

# Principles of Bible Translation —Applied to Prophecy 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

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The translation of prophecy re-emerged as a front burner issue for the church when the RSV and other modern translations rendered “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14 as “young woman.”<sup>1</sup> This issue was one of the most important factors which made the RSV the most controversial translation in history up to that point and which disqualified the RSV as the standard Bible translation for many Evangelical Christians. The superiority of the NIV 1984 to the RSV in its treatment of prophecy was a significant factor in WELS’s choosing the NIV as the translation it would use after it had rejected the RSV.<sup>2</sup> Now the issue of the translation of prophecy seems to be returning to the top of the stove.

A key issue behind the contemporary debate over prophecy is the question whether some Old Testament prophecies, from the time they were first given, pointed directly to Christ as their fulfillment, or whether all “prophecies” originally referred to something or someone in the more immediate context, but they later became “prophecies” when they were given a new application to a Messiah by the Jews or when they were applied specifically to Jesus by the church. A middle option would be the opinion that the text as originally given, though it referred directly and primarily only to present events, contained a “seed” of a messianic prophecy that grew and developed through the centuries.<sup>3</sup>

This paper addressing issues concerning the translation of prophecy was requested as a follow-up to a paper on principles for making and evaluating Bible translations, which was presented to a conference of the Michigan District in Monroe, Michigan in January, 2012. It is largely an elaboration of principle 17 of that paper.

The translator will recognize and preserve direct prophecy where the immediate context or other testimonies of Scripture indicate direct prophecy.

Corollaries to this principle would be:

The translator will do nothing to blur the presence of prophecy in a passage regardless of whether the prophecy is direct or typical.

If the text and the parallel passages allow the prophecy to be understood as either typical or direct, the translator should leave both possibilities open.

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<sup>1</sup> The issue had emerged already in early church history when Aquila translated ‘*almah* in Isaiah 7:14 as “young woman” and when the church fathers engaged in disputes with the Jews over such passages as Genesis 3:15. We will touch on some of these issues below.

<sup>2</sup> *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Volume 75-4, p 300.

<sup>3</sup> Here I am not considering all the possible shades on the spectrum of the interpretation of prophecy. I am just looking at red, green, and violet as samples of the colors of the spectrum. I do this to introduce an often neglected question: is it proper to consider some prophecies as “retrospective” prophecies that became prophecies only some time after they were written. This is perhaps the most important question raised by contemporary Evangelical treatment of prophecy. My own views on types of prophecies are given below.

In most cases, when the prophecy contains a collective singular, the collective singular must be preserved in the translation, because the prophetic connection to Christ will be obscured by pluralizing the reference.

The translator will not ignore the Old Testament context of the passage, but the prophecy cannot be understood or translated in isolation from its New Testament connections.

As he interprets and translates the prophecy, the translator will regard the New Testament interpretation of Old Testament prophecies as authoritative. The Old Testament cannot be properly understood in isolation from the New Testament.<sup>4</sup>

Since this paper focuses on the application of hermeneutics to making or evaluating a Bible translation, perhaps a more accurate title would be “The Application of the Hermeneutics of Prophecy to Making and Evaluating Translations.” I have retained the title above, however, to show this paper’s connection to the previous paper about translation principles.

Or looking at it from another direction we could say that our topic is the relationship of exegesis and translation. Every translation involves at least three levels of exegesis:

- 1) Linguistic exegesis of all of the words and grammatical forms and of their syntactical connection. Is the verb passive or middle? Which of two homonyms is present here? Etc.
- 2) Semantic exegesis of the words in the source language. Of the many meaning or nuances of this word, which apply here?
- 3) Cross-language exegesis, determining the equivalent words in the target language. Aquila may be the only translator in history who was largely able to confine his exegesis in translation to these three levels. Almost all translators include, to a greater or lesser degree, two additional levels of exegesis in their translation.
- 4) Contextual exegesis: the translator uses information in the nearer and wider context of the text to explain the meaning of idioms in the original. The Hebrew text says “uncircumcised lips”, but the translator says “not a fluent speaker”.
- 5) Theological exegesis: the translator uses his understanding of biblical theology to guide his translation. Ideally this means “Scripture interprets Scripture.” Less ideally, other extraneous factors influence the translation. A Lutheran or a Baptist’s understanding of baptism may influence his translation of “a washing of regeneration”.

In this paper, we will focus on how the theology of Luther influenced his translation of prophecy and consider how theological exegesis and hermeneutics may play a role in translation of prophecy today.<sup>5</sup>

## Overview of Prophecy

We recognize three main types of Messianic prophecies:

- 1) *Direct or rectilinear prophecies* which point directly to Christ, such as Isaiah 7:14, which points to the virgin birth, or Psalm 16:10, which points to Christ’s resurrection.
- 2) *Typical prophecies* in which something or someone in the prophet’s experience points to a greater fulfillment in Christ’s life. The traitor Ahithophel in David’s life foreshadows

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<sup>4</sup> This does not mean that the translator has to retro-translate the Greek version of the passage back into the Old Testament text, but it means, for example, that if the New Testament says that a prophecy is direct, it is direct.

<sup>5</sup> An interesting way to consider this subject detached from present debates is to observe how these principles operated in the production of the first major translation of the Bible, the Septuagint. The third edition of Tov’s *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* is a good resource for such a study.

Judas in Jesus' life. Hosea 11:1 is a rare case in which the type, the exodus from Egypt, lies in the prophet's past. In this type of prophecy only the ultimate fulfillment is being foretold. The type is already present or past.

- 3) *Prophecies with an intermediate fulfillment* in which an event or person which is still future to the prophet points to a greater fulfillment in Christ. David will have a son who will build God's house. Solomon is an intermediate fulfillment, but the great fulfillment is in Christ. In this type of prophecy both the type and the ultimate fulfillment are prophesied. Even when the intermediate fulfillment is in the foreground of the prophecy, the ultimate fulfillment is already in view when the prophecy is first given.

All three types of prophecy were real prophecies from the beginning. They did not first become prophecies on the basis of later events. The miraculous nature and the validity of a prophecy do not depend of whether a prophecy is typical or direct. God can prophesy with or without a type. Nevertheless, the two types are not simply interchangeable. Gold and silver are both precious metals, but I cannot indiscriminately substitute silver for gold. I cannot indiscriminately substitute typical prophecy for direct.

In this paper we are using the term "prophecy" in its narrow sense: prophecy refers to God-given predictions of the future, which proclaim law and gospel. We will limit our discussion to those Messianic prophecies that clearly point to the person and work of Christ. We will not discuss messianic prophecies which refer to a future glorious age for God's people without explicitly referring to the Messiah.<sup>6</sup>

### The Issue

It is important to emphasize that all three types of Messianic prophecy were real prophecy, given by God, from the moment they were spoken and written. In the typical prophecies the prophets were not simply writing statements about Old Testament events or people which the New Testament writers later borrowed and applied to Christ. The prophets did not understand all the details concerning the fulfillment of their prophecies, but they did understand that they were writing about Christ for our benefit as well as for their own:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, <sup>11</sup>trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.<sup>12</sup> It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you (1 Peter 1:10-12).

God directed both the lives and the words of the prophets so that certain Old Testament events which they experienced, the words which they wrote about those events, and the words which they wrote about things far in the future which they had not yet seen would all serve as true prophecies of Christ regardless of whether or not a type was involved.

In identifying Messianic prophecies we must distinguish two groups of prophecies. One group consists of Messianic prophecies which can be identified with certainty because they are quoted in the New Testament as Messianic. Since the Holy Spirit is the source of all Scripture, all of these passages must be recognized as Messianic prophecies even if the Messianic interpretation is not obvious to us from

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<sup>6</sup> The precise number of Messianic prophecies is of course debatable. The rabbis list more than 500 prophecies of the Messiah and his age. In his comprehensive *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (Harper and Row, 1973) Payne lists more than 100 direct Messianic prophecies (p 667-668). Payne boosts the number by counting multiple prophecies in one psalm or in one oracle as separate prophecies. From Psalms, Payne lists 101 verses in 13 psalms as messianic prophecies (p 257). We could probably condense Payne's list to about fifty main prophecies.

a superficial reading of the Old Testament. We must recognize as direct prophecy that which Scripture identifies as direct.

A second group of prophecies consists of passages which have not been explicitly identified as Messianic prophecies by the New Testament. Commentators have nevertheless correctly classified these passages as Messianic prophecies because the attributes and actions of the person described in the prophecy are divine idioms which can be ascribed only to Christ, or because the commentators noticed a striking correspondence between events described in an Old Testament passage and events in Christ's kingdom. For example, Psalm 72 is not quoted as Messianic in the New Testament, but its content is clearly Messianic.<sup>7</sup> In some cases the Messianic application of a given passage is less obvious, and commentators must not be dogmatic about these identifications. In a certain sense, every psalm is messianic since the whole life of David and the whole history of Israel point to Christ. Here, however, we are using the term "Messianic" only of those texts which contain prophecies and types which find specific fulfillment in Christ.

We must emphasize the reality of Messianic prophecy including direct prophecy, because many modern commentators deny the existence of true Messianic prophecy. Since many of the more liberal critics deny the very possibility of predictive prophecy, they interpret the "Messianic prophecies" as exaggerated descriptions of the kings of Israel which were later applied to a hoped-for Messiah by both Jews and Christians. This reinterpretation may have taken place either before or after the prophecies were recorded in the canonical books. Even some liberal critics believe that although these predictions or hopes were not Messianic when first proclaimed,<sup>8</sup> they were already being interpreted as Messianic prophecies by the time they became "canonical" by being incorporated into the book of Psalms or into the writings of the prophets.<sup>9</sup> If critics treat all the Messianic psalms as "royal psalms" which referred only to the kings of Israel, at least initially, they are directly contradicting the testimony of Christ who said, "All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets and in the Psalms concerning me" (Luke 24:44). Speaking of the Old Testament, Jesus said, "These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39).

More recently, even relatively conservative commentators, including many Evangelicals and even some Lutherans, have been reluctant to classify prophecies as direct prophecies that are fulfilled only by Christ. There is also a growing tendency in Evangelicalism to see much prophecy as "retrospective," that is, it was not prophetic when written, but it became prophecy later. We will discuss examples of this more fully in the comments on various prophecies below.

Messianic prophecies are a great treasure for the church. They have great value as a testimony to Christ. Only the four Gospels surpass Psalms and Isaiah as sources of information about the feelings, words, and deeds of Christ while he was on earth, carrying out his work as our Savior. The Messianic prophecies were a source of strength and encouragement for Old Testament believers, and they remain the same for us today. "Everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

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<sup>7</sup> Psalm 72 will be discussed below.

<sup>8</sup> In their view this first proclamation may have occurred during a long phase of oral transmission or in documents that later became sources for the canonical books.

<sup>9</sup> E.g., James L. Mayes (*Interpretation: Psalms*, Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1994, p 236, 238) says of Psalm 72: "This prayer poem was probably composed for the inauguration of a Davidic king in Jerusalem. It was appropriate for such an occasion and has a general character that would allow it to be used repeatedly. It is not about any particular king.... By the time Psalm 72 became part of Scripture it was probably being understood by some as a prayer for the coming of the Messiah." Is the word "prayer" here a true synonym of "prophecy"? Or in this context is "prayer" less than "prophecy"? A prayer is a hope. A prophecy is a promise.

## Recognizing Types of Prophecy

How does one recognize direct prophecies?

- Principle One: A prophecy is direct if the New Testament says it is direct.
- Principle Two: A prophecy is direct if divine attributes and actions are attributed to the subject of the prophecy. Such idioms cannot be dismissed as hyperbole.
- Principle Three: A prophecy is probably direct if there are no corresponding types visible in the experience of the prophet.
- Principle Four: If he is going to classify a prophecy as typical, the interpreter should be able to identify a type to which the prophecy is pointing.
- Principle Five: Prophecies which contain elements that cannot apply to Christ, for example, the presumptuous prophet in Deuteronomy 18:20 or the disobedient son in 2 Samuel 7:14 include imperfect types as well as the perfect fulfillment.<sup>10</sup>

### Recent Lutheran Discussion

There was a controversy about this issue of direct and typical prophecy in the Missouri Synod, in which one seminary (St. Louis) tended to make all messianic prophecies typical, while the other seminary (Springfield/Fort Wayne) tended to make all of them direct. The tendency to make all messianic prophecies direct was in part a backlash or overreaction to the liberal or “moderate” tendency that culminated in the Seminex theology which made all the messianic prophecies typical. This debate had an effect on translations, commentaries, and study Bibles. The biggest weakness of the *Concordia Self-Study Bible (NIV)* is that it falters in the recognition of direct prophecy at key points. The notes of the more recent *Lutheran Study Bible (ESV)* are somewhat of an improvement.<sup>11</sup> Here we will not explore the details of this debate but will deal with this issue only as a translation issue.<sup>12</sup>

Throughout this debate WELS teachers held the middle: Both typical and direct prophecies were real prophecies right from the start. Whether a specific prophecy is typical or direct must be decided from the immediate and wider context.<sup>13</sup>

### Capitalization in prophecy

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<sup>10</sup> Here I am simply stating the principles. The way in which I would apply them will be illustrated in the examples which follow.

<sup>11</sup> They are still something of a mixed bag. At Acts 13:33, for example, the note is shaky. At Acts 13:35 it is good. Appendix D to this paper deals with the *LSB* notes.

<sup>12</sup> A detailed discussion of this debate is provided in a paper on the WELS Translation Evaluation Committee web site, “Messianic prophesy and English Translations –with July 2012 Addendum,” by Thomas Nass.

