

TRANSFORMATION: THE MESSIANIC VISION

STUDY 10: DREAMS AND FULFILMENTS

The Holism of the Old Testament

This study of transformation models from the Old Testament began by looking at the world as God made it and intended it to be. It was a picture of a harmonious relationship between God, man, and the world. Dr. Chris Wright in Living as the People of God: the Relevance of Old Testament Ethics sees this threefold interdependence as the framework for understanding all of the Old Testament. It is pictured as a triangle. (Figure 10.1)

So the old Testament is not just about man's relationship to God. Its concerns are not solely spiritual – they are social and economic too. God is concerned about how people structure their society and relate to each other. The Old Testament has a particular determination to ensure justice, a sharing of resources, the abolition of oppression, and the eradication of prejudice so that the bounty of the good land can be enjoyed by all. This breadth of concern, expressed through history over a long period of time, affirming the value of human life, and ensuring the health of human society, makes the Old Testament unique among the world's religious texts.

Refer back to the creation model and briefly describe the key points in the relationship between a) people and God, b) individuals and society, c) humans and the world.

A Vision for the Future

Israel experienced many leadership patterns. The personal oversight of the patriarchs as heads of the clan. The administrative ability and economic foresight of Joseph. The strong management of Moses and Joshua. The varied contributions of the judges during the period of a loose federation structure between the tribes. The integrity of Samuel who was prophet/social leader, priest/spiritual leader, and judge/political leader. Then they chose to have a king but as predicted by God the kings became exploiters and oppressors of the people. Soon Israel's kings were deposed by foreign expansionist powers and its people were either dragged into exile or left resourceless in the land. Out of this experience of the failure of the kings to establish a just society and the judgment of conquest, a new vision arose through the prophets. The vision of a new age of peace and prosperity.

The key passages in the Old Testament which describe this prophetic vision of the future God intended for His people are:

- a) Isaiah 9:1-7; 11:1-16; 19:19-25; 29:18-21; 32:1-4; 35:1-10; 40:1-5; 42:1-7; 49:8-13; 51:4,5,11,14; 54:10-17; 55:12-13; 56:4-7; 61:1-3; 65:17-25
- b) Jeremiah 23:5-6; 30:8-9; 31:10-12.
- c) Ezekiel 28:25-26; 34:22-31.
- d) Daniel 12.
- e) Joel 2:28-32; 3:18.
- f) Amos 9:11-15.
- g) Zephaniah 1:14-18; 3:16-20.
- h) Micah 4.
- i) Zechariah 3:10-14

j) Malachi 4.

Read the above passages and note points made about the relationship of a) people and God, b) individuals and society, c) humans and the world. Share your findings.

A Modern Prophet Speaks

The world's greatest prophets and leaders have been those who had a clear vision of the future, a determination to share it, and conviction that it could become a reality. One of the greatest such visions of the twentieth centuries was articulated by Dr. Martin Luther King. He said:

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up to live out the true meaning of its creed; 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal'.

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the State of Mississippi, a State sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children one day will live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low. The rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places straight. This is the faith that I go back to the south with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountains of despair, the stone of hope. With this hope we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing we will be free one day.

This will be the day when all of God's children will be able to sing with new meaning "Let freedom ring"! So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire; let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York. But not only that. Let freedom ring from the stone mountains of Georgia. Let freedom ring from every hill and molehill of Mississippi, from every mountainside. When we allow freedom to ring from every town and every hamlet, from every state and from every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual: 'Free at last! Free at last! Great God Almighty, We are free at last!'

-The words of hope preached to over a quarter of a million freedom marchers under the shadow of the Lincoln Memorial, Washington, 1964.

Identify five key elements of this vision.

The Day of the Lord

The characteristics of the Day of the Lord on which all of the hopes of God's people could be realized are listed below. Summarize the verses quoted, or a quote of a key verse from each section.

