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# Is Jeremiah 33:14–26 a ‘centre’ to the Bible? A test case in inter-canonical hermeneutics

*Dane Ortlund*

*Dane Ortlund is Senior Editor in the Bible Division at Crossway Books in Wheaton, Illinois.*

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## 1. Introduction

Is Jeremiah 33:14–26 a centre to the Bible? That is the question this essay considers. Before launching into an answer, let us be clear about precisely what we are asking.

First, some will understandably question the legitimacy of claiming a text from Jeremiah to provide a point of reference for other texts in the Christian canon. How can Jeremiah provide a centre to books that predate him (oblivious to Jeremiah) or books that postdate him (to which Jeremiah was oblivious)? Let us clarify from the outset that this essay approaches Jeremiah as part of a unified literary web consisting of the 66 books of the Protestant Bible. By operating out of a ‘canonical’<sup>1</sup> approach to Scripture, however, we do not wish to downplay its *historical* dimension, but rather self-consciously to read the book of Jeremiah not only as the product of a Jewish prophet but also as the product of an omniscient and history-governing divine author.<sup>2</sup>

Second, in particular need of clarification is what we mean by ‘centre of the Bible’. For Christians, and especially Protestant Christians, and especially evangelical Protestant Christians, Jesus Christ himself is the ‘centre’ of the Bible in that he is the one for whom the OT prepares and of whom the NT speaks – what Motyer calls ‘the master theme of the Bible’.<sup>3</sup> ‘That Christ is at the centre of the Bible’, writes Packer, ‘is a Christian truism’.<sup>4</sup> It may seem strange, then, to identify an *OT* text as a ‘centre’ to the Bible. Is not a text such as Jeremiah 33 simply one stop along the biblical ascent that culminates in Christ? Would it not be

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1 One thinks esp. of the work of Brevard S. Childs (e.g., *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments: Theological Reflection on the Christian Bible* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993]).

2 Cf. Vern S. Poythress, ‘Divine Meaning of Scripture’, *WTJ* 48 (1986), 241–79.

3 Alec Motyer, *Look to the Rock: An Old Testament Background to Our Understanding of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 19–22.

4 J. I. Packer, ‘Theology and Bible Reading’, in *The Act of Bible Reading: A Multidisciplinary Approach to Biblical Interpretation* (ed. Elmer Dyck; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996), 79.

premature to identify such a text as a ‘centre’ of the Bible? Even if we focus only on the OT itself, is not the Torah the ‘centre’?<sup>5</sup> Or, if we do concede that Jeremiah might contain a centre to the Bible, should not the new covenant text of Jeremiah 31 be that centre?

Let us clarify that we are asking if Jeremiah 33 provides *a* centre *to* the Bible, not *the* centre *of* the Bible. Perhaps this itself seems disingenuous – does not the very concept of a ‘centre’ demand that there be only one? Only if we view Scripture monoperspectivally. To take an analogy: what is the centre of the human being? It depends. If we are in a geometry class, the centre is somewhere around the belly button; if the context is neuroscience, the brain; if we are in a course on Plato, the soul; if we are talking about the integrative point of the human psyche from a biblical point of view, the heart. The multiple perspectives with which one can view complex realities such as a human being – or the Bible – demand that room be given to identify different ‘centres’ depending on what exactly is being discussed.<sup>6</sup>

While this essay operates out of a christocentric reading of the Bible – that is, Jesus is ‘the focal point that gathers all the rays of light that issue from Scripture’<sup>7</sup> – it is not in competition with such a hermeneutic but emerging from it that we suggest Jer. 33:14-26 fruitfully provides a centre to the Bible. By ‘centre’, then, we do not mean salvation-historical climax, that for which everything antecedent to it prepares and from which everything subsequent to it flows. One must not throw the biblical story off-balance by identifying anything other than Christ’s death and resurrection as the climactic pinnacle of this story. Rather we mean: *Jer. 33:14-26 provides such a unique cluster of pivotal biblical-theological themes that it forms a one-of-a-kind canonical intersection through which the whole Bible passes and from which the whole Bible can be panoramically viewed and drawn together.*<sup>8</sup> The second half of Jeremiah 33 contains references to the ‘coming days’, promise and fulfillment, the Branch, righteousness, Jerusalem, the Levites, the priesthood, sacrifice, David, son of David, kingship, creation, covenant, seed of Abraham, election, divine mercy, restoration, and the patriarchs. We will pick up six of these themes below.