<sup>13</sup> For example, see Paul Peters, *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 58, p 102 ff. In applying this criterion to individual prophecies he concludes that some prophecies such as 2 Samuel 7: 12-17 were typical. Others such as Isaiah 7:14 were direct. Since the article by Peters was an exegesis of Isaiah 7, his intention as he began writing the article was to apply the test of typical or direct prophecy to Isaiah 7:14 immediately, but because of the confusion about this issue in the Synodical Conference, at the urging of his colleagues, he digressed for about 20 pages to apply the criterion to other passages. After this lengthy digression, he returned to a detailed exposition of Isaiah 7 and concludes that Isaiah 7:14 refers directly to Christ since there is no suitable type in the Old Testament context and since the direct application of the prophecy in Matthew 1 governs our interpretation. He concludes, “It is to this interpretation of Isaiah’s prophecy of the virgin birth that we will always have final recourse for our understanding of whom the prophet is speaking” (*Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 58, p 195).

It has been a recent convention in English usage to capitalize nouns and pronouns which refer to God.<sup>14</sup> Strictly applied, this principle requires that all nouns and pronouns which refer to Christ in a prophecy are to be capitalized. More recently, English style and some Bible translations have returned to the policy of not capitalizing such references. Which practice best accords with sound principles of translation? In deciding which way to go, should we be guided more by the nature of the biblical text or more by English conventions?

Capitalization of nouns and pronouns that refer to God is not a feature of the original text, and therefore it falls into the category of interpretation rather than translation. It is therefore best not to adopt this as a translation principle.<sup>15</sup>

English style requires titles and proper names be capitalized, so the translator must capitalize Messianic titles and proper names that occur in prophecies.

These two principles are in tension. To reproduce the Bible literalistically a translator would have to use no capitalization, but English conventions call for the capitalization of proper names and of many titles. (Elvis is the King not the king. LeBron James is the king, not the King.) The best solution is to capitalize only the titles and proper names in the prophecies, not the common nouns and pronouns that refer to God.

There are a number of other complications here.

Capitalization is not inherently an issue of deity versus non-deity nor of a Messianic versus non-messianic reference. Capitalization is most often simply an issue of a title or a proper name versus a common noun: the Antichrist or an antichrist (1 Jo 2:18); the Evil One or an evil one, or the evil (Lord's Prayer); the Church or the church. Capitalization does not necessarily indicate deity or reverence: Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, the Great Pumpkin, and I are all capitalized. Capitalization may also be used to express differences of emphasis. A writer may use "the temple" or "the Temple" to indicate whether he is thinking primarily of the type of building that this structure is or he is emphasizing that this is the unique Temple of Yahweh. But all of these distinctions are foreign to the biblical text, so it is unwise to adopt capitalization as a device for marking Messianic prophecy or for distinguishing direct prophecy from typical prophecy. References to the Messiah should be capitalized if they are titles. Otherwise they should not.

Sometimes it is not possible to determine with certainty if pronouns refer to the Messiah or to a man (Ps 72:15a). Sometimes it may be uncertain whether a prophetic statement is direct or typical. If the reference is to a typical or intermediate fulfillment, what is the translator to do since the reference is to both Christ and to the type? How can he capitalize and not capitalize the same word?<sup>16</sup> This is another reason why capitalization as a means of identifying prophecy and distinguishing direct and indirect prophecies is not a good principal of translation.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> This seems to have begun in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was not the practice of early English translations. See the 1611 version of Psalm 2 in Appendix C.

<sup>15</sup> Translations can, of course, decide as an editorial principle to capitalize all pronouns and nouns referring to Christ, but they should recognize that this is exegesis more than translation. It is a step beyond translation toward making a study Bible. Many of us may like such translations, but here our question is not what do we like, but what is the most accurate translation of the text.

<sup>16</sup> What do we do when the Messiah says "we" and includes us in the "we"?

<sup>17</sup> The difficulty of applying the capitalization principle was illustrated by the recent publication of the volume of Gerhard's dogmatics on the church (or is it the Church?). The editors had decided to capitalize Church whenever it referred to the universal, invisible church and to lower-case it whenever it referred to a particular visible church. They soon realized the task was impossible and used no capitalization on this word unless it began a sentence.

However, when a translation adopts a principle of capitalization as a means of distinguishing prophecies from non-prophecies and direct prophecies from typical prophecies, it becomes responsible for inserting the correct interpretation into its translation and must then be held accountable for that interpretation.

### The Practice of Leading Translations

The WELS TEC surveyed nine translations. It concluded that of the nine translations surveyed, five have the policy of capitalizing pronouns that refer to the triune God (KJV, NKJV, NASB, HCSB, AAT). Four translations do not have this policy (NIV84, NIV11, RSV, ESV).<sup>18</sup> (Note that this does not address the issue of capitalization of names and titles, only pronouns.) The ESV preface explains its non-capitalization policy for pronouns that refer to deity:

It is sometimes suggested that Bible translations should capitalize pronouns referring to deity. It has seemed best not to capitalize deity pronouns in the ESV, however, for the following reasons: first, there is nothing in the original Hebrew and Greek manuscripts that corresponds to such capitalization; second, the practice of capitalizing deity pronouns in English Bible translations is a recent innovation, which began only in the mid-twentieth century; and, third, such capitalization is absent from the KJV Bible and the whole stream of Bible translations that the ESV seeks to carry forward.

Douglas Moo, chairman of the NIV committee on translation, provided a statement of the policy of the NIV concerning capitalization of nouns/titles that refer to deity:

We have no written policy. But our general approach is to reserve caps in titles for places where the text is explicitly referring in context to deity. This holds true, for instance for the difference between “king” and “King” in the Psalms. We had significant debates about texts such as Ps. 110:1, where the second “lord” is explicitly applied to Christ in the NT. We finally decided to keep it lower-case here out of respect for the immediate context. While no one on CBT has any doubt whatsoever that such passages are “messianic” and that Messiah Jesus is divine (this would never even have been a matter of discussion: we are all committed orthodox Christians!), we also think it is important that translations help readers follow the canonical contours of Scripture, allowing for “intermediate” fulfillments of some of the prophecies about a future king (a la Kaiser’s line of promise approach).<sup>19</sup>

I did not find specific elaborations of the policies concerning capitalization in prophecy followed by ESV and HCSB. The ESV did have the express goal of fixing the RSV’s aberrations in prophecies.

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<sup>18</sup> The reality is more complex than this, especially for the KJV. The original KJV did not capitalize these words. See Appendix C.

<sup>19</sup> The “line of promise approach” is that a prophetic passage’s unity of meaning consists in the fact that from the original “seed” meaning, the core idea grew in content over time as God’s promise-plan unfolded. (See: Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, Zondervan, 1995, p 23-35.) Read in its entirety Kaiser’s presentation does not speak against direct prophecy. He allows typical prophecies if the context indicates a type, but he classifies Ps 16, 45, 72, 110 among the direct prophecies (p 119, 127-128, 133, 96; see also 240-242). In his book he focuses on direct prophecies (p 35). Of Isaiah 7 he says that *‘almah* means “virgin” and that it does not refer to any virgin but to *the* virgin (p 160), but he seems to allow some typology in the birth of Hezekiah. The chief issue for us here is whether the prophecy of Christ was there from the beginning or it was a new meaning that arose later. Kaiser seems to affirm that it was there from the beginning. We cannot find multiple, changing meanings in a passage—there is one simple sense. One simple sense, however, does not exclude more than one stage of fulfillment. Kaiser’s application of the “line of promise approach” does not seem to be the same as that of Moo.

## Case Studies

We will now consider a number of test cases. In the time allotted to us we cannot do any detailed exegesis of the passages in question. The discussions below provide some initial comparisons and are invitations to further study. They are not a full evaluation of the treatment of prophecy in the translations used as illustrations, but are intended to suggest criteria upon which such evaluations should be made.

### Isaiah 7

We begin with Isaiah 7:14, which is usually regarded as the most crucial test. If a translator or interpreter does not recognize a direct prophecy which refers only to Christ here in this promise which speaks of a virgin birth of God-with-us, it would be inconsistent for him to see one anywhere else.

NIV 1984	The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son	
NIV 2011	The virgin* will be with child and will give birth to a son	* Note: <i>Or</i> young woman
ESV	The virgin shall conceive and bear a son	
HCSB	The virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel	
NASB	Behold, a virgin* will be with child and bear a son	*Or maiden <sup>20</sup>
NKJV	Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son	
NLT	The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son	
NRSV	Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son	
MSG	A girl who is presently a virgin will get pregnant. She'll bear a son	

Evaluate NIV 2011, NRSV, NASB, and MSG.

The Message removes a virgin birth from the prophecy. Translations and notes referring to a “young woman” are intended to keep the door open for a typical interpretation, though linguistic arguments about *‘almah* may also enter into the discussion.

What are the factors that point us toward a direct prophecy in Isaiah 7:14?

1. The rendering of *‘almah* as *parthenos* in the New Testament and the Septuagint necessitates a direct prophecy since it means “virgin” and there was only one virgin birth in history. If *‘almah* does not mean “virgin”, LXX and the New Testament manufactured a prophecy where originally there was none.
2. In some respects “virgin” is the less miraculous word in the prophecy. The really miraculous word is “Immanuel”. There is only one Immanuel worthy of the name.
3. There are no types for the virgin-born Immanuel visible in the context. In chapter 8, it is Isaiah who is the type of Christ. His children through the prophetess are types of believers, not types of Christ (He 2:13). Shear-Jashub was already old enough to accompany Isaiah chapter 7. Maher-shalal-hash-baz was not born of a virgin birth or even of a woman who was a virgin before his conception. Isaiah’s boys were not named Immanuel. Their names point to the Captivity and the Return. There are no suitable types in the royal family.<sup>21</sup> Hezekiah is too old, Manasseh too young.
4. The child appears again in Isaiah 9 where he is called Mighty God and Everlasting Father.
5. In chapter 11, at the end of the Book of Immanuel, the child is both a shoot from the stump of Jesse and the root of Jesse. The description of the child in the rest of chapter 11 does not fit a contemporary of Isaiah.

<sup>20</sup> “Maiden” includes “virgin” as one of its meanings. “Virgin” is *Jungfrau* and “maiden” is *Magd*. Luther uses both to refer to Mary.

<sup>21</sup> J. Brug, “The Reign of Hezekiah,” *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Summer 1990, p 181-191.



6. The other reference to the child's mother (Micah 5:3) also occurs in a direct prophecy.
7. The sign needs to be a very dramatic sign—"deep as Sheol, high as heaven" (ESV). It is introduced with a dramatic *hinneh*. A normal birth nine months down the road hardly suffices.
8. A virgin birth of God-with-Us seven hundred years down the road does fit the needs of the situation of Isaiah's day, since the issue at hand is the survival and endurance of the Davidic throne. See also Isaiah 6:13—the stump of Judah will be in the ground a long time. The solution must be long-term.
9. What is a valid motive for eliminating the direct prophecy from the passage?

## 2 Samuel 7

We will rely rather heavily on examples from Psalms, but since many of the Messianic prophecies in Psalms flow from 2 Samuel 7:12-15, we will go there first.

I will raise up after you your descendant, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. <sup>13</sup>He will build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. <sup>14</sup>I will be a father to him, and he will be a son to Me. When he does wrong, I will discipline him with a human rod and with blows from others. <sup>15</sup>But My faithful love will never leave him (HCSB).

None of our base translations have any capitalization of nouns referring to the "son" because there are no titles in the passage, and because all translators recognize that Solomon provides an intermediate fulfillment. We accept the premise that 2 Samuel 7 refers both to Solomon and to Christ, but we believe the reference to a greater fulfillment in Christ was present from the start. We call this a typical prophecy but not in the weakened sense held by some Evangelicals:

While these texts present an ideal picture of God's king (anointed one), the narrative of the later years of David's kingship in 2 Samuel suggest that David himself fell short of the ideal. While the books of Samuel ... do not explicitly look forward to a future ruler from the line of David who will restore the fortunes of the line, they nevertheless trace a divergence between the ideal and the reality even in David's time which tends in the direction of such an expectation. <sup>22</sup>

Our next question: do the psalms that spring from 2 Samuel 7 also refer to both Christ and Solomon, or do they move ahead to focus on the One who is greater than Solomon? <sup>23 24</sup>

## Psalm 2

As stated above, I do not recommend capitalization as a marker of direct prophecy unless a title is involved, but the presence or absence of capitalization may give us information about the translators' view of the prophecy. Psalm 2:2 provides an illustration.

NIV 1984	against the LORD and against his Anointed One	<i>A note has lower case</i>
NIV 2011	against the LORD and against his anointed	
NASB	against the LORD and against His Anointed	
HCSB	against the Lord and His Anointed One	<i>A note has lower case</i>

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<sup>22</sup> Satterthwaite, *The Lord's Anointed (TLA)*, p 41.

<sup>23</sup> An example of "moving ahead" beyond the type is found in the relationship of Revelation to Matthew 24. Both prophesy the events of the Last Day, but Matthew 24 also includes a type, the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Revelation moves beyond this since the type had already occurred.

<sup>24</sup> Luther's treatment of the application of prophecy will be treated in Appendix A.

## ESV against the LORD and against his Anointed

Are these differences of style or differences of interpretation? According to the NIV's stated principle of capitalization, NIV 2011 by its switch to lower case intends to remove Psalm 2 from the category of direct prophecy.<sup>25</sup> NASB with its double capitalization places Psalm 2 into the category of direct prophecy. Holman's capitalization seems to point in the direction of a direct prophecy, but it hedges with its translators' note, and the notes of the *HCSB Study Bible* take the passage as typical.<sup>26</sup> ESV capitalizes "Anointed" as a title, but this does not necessarily indicate a direct prophecy.<sup>27 28</sup>

What are some reasons to think this psalm is direct prophecy?