Peace

Is. 9:6,7; Ex. 28:26, 34:25; Micah 4:3

Prosperity

Is. 9:3, 27:3, 32:2, 35:1-2, 35:6-7, 49:9-10, 65:21; Jer. 31:12; Ezekial 34:26-27, 34:29, Joel 2:1-9; 2:24-26, 3:18; Amos 9:43; Zeph. 3:30

Judgment

Is. 11:4, 24:1-3, 24:21-23, 29:20-21; Dan. 12:1-10; Joel 2:2-11; Zeph. 1:14-18, Zech. 14:1-5, 14:12-15; Mal. 3:2, 3:5, 4:1

Reconciliation of nature

Is. 9:4, 11:4, 44:26, 51:14, 65:22; Ez. 34:27-28; Micah 4:4; Zeph. 3:19

Freedom from Oppression

Is. 9:4, 11:4, 44:26, 51:14, 65:22; Ez. 34:27-28; Micah 4:4; Zeph. 3:19

Freedom from foreign rule

Is. 9:5, 11:4, 44:8-9; Jer. 30:8; Joel 2:20

Joy & Worship

Is. 9, 28:19, 51, 56:4-7; Jer. 30:9; Joel 2:28; Mal. 4:2

Salvation

Is. 9:2, 11:1-3, 11:11-12, 16, 19:20-25, 25:9, 35:4-10, 40:1-12, 51:4; Jer. 2:3-6; Dan. 12:10; Joel 2:32; Zeph. 3:17

Reconciliation of people

Is. 11:13, 19:23; Zeph. 3:10; Mal. 4:6

Universal Recognition of Truth

Is. 19:19, 40:5, 44:12-13, 26; Mich. 4:1-2; Zech. 14:9-16

Messiah's rule

Is. 9:6-7, 28:16, 43:4, 60:19-20; Jer. 23:5-6; Ez. 34:23; Joel 2:23

Healing of diseases

Is. 29:18, 32:3-5, 35:5-6, 42:7-16, 61:1-3, 65:20

Return to Israel

Is. 54:11-12, 60:21, 65:18; Jer. 31:6-11; Ex. 28:25; Joel 13:20; Amos 9:11-12, 14-15; Micah 2:12; Zeph. 3:20

Resurrection

Dan. 12:2-13; Zech. 14:5

God's Answer to Humanity's Problems

The vision of the Messianic Age arose out of the struggle of the people of God and their experience of divine punishment and human cruelty. They knew that while God might punish children for their parent' sins till the third or fourth generation He shows His love to thousands of generations of those who love and obey him. So in the midst of sorrow and suffering they dreamed of a future of peace and prosperity. It was not a futile dream but a strong conviction. Within this rich tradition of the Old Testament lie God's answers to humanity's problems.

Problem 1: War. In the 40 years since the end of the Second World War there have been constant wars in the Two-Thirds World while the super powers have amassed nuclear weapons sufficient to destroy all human life on the earth 20 times over. The description of Zechariah 14:12, "Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths," suggests a nuclear disaster. God's plan for the nations however, is to "beat their swords into plough-shares and their spears into pruning hooks. When the Prince of Peace reigns, nations will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore" (Mich 4:3).

The swords (And guns and tanks and rockets) are not just to be melted down but are to be made into tools of production for the benefit of all people. The Biblical mandate and the Messiah's agenda is to reduce armaments and to increase development. Arthur Simon writes:

Less than two months after becoming US President Dwight D. Eisenhower said 'Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed.' A more judicious use of power would help to reverse this 'theft from those who hunger', by releasing billions of dollars each year for peaceful development. (1984, p. 154)

What steps can we take to accomplish reduction of armaments? How can we develop a non-militaristic attitude toward others? Is peace the absence of war or something more? How do you interpret Isaiah 54:16?

Problem 2: Poverty In contrast to India where 50 percent of the population lives below the poverty line, in the West farmers are paid not to produce, and annually thousands of tonnes of grain are destroyed to maintain prices. In the Messianic Age, even the desert will be productive (Is. 35:6-7), and everyone will have enough to eat (Amos 9:13). Continuous cropping will be the norm. Malnutrition, the most common result of poverty, and oppression, its more common cause, will be dealt with. The constant presence of the poor (Deut. 15:11; Lk. 16:19ff; John 12:8; Mt. 25:31-45) is a continuing challenge to work to bring in the age of prosperity for all. Where God's will is done, poverty is eradicated. The initiative comes from both directions' generosity and sharing by those who have a surplus, and work and integrity by the poor. The result should be justice in the structures and organization of society.