5 So Günter Stemberger, ‘Exegetical Contacts between Christians and Jews in the Roman Empire’, in *Hebrew Bible, Old Testament: The History of Its Interpretation* (ed. M. Sæbø; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), 571-72.

6 For helpful discussions of multiperspectival approaches to the Bible see Vern S. Poythress, *Symphonic Theology: The Validity of Multiple Perspectives in Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987); John M. Frame, *Doctrine of the Knowledge of God* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987), passim; idem, *Perspectives on the Word of God: An Introduction to Christian Ethics* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 1999), esp. 50-54.

7 Leonhard Goppelt, *Typos: The Typological Interpretation of the Old Testament in the New* (trans. Donald Madvig; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 58.

8 ‘Biblical theology’ in this essay refers to reflection on the progressively unfolding redemptive narrative of Scripture that traces a theological (i.e. having to do with God and his activity in the world) theme through the canon’s narrative, culminating supremely in Christ.

When these biblical-theological themes are identified, and when Jeremiah's place in the canon and in the history of God's people is kept in mind, it is not inappropriate to consider Jeremiah 33 to provide a 'centre' of sorts to the whole Bible. From the canonical peak of Jeremiah 33, the entire horizon of the biblical storyline opens up before us, looking back to what has developed thus far as well as forward in anticipation of what lies ahead. One of the few who does Jeremiah 33 biblical theological justice, Walter Brueggemann, puts it well: 'this chapter seems to want to collect all Israel's possible ways of speaking of God's good future'.<sup>9</sup>

## 2. Neglect of Jeremiah 33 in biblical theology

Jeremiah 33:14-26 is largely neglected in the relevant secondary literature, rendering treatment of this text against the backdrop of the whole canon all the more requisite. In the shadow of its cousin passage two chapters earlier describing the new covenant (31:31-34), chapter 33 and its striking biblical-theological importance has been unduly sidelined. The focus on chapter 31 is understandable, even necessary. It is quoted at length in the NT (Heb. 8:8-12; cf. 10:15-17) and alluded to elsewhere (e.g., 2 Cor. 3:6).<sup>10</sup> No quotations of Jer. 33:14-26 exist in the NT.<sup>11</sup> A further complicating factor that may reinforce neglect of this passage, though not too surprising given the convoluted textual history of Jeremiah, is the omission of verses 14-26 from the LXX.<sup>12</sup>

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- 9 Walter Brueggemann, *A Commentary on Jeremiah: Exile and Homecoming* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 318. See also the comments of Georg Fischer, who briefly draws together several of the whole-Bible themes of Jer. 33:14-26 (*Jeremia 26-52* [HThKAT; Freiburg: Herder, 2005], 240).
- 10 David Reimer notes, however, that Jeremiah 31 'is remarkably devoid of' the longing for an ideal king so prominent in Jer. 33:14-26 (David J. Reimer, 'Redeeming Politics in Jeremiah', in Hans M. Barstad and Reinhard G. Kratz, eds., *Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* [BZAW 388; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009], 128).
- 11 Allusions may be a different story – see, e.g., Rikk E. Watts' recent contribution to the use of the OT in Mark in D. A. Carson and G. K. Beale, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 125, 156, 161, 216, 228. Derek Kidner, following A. W. Streane, suspects that 1 Pet. 1:10-11 may be referring to Jer. 33:14-26 (Derek Kidner, *The Message of Jeremiah: Against Wind and Tide* [BST; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1987], 115).
- 12 See esp. Gleason A. Archer, 'The Relationship between the Septuagint Translation and the Massoretic Text in Jeremiah', *TJ* 12 (1991), 139-50; Hetty Lalleman, 'Jeremiah, Judgement and Creation', *TynB* 60 (2009), 20-22. Cf. discussion in Hermann-Josef Stipp, *Das masoretische und alexandrinische Sondergut des Jeremiasbuches: Textgeschichtlicher Rang, Eigenarten, Triebkräfte* (OBO 136; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1994), 133-36. Some believe 33:14-26 was omitted from the LXX (e.g., Paul Volz, *Der Prophet Jeremia* [2d ed.; Leipzig: A. Deichertsche Verlagsbuchhandlung D. Werner Scholl, 1928; repr., New York: Georg Olms, 1983], 310-11, 313-16), while others think the LXX provides the earliest text and 33:14-26 is a later addition to the MT (e.g., Mark Leuchter, *The Polemics of Exile in Jeremiah 26-45* [Cambridge:

Yet the paucity of reference to Jeremiah 33 among current biblical scholarship is unjustified. While we will show why this is the case below, here we briefly register just how neglected it is.

In Scobie's magisterial project that seeks to assemble a whole-Bible theology, Jeremiah 33 gets only a passing mention in the most promising section (that which deals with the 'kingly Messiah' to come).<sup>13</sup> VanGemerens covenantally-circumscribed tracing of redemption through the whole Bible references texts from Jeremiah 33:14-26 at a few points but does not substantively interact with this chapter.<sup>14</sup> The same goes for Kline's *Kingdom Prologue*<sup>15</sup> and Hamilton's recent volume arguing that the central motif of the whole Bible is the glory of God in salvation through judgment.<sup>16</sup> Childs' whole-Bible theology ignores Jer. 33,<sup>17</sup> as does S. G. de Graaf's four-volume *Promise and Fulfillment*.<sup>18</sup>

Theologies of the OT often likewise neglect Jeremiah 33. Waltke, for example, gives two passing references to texts from this chapter.<sup>19</sup> Goldingay's 900-page volume outlining OT theology contains a single reference to Jeremiah 33.<sup>20</sup> The same goes for Dyrness' popular treatment of the theology of the OT<sup>21</sup> and Gamble's tome providing a biblical theology of the OT.<sup>22</sup> Despite the biblical theological lens through which Motyer views the OT, his survey of the story and theology of the OT does not probe Jeremiah 33 beyond the odd citation.<sup>23</sup> Müller's

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Cambridge University Press, 2008], 72). For a seemingly exhaustive list of those who argue for one or the other of these positions see Bob Becking, *Between Fear and Freedom: Essays on the Interpretation of Jeremiah 30-31* (Oudtestamentische Studiën 51; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 12 n. 7 (for those arguing that the LXX is more reliable), 13 n. 8 (for those arguing that the MT is the more reliable).

- 13 Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of Our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 317.
- 14 Willem VanGemerens, *The Progress of Redemption: The Story of Salvation from Creation to the New Jerusalem* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1988), 60, 267, 455, 456.
- 15 Meredith G. Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview* (Eugene, Ore.: Wipf & Stock, 2006), 14, 16, 249.
- 16 James M. Hamilton, *God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2010), 214 n. 155, 221.
- 17 Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*.
- 18 S. G. de Graaf, *Promise and Deliverance* (trans. H. E. Runner and E. W. Runner; 4 vols.; Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1977-1981).
- 19 Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007), 205, 844.
- 20 John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology, Volume One: Israel's Gospel* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2003), 92. Better is Goldingay's second volume, *Old Testament Theology, Volume Two: Israel's Faith* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006).
- 21 William Dyrness, *Themes in Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1979), 76.
- 22 Richard C. Gamble, *The Whole Counsel of God, Vol. 1: God's Mighty Acts in the OT* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2009), 305. This is the first installment of a three-volume set.
- 23 Alec Motyer, *Roots: Let the Old Testament Speak* (Fearn, Scotland: Christian Focus, 2009), 248, 259, 341.

focus on OT eschatology mentions texts from Jer. 33:14-26 only twice.<sup>24</sup> Bullock virtually ignores chapter 33 in his introduction to Jeremiah.<sup>25</sup>