Acts 4:27 tells us that the conspiracy against Jesus which led to his death was the chief example of such plotting against God's king. Pilate and Herod hated each other, but they nevertheless cooperated in Jesus' trial. The Pharisees and the Sadducees were bitter enemies, but they agreed on one thing—Jesus must die. This application would not in itself rule out a type being found in enemies of the kings of Judah, but the prophecy goes further.

Three New Testament passages quote Psalm 2:7 as a Messianic prophecy which establishes that Jesus is the Son of God. In Acts 13:33 this declaration of sonship is closely associated with Jesus' resurrection. Hebrews 1:5 cites Psalm 2:7 to demonstrate Jesus' superiority to the angels, who are "sons of God" only by creation, not by eternal equality. Hebrews 5:5 quotes Psalm 2 to show that Jesus' did not usurp the position of being our High Priest and Savior, but that this office was assigned to him by the Father. Though there are no other strictly divine attributes listed in this psalm, the prophecy of a kingdom to the ends of the earth is fulfilled only by Christ.

Revelation 2:27, 12:5, and 19:15 refer the shepherding (or smashing) with a rod of iron to Christ. Which king of Judah did this? The only king suitable as a type is David, and from the perspective of the psalm he is already in the past.

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<sup>25</sup> In *The Making of the NIV* (1991) (p 92) Bruce Waltke explains the capitalization of "Anointed" in Psalm 2 of NIV 1984. Waltke says that the capitalization issue was decided on hermeneutical and theological grounds: "Although on the historical level one might rightly opt for rendering the references to the king by lower case, on the canonical level one rightly opts for upper case, as in the NIV [1984] text. By using upper case in Psalm 2, the NIV [1984] translators expose their orthodox views, not only of inspiration, but also of christology." This assertion raises the question, "What then is exposed by the removing of the capitalization in NIV 2011?" In reality, the shift of hermeneutics from 1984 to 2011 is less than it might appear at first. The key lies in the distinction between the "historical" and "canonical" meaning of the text, a distinction already made by the 1984 translators. The "historical meaning" is the original meaning of the text. This meaning requires lower case "anointed" since the text was originally not Messianic. The "canonical meaning" is the later, derived meaning of the text. This later meaning allows capitalized "Anointed" since, when the psalm was placed into the canon, it had become messianic. In 1984 the committee decided to capitalize on the basis of the canonical meaning of the psalm. In 2011 the committee decided not to capitalize on the basis of what they believed to be the original meaning of the text. Their view of prophecy was essentially the same in both versions. This is explained in some detail on pages 90-92 of Waltke's article: The original audience referred this coronation liturgy to Solomon and later kings. When all these kings failed to meet the ideal, and the kingdom of Judah was brought to an end, and Israel went into exile, "the psalm, which spoke of one greater than David, became purely prophetic." (Some translators may have thought that the psalm went from being completely about a king to being completely about the King. Others may have thought that although the psalm was primarily about the king when it was written, it always "contained the seed" of being about the King.)

<sup>26</sup> "In this context, the anointed One is the Davidic king who is ultimately, in the progress of divine revelation, Jesus Christ" (*HCSB Study Bible*, Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2010, p. 882).

<sup>27</sup> *ESV Study Bible*, p 108, indicates that Psalm 2 is typical.

<sup>28</sup> The same issue of capitalization occurs in v 6 with "King" and in v 7 and 12 with "Son".

In 2 Samuel 7 the Lord had promised David that he would have a son who would rule after him and who would build God's house. God promised that he himself would be a father to this king. David's successor Solomon partly fulfilled that part of the prophecy. God was Solomon's spiritual father. Solomon ruled on David's throne. He built the Temple as God's house. But Solomon died. His kingdom was divided. The temple he built was destroyed. No Israelite king could or would fulfill the full prophecy of Psalm 2. The last verse of the psalm takes us to Judgment Day. Which king of Judah was such a blessed refuge? This promise was fulfilled only by Christ.

A similar issue arises with Psalm 72, the bookend psalm with Psalm 2 in the arrangement of the Davidic psalter. We will, therefore, consider it next.

### Psalm 72

Psalm 72 occupies a crucial place in the Book of Psalms as the concluding psalm of the original Davidic psalter (Ps 1-72). With Psalm 2 it serves as bookends enclosing the Davidic psalter. Psalm 72 is therefore one of the most important Messianic psalms. It is not explicitly quoted in the New Testament as Messianic, but it is very similar to Isaiah 11 and Isaiah 60, which are quoted in the New Testament. If those passages are Messianic, this psalm surely is too. It pictures the eternal and universal nature of Christ's just rule. The Targum recognizes it as Messianic, labeling the king it describes as King Messiah.

The heading of this psalm is *li-shlomo*. This could be translated "by, to, or for Solomon." For this reason some commentators regard this as a psalm written *by* David to express his hope *for* Solomon. The Septuagint and some conservative commentators adopt this opinion, probably because of the note at the end of this psalm that announces that Psalm 72 is the conclusion of the Prayers of David. In 2 Samuel 7 David had been promised that he would have a great son who would build God's house. However, even though Solomon did "build God's house" by building the Temple in Jerusalem, he fell far short of building the kind of kingdom that had been promised to David. Solomon's kingdom ended at the Euphrates. King Messiah's kingdom extends from the Euphrates to the ends of the earth. It encompasses the whole known world. Solomon died. His kingdom was torn apart. King Messiah lives. People everywhere are blessed through him and bless him. He endures or he is feared as long as the sun and moon endure. We therefore understand this psalm, not as a prayer written for or about Solomon, but as a prophetic prayer written by Solomon, who recognized that he could not establish the true glory of the Davidic kingdom, but that God's people would have to wait for another king to accomplish that, namely, King Messiah.

Some Evangelicals see Psalm 72 as messianic in a rather weak, developmental sense:

A summary interpretation of Psalm 72 indicates that it is a petition occasioned by a new king's accession to the royal throne in Israel. Christ was not the originally intended referent. However, considerations of the psalm's poetic imagery and "intertextuality" as part of the Old Testament canon and tradition reveal that Psalm 72 was open to messianic readings from the start. In the New Testament, Christ was identified as the (partial) fulfillment of the psalm's intercessions and benedictions.<sup>29</sup>

Kaiser, on the other hand, says, "This psalm is a direct messianic prediction because it uses the future tense throughout and because not even Solomon in all his glory could have fulfilled what is said here."<sup>30</sup> We agree, as does Luther.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Knut Heim in *TLA*, p 223.

<sup>30</sup> *TMIOT*, p 133.

There are a number of translation issues in this psalm.

In verse 1, none of our three base translations capitalize “king” or “king’s son” since they are not regarded as titles. This does not in itself exclude direct prophecy, but the notes in the HCSB and ESV study Bibles suggest that the editors view these prophecies as typical.

Grammatically, the Hebrew imperfect verbs throughout the psalm may be translated either as a prayer (“May the king do these things”) or as a future reality (“The king will do these things”).

- NIV84 He will judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice.
- NIV11 May he judge your people in righteousness, your afflicted ones with justice.
- NASB May he judge Your people with righteousness And Your afflicted with justice.
- ESV May he judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice!

Some claim that translating “may he” rather than “he will” diminishes the prophetic force. This translation could have this effect, but the Hebrew permits either translation, and translations that uphold prophecy adopt either option. Some translations switch from prediction to prayer during the course of the psalm or alternate prayer and prophecy (HCSB, ESV briefly). Translating this as prayer rather than prophecy may not always be an innocent choice, but the psalm could be taken either as a prophecy that leads us to pray, “Come, Lord Jesus,” or as a confident prayer based on prophecy. I favor the first option.

In verse 5 the Hebrew reads “they will fear you”. The Septuagint has “he will endure”. (Note also the further examples of the prayer v. prophecy issue in the translations below.)

- ESV May they fear you while the sun endures, and as long as the moon,
- NIV84 He will endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon,
- NIV11 May he endure as long as the sun, as long as the moon
- HCSB May he continue while the sun endures and as long as the moon,
- NET People will fear you as long as the sun and moon remain in the sky,
- NASB Let them fear You while the sun endures, And as long as the moon,
- NLT May they fear you as long as the sun shines, as long as the moon remains in the sky
- NKJV They shall fear You as long as the sun and moon endure,
- KJV They shall fear thee as long as the sun and moon endure,
- NRSV May he live while the sun endures, and as long as the moon,
- MSG Outlast the sun, outlive the moon—age after age after age.
- BBE May his life go on as long as the sun and moon,

In verse 16 the Hebrew says, “they from the city will flourish.” Many translations stumble at the sudden introduction of people from the city into the agricultural imagery of the text, and they remove the reference to the city folks by emendation of the text. This gives some indication of how ready a translation is to emend the Masoretic text.

- NIV let it thrive like the grass of the field
- HCSB may people flourish in the cities like the grass of the field.
- ESV may people blossom in the cities like the grass of the field!
- NET may its crops be as abundant as the grass of the earth!
- NLT may the people thrive like grass in a field

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<sup>31</sup> Luther’s comments on the translation of Psalm 72 are found in WA, DB3, p 82-84. He repeatedly says this king cannot be Solomon because Solomon did not have a universal kingdom, Solomon is dead, and Solomon is not worshiped forever. Luther connects the dust-eating enemies with the serpent in Genesis 3.

BBE	may its stems be unnumbered like the grass of the earth
NASB	may those from the city flourish like vegetation of the earth
MSG	praises springing from the city like grass from the earth
NKJV	those of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth
NRSV	may people blossom in the cities like the grass of the field
KJV	they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth

It is hard to see why the text needs to be emended here. The reference to the city folks makes it clear that the passage is not about agriculture but about missions. See Jesus' remark in John 4:35: "The fields are ripe for the harvest."

This psalm could not be applied literally to any king of Israel. All the kings of Israel lived for a few years and died. Even their dynasty did not remain in power for more than a few centuries, from about 1000 BC to 586 BC. The Davidic dynasty lost its dominion to foreign rulers of Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome. Only Christ rules over all nations until the end of this age and on into eternity (Mt 28:19-20). Though he died, Christ rose and now lives forever. His church will endure until he returns. Then his people will live with him forever, even though heaven and earth pass away.

### Psalm 16

Psalm 16 is identified as a direct prophecy in the New Testament. It is one of the best test cases for the existence of direct prophecy. If a commentator does not see direct prophecy in this case, in which Scripture says the prophecy is direct, it is inconsistent for him to see it anywhere else.<sup>32</sup>

The fulfillment of this psalm applies primarily and directly to Christ. Peter in Acts 2:25-28 applies verses 9-11 of the psalm to Christ. He then explains how this is so in Acts 2:29-31:

Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day.<sup>30</sup> But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne.<sup>31</sup> Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay.

His points: 1) David was a prophet; 2) David spoke about Christ and realized he was speaking about the future; 3) David died and is still in the grave; 4) Jesus died but did not stay in the grave. In Acts 13:35 Paul affirms that this psalm could not be the prayer of David about himself, because David died and remained in the grave.

For when David had served God's purpose in his own generation, he fell asleep; he was buried with his fathers and his body decayed.<sup>37</sup> But the one whom God raised from the dead did not see decay.

In this present age, the promise of this psalm was fulfilled only by Christ, who did not remain in the grave, but rose and conquered death. But because its promises are true of Christ, they will be true also of

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<sup>32</sup> There are cases in which such interpreters may appear at times to find direct prophecies elsewhere in the OT, but closer examination of their notes and their comments shows that they do not take these prophecies as direct prophecies in the same sense that we do when we use the term "direct prophecy". For example, translations that capitalize "Holy One" in Psalm 16 nevertheless may explain the passage as typical in their notes. Capitalization in later prophecies may simply indicate a belief in the development of a Messianic consciousness or of Messianic terminology during the later stages of the Old Testament. I would not classify such cases as real recognition of prophecies that were direct from the start. Both the *HCSB Study Bible* and the *ESV Study Bible* seem to interpret all the messianic prophecies as typical, at least in Psalms. See also statements by the translators in connection with footnotes 25 and 43. Not much weight can be put on inconsistencies of capitalization when one is trying to decipher a translation's understanding of prophecy.

us in eternity. It can properly be used as a funeral text because it applies directly only to Christ, and only secondarily to us.

The main translation issue is verse 10. As you look at these translations, look at the capitalization. (Also note the treatment of “soul” and “sheol”.)

- KJV for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.
- NIV84 because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.
- NIV11 because you will not abandon me to the realm of the dead, nor will you let your faithful one see decay.
- HCSB for You will not abandon me to Sheol; You will not allow Your Faithful One to see decay.
- ESV for you will not abandon my soul to Sheol, or let your holy one see corruption.
- NKJV for You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.
- NASB You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.
- NRSV For you do not give me up to Sheol, or let your faithful one see the Pit.
- NLT For you will not leave my soul among the dead or allow your holy one to rot in the grave.
- NET You will not abandon me to Sheol; you will not allow your faithful follower to see the Pit.
- MSG You canceled my ticket to hell—that's not my destination!
- BBE For you will not let my soul be prisoned in the underworld; you will not let your loved one see the place of death.

Rate NIV84, NIV11, HCSB, and ESV.

Though Kaiser does not completely rule out David in some sense being “the godly one”, he says that the psalm has a direct messianic reference depending on the identification of the Godly One. He comments on the significance of the singular “holy one”, observing that a switch to the plural in some late Hebrew manuscripts may be an attempt to remove the messianic promise.<sup>33</sup>

## Psalm 22

Another test case for direct prophecy is Psalm 22. This psalm is one of the most important of all psalms. Jesus quoted from this psalm on the cross, and it contains numerous references to his passion and exaltation. No psalm is more cited in the New Testament. This psalm rises above the surrounding psalms, which focus on the sufferings and triumphs of David, to give us a graphic picture of the suffering and triumph of the Messiah, unparalleled except perhaps in Isaiah 52-53.