Do you think the vision of the Messianic Age provides a mandate for both welfare and liberation approaches to development? From your reading of the Messianic passages do you think conditions in the world will get worse until the Messiah will suddenly come, or do you think they will gradually improve?

Problem 3: Disease. In a diagram of the poverty cycle developed by TAFTEE, many of the results of poverty are shown to be health-related factors (Figure 10.2). In Figure 10.2, how many health factors are mentioned? Can you add others? Are health services a good intervention point in dealing with the poverty cycle? What sort of diseases most contribute to poverty?

Read the Isaiah passage which describe the eradication of disease in the Messianic Age and list the disabilities mentioned.

The vision was of people with permanent physical disabilities whose problems were beyond the skill of the doctors, being restored physically so that they could fully participate in the life of the community. God's concern is for the total physical, mental, social and spiritual well being of the community and not just for the absence of disease.

Problem 4: Minority Groups. Israel's history is the story of a minority people who were constantly threatened, harassed and dominated by other more powerful neighbors. They were constantly challenged to treat the foreigners among them in just and compassionate ways and include them fully in the life of their community (Lev. 19:33-34) Similarly the disadvantaged of their own community were to be a special target group for sharing and caring (Deut. 15:7-8; 24:12-15; Ex. 22:22-24).

By comparison with the oppression they suffered in Egypt, the brutality they experienced in Assyria, the massive dislocation of peoples which was official policy in Babylon, and the harshness of Rome, Israel had an extremely enlightened social policy.

The vision of the Messianic Age extends this policy. Every group and individual would have a homeland – some territory in which they would be secure. Foreign domination would be replaced by self-rule and any oppression within the community would be abolished so that truth and justice would become the recognized features of society. The prophets recognized

this to be the intention and plan of God.

When Jesus came it was with a special compassion for the marginalized groups of society; the poor, the lepers, women, children, tax collectors, rural people, and "sinners."

Research how many ethnic groups live in your city/area by consulting the most recent census results. Find out what ministries churches sponsor amongst minority groups in your community.

Realizing the Vision

The question which faces Christians now is whether the vision of the Messianic Age is utopian or realizable. To answer this requires a look at god's instructions for the functioning of society and their fulfillment in the ministry of Jesus. In the chart in Figure 10.3 fill in the gaps. What conclusions can be drawn from this comparison in Figure 10.3? Do you agree that a) The blessings of the Messianic Age were intended to be enjoyed by the people of God throughout time? b) The promises of the coming of God's reign among man was fulfilled in the coming of Jesus?

A Dream for India

Dr. Michael Bogaert, the director of the Xavier Institute for Social Service, in Bihars has expressed his dreams for a city and district of India in a similar way to Dr. Martin Luther King's dream for America.

The Dream

For Jamshedpur city and Singhbhum District we dream of a society where

1. Those who today suffer in their human rights, or by poverty are condemned to sub-human conditions, become, through a process of empowerment and liberation, the artisans of their own destiny, and are enabled to do so by the better off, who willingly share their assets and power.
2. Development is such that it provides full scope to ordinary people, in the urban bastis, interior villages, or in the hills to express their own genius, and develop their local communities through their own traditional structures, improved and invigorated by appropriate management and entrepreneurial motivation.
3. The human relations and values of traditional society, characterized by respect, equality between the sexes, solidarity, sharing and cooperation for the common good, are not denigrated as the values of weaklings, doomed to disappear, but as holding the answer to some of the questions which modern industrial society, trapped in materialism, individualism, and competition for power, is posing to itself today.
4. The culture, customs, languages of the aboriginal population are not being swamped by modern film culture, or drowned in the din of disco, but maintain a

vibrant life of their own and provide a source of inspiration for the renewal of modern Indian culture.

5. Land is restored to the original owners, and the latter fully exploit it for their won family, and the feeding of the nation. Thanks to appropriate technology, traditional crafts and modern village entrepreneurship flourish and help people to break out of the vicious circle of poverty-migration-poverty or the drudgery of head-loading.