Other works helpfully laying out the grand narrative of Scripture in a way generally consonant with the approach of this essay also neglect Jer. 33:14-26, such as important works by Goppelt, LaRondelle, Clowney, Johnson, and Alexander.<sup>26</sup> The wealth of intercanonical material found in *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts* contains just a few passing citations, without substantive discussion, of this passage.<sup>27</sup> Beale's biblical theology of the temple bypasses Jeremiah 33.<sup>28</sup> Bartholomew and Goheen's *The Drama of Scripture* ignores this chapter, despite their explicit structuring around the motif of kingship, the most crucial theme in Jeremiah 33.<sup>29</sup> Alexander's treatment of the king-theme throughout the Bible gives less than a page to the second half of Jeremiah 33.<sup>30</sup> Smith-Christopher's biblical theology of exile bypasses this chapter,<sup>31</sup> as does Pate's biblical theology of Israel.<sup>32</sup>

The same neglect recurs in monographs on Jeremiah. McConville, in a book that deals with every chapter in Jeremiah, opens his discussion of chapter 33 with the assertion that 'Jeremiah 33 adds little substantively new' to what has come before.<sup>33</sup> Carroll<sup>34</sup> and Overholt<sup>35</sup> similarly give little place to chapter 33

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24 Hans-Peter Müller, *Ursprünge und Strukturen alttestamentlicher Eschatologie* (BZAW 109; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1969), 198, 217.

25 C. Hassell Bullock, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophetic Books* (Chicago: Moody, 1986), 199, 201.

26 Goppelt, *Typos*; Hans K. LaRondelle, *The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation* (Berrien Springs, Mich.: Andrews University Press, 1983); Edmund P. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1988) (though note p. 118); Dennis E. Johnson, *Him We Proclaim: Preaching Christ from All the Scriptures* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian & Reformed, 2007); T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2008), though see 59 n. 86.

27 G. K. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 39 n. 31, 345 n. 18, 357 n. 103.

28 G. K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church's Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (NSBT 17; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004).

29 Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004).

30 T. Desmond Alexander, *The Servant King: The Bible's Portrait of the Messiah* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2003), 114; cf. 77-78.

31 Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002).

32 C. Marvin Pate et al, *The Story of Israel: A Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2004).

33 J. G. McConville, *Judgment and Promise: An Interpretation of the Book of Jeremiah* (Leicester: Apollon, 1993), 101.

34 Robert P. Carroll, *From Chaos to Covenant: Prophecy in the Book of Jeremiah* (New York: Crossroad, 1981).

35 Thomas W. Overholt, *The Threat of Falsehood: A Study in the Book of Jeremiah* (SBT 16; Naperville, Ill.: Allenson, 1970).

in their works, and Job's recent monograph deals with Jer. 33:14-26 only with respect to its textual authenticity.<sup>36</sup> Hoffman writes on eschatology in Jeremiah but considers 33:14-26 similar enough to 23:5-6 that chapter 33 can be ignored.<sup>37</sup> Jeremiah 33:14-26 is further ignored by Schenker's monograph on chapter 31,<sup>38</sup> Wolff's dissertation on the reception-history of Jeremiah,<sup>39</sup> and Pohlmann's study of Jeremiah's personal confessions and judgment pronouncements.<sup>40</sup>

Though not exhaustive, this is a representative analysis of scholarly treatment of Jeremiah. Lundbom catches the general scholarly mood concerning Jeremiah 33 with his self-excusing comment in concluding his discussion of the Book of Consolation: 'Chapter 33 is admittedly a difficult chapter to unravel so we cannot say more than this at the present time'.<sup>41</sup>

### 3. Biblical-theological reflection on Jeremiah 33

The purpose of this essay is to bring out this passage's neglected but striking coordination of crucial whole-Bible motifs. We proceed by identifying *six intercanonical themes* and then, stepping back from the text, by articulating *two macro-hermeneutical lenses* or captions within which even these six themes are subsumed.