There are relatively few translation issues here that would directly affect the Messianic interpretation. The issue here is not so much translation, but the criteria for recognizing direct prophecy. Here no divine attributes are attributed directly to the subject of the psalm, but there is much evidence for regarding this psalm as direct. When did David suffer like this? When did his enemies cast lots for David’s clothing? When did they pierce his hands and feet? Why do future generations worship him? Can we find any type

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<sup>33</sup> *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, p 119-120.

in David's life that would justify making the psalm typical? If there are no known types, why make it typical unless one has a bias against direct?

In verse 1 NKJV is alone in capitalizing the references to the speaker: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, And from the words of My groaning?" It appears that most, if not all of the translations see Psalm 22 as typical.<sup>34</sup>

The most debated translation issue is in verse 16/17. The Masoretic text has "like a lion my hands and feet" in most manuscripts. A variant is "they dig or bore my hands and feet".

NIV they have pierced my hands and my feet  
ESV they have pierced my hands and feet  
HCSB they pierced my hands and my feet.  
NASB they pierced my hands and my feet  
NLT they have pierced my hands and feet  
NKJV They pierced My hands and My feet  
KJV they pierced my hands and my feet.  
BBE they made wounds in my hands and feet  
MSG they pin me down hand and foot  
NRSV my hands and feet have shriveled  
NET like a lion they pin my hands and feet

Only NET retains "like a lion", but MSG and NRSV depart from the traditional Christian reading.

There is an interesting variant in verse 29/30. Only NRSV follows the Septuagint and Syriac, "I shall live for him." This reading reflects two variants, "*my soul* (נַפְשִׁי) lives *for him*" (לוֹ) in place of "his soul does not live".

This psalm sets both the suffering and exaltation of the Lord's servant before us, so that when he comes in glory we may be among those who bow in joy, not among those who cower in fear.

#### Psalm 45

Another key test of the case for direct prophecy is Psalm 45, a wedding song for Christ and the Church. This psalm is not merely a "royal psalm" written for a king of Israel, but a Messianic psalm which refers to Christ. The key point in the identification as a direct prophecy is the address to the king as God in verse 6/7.

The Hebrew reads "your throne, God, forever" (כִּסֵּאֲךָ אֱלֹהִים עוֹלָם). This construction with the suffix on כִּסֵּאֲךָ does not permit such evasive renderings as "the eternal and everlasting God has enthroned you" (this reads כִּסֵּאֲךָ as a verb, which it never is in Hebrew) or "your throne which God has given you will last forever" (reading "your throne of God," using כִּסֵּאֲךָ as a construct in spite of the suffix). Such translations ignore the simplest sense of the Hebrew text and the renderings of the most ancient translations (the LXX has ὁ θρόνος σου, ὁ θεός, εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος). Furthermore, these verses are quoted in Hebrews 1:8 as a testimony of Christ's divine superiority to the angels. The Messianic interpretation is clear and should not be set aside. How do our test translations stack up?

<sup>34</sup> E.g., HCSB Study Bible note on Psalm 22 – "In his suffering the psalmist foreshadowed the Messiah. In His suffering, Jesus identified with the psalmist" (p. 901).

NIV 1984 Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;  
 NIV 2011 Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;  
           Note: *Here the king is addressed as God's representative.*  
 HCSB Your throne, God, is forever and ever;  
           Notes: Or *Your divine throne is*, or *Your throne is God's*  
 ESV Your throne, O God, is forever and ever.  
 NASB Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;  
 NRSV Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever.  
 NLT Your throne, O God, endures forever and ever.  
 RSV Your divine throne endures forever and forever.  
 MSG Your throne is God's throne, ever and always;

The note in NIV 2011 suggests that this psalm originally was not a Messianic prophecy but a hyperbole about a king of Israel. The translators could not decapitalize the vocative to make the prophecy typical because the king's title here is "God", which must remain capitalized. To add a translators' note which minimizes or removes a direct prophecy, which could not be removed by other means, is in my opinion a serious mistake. The HCSB notes unfortunately have the same effect and seem to point to disagreement in the committee. It is notable that the NRSV, on the other hand, backs off from the bad translation of the RSV, even while NIV and HCSB are taking a step in the wrong direction. The Message is a miss.

If this song is a description of the wedding of a king and queen of Israel, who are the candidates who fit the description? We need a conquering king, who will be praised forever and ever, and a pure bride. Two of the most common candidates to serve as a type for the queen are Jezebel and Athaliah. The implausibility of this interpretation speaks for itself. David's wives are not good candidates. He was not a king when he married Michal. Bathsheba was not a queen. Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter don't fill the bill. Kaiser quotes Spurgeon's comment as his own.

Some here see Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter only—they are short-sighted. Others see both Solomon and Christ—they are cross-eyed. Well-focused spiritual eyes see here only Jesus.<sup>35</sup>

Luther's translation notes say:

The Jews mutilate this psalm miserably, thinking it is about Solomon. Is this really so carnal? It is a beautiful prophecy.<sup>36</sup>

This verse is very important as one of the clearest Old Testament testimonies to Christ's deity. The Messianic King is called God, and he rules an eternal kingdom. However, in verse 7/8 he is also distinguished from God, his God. This distinction is meaningful only in light of the doctrines of the Trinity and of Christ's incarnation. Although the Messianic King is true God, he is also the obedient Son who became a man in submission to his Father's will. Jesus the Anointed is set above all other human beings because he is exalted in joy at the right hand of God. He is worthy of the exalted position, because as the God-man he has completed the work of salvation. Therefore, the right to judge and rule all people has been trusted to him (John 5:22-23).

There are a number of secondary reflections of the king versus King Messiah issue in verse 16. Since the masculine pronouns indicate that the king is now once again being addressed rather than the queen, who was addressed in the immediately preceding verses, how do the translations reflect this shift? Since

<sup>35</sup> *TMIOT*, p 128.

<sup>36</sup> WA, DB3, p 542. "*Laut das so carnaliter.*"



the issue is dynastic succession, why would translations avoid the terms “fathers” and “sons”? Does the king appoint rulers throughout the land or throughout the earth?

NIV	Your sons will take the place of your fathers; you will make them princes throughout the land.
ESV	In place of your fathers shall be your sons; you will make them princes in all the earth.
HCSB	Your sons will succeed your ancestors; you will make them princes throughout the land.
NASB	In place of your fathers will be your sons; You shall make them princes in all the earth.
NLT	Your sons will become kings like their father. You will make them rulers over many lands.
MSG	Set your mind now on sons—don't dote on father and grandfather. You'll set your sons up as princes all over the earth.
BBE	Your children will take the place of your fathers; so that you may make them rulers over all the earth.
NKJV	Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons, Whom You shall make princes in all the earth.
NET	Your sons will carry on the dynasty of your ancestors; you will make them princes throughout the land. Note: “Your” is masculine.
NRSV	In the place of ancestors you, O king, shall have sons; you will make them princes in all the earth.
KJV	Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.

Which translations remove “fathers” or “sons”? Why? Which translations best reflect the gender of the person being addressed?

The heading calls this poem “a song of loves.” Virtually all the translations have “a love song” or “song of love.” NIV has “a wedding song”. Does this choice give a slant to the interpretation?

### Psalm 110

Psalm 110 is one of the most important Messianic psalms and one of the most important tests of the principle of direct prophecy. It is quoted or alluded to in the New Testament more than 30 times, more than any other psalm (though the significance of this number is diminished by the repeated references to the same few points in Hebrews and by the many references to Christ being seated at the right hand of God throughout the epistles). Luther called it the main psalm to deal with our dear Lord Jesus Christ.

In this psalm David receives an oracle about his lord. David’s lord will be a mighty warrior, served by a holy people. He will have an everlasting priesthood like the priesthood of Melchizedek.

Jesus quoted verse 1 as a proof of his deity (Matthew 22:43, Mark 12:36, Luke 20:42). His opponents did not question his view that the psalm spoke of the Messiah, but they were less happy with the application he drew from it. David, the speaker of verse 1, declared, “The LORD Yahweh says to my lord (or master), ‘Sit at my right hand.’” If David, the greatest king of Israel, calls the Messiah his lord, then the Messiah must be more than David’s descendent. He must be God as well. The Messiah is not only the branch that shoots up from David; he is also the root from which David grows. Jesus the Messiah, therefore, is justified in calling himself Son of God or even God.

In his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:34-36) Peter makes it clear that the psalm is about Christ, not about David.

For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said, “The Lord said to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand <sup>35</sup>until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.’” <sup>36</sup>Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

The issues that we have to deal with in this Psalm again pertain more to interpretation than to translation. Nevertheless, the capitalization or non-capitalization in verse 1 is sometimes an indicator of the translators’ interpretation of the psalm.

NIV84 The LORD says to my Lord:  
NIV11 The LORD says to my lord:  
ESV The LORD says to my Lord:  
HCSB the declaration of the LORD to my Lord:  
NASB The LORD says to my Lord:  
NLT The Lord said to my Lord,  
MSG The word of GOD to my Lord:  
NKJV The LORD said to my Lord,  
KJV The LORD said unto my Lord,  
NRSV The LORD says to my lord,  
NET Here is the Lord’s proclamation to my lord:  
BBE The Lord said to my lord,

Why the decapitalization by the NIV?<sup>37</sup> What accounts for this change? In a statement cited earlier, Douglas Moo of the NIV CBT offered this explanation:

We have no written policy [concerning capitalization]. But our general approach is to reserve caps in titles for places where the text is explicitly referring in context to deity. This holds true, for instance for the difference between “king” and “King” in the Psalms. We had significant debates about texts such as Ps. 110:1, where the second “lord” is explicitly applied to Christ in the NT. We finally decided to keep it lower-case here out of respect for the immediate context.

But shouldn’t the New Testament context be given more weight? An approach to the translation of prophecy, mentioned in a summary of a WELS symposium on translation,<sup>38</sup> gives insight into the issue:

The Old Testament will be translated in “isolation” from the New Testament. In other words, an Old Testament translation will not be affected by a clear reference in the New Testament.

Whether or not this is a formal principle accepted by the majority of the CBT, I don’t know, but it seems to have been the operative principle in translating Psalm 110.<sup>39</sup> <sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> NIV does have “Lord” in a note, so apparently a minority of the committee may see Psalm 110 as a direct prophecy. It should, however, be noted that in normal usage a person would call a superior “My Lord” even if the person were only a human being. The original KJV regularly capitalized words like King even when they referred to humans. See Appendix C.

<sup>38</sup> Glenn Schwanke, “Translation Symposium Summary,” p 6. Available online.

<sup>39</sup> Luther sharply rejects this view in the introduction to the last words of David, which is translated in Volume 15 of the American Edition.

<sup>40</sup> We will return to this issue in connection with Psalm 8.

How can “respect for the immediate context” lead to taking this as a typical prophecy? The translators’ note of the NET offers one rationale for translators to decapitalize “lord”, based on the assumed context of the psalm.

In the psalm’s original context the speaker is an unidentified prophetic voice in the royal court. In the course of time the psalm is applied to each successive king in the dynasty and ultimately to the ideal Davidic king. NT references to the psalm understand David to be speaking about his “lord,” the Messiah.

Neither the context of the psalm (this king is David’s lord and also a priest like Melchizedek) nor the New Testament context justify this interpretation. This interpretation also denies Davidic authorship, which is crucial to Jesus’ use of the psalm.

In contrast to this view Walter Kaiser says:

Psalm 110, then, is a direct and specific messianic psalm for the reasons we have argued above.<sup>41</sup>

The portrait of David’s lord, who is a king-priest, enthroned by God in perpetuity over a world-wide kingdom, who wins a head-crushing victory over the evil enemy, supports Kaiser’s view. There is a type in this psalm, but it is Melchizedek, who already lay far in the past when the psalm was written.

#### Micah 5

Micah 5:2 presents an interesting case that tests the line between translation and interpretation. The passage ends with this description of the Messiah:

Lit.	his goings out from before, from the days of eternity ( <i>‘olam</i> )
NIV	whose origins are from of old, from ancient times
ESV	whose origin is from of old, from ancient days
HCSB	His origin is from antiquity, from eternity.
NASB	his goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity
NLT	one whose origins are from the distant past
MSG	his family tree is ancient and distinguished
BBE	whose going out has been purposed from time past, from the eternal days
NKJV	whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting
NRSV	whose origin is from of old, from ancient days
KJV	whose goings forth [have been] from of old, from everlasting

The most traditional interpretation is that this passage is a reference to Christ’s eternal generation, but would that be expressed by a plural, “goings out”? The explanation commonly offered for this plural is “majestic plural.” Many recent translations, on the other hand, take this passage as a reference to Messiah’s descent from the patriarchs and kings. But is a third option better? Does the plural “goings out” actually refer to Messiah’s many appearances as the Angel of the Lord? Compare John 1:10: “He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.” All three interpretations are doctrinally correct: 1) the Messiah had many distinguished ancestors, 2) King Messiah was begotten in eternity, 3) As the Angel of the Lord King Messiah appeared throughout the Old Testament era. Which seems to fit the context best?

#### Psalm 8

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<sup>41</sup> *TMIOT*, p 96.

We have saved Psalm 8 for last because it is perhaps the most serious translation problem raised in debates surrounding recent translations, and the underlying issue is different than in the other cases we have considered. Here the issue is not capitalization but the importance of accurate number and gender in the translation of messianic prophecy.<sup>42</sup>

A serious problem arises from a shift of number and gender in the translation of Psalm 8:4-6. These are the key verses of this psalm, which are recognized by the letter to the Hebrews and by traditional Lutheran interpretation as an important prophecy of Christ. The minutes of the committee assembled by Luther to revise his translation of Psalms indicate Luther's understanding of this psalm.