6. The modern sector of the economy, industries, banks, trade, thanks to enlightened management, discipline, and good industrial relations, generate the surplus which benefits the rural economy, rather than be a drain on the economy, as is the case in other parts of the state.

7. The poorest man and woman has justice done to him/her in the courts, with the police, in government offices, in *kucheries*, without having to pay bribes, or being sent from pillar to post. A society where decisions pertaining to the village, are taken in the village and justice is equitably dispensed by the *panchayats*.

8. Those who come from outside do not see the area or its inhabitants as a colony to be stripped of its assets and dignity, but fully respect the economic, political, and cultural structures of the local inhabitants, and enable the latter to enrich their life, by sharing the economic wealth which is being generated. A society in which there are no so-called superior and inferior human beings, but all are brothers and sisters, because they are all children of the same God.

9. The natural environment is restored to its pristine balance by taking the local population fully into confidence in the management of forests, lands, rivers, and other natural resources. A society where the water, the air, the soil, and the atmosphere are not a hazard for our children and future generations.

10. People of different religions, communities, castes, and languages live in peace and amity, and appreciate each others differences, rather than exploit them to sow hatred and suspicion.

11. Some of the youth, fortunate enough to have had an education, are willing to forgo the prestige, income, and security of an employment in industry or government and are ready to volunteer as full time agents of social change in the urban slums, and the villages of the rural areas, so that justice is done to the oppressed there, and the problem of poverty was solved.

12. The middle class from amongst the local and tribal people, through the leadership they assume in industry, business, community development, cooperatives, administration, shows that they are second to none, and that in Jamshedpur it is possible to be fully at home in industrial life, and still maintain one's own culture, identity, and one's dignity.

Implementing the Dream

It is suggested that you spell out this dream further, and make it more concrete. That you share it with other, put it in verse and song, present it in folk drama, and paint it on walls. That you take it to the people and find out whether they see their own aspiration reflected in your dream.

And then work at it, together. You may achieve little, but it gives more satisfaction to know that you have tried to bring yourself and society one step closer to a dream, than to be blind to all visions and lack all sense of direction.
(January, 1984)

Rewrite this dream to fit your context. Decide how you want to share it.

Final Questions

What is preventing the blessings of Messiah's rule from being experienced now?

Are development program consciously shaped by God's objectives? How does our activity now relate to the second coming of the Messiah?

A Commitment

In the mountains of Switzerland there are many tombstones marking the spots where climbers have died. One contains words which simply tell the story of an alpine guide. They could be our motto as we work for a better future. They are "HE DIED CLIMBING."

Insert Figure 10.1 pg 246

Insert Figure 10.2 page 246

Figure 10.3

The Promised land

"I will grant peace in the and, and you will lie down and none will make you afraid." (Lev. 26:6)

"One witness is not enough to convict a man accused of any crime or offense he may have committed. A matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses."

"You will still be eating last year's harvest when you will have to move it out to make room for the new." (Lev. 26: 4-5, 26:10, Deut. 28: 11-12, 28:14-15)

"I will put my dwelling place among you. I will walk among you and be your God and you will be my people." (Lev. 26:11-12)

Deuteronomy 7:15

The Messianic Age

Peace: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nations will not take up sword against nation nor will they train for war anymore." (Micah 4:3)

Truth: "The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him. The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." (Is. 11:2-3, 32:3-4)

Prosperity:
Isaiah 49:10;
Jeremiah 31:12
Amos 9:13

Presence of God:
Isaiah 19:19
Zephaniah 3:17
Zechariah 4:9

Healing of Disease
Isaiah 29:18
Isaiah 35:5-6

The Ministry of Jesus

Mt. 26:52

"Let your 'yes' be 'yes' and your 'no' be 'no'" (Mt. 5:37)

"You are a man of integrity and you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You are not swayed by men, because you pay no attention to who they are." (Mt. 22:11)

"He taught as one who had authority." (Mt. 7:29)

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things will be added unto you." (Mt 6:37)

Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the Kingdom of God." (Mt. 5:20)

Matthew 1:23

"Jesus healed every disease and sickness among the people."