By *intercanonical theme* we mean a motif that recurs throughout the canon, OT and New, not coincidentally but because it is built into the very structure of the biblical story such that as it is repeatedly picked up one finds the redemptive plotline developing and thickening.<sup>42</sup> By *macro-hermeneutical lens* we mean a

36 John Brian Job, *Jeremiah's Kings: A Study of the Monarchy in Jeremiah* (SOTSMS; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 132-36. Barbara A. Bozak, while admittedly focusing on Jeremiah 30-31, fails to make connections with ch 33, despite her belief in the validity of focusing on the final form of the text (*Life 'Anew': A Literary-Theological Study of Jer. 30-31* [AnBib 122; Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1991]).

37 Yair Hoffman, 'Eschatology in the Book of Jeremiah', in *Eschatology in the Bible and in Jewish and Christian Tradition* (ed. Henning G. Reventlow; JSOTSup 243; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987), 88.

38 Adrian Schenker, *Das Neue am neuen Bund und das Alte am alten: Jer. 31 in der hebräischen und griechischen Bibel* (FRLANT 212; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

39 Christian Wolff, *Jeremia im Frühjudentum und Urchristentum* (TUGAL 118; Berlin: Akademie, 1976).

40 Karl-Friedrich Pohlmann, *Die Ferne Gottes: Studies zum Jeremiabuch* (BZAW 179; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1989). Pohlmann gives extensive attention to Jeremiah 30-32.

41 Jack R. Lundbom, *Jeremiah: A Study in Ancient Hebrew Rhetoric* (2d ed., Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1997), 51.

42 I am not using 'intercanonical', then, as Robert Wall does, who uses the term to describe inherently contradictory conversations between the various biblical authors in a way that neglects both ultimate divine authorship and the historical verities of the text (Robert W. Wall, 'Reading the New Testament in Canonical Context', in *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* [ed. Joel B. Green; 2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010], 383-84).



theological category which, applied to a text, provides maximal illumination from the standpoint of the entire canon and the sweep of redemptive history. Thus the themes are inductively drawn from the text; the lenses are deductively brought to the text. While the various intercanonical themes are organically unified, they are not transparently able to make sense of each other; the macro-hermeneutical lenses enable us to connect the dots, generating a coherent whole.

Before turning to these themes, it is relevant to recall the historical and literary context of Jeremiah 33. Jeremiah was one of the last prophets to issue forth God's word before the sixth-century capture of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and the exile of all but a small number of Jews who stayed behind to maintain the land (39:10). Writing as he does in the days leading up to and during Judah's exile, the climactic catastrophe of the nation's history, Jeremiah's prophetic ministry comes at a pivotal time in the biblical narrative. It is at this moment in the history of God's people that all their sins come crashing down on top of them and the exile so long threatened becomes reality. This was a catastrophe of devastating proportions.

Yet it is from the ashes of this devastation that new hope will rise: the centrepiece of Jeremiah is chapters 30-33,<sup>43</sup> the 'Book of Consolation,' an extended promise of national restoration, in which Yahweh assures his people that they will one day be re-established despite the impending punishment on the threshold of which their sins have currently brought them. And the mini-climax within this Book of Consolation, I suggest, is Jer. 33:14-26.<sup>44</sup>

In short, then, the historical and literary placement of Jeremiah 33 may encourage us to yield more redemptive-historical significance to this text than is often rendered. For decisive corroboration, though, we must consider the text itself. Space prohibits sustained reflection on any of the below suggested themes. This essay is a cursory overview intended to highlight several key themes without lingering long over any single one. Also, the following six themes and the final two lenses are not neatly separable but are overlapping, interlaced with one another in various ways and to varying degrees.

### *Six intercanonical themes*

Though more could be explored, we will focus in what follows on the six in-

43 So A. van der Wal, 'Themes from Exodus in Jeremiah 30-31', in Marc Vervenne, ed., *Studies in the Book of Exodus: Redaction, Reception, Interpretation* (BETL 126; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1996), 559; Duane L. Christensen, *The Unity of the Bible: Exploring the Beauty and Structure of the Bible* (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist, 2003), 115; Gary E. Yates, 'Narrative Parallelism and the "Jehoiakim Frame": A Reading Strategy for Jeremiah 26-45', *JETS* 48 (2005), 279.