The whole psalm is a prophecy concerning Christ. It is not a general statement about creation, as the Jews foolishly claim. It speaks about the gospel and about the subject and object of the gospel: Christ has suffered and has been raised to life. The Epistle to the Hebrews alleges that it is wholly or directly (*prorsus*) about Christ.<sup>43</sup>

How do recent translations agree or disagree with Luther's approach?

NIV 1984 what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?  
<sup>5</sup>You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. <sup>6</sup>You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:

NIV 2011 what is mankind that you are mindful of them, human beings that you care for them? <sup>5</sup>You have made them a little lower than the angels and crowned them with glory and honor. <sup>6</sup>You made them rulers over the works of your hands; you put everything under their feet: [Translators' notes have the singular.]

HCSB what is man that You remember him, the son of man that You look after him? <sup>5</sup>You made him little less than God and crowned him with glory and honor. <sup>6</sup>You made him lord over the works of Your hands; You put everything under his feet.

ESV what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? <sup>5</sup>Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. <sup>6</sup>You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet,

NASB, NKJV, and KJV agree with NIV84 in referring to "man" and "the son of man"

NET, NLT, MSG, and NRSV agree with NIV11 with renderings like "the human race", "mankind" "my micro-self", "us", "mortals", and "human beings".

If the text said *bnei-Adam* this would be a natural way to refer to people of both genders. The text says *ben-Adam*, which is a natural way to refer to a male person, as *bat-Adam* is a natural way to refer to a single female person (though in contemporary Hebrew even an individual woman can be called a *ben-adam*: הִיא בֶּן אָדָם מְשֻׁפָּלִיל *she is an educated person*).

This passage needs an article of its own because there are other issues besides the singular/plural and the gender neutral issues, but here we have to limit ourselves to the observation that the translation of Psalm 8 in the NIV 2011 makes it difficult (perhaps even impossible) for a reader of Psalms to recognize the messianic interpretation which focuses on Christ as the one who recovers dominion over all things for man. A reader of the Bible might still be able to read the Messianic interpretation back into the psalm from Hebrews 2, but this pluralizing translation lends support to the view that the messianic meaning was

<sup>42</sup> We got a foretaste of this issue with the choice of Holy One or holy ones in Psalm 110.

<sup>43</sup> *Revisionsprotokolle* in WA, DB3, p XXXIV. Translation jb. Another version is on p 12 of WA, DB3.

not there originally but was read into the psalm later. This removal of the singular forms from Psalm 8 may not have been a conscious attempt to remove prophecy (the singular/plural form “seed” or “offspring”, which is critical to the Messianic interpretation, was retained in Genesis 3:15). It seems more likely that the focus on gender-neutral language made the translators oblivious to what they were doing to the Messianic import of the passage.

The fact that many Evangelicals and many or some of the translators of NIV 1984, TNIV, and NIV 2011 appear to see only typical prophecy in the Old Testament (at least early on)<sup>44</sup> increases the reason for concern, since for some Evangelicals “typical prophecy” increasingly means post-facto prophecy (also called retrospective typology).<sup>45</sup> It also is a cause for concern when capitalization is retained more often in later messianic prophecies such as in Zechariah, but not in the early prophecies in Psalms, since this lends itself to a view of an evolutionary development of prophecy.<sup>46</sup>

Moo offered this explanation of the approach of members of the current CBT:

In our Psalm 8 footnotes, we do not cap “him” because we think the basic, original referent is to “human being.” Christ ultimately fulfills that role of the “ultimate” human being, so of course Psalm 8 ultimately applies to him. But we think it important that readers understand what Psalm 8 is doing in its original context and not read the psalm as “narrowly” messianic.

Another translation principle attributed to the NIV CBT reflects the same philosophy.

Functional equivalence means that Psalm 8 has to be read in the flow of the Psalms and the Old Testament. The New Testament and Hebrews 2 are secondary.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See Kenneth Barker, *The Accuracy of the NIV*, p 33, 24, 34, 41-42 for a statement. Genesis 3:15, Psalm 16:10, and Isaiah 7:14 are among the generic typological prophecies.

<sup>45</sup> This is discussed in Nass, “Messianic Prophecy with Addendum”. Among sources he suggests for further study are Douglas J. Moo, “The Problem of Sensus Plenior,” in *Hermeneutics, Authority, and Canon*, (ed. D. A. Carson and John D. Woodbridge). Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1986, p. 196. Darrell L. Bock, “Use of the Old Testament in the New,” in *Foundations for Biblical Interpretation*, (ed. David S. Dockery, Kenneth A. Mathews, and Robert B. Sloan). Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1994, pp. 110-111; and Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, New American Commentary. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1997, pp. 388-390. See also *Three Views on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008.

<sup>46</sup> More on this later in Appendix F on additional applications which include prophecies of the Branch.

<sup>47</sup> This approach is defended at length in a paper by Rodney Decker available online. In a section entitled, “Changes Related to Messianic Texts,” Decker states: “The issues in this use of the OT in the NT are hermeneutical. I happen to think that the TNIV/NIV11 is a more accurate reflection of the text than the original NIV and other similar translations. Exegesis of Psalm 8 would show that in the OT text on its own (i.e., without reading any NT use back into the OT text<sup>49</sup>) [one] would conclude that the entire reference of the psalm as originally written and intended refers only to human beings. The TNIV actually expresses the contextual meaning of *’enos* (v. 4; LXX, *anthropos*) quite well. In contrast to the “LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (v. 1) for whom the heavens are finger work (v. 3), humans are appropriately described as “mere mortals.” The point of the psalm is that even though we humans are puny beings in comparison with God, we are special creations by God with privilege and responsibility over the rest of creation (vv. 5-8). God has given us a position lower than angels,” still one of glory with dominion over the animal kingdom. Both “man” (*’enos*) and “son of man” (*ben-adam*) are generic references to the human race, not to any specific person. As such, the use of English plural pronouns following is not only valid, but preferable. There is no hint here of anything messianic. If we had only Psalm 8, we would never suspect that it had any relevance to Jesus. .... Only in Heb. 2:9 does the reference become Christological and singular—and at that point the NIV 11 (and the older TNIV) is perfectly clear.”

Why do we disagree with this approach and feel it is important to preserve the collective singular? The collective singular is necessary to retain the Messianic interpretation indicated by the New Testament. In his discussion of a similar situation, namely, the use of the collective singular “seed” in the promises to the patriarchs, Paul asserts the importance of the singular form:

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. Scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ (Ga 3:16).

This use of a prophetic singular is the standard practice in Messianic prophecies even when a typical element is involved. Deuteronomy 18 speaks of a prophet, not of prophets. Psalm 16 refers to a holy one, not to holy ones. The Messianic psalms refer to a king and a son, not to kings and sons. Even when the reference is to an institution filled by several people, the references are consistently singular.

This principle applies not only to the Seed prophecies to Eve and to Abraham but to Psalm 8 as well. Without the singular form the clarity (and perhaps even the presence) of the Messianic prophecy in Psalm 8 is lost. Neither a direct or typical prophecy of Christ will be recognized by the average reader. In his defense of this plural translation Rodney Decker says, “There is no hint here of anything messianic. If we had only Psalm 8, we would never suspect that it had any relevance to Jesus.” I agree with Decker that this becomes true if the psalm is translated with the plural. The retention of the collective singular “seed” does not, of course, by itself determine whether the prophecy is typical or direct. That must be determined from the Old Testament and New Testament contexts. But the collective singular keeps all the prophetic options open. The plural does not.

So how then does Psalm 8 connect with its Old Testament roots? God gave Adam, and Eve who was with him, dominion over the earth. Through the fall into sin Adam and Eve squandered the perfect dominion over the earth which God had entrusted to them as the regents for the human race, but God promised to send Christ as the Son of Adam,<sup>48</sup> in order to regain the dominion which we had lost and to restore that dominion to us. That restoration is fully realized on the new earth.

How does Psalm 8 connect to its New Testament fulfillment? Psalm 8 is quoted twice in the New Testament as a Messianic prophecy which was fulfilled when Christ came and regained full dominion over the world for us. Psalm 8:6 is quoted in 1 Corinthians 15:27 as a statement of Christ’s rule over all things. Just as Adam brought death to all people, so Christ, the second Adam, won life for all people. Adam lost the dominion which had been entrusted to him, but Christ is now ruling the world for the benefit of his people. He will share this dominion with them in the new heavens and the new earth. Psalm 8 is quoted again in Hebrews 2:6-9:

In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

The glorious state of the “son of man” finds its fulfillment not in fallen man but in Christ and then secondarily in those whom he restores to Paradise.<sup>49</sup>

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Decker’sNote <sup>49</sup> I would argue strongly for the hermeneutical autonomy of the OT and reject any hermeneutical approach which uses the NT to reinterpret the OT.

(“An Evaluation of the 2011 Edition of the NIV 2011 NT” p 15, 16)

<sup>48</sup> Though both Adam and Eve sinned, God did not send two saviors, one male and one female, but only one, a second Adam.

<sup>49</sup> These verses have occasioned much debate and we cannot delve into that debate in the time we have, but it seems most natural to understand the first “him”(in verse 8) as a reference to mankind, which received the blessing of

Commentators who believe that Psalm 8 is a Messianic prophecy fulfilled by Christ have disagreed about whether it is a direct prophecy which refers only to Jesus or a typical prophecy which refers not only to Christ but to Adam and the human race. Much of this debate is a matter of terminology.

Certainly, in Psalm 8 the psalmist alludes back to the creation account and to the blessings given to Adam and Eve at creation. In that sense there is a typical element in the psalm, but the type is in the past. It is not being prophesied. The glorious promise of this psalm is not fulfilled by anyone in the psalmist's own experience or by someone coming between the time of psalmist and the time of Christ. The glorious things said of man in this psalm are first fulfilled by Christ as the Second Adam and then, secondarily, by those with whom he shares his dominion. In that sense, the prophecy is direct.

Psalm 8 is a psalm which does not fit neatly into our pigeon holes of typical and direct prophecy. We have to clarify what we mean by the terms. There is, in a sense, a typical element in so far as there is a correlation between the first and the second Adam. There is, however, no Old Testament figure who partially fulfilled the prophecy of the psalm. Which son of Adam had everything placed under his feet? As a prophecy, it is fulfilled first by Christ.

The function of Psalm 8 in its location in Psalms, surrounded by psalms of suffering, is to comfort David and those who suffer as he did. Being assured that human beings have dominion over the world is pretty poor comfort. Being assured the Son of Man is in charge is powerful comfort.

So do translators' hermeneutics and doctrinal position influence their translation? Psalm 8 is a good demonstration that they do.

Certainly, a strong preference for inclusive language and an inclination not to see direct prophecy in Psalms influenced the shift in the NIV. Perhaps, another contributing factor to the tendency to see Psalm 8 as typical is the Reformed view of a remnant of the image of God in fallen man. Whereas Lutherans, for the most part, speak of a complete loss of the image of God in fallen mankind because they define the image of God as righteousness and true holiness and a happy fellowship with God on the basis of Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10, most Reformed speak of a remnant of the image of God in man.<sup>50</sup> This seemingly would make an interpreter more likely to see a fulfillment of Psalm 8 in fallen man.

Luther, on the other hand, is so strongly influenced by the New Testament portrait of Christ that he sees the psalm almost entirely in terms of Christ's humiliation and exaltation. Luther believed that the psalms "predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow" (1 Peter 1:11). This is reflected most strongly in his interpretation of verse 5. The Hebrew says "you made him lack little from *elohim*." There are several renderings of the verse, any of which can fit a dictionary meaning of *elohim*. During Jesus' state of humiliation God "made him a little lower than the heavenly beings", or "a little

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dominion in Adam (In putting everything under man, God left nothing that is not subject to man. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to man). God gave the blessing to mankind, but at present we do not see man exercising this blessing. We do, however, see Christ, who now has all power in heaven and earth, exercising this dominion on our behalf.

Those who eliminate all reference to mankind in the psalm read as follows: "In putting everything under Christ, God left nothing that is not subject to Christ. Yet at present we do not *see* everything subject to Christ since his rule is not fully manifested in the world yet. But we do see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death." This seems to be a forced reading.

<sup>50</sup> Among Calvinists this does not necessarily lead to a false view of man's ability to help in his conversion because the remnant of the image is defined largely in terms of what Lutherans would call the natural knowledge of God and natural knowledge of the law.

lower than the angels,”<sup>51</sup> or “a little lower than God,” or “made him lack apart from God for a while”<sup>52</sup>. The angels ministered to Jesus during his temptation and at Gethsemane. In spite of this fact and the reference to angels in the LXX and in the New Testament, Luther sees the passage in terms of the relation of Christ and his Father during his humiliation.<sup>53</sup> Actually, there is comparatively little difference in meaning between these various translations since all of them point to the lowly appearance of Jesus during his humiliation. During his stay on earth Jesus did not look like God or even like an angel, but like an ordinary man. He did not fully use or display the divine powers and attributes which he possessed. But Jesus did not stay in this humble condition. When he had finished his work of defeating sin, death, and the devil, he ascended to heaven and was seated at the right hand of God. He now has all power in heaven and on earth. He is crowned with honor and glory.

Where do you see prophecy?  
How do you see prophecy?