Isaiah 65:20

(Mt. 4:23)

"Tell John the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those with leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised." (Mt. 11:5)

Amos 26:54
Deuteronomy 12:9,
Deuteronomy 14:28-19
Deuteronomy 15:4, 12
Numbers 36:9

Equality:
Micah 4:2-4

"Tax collectors and prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God." (Mt. 21:31)

"Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find. So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find both good and bad, and the wedding hall was full of guests." (Mt. 22:9-10)

"The greatest among you will be your servant. For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted." (Mt. 23:11)

"Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the Lord your God is giving you." (Deut. 16:20)

Justice:
Isaiah 32:1
Isaiah 32:16
Isaiah 42:13-14
Isaiah 51:4-5

"In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the prophets." (Mt. 7:12)

"He leads justice to victory." (Mt. 12:20)

"Be open handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land." (Deut. 15:11)

Compassion/Care
Isaiah 42:7

"When He saw the crowds he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." (Mt. 9:39)

"I was hungry and you

"You must have accurate and honest weights and measures so that you may live long in the land your God is giving you."
(Deut. 25:15)

Honesty
Zephaniah 3:13
Zephaniah 5:3

"Do not accept a bribe for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous." (Deut. 16:19)

"It is the land of mountains and valleys that drink rain from heaven. The hand of the Lord your God is continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end."
(Deut. 11:11-12)

Harmony of Nature
Isaiah 35:6-7
Isaiah 55:13
Isaiah 65:25

"You must not worship the Lord your God in their way because in worshiping their Gods they do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods."
(Deut. 12:31)

Reverence for Life
Micah 4:3

"Moses set aside

gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you took me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me." (Mt. 25:35-36)

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth." (Mt. 6:19)

"You cannot serve God and money." (Mt. 6:24)

"He rebuked the winds and the waves and it was completely calm."
(Mt. 8:26)

"The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised."
(Mt. 11:5)

"Do not look down on one of these little ones."
(Mt. 18:10)

cities to where anyone who had killed his neighbor without malice aforethought could flee and find refuge and save his life."

(Deut. 4:41-42;
Num. 22:18)

Harmony Among People

Isaiah 56:4-5
Zephaniah 3:19
Malachi 4:6

"If you are offering your gifts at the altar and remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift." (Mt. 5:23-24)

"Love your neighbor as yourself." (Mt. 22:39)

Numbers 35:6
Numbers 35:13-15

Forgiveness

Isaiah 61:1

Give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Mt. 1:21)

"The son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." (Mt. 9:6)

Deuteronomy 15:8
Deuteronomy 15:18

Generosity
Isaiah 34:26
Joel 2:28-29

"Freely you have received freely give." (Mt. 10:8)

"Walk in all the way that your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess." (Deut. 5:33)

Worship
Isaiah 35:10a

"Where is the one who has been born the King of the Jews? We have come to worship him." (Mt. 22, Luke 7:16)

"Do not be terrified by them, for the Lord your God who is among you, is a great and awesome God." (Deut. 7:21)

Peace of Mind
Isaiah 32:2-7
Isaiah 35:10b

"Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Mt. 11:28)

"Do not worry about food, drink, clothing, or tomorrow. Your heavenly father knows your needs." (Mt. 6:31-34)

"Do not defile the land where you live and

where I dwell, for I the Lord dwell among the Israelites." (Num. 35:34)

Defeat of Evil
Ex. 34:28

"If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come among you."
(Mt. 12:28)

"The nearest equivalents are the promises that if they structure the society the way God wills, they will live a long time in the land and their children will dwell there after them."

Resurrection
Daniel 12:2-13
Zechariah 14:5

"He took the girl by the hand and she got up."
(Mt. 12:28)

"Raise the dead."
(Mt. 10:8)

"Young man, I say to you get up! The dead young man began to talk and Jesus gave him back to mother." (Lk. 7:15)

"Lazarus, come out! The dead man came out."
(John 11:43-44, Mt. 27:52-53)

"He's not here he has risen." (Mt. 28:6)