temple of v. 1 but also to the entirety of the earth in 5:26 (הָאָרֶץ). Both of the latter portray his exalted (נִשְׂאָה) status which draws the nations to him (5:26). The same of course is expressed in 11:9–12 where the association with glory (כְּבוֹד) is made explicit. So the glory of the Lord in 6:3 and its implied association with the exalted Lord in 6:1 and 5:26 is unambiguous. John’s reference to his glory as of Christ is consistent with this web of interlocking concepts of glory and exaltedness in Isaiah.

Isaiah also combines through juxtaposition the exaltedness (יְרוֹם וְנִשְׂאָה) in 52:13 of the servant along with recognition by the nations and their kings (52:15), to his (expiatory)⁷⁶ death in 53:1ff.⁷⁷ Isaiah 5–6 focus on glory in exaltation while the Servant Song of Isa 53 reveals his death as part of this exaltation. In fact the entire poem is enveloped by the same root נִשְׂאָה, first portraying his exaltation (52:13), then his bearing of sickness (53:4) and sin (53:12). In fact, the juxtaposition of his

73. These two 1st person singular, *wayyiqtol* verb forms divide the pericope neatly into two halves—vision and message. Furthermore, these two verbal roots are repeated twice again in Isa 6:9, 10, but to affirm the people’s inability to understand inwardly in spite of an outward sensory perception. The distribution of these forms contrasts distinctly the prophet and people.

74. The collocation of מְלֵא and כְּבוֹד in Exod 40:34, 35, where the tabernacle is filled with the glory of YHWH, as well as the indicative in Isa 11:10 (מְלֵאֵהוּ) supports the reading מְלֵא with כְּבוֹדוֹ (masculine singular noun) as the subject.

75. “Smoke” (עָשָׁן) of v. 4 simply reiterates the eschatological smoke and cloud of the sanctuary in 4:5 (עָשָׁן . . . עֲנָן), which of course recalls the tabernacle filled with a cloud of glory in Exod 40:34, 35. Implied is an eschatological reading by Isaiah of the tabernacle narrative at Sinai.

76. Isa 53:4, 5, 12.

77. Exploiting undoubtedly the double sense of נִשְׂאָה as “to lift,” and “to take away transgression” (BDB, pp. 670–72), found in that order in Isa 52:13 and 53:12 successively.

extraordinary elevation in 52:13 and astonishment at the marring of his features in 52:14 combines the two concepts from the poem's beginning. The result is that the "many" (רבים) who are astonished, are also the many sprinkled from sin (52:15—who are nations and kings), the many justified (53:11), and forgiven (53:12).

Likewise in John 12:32–33 the exaltation of Christ in his death is the means to draw all to him. Glorification of God's name (John 12:28) precedes the reference to Christ's death in 12:32–33 and the attendant drawing of many. This is consistent as well with reference to the nations seeking the root of Jesse in Isa 11:9–10 (עמים) along with their recognition of his deeds and exalted name (בַּעֲמִים . . . נִשְׁגַּב שְׁמוֹ)⁷⁸ in 12:4.⁷⁹

Distribution of the noun נס across the Hebrew canon also undergirds the aforementioned linkage of exaltation and redemptive death seen in Isa 5, 6, 11, 52–53 and John 12:32–33. It appears a total of twenty-one times: once in each of Exodus, Ezekiel and Psalms, 5× in Jeremiah, 10× in Isaiah, 3× in Numbers. Comparison of the context of its deliberate clustering in Isa 5, 11 (3×) and Num 21 (2×) will be noted here. The occurrences in Isa 5:26, 11:10, 12, and accompanying collocation with נשא creates verbal resonance, as noted previously, with 6:1 and 52:13–53:12.⁸⁰ In other words, the exaltation of the נס in 5:26, 11:10, 12 is linked through use of the same verb נשא to 6:1ff. and 52:13ff. Common to the latter two is the concept forgiveness. The sins of many are borne (חטא רבים נשא, 53:12) at the exaltation (נשא) of the servant in 52:13ff. So also the sin (חטאה) of the prophet is removed in 6:7 at the sight (ראה, 6:1, 5) of the exalted (נשא) king, when one of the burning beings (שרפים) touches his lips with coals. Likewise the confessed sin of the people (חטאנו) in Num 21:7 is removed by looking (ראה) at the נס (Num 21:8–9, twice). On the standard was a שרף (Num 21:8) modeled after the שרפים, which are the burning serpents who had bitten the people.⁸¹

Conclusion

Linguistic evidence cited here supports not only the cohesive integration of Isa 1–12, but also a unity stretching across the book to Isa 52–53. Furthermore, the

78. Exaltation of the name in that day (ביום ההוא . . . נִשְׁגַּב שְׁמוֹ) in 12:4, wraps up a theme begun in 2:11, 17: נִשְׁגַּב יְהוָה לְבָרוּ בַיּוֹם הַהוּא.

79. It is worth noting as well that the seeking of the root of Jesse by the nations in 11:10 (אֵלֵינוּ גּוֹיִם יִדְרָשׁוּ) provides further details to a similar description of them streaming to Zion in 2:2 (וְנִהְרָוּ אֵלֵינוּ כָּל הַגּוֹיִם). They will stream to Zion seeking the root of Jesse, its king.

80. Recall that both roots נשא and נס are found in 52:13 and 6:1, providing further evidence of deliberate intertextuality. Note also the use of שרש in 11:1, 10 and 53:2.

81. Distribution of the noun שרף or שרפים is also limited, totaling only seven in the MT. Four of those seven—twice in Isaiah 6 and twice in Num 21, provide further evidence of intertextuality. Note how John 3:14 and 12:32 repeat the identical verb שרש implying recognition of the linking evidence presented here between the cited texts from Isaiah 5–11, 53 and Num 21. The LXX does not express the lifting of the serpent through this verb repeated in John and so presumably the link was produced based on lexical data presented here.

apostle John's interpretation is entirely in harmony with the literary data and its implications. Contemporary New Testament scholars often cannot hide their surprise at John's christological understanding of Isaiah 6. Terms such as "startling,"⁸² "somewhat perplexing,"⁸³ or in more guarded fashion that John, "speaks as if the words of Isaiah . . . had the situation of Jesus in mind."⁸⁴ Similar are comments such as, "Isaiah is alleged to have said this, according to verse 41, because he saw his, that is, Jesus' glory and spoke of him,"⁸⁵ or that it, "illustrates well the freedom, so to speak, with which Jn. treats the O. T."⁸⁶ But as has been shown here, John's identification of Christ in Isaiah 6 is consistent with its immediate and wider context, and not surprising at all. The discourse of Isa 1–12 evinces an integrated unity, regardless of real or imagined pre-canonical sources. In spite of overtures by some to the established shape, much of this unitary evidence has been overlooked. The sixth chapter of Isaiah, when read in its context, portrays in its opening verses the glorious eschatological exaltation of Adonay as a visible and anthropomorphic priest/king from the line of Jesse.

82. Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Prophetic Gospel: A Study of John and the Old Testament* (T & T Clark, 1991), 166, and Merrill C. Tenney, *The Gospel of John* (EBC 9; Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981), 133.

83. Gerald L. Borchert, *John 12–21* (NAC 25B; Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 65–66.

84. Urban C. von Wahlde, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (The Gospel and Letters of John 2; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 560.

85. Ernst Haenchen, *John 2* (Commentary on the Gospel of John Chapters 7–21; trans. by Robert W. Funk, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1994), 101.

86. J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1949), 452.