If Isaiah 7:14 is one end of the spectrum for testing Messianic prophecy (if you don't see it there, you won't see it anywhere), Genesis 4:1 is the other end of the spectrum (if you take this verse as a messianic allusion, you won't miss many messianic references). Of the translations I looked at only Luther and Beck see Eve's words (קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־יְהוָה) as a messianic reference, “I have gotten a Man, the Lord.” Luther takes the *'et Adonai* as appositional to *ish*. This is defensible grammar. *'Et* can mark an apposition to an object as it does in the very next verse (אֶת־אָהָיו אֶת־הַכֶּלֶל), but in such cases there is usually a double *'et* as there is in verse 2. In verse 1, however, the first noun of the pair, “a man”, is indefinite, and the second noun of the pair, the LORD, is definite, so only the second member has *'et*. This explanation agrees with Gesenius's claim that the original meaning of *'et* in such contexts is demonstrative, *'et Adonai* = the Lord himself. In verse 1 *'et* marks Eve and Cain as definite proper names and may serve the same function here. If it can be argued that Luther's grammar here is questionable, his theology nonetheless is clear. He believed that Eve understood the *protevangelion* as the promise of a Savior and she was expressing her faith in that promise. This belief certainly influenced his translation. Maybe Luther is giving us a messianic reference here where none was intended, but just as Luther preferred, if need be, to have only body and blood with the pope rather than to have mere bread and wine with Zwingli, I would prefer to have a few too many messianic references with Luther than too few with critical interpreters. In any case the debate about whether this is a reference to the Messiah is a moot issue, because if Eve was intending to refer to the Messiah, she was wrong.<sup>54</sup>

### Conclusions

We will end this topic where it begins, with Genesis 3:15, the first Messianic prophecy.

וְאִיבָהּ | אֲשִׁית בְּיָדָהּ וּבִין הָאִשָּׁה וּבִין זְרַעָהּ וּבִין זְרַעָהּ  
הוּא יְשׁוּפֶךָ רֹאשׁ וְאַתָּה תְּשׁוּפֶנּוּ עֵקֶב: ס

<sup>51</sup> This use of *elohim* as a name for angels would be very unusual. Angels are usually called “sons of God” not “gods”.

<sup>52</sup> Luther's view.

<sup>53</sup> Other interpretations that Luther considered during his revision work were “you will be left uncomforted and forsaken for a while” and “he will have no God for a while.” In successive versions he translated: *ein wenig lassen mangeln an Gott* and *lassen eine kleine Zeit von Gott verlassen sein*. This approach clearly focuses the interpretation on Christ.

<sup>54</sup> I have appended quotations from Luther on this issue in Appendix A.



NIV	I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.
ESV	I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.
HCSB	I will put hostility between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.
NASB	I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.
NLT	I will cause hostility between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring. He will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.
MSG	I'm declaring war between you and the Woman, between your offspring and hers. He'll wound your head, you'll wound his heel.
NET	I will put hostility between you and the woman and between your offspring and her offspring; her offspring will attack your head, and you will attack her offspring's heel.
BBE	And there will be war between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed: by him will your head be crushed and by you his foot will be wounded.
NKJV	I will put enmity between you and the woman, And between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.
NRSV	I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will strike your head, and you will strike his heel.
KJV	I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.
VULG	inimicitias ponam inter te et mulierem, et semen tuum et semen illius, ipsa conteret caput tuum et tu insidiaberis calcaneo eius
LXX	καὶ ἔχθραν θήσω ἀνὰ μέσον σου καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τῆς γυναικὸς καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σπέρματός σου καὶ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ σπέρματος αὐτῆς, αὐτός σου τηρήσει κεφαλὴν, καὶ σὺ τηρήσεις αὐτοῦ πτέρναν.
LDB	Und ich will Feindschaft setzen zwischen dir und der Frau und zwischen deinem Nachkommen und ihrem Nachkommen; der soll dir den Kopf zertreten, und du wirst ihn in die Ferse stechen.

Observations on the translations:

1. All our test translations preserve the collective singular “seed” or “offspring”. “Seed” is a somewhat better translation than “offspring” since it contains nuances which “offspring” does not.
2. All the English translations have the singular “he” as the pronoun describing the one who crushes Satan’s head except NET, which avoids a pronoun, and the KJV, which translates the pronoun as a neuter in literal grammatical agreement with “seed”. The suffix on “heel” is masculine singular.<sup>55</sup> Though the collective singular “offspring” would allow a reference to the whole race that came from the woman, the two masculine singular pronouns point to the one male individual who will come to represent the whole group and to fulfill the destiny of the group.
3. The Vulgate switches a Messianic “he” to a Marian “she”.
4. The Septuagint has “he” (αὐτός) even though this violates its usual rules of agreement with the neuter grammatical gender of “seed” (σπέρμα).

<sup>55</sup> In Hebrew the suffix is actually on the verb, “you will bruise him in regard to the heel.”

5. Though the NET's rendering "her offspring" can be understood as collective singular which can be interpreted as plural or singular, the NET's intention with this rendering is to move away from the messianic interpretation, as is clear from its notes:

The Hebrew word translated "offspring" is a collective singular. The text anticipates the ongoing struggle between human beings (the woman's offspring) and deadly poisonous snakes (the serpent's offspring). An ancient Jewish interpretation of the passage states: "He made the serpent, cause of the deceit, press the earth with belly and flank, having bitterly driven him out. He aroused a dire enmity between them. The one guards his head to save it, the other his heel, for death is at hand in the proximity of men and malignant poisonous snakes." ...

Many Christian theologians (going back to Irenaeus) understand v. 15 as the so-called *protevangelium*, supposedly prophesying Christ's victory over Satan .... In this allegorical approach, the woman's offspring is initially Cain,<sup>56</sup> then the whole human race, and ultimately Jesus Christ, the *offspring* (Heb "seed") of the woman (see Gal 4:4). The *offspring* of the serpent includes the evil powers and demons of the spirit world, as well as those humans who are in the kingdom of darkness (see John 8:44). According to this view, the passage gives the first hint of the gospel. Satan delivers a crippling blow to the Seed of the woman (Jesus), who in turn delivers a fatal blow to the Serpent (first defeating him through the death and resurrection [1 Cor 15:55-57] and then destroying him in the judgment [Rev 12:7-9; 20:7-10]). However, the grammatical structure of Gen 3:15b does not suggest this view. The repetition of the verb "attack," as well as the word order, suggests mutual hostility is being depicted, not the defeat of the serpent.

6. Though we can't fault the Targums for interpreting (that is their very nature), the interpretation of Targum Neofiti illustrates how pluralizing the reference endangers the correct interpretation:

I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your sons and her sons. And it will come about that when her sons observe the Law and do the commandments, they will aim at you and strike you on the head and kill you. But when they forsake the commandments of the Law, you will aim and bite him on his heel and make him ill. For her sons, however, there will be a remedy, but for you, O Serpent, there will not be a remedy, since they are to make appeasement in the end, in the day of King Messiah (*Targum Neofiti 1*, Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992, p 61).

Here works seem to be the means of salvation.

7. Most of the translations reflect the fact that the same Hebrew verb *shuph* is used to describe both attacks, that of the serpent and that of the seed. The NIV, BBE and LDB, however, translate the two occurrences of the verb differently according to context. The practical effect of the NIV's shift of verbs from "crush" to "strike" is to highlight the Messianic interpretation.
8. The prophecy is direct insofar as the Seed is the only one who crushes the Serpent's head. The rest of the woman's seed participate in the war insofar as they suffer from the Serpent's attacks and insofar as they defeat him with the gospel. The seeds' involvement in the war and their participation in the victory depend on their attachment to the Seed (Ro 16:20).
9. Many Evangelicals, including some considered conservative, deny or minimize the messianic origin of the passage:

The early Christian fathers, it is said, applied this verse to Christ and even labeled it the *Protevangelium*. We know, however, as the result of scientific study that this is not the sense of the passage. Actually, there is no Messianic prophecy here, and so, of course, there is no reference at all to Satan.<sup>57</sup>

Evangelicals want academic respectability, so many of them feel a pressure to conform to some degree to "scientific study" and yet they do not want to abandon prophecy. They often feel pressure to find a middle ground.

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<sup>56</sup> Cain as the type of Christ??

<sup>57</sup> Edward J. Young, *Genesis 3*, Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1966, p 105. Young here is not presenting his own final view, but the modern consensus. See below at note 60 for his view.

10. Some Evangelicals who maintain that the passage was originally about people and snakes, nevertheless, claim that by its placement in the final form of Genesis [whenever that was], it had already been made into a messianic prophecy.

Nevertheless, in spite of widespread unanimity against a messianic reading of 3:15, the recent commentaries on Genesis by Wenham and Hamilton acknowledge the possibility that this verse may be understood as messianic in the light of later revelation; for both writers it is an example of *sensus plenior*. Clearly, the messianic spirit still has not been wholly exorcised from this passage.<sup>58</sup>

From the preceding discussion it is evident that the answer to the question “Is Gen. 3:15 messianic?” depends largely on methodological considerations. Viewed solely within the context of ch. 3, it is virtually impossible to sustain a messianic interpretation of 3:15. Considered, however, in the light of Genesis as a whole, a messianic reading of this verse is not only possible but highly probable.... Moreover, all too often there is an unwillingness to recognize that every section of Genesis is now, regardless of its prior oral and/or literary history, an integral part of a much larger work.<sup>59</sup>

Possibly, however, the writer, whoever he was (modern negative criticism seems to be assured that he was not Moses) had some kind of inkling that the passage did after all have something to do with man’s redemption. Of course, the writer did not see Christ here and he did not see Satan, but he may have sensed that there was more here than meets the eye.<sup>60</sup>

For us the question can be framed in this way: “Did Adam and Eve know that a Savior was coming, or did Eve just know about fighting snakes?”<sup>61</sup> “Did Moses know about this Savior and write about him?” “Did David know about this Savior and write about him?” “Were these real Messianic prophecies that produced faith in the Messiah in those who received them?” We rejoice that we know so much more about the Seed, the Son of Adam, David’s Lord, the Virgin’s Son than those who first received and recorded the oracles about him, but we are also confident that at the heart of things, their gospel and ours, their faith and ours, are one. And we expect that translations and commentaries will clearly proclaim that truth.

We have seen that translators’ hermeneutics of prophecy have a distinct effect on their translations. This is true of whether we are talking about translations that veer away from messianic prophecy like RSV, NEB, etc. or translations that highlight it such as Luther and NKJV.

What are some ways in which translations may obscure prophecy whether direct or typical?

The first and worst is when the translation fundamentally distorts or hides the teaching of a passage. Examples of such translations in general would be “a baptism that is a sign of repentance,” “baptized to show they repent,” “these sort of believe for a while,” and “we participate in the blessings of Christ’s blood”. Examples of such translations which are prophecy-killing are “she will crush your head,” and “a woman now a virgin will conceive”. The biggest question here is whether NIV’s Psalm 8 falls into this category. A relatively few such translations are enough to destroy confidence in a translation. Crucial questions facing us are whether any of the translations in the versions which we are considering (NIV,

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<sup>58</sup> T.D. Alexander in *The Lord’s Anointed*, p 29.

<sup>59</sup> Op. cit., p 32.

<sup>60</sup> Young, p 105. Young gives his own view on p 120, which is some improvement to that above: “That there is a reference to Christ is not to be entirely rejected. It is true that the prophecy is uttered in general terms, and its primary meaning is that the human race will be victorious over the serpent. Nevertheless, it is also true that the way in which man will vanquish Satan is that there will be born of a woman One, even Jesus Christ, who will obtain the victory. In this sense this is a prophecy of Christ and deserves to be known as the Protevangelium.”

<sup>61</sup> See the appendix of Luther quotes on the understanding of prophecy by the Old Testament Christians.

ESV, and HCSB) fall into this class and how many such translations it would take to ruin a translation for us.

In the second group of translations, the passage itself is translated correctly or acceptably in the main text, but alternate translations and comments in the translators' notes cast doubt on the proper messianic interpretation of the passage. Examples would be translations which have "virgin" in the translation but "young woman" in the notes (Is 7:14), translations which reduce messianic references to hyperbole about a king (Ps 45), and translations that consciously reduce a direct prophecy to typical by lowercasing the messianic referent (Ps 110).

In the third class, the translator may have a wrong view about the prophecy, and his translation may support or allow that view, but this wrong view is not necessarily apparent to the reader, who may still be able to see the correct view in the translation. An example would be the translator lowercasing "anointed" to mark the prophecy as typical or post-facto, but the reader who interprets "the anointed" as a common noun referring to Christ could still understand the prophecy as direct. The translation could be intended to facilitate a wrong interpretation, but the reader who knows the right interpretation might not notice the evasiveness of the translation.

Recognizing and evaluating such translation issues is an important part of the work of making and evaluating a translation. A goal of such evaluation is to guard the treasure of prophecy by clearly preserving the prophetic meaning of the texts and by conveying that meaning in clear language which speaks to the heart.

# Appendices

## Appendix A. Luther on the Power of Prophecies

Portals into Luther's treatments of prophecy can be found in *What Luther Says*, II p 999, and Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, II p 516-517, esp. note 19, and III p 211-215. Significantly, Pieper's comments are under the topic, "The Old Testament Means of Grace".

All the saints of the Old Testament were justified and sanctified by faith in the "Seed" which was to come (W 42, 180; St L 1, 296).

Adam and Eve were encouraged by this promise. Wholeheartedly they grasped the hope of their restoration; and full of faith, they saw that God cared about their salvation, since he clearly declares that the male Seed of the woman would prostrate this enemy (AE 1, 193).

"The woman's Seed" he says. This means all individuals in general, and yet he is speaking of only one individual, of the Seed of Mary, who is the mother without union with a male. Thus the first little expression, "I shall put enmity between you and the woman" seems to denote all women in general. God wanted to make all women suspect to Satan; on the other hand, he wanted to leave the godly with a very certain hope, so that they might expect this salvation from all who gave birth, until the real one came. In the same way, this "her Seed" is spoken most individually, if one may use the expression, concerning the Seed which was born only to Mary of the tribe of Judah, who was espoused to Joseph (AE 1, 196).

Although Eve was mistaken in this hope [that Cain was the promised Seed of the woman], her words nevertheless reveal that Eve was a holy woman and believed the promise of the future salvation by the blessed Seed (St L, 1, 296).

"The Seed of the Woman shall bruise your head." This passage is the absolution whereby God acquitted Adam and Eve and all of us (St L 3, 66).

Where and when did [Abraham see Christ's day and rejoice]? Not with bodily eyes, as the Jews understand the words, but with the sight of faith when he recognized Christ when it was told him Genesis 22: "In your Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." (St L, 11, 573).

Luther says that the first promise was both very dark and very clear. Very dark as far as the final circumstances, very clear in the promise that the Woman's Seed in whom God is the acting subject will make an end of the devil (St L, 1, 240ff; 1, 241; 3, 661).

## Appendix B: NPH/ WLS Principles of Capitalization

This set of rules shows the difficulty of making practical rules of capitalization for divine references.

### 7.3 Biblical and Religious Capitalization

#### 7.3.1 Names for God

Capitalize all names and epithets for the one supreme God and the persons of the Trinity.

Almighty One Eternal One the One Christ God Son of Man

Crucified One Holy Spirit Son of Righteousness El Jehovah Yahweh

Capitalize the names of deities from other faiths and mythology when they are proper nouns.

Astarte Diana Shiva Dagon Pan Zeus  
The prophets built an altar for Baal.  
The baals did not help the Canaanite people.

Any noun referring to the Deity is capitalized when used as a vocative (unless it is in apposition to a capitalized vocative). Occasionally a noun that normally is not capitalized may be capitalized for the sake of clarity.

O Jesus, rock of my salvation but O Rock of my salvation

Lowercase all derivatives from the word “God” whether nouns, adjectives, or adverbs:

godsend godlike godly godspeed  
*Exceptions* God-fearing Godhead God-pleasing

Lowercase the word god(s) when referring to a false deity.

Always capitalize the following because of usage:

<u>Branch</u>	Great Physician	Passover
Bridegroom	High Priest	Paschal
Comforter	<u>King</u>	Paraclete
Counselor	Lawgiver	Priest
Creator	Lamb	Prophet
Dayspring	<u>Lord</u>	Redeemer
Daystar	Messiah	Savior
First and Last	Morning Star	Suffering Servant
Good Shepherd	Most High	
Great High Priest	Omega	

7.3.2 Pronouns Lowercase pronouns referring to the Deity.

[Does this need to be this complicated? Notice the places where this is arbitrary.]

### Appendix C: Capitalization of Psalm 2 in the 1611 version of the KJV.

Here is an excellent standard of capitalization. Common nouns and pronouns that refer to deity are not capitalized. Titles are. As an honorific, King is capitalized even when it refers to bad, human kings. The capitalization principles of the KJV were not what people think they were.

- 1 *Why* do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vaine thing?
- 2 *The Kings* of the earth set themselues, and the rulers take counsell together, against the *Lord*, and against his *Anoynted*, saying,
- 3 Let vs breake their bandes asunder, and cast away their cords from vs.
- 4 *Hee* that sitteth in the heauens shal laugh: the *Lord* shall haue them in derision.
- 5 Then shall *hee* speake vnto them in *his* wrath, and vexe them in his sore displeasure.
- 6 Yet haue I set my *King* vpon my holy hill of Sion.
- 7 I will declare the decree: the *Lord* hath said vnto mee, *Thou* art my *sonne*, this day haue I begotten thee.

8 Aske of me, and I shall giue thee the heathen for thine inheritance,  
and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

9 Thou shalt breake them with a rod of iron,  
thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potters vessell.

10 Bee wise now therefore, O yee *Kings*: be instructed ye *Judges* of the earth.

11 Serue the Lord with feare, and reioyce with trembling.

12 Kisse the *Sonne* lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way,  
when his wrath is kindled but a little:  
Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.

#### Appendix D. Notes of the *Lutheran Study Bible* are a mixed bag.

These are some of the notes that need to be checked out and analyzed in an evaluation of the *LSB*.

- Psalm 2—a weak note associates the psalm with David’s coronation.
- Psalm 8:1—an erroneous note says *adonai* can be addressed to a king. *Adoni* can be.
- Psalm 8:4—a dubious note associates the main thrust of the psalm with man.
- Psalm 8:5—a good note says Luther applies the psalm to Christ.
- Psalm 16—a good note says Luther applies the psalm to Christ.
- Psalm 16:10—a mixed note applies the verse to men and says it prophesies Christ.
- Psalm 22:16—Note says a “sufferer is pierced as dogs bite limbs.” Also says the highest fulfillment is in Christ’s crucifixion.
- Psalm 45—Note describes this as a royal psalm celebrating the marriage of the ideal king to his bride. Note say that the prayer addressed to God as well as to this king depicts the “anointed” in a way that would have exceeded any Davidic king. Whoever the king was in the original setting, he foreshadows that future One “greater than Solomon.”
- Psalm 45:6—*O God* :This king is thoroughly human and subject to death. Yet he is addressed as and must be none other than the true God.
- Psalm 69—these afflictions of David foreshadow the even greater afflictions of Christ; hence this psalm is quoted in the NT with reference to Christ.
- Psalm 72—by or for Solomon for his coronation; it may well have been used at the coronation of other kings of the Davidic line; the line of Davidic kings prophetically pointed to the ultimate Son of David.
- Psalm 72:5-7 refers figuratively to the splendor of eternity.
- Psalm 72:8—unclear confusing note on the verse. Does say it points to Christ.
- Psalm 72:17—these words point to Jesus.
- Psalm 72 endnote—The psalmist realizes that even the best of the Davidic kings fell short of the ideal.
- Psalm 110—some pretty clear references to the psalm being messianic in v 1 and 4
- Psalm 118:22—Christ is the cornerstone.
- Isaiah 7:14—clear reference to the virgin birth.
- Hebrews 2:8—a mixed, weak note on Psalm 8.
- Hebrews 2:12—Psalm 22 is typical.

#### Appendix E: additional examples for further study

The Branch

Isaiah 4:2 offers a striking example of capitalization issues focusing on the term “branch”.

Many English versions understand the phrase **הַיְהוָה בְּרַחֲמָיו** as a messianic title and render it, “the Branch of the Lord”. In favor of this translation is the fact that **בְּרַחֲמָיו** is used by later prophets as the title of a royal descendant (Jer 23:5 33:15; Zech 3:8; 6:12). Against this view is the parallelism, which suggests that this prophecy describes the blessed prosperity of God’s people during the messianic era. None of the translations which capitalize Branch capitalize the second member of the parallelism. This makes the parallelism complementary rather than strictly parallel. The NPH style guide says Branch is always capitalized because of conventional usage.

- NIV In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel.
- HSCB On that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of Israel’s survivors.
- NASB In that day the Branch of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and the adornment of the survivors of Israel.
- NKJV In that day the Branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious; And the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing For those of Israel who have escaped.
- MSG And that's when GOD's Branch will sprout green and lush. The produce of the country will give Israel's survivors something to be proud of again. Oh, they'll hold their heads high!
- ESV In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel.
- NLT But in that day, the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious; the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of all who survive in Israel.
- NET At that time the crops given by the Lord will bring admiration and honor; the produce of the land will be a source of pride and delight to those who remain in Israel.
- BBE In that day will the young growth of the Lord be beautiful in glory, and the fruit of the earth will be the pride of those who are still living in Israel.
- NRSV On that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel.
- KJV In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel.

Isaiah 11:1 provides a similar issue of inconsistency of capitalization.

- ESV There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.
- NASB Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.
- NET A shoot will grow out of Jesse’s root stock, a bud will sprout from his roots.
- BBE And there will come a rod out of the broken tree of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots will give fruit.
- NRSV A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.
- NIV A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
- NLT Out of the stump of David’s family will grow a shoot— yes, a new Branch bearing fruit from the old root.
- KJV And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:
- NKJV There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots.
- MSG A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump, from his roots a budding Branch.



The branch here is נֶצֶר not צֶמַח. The issue here is whether shoot and branch are titles or pictures. Some strongly messianic translations do not capitalize either one. It would seem consistency would suggest capitalizing both or neither.

Isaiah 11:10— the same issue applies to “root”.

- NIV In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.
- NASB Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.
- ESV In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.
- NET At that time a root from Jesse will stand like a signal flag for the nations. Nations will look to him for guidance, and his residence will be majestic.
- NLT In that day the heir to David’s throne will be a banner of salvation to all the world. The nations will rally to him, and the land where he lives will be a glorious place.
- MSG On that day, Jesse's Root will be raised high, posted as a rallying banner for the peoples. The nations will all come to him. His headquarters will be glorious.
- BBE And in that day, the eyes of the nations will be turned to the root of Jesse which will be lifted up as the flag of the peoples; and his resting-place will be glory.
- NKJV And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; For the Gentiles shall seek Him, And His resting place shall be glorious.”
- NRSV 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.
- KJV And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek; and his rest shall be glorious.

This is another illustration of why capitalization is not a very good method of trying to identify types of prophecy.

Micah 2:13—the Breaker was recognized as a Messianic title by the Jews.

- NIV84 One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their king will pass through before them, the LORD at their head.
- NIV11 The One who breaks open the way will go up before them; they will break through the gate and go out. Their King will pass through before them, the LORD at their head.
- HCSB One who breaks open [the way] will advance before them; they will break out, pass through the gate, and leave by it. Their King will pass through before them, the LORD as their leader.
- NASB The breaker goes up before them; They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it.
- NET The one who can break through barriers will lead them out they will break out, pass through the gate, and leave.
- ESV He who opens the breach goes up before them; they break through and pass the gate, going out by it.
- NLT Your leader will break out and lead you out of exile, out through the gates of the enemy cities, back to your own land.
- MSG Then I, GOD, will burst all confinements and lead them out into the open. They'll follow their King. I will be out in front leading them.”
- BBE The opener of the way will go up before them: forcing their way out they will go on to the doorway and out through it: their king will go on before them, and the Lord at their head.

- NKJV The one who breaks open will come up before them; They will break out, Pass through the gate, And go out by it;
- NRSV The one who breaks out will go up before them; they will break through and pass the gate, going out by it.
- KJV The breaker is come up before them: they have broken up , and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it:
- NIV11 adds capitalization that NIV84 did not have. HCSB is the only other capitalizer.

#### Angel of the Lord

Zechariah 12:8 is another example of the issue of capitalization. Should the Angel of the Lord be capitalized when it refers to Christ?

- NIV84 the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the LORD going before them.
- NIV11 the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD going before them.
- ESV the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them.
- HCSB the house of David will be like God, like the Angel of the LORD, before them.
- NASB the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the LORD before them.
- NLT the royal descendants will be like God, like the angel of the Lord who goes before them!
- MSG the family of David itself will be godlike, like the Angel of GOD leading the people.
- NET the dynasty of David will be like God, like the angel of the Lord before them.<sup>1</sup>
- <sup>1</sup>This is hyperbole about the king.
- BBE the family of David will be as God, as the angel of the Lord before them.
- NKJV the house of David shall be like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them.
- NRSV the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, at their head.
- KJV the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.

Differences of style or differences of interpretation?

Zechariah 3:1 is even more striking:

- NIV Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him.
- NASB Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.
- ESV Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.
- NLT Then the angel showed me Jeshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord. The Accuser, Satan, was there at the angel's right hand, making accusations against Jeshua.
- MSG Next the Messenger-Angel showed me the high priest Joshua. He was standing before GOD's Angel where the Accuser showed up to accuse him.
- BBE And he let me see Joshua, the high priest, in his place before the angel of the Lord, and the Satan at his right hand ready to take up a cause against him.
- NKJV Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him.
- NRSV Then he showed me the high priest Joshua standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.
- KJV And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

Why do so many capitalize *the satan* and so few capitalize *the malak Adonai*?<sup>62</sup>

### Number and Gender Shifts

Psalm 34:20— Psalm 8 is not the only instance where the singular to plural shift may blur recognition of messianic prophecy. Does a shift to the plural blur the connection of this verse with John 19:36? This question would apply whether the prophecy is typical or direct.

- NIV84 he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.
- TNIV he protects all their bones, not one of them will be broken.
- NIV11 he protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.
- NASB he keeps all his bones, not one of them is broken.
- ESV he keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken.
- TLB God even protects him from accidents.

Psalm 69:8: does a gender change lessen the connection with John 7: 5?

- NIV84 I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother's sons;
- NIV11 I am a foreigner to my own family, a stranger to my own mother's children;
- NASB I have become estranged from my brothers and an alien to my mother's sons.
- ESV I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's sons.
- NLT Even my own brothers pretend they don't know me; they treat me like a stranger.
- MSG My brothers shun me like a bum off the street; My family treats me like an unwanted guest.
- BBE I have become strange to my brothers, and like a man from a far country to my mother's children.
- NKJV I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children;
- NRSV I have become a stranger to my kindred, an alien to my mother's children.
- KJV I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children

### Psalm 68—a special case

Psalm 68 is a psalm about the march of the ark from Sinai to Zion. One verse, verse 18 has generated a lot of discussion due to its application in Ephesians 4 to the giving of the public ministry by Christ. The issue here is a shift in the translation of the passage from the OT to the NT version. It needs a study of its own.

- NET You ascend on high, you have taken many captives. You receive tribute from men, including even sinful rebels. Indeed the Lord God lives there!
- NIV When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train; you received gifts from men, even from the rebellious—that you, O LORD God, might dwell there.
- ESV You ascended on high, leading a host of captives in your train and receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious, that the LORD God may dwell there.
- HCSB You ascended to the heights, taking away captives; You received gifts from people, even from the rebellious, so that the LORD God might live there
- NASB You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your captives; You have received gifts among men, Even among the rebellious also, that the LORD God may dwell there.

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<sup>62</sup> This is true also of most of the other Angel of the Lord passages. See also Exodus 33:14.

- NLT When you ascended to the heights, you led a crowd of captives. You received gifts from the people, even from those who rebelled against you. Now the Lord God will live among us there.
- MSG You climbed to the High Place, captives in tow, your arms full of booty from rebels, And now you sit there in state, GOD, sovereign GOD!
- BBE You have gone up on high, taking your prisoners with you; you have taken offerings from men; the Lord God has taken his place on the seat of his power.
- NKJV You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, Even from the rebellious, That the LORD God might dwell there .
- NRSV You ascended the high mount, leading captives in your train and receiving gifts from people, even from those who rebel against the LORD God's abiding there.
- KJV Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive : thou hast received gifts for men; yea, [for] the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell [among them]. {for men: Heb. In the man }

מִבְּיָמֵינוּ (v 19) is literally “among men.” The NIV rendering, “gifts from men,” views these gifts as tribute which the defeated enemies pay to the conquering Lord. Others, interpreting the *beth* as a *beth essentiae*, translate, “you received gifts consisting of men, that is, you received men as gifts.” We can, however, remain with the literal rendering, “among men.” “Among men” may simply mean “on earth” as opposed to “in heaven.” God gave Jesus all the gifts he needed for his work as Savior. In the New Testament, however, Paul paraphrases this verse to show that after his ascension Christ shares the gifts that he has received with us, his people. Interestingly, the Targum agrees with Paul’s reading, so Paul may have been following a traditional rabbinic interpretation. The interpretation “share gifts with men” may simply be a paraphrase, or Paul and the Targum may have read חלק, “share,” instead of לקח, “receive.”

The “ascension” to Zion, great as it was, was a pointer to a greater ascension. In Ephesians 4:7-12 Paul applies these words to Christ’s ascension to heaven after his death and resurrection. Christ’s ascension marks the completion of God’s conquest of the earth. Christ has defeated and subjected sin, death, and Satan. Christ now has all power in heaven and in earth. He is King of kings and Lord of lords.

<sup>7</sup> But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. <sup>8</sup> This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.”  
<sup>9</sup> (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? <sup>10</sup> He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) <sup>11</sup> It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.

Who then are these captives Christ brings with him? To be sure, they are enemies he has subdued, but they include those former enemies whom he has freed from slavery to sin and made his friends. These former enemies now have become his servants, whom he gives back to his church, that they may serve the church on his behalf (Ephesians 4:8 points to verse 11). These servants of Christ have “become captive to the Word of God.” Among these former enemies was Paul himself (2 Corinthians 2:14; 1 Corinthians 9:16-19; 1 Corinthians 3:5). Christ receives men as gift. He gives some of those same men as gifts to his church. By his grace these men who were by nature rebels lead other rebels to submission and obedience to the King.

ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἠχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν, ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.  
Having ascended on high he led captivity captive. He gave gifts to men.

Paul modifies the quotation somewhat from its Hebrew form. The Septuagint had followed the Hebrew very closely (ἐλάβες δόματα ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ.). But instead of sticking with the Hebrew and the Septuagint and saying, “You *received* gifts *among* men,” Paul says, “He *gave* gifts *to* men” (ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις). Paul’s approach agrees with that of the Targum, which paraphrases the verse in light of the whole context of the psalm: “You have ascended to the firmament. You have led captivity captive. You have taught them the words of the law. You have given gifts to the children of men.” Both Paul and the Targum understand that the main thrust of the psalm is the blessings the Lord shares with his people. Paul, however, corrects the application of the Targum, which seems to be thinking of Moses’ ascent of Mount Sinai to receive the law that he might give it to Israel. Paul applies the psalm not to Moses but to Christ. Christ has not only received gifts, but he shares with us the gifts that he has received. He gives us gifts that enable us join him in the work of bringing people into his kingdom by announcing Christ’s victory to them. Christ, therefore, gives us his Word to proclaim. He also gives the church pastors, teachers, and missionaries to proclaim that Word publicly. By the faithful use of these gifts we lead people into God’s kingdom of grace so that God dwells in their hearts through faith. Through the faithful preaching of the gospel we prepare ourselves and others for the day when Christ will return to claim the kingdom that is already his. Then we and all who are his will ascend to his glorious kingdom and live there with him forever.

#### Son of Man

Daniel 7:13 and 8:17: NIV 2011 retains “son of man” rather than “human being” but bases this more on tradition than translation principle.

- Daniel 7:13 – Footnote: The Aramaic phrase *bar enash* means human being. The phrase son of man is retained here because of its use in the New Testament as a title of Jesus, probably based largely on this verse.

NIV	In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence.
HCSB	I continued watching in the night visions, and I saw One like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before Him.
NASB	I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him.
ESV	I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him.
NET	I was watching in the night visions, “And with the clouds of the sky one like a son of man was approaching. He went up to the Ancient of Days and was escorted before him.
NLT	As my vision continued that night, I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient One and was led into his presence.
MSG	My dream continued. “I saw a human form, a son of man, arriving in a whirl of clouds. He came to The Old One and was presented to him.
BBE	I saw in visions of the night, and there was coming with the clouds of heaven one like a man, and he came to the one who was very old, and they took him near before him.
NKJV	I was watching in the night visions, And behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him.
NRSV	As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him.
KJV	I saw in the night visions, and, behold, [one] like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

Notice that here “son of man” is not a title or vocative but a descriptive phrase, hence the non-capitalization. This is the basis for the updated scene in Revelation 4 and 5.

- Daniel 8:17 – Footnote: “The Hebrew phrase *ben adam* means *human being*. The phrase *son of man* is retained as a form of address here because of its possible association with ‘Son of Man’ in the New Testament.” This rationale for avoiding gender neutral seems puzzling, because the address is to Daniel not to the Messiah. NRSV maintains its gender neutral policy.

NIV “Son of man,” he said to me, “understand that the vision concerns the time of the end.”  
NRSV “Understand, O mortal, that the vision is for the time of the end.”

#### Another Special Case

Jeremiah 31:22: NIV 2011 eliminates the patristic messianic interpretation as an allusion to the virgin birth. NIV 1984, HCSB, and ESV are neutral. It is not clear from the context that this is in fact a messianic prophecy.

NIV 1984 How long will you wander, O unfaithful daughter? The LORD will create a new thing on earth—a woman will surround a man.  
NIV 2011 How long will you wander, O unfaithful daughter? The LORD will create a new thing on earth—a woman will return to the man. (or protect)  
HCSB How long will you turn here and there, faithless daughter? For the LORD creates something new in the land — a female will shelter a man.  
NASB How long will you go here and there, O faithless daughter? For the LORD has created a new thing in the earth—A woman will encompass a man.  
ESV How long will you waver, O faithless daughter? For the LORD has created a new thing on the earth: a woman encircles a man.  
NLT How long will you wander, my wayward daughter? For the Lord will cause something new to happen— Israel will embrace her God.”  
MSG How long will you flit here and there, indecisive? How long before you make up your fickle mind? GOD will create a new thing in this land: A transformed woman will embrace the transforming GOD!”  
BBE How long will you go on turning this way and that, O wandering daughter? For the Lord has made a new thing on the earth, a woman changed into a man.

#### Side Issues

Jeremiah 23:6 and 33:16: NIV 2011 rendering weakens the traditional Lutheran understanding that the text refers to Christ as “the Lord our Righteousness.” ESV is not better. Again, the grammar is not decisive here.

NIV 1984 This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness.  
NIV 2011 This is the name by which it will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior.  
HCSB This is what she will be named: Yahweh Our Righteousness.  
ESV This is the name by which it will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'  
NASB This is the name by which she will be called: the LORD is our righteousness.'  
MSG The motto for the city will be, “GOD Has Set Things Right for Us.”  
BBE This the name which will be given to her: The Lord is our righteousness.  
NKJV This is the name by which she will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

Habakkuk 2: How do translations view the nature of faith in the Messiah?

NIV the righteous will live by his faith—  
 NASB the righteous will live by his faith.  
 ESV the righteous shall live by his faith.  
 NET the person of integrity will live because of his faithfulness.  
 NLT the righteous will live by their faithfulness to God.  
 MSG the person in right standing before God through loyal and steady believing is fully alive, [really] alive.  
 BBE the upright man will have life through his good faith.  
 NKJV the just shall live by his faith.  
 NRSV the righteous live by their faith.  
 KJV the just shall live by his faith.

Compare Romans 1:16—righteous by faith or live by faith?

NET The righteous by faith will live.  
 NIV The righteous will live by faith.  
 ESV The righteous shall live by faith.  
 NASB THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.  
 NLT It is through faith that a righteous person has life.  
 MSG The person in right standing before God by trusting him really lives.  
 BBE The man who does righteousness will be living by his faith.  
 NKJV The just shall live by faith.  
 NRSV The one who is righteous will live by faith.  
 KJV The just shall live by faith.

Any interesting translations here?

#### Another special problem

Genesis 49:10 is a difficult prophecy with which translators wrestle. Is this a case where the Old Testament is the key to interpreting an Old Testament prophecy?

NIV84 The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.  
 NIV11 The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his. *Or to whom tribute belongs; the meaning of the Hebrew for this phrase is uncertain.*  
 HCSB The scepter will not depart from Judah or the staff from between his feet until He whose right it is comes and the obedience of the peoples belongs to Him. *Or until tribute comes to him, or until Shiloh comes, or until He comes to Shiloh.*  
 ESV The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.  
 NET The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs; the nations will obey him.  
 NASB The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes, And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.  
 NLT The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from his descendants, until the coming of the one to whom it belongs, the one whom all nations will honor.  
 MSG The scepter shall not leave Judah; he'll keep a firm grip on the command staff Until the ultimate ruler comes and the nations obey him.

- BBE The rod of authority will not be taken from Judah, and he will not be without a law-giver, till he comes who has the right to it, and the peoples will put themselves under his rule.
- NKJV The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes; And to Him shall be the obedience of the people.
- NRSV The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and the obedience of the peoples is his.
- KJV The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him [shall] the gathering of the people [be].

Are some of these translations more messianic than others? How about Luther's *bis dass der Held komme*? The key Old Testament reference here is Ezekiel 21:27: "The crown will not be restored until he to whom it rightfully belongs shall come; to him I will give it."

#### A last Luther Case

2 Samuel 7:19 is our last passage. Luther sees this as a Messianic prophecy of Christ. The critical phrase is

וְזֵאת תִּנְרֵת הָאָדָם אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה:

This is the law of the man the Lord God

Our translations take this as a prosaic statement about God's usual way of dealing with man or of man's usual way of dealing.

- NET And you didn't stop there, O Lord God! You have also spoken about the future of your servant's family. Is this your usual way of dealing with men, O Lord God?
- NIV And as if this were not enough in your sight, O Sovereign LORD, you have also spoken about the future of the house of your servant. Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign LORD?
- NASB And yet this was insignificant in Your eyes, O Lord GOD, for You have spoken also of the house of Your servant concerning the distant future. And this is the custom of man, O Lord GOD.
- ESV And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord GOD. You have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come, and this is instruction for mankind, O Lord GOD!
- NLT And now, Sovereign Lord, in addition to everything else, you speak of giving your servant a lasting dynasty! Do you deal with everyone this way, O Sovereign Lord?
- MSG But that's nothing compared to what's coming, for you've also spoken of my family far into the future, given me a glimpse into tomorrow, my Master GOD!
- BBE And this was only a small thing to you, O Lord God; but your words have even been about the far-off future of your servant's family, O Lord God!
- NKJV "And yet this was a small thing in Your sight, O Lord GOD; and You have also spoken of Your servant's house for a great while to come. Is this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?
- NRSV And yet this was a small thing in your eyes, O Lord GOD; you have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come. May this be instruction for the people, O Lord GOD!
- KJV And this was yet a small thing in thy sight, O Lord GOD; but thou hast spoken also of thy servant's house for a great while to come. And [is] this the manner of man, O Lord GOD?

Luther takes as a prophetic declaration that the Lord will come as a man: "This is the way of a man who is God the Lord." He explains: That is, you talk with me about an eternal kingdom of which no one can be king unless he is God and man, because he is my son and will rule as king forever, which applies to God alone. (See WA, DB3, p 398.) For Luther's thoughts on



interpreting the Old Testament in line with the New see the introduction to Luther's treatise on the last words of David, which has been translated in Volume 15 of the American edition.

## **For further reading**

See also the notes of Luther's translation committee in WA, DB 3 and 4. Translation of these is barely underway.

Other suggested Luther readings available in English in the American edition:

His comments on Genesis 3:15 and 4:1 in Volume one, esp. p 188-198, 241-243.

Comments on Psalm 8 in Volume 12, esp. p 98, 122-128.

Comments on Psalm 45 in Volume 12, p 197-302, esp. 230-231.

Comments on Psalm 110 in Volume 13, p 225-348, esp. 230, 348.

Many materials on the WLS TEC website especially:

Tom Nass, "Messianic prophesy and English Translations - with July 2012 Addendum."

Glenn Schwanke, "Messianic Prophecy in the NIV 2011 (With special attention to the Psalms and Isaiah 7:14). Available online.

Walter J. Kaiser Jr, *The Messiah in the Old Testament (TMIOT)*, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995. A useful Evangelical study of prophecy.

Satterthwaite, Philip E. et al. *The Lord's Anointed: Interpretation of the Old Testament Messianic Texts*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1995. A not so good Evangelical study of prophecy.

Michael Reu, *Luther's German Bible*, Columbus, OH: Lutheran Book Concern, 1934. A study of all aspects of Luther's Bible.

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