44 So Kidner, *Jeremiah*, 114-15; Patrick D. Miller, 'Jeremiah' (*NIB* 6; Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 827. Cf. Elena di Pedè, *Au-delà du refus: l'espoir. Recherches sur la cohérence narrative de Jr 32-45* (TM) (BZAW 357; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), 28. On the theological significance of Jer. 33:14-26 to Jeremiah as a whole see also Fischer, *Jeremia 26-52*, 223; Joëlle Ferry, "'Je restaurerai Juda et Israël'" (Jer. 33:7, 9, 26), *L'écriture de Jérémie 33*, *Transeuphratène* 15 (1998), 69-82.



terrelated themes of messianic hope, land, kingship, priesthood, covenant, and election.

### 1. Messianic hope

In the coming days, the Lord says, 'I will cause a righteous Branch to spring up for David, and he shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In those days Judah will be saved and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: "The LORD is our righteousness"' (Jer. 33:15-16). The reader's mind is immediately brought back to Jeremiah 23:5-6. In both passages a 'righteous branch' associated with David will arise on the scene in the 'coming days' to reign in righteousness.<sup>45</sup> God's people will finally be graced with a leader in the Davidic line who will rule as Israel's kings were meant to rule. The 'good word' (v. 14) in view here likely hearkens back to 2 Samuel 7 and God's promise to David of a perpetual kingship. Several factors, however, point toward understanding this coming one as more than merely another human king who will simply be more successful in godly leadership than his predecessors.

First, the setting in which this king will arrive is the 'coming days'. The definitive and consummative nature of these days hint at a leadership that will be different not only in degree but in kind. Second, Jeremiah is pervasively pessimistic about the kingship of Israel, time and again lambasting Israel's monarchs, to the point that in 22:30 Yahweh says that the throne will come to a decisive end. Third, the difficult term *tsemaḥ*, 'branch' or 'growth' or 'sprouting', when read with canonical sensitivity, brings to the fore a recurrent prophetic theme (Isa. 4:2; 11:1-2; 60:21; Zech. 3:8; 6:12-13).<sup>46</sup> This 'branch' is a coming descendant of David who will rule God's people in justice and righteousness, issuing in their salvation and security. It is probably not coincidence, in light of Jer. 33:16, that the name of the last king of Judah, Zedekiah, means 'Yahweh is righteous/Yahweh is my righteousness' – the supreme irony at the end of a long line of kings who consistently failed to embody such a truth (cf. 52:1-3).<sup>47</sup>

This hope is intercanonical in that the longing birthed in Gen. 3:15, that the seed of Adam would crush the head of the seed of the serpent, travels along throughout the OT, gaining momentum and specificity, and is only finally realized in the coming age, when Messiah comes.

45 See the extended comparison of 23:5-6 and 33:14-16 in Yohanan Goldman, *Prophétie et royauté au retour de l'exil: Les origines littéraires de la forme massorétique du livre de Jérémie* (OBO 118; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1992), 12-15. For detailed discussion of the 'branch' in 23:5 and 33:15, see Wolter H. Rose, *Zemah and Zerubbabel: Messianic Expectations in the Early Postexilic Period* (JSOTSup 304; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 91-120, esp. 109-120.

46 See R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission* (Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 1998), 100; William Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: A Theology of the Old Testament Covenants* (Exeter: Paternoster, 2002), 172.

47 See Müller, *Ursprünge und Strukturen alttestamentlicher Eschatologie*, 217; Donald E. Gowan, *Theology of the Prophetic Books: The Death and Resurrection of Israel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 116-17.

## 2. Land

The promise of verse 15 is that the Branch 'will execute justice and righteousness *in the land*' (cf. Jer. 30:3). Though the reference is brief, the descriptor 'in the land' does not merely indicate the location of the divine promise's fulfillment but is itself a critical part of that promise. Furthermore, the reference to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in Jer. 33:26 may include an implicit recalling of the land promise, since throughout the OT and Jewish literature these patriarchs are mentioned in connection with the land promise (e.g., Exod. 33:1; Lev. 26:42; Num. 23:11; Deut. 1:8; 6:10; 30:20; 34:4; cf. Josh. 24:3; 2 Chron. 20:7; Ezek. 33:24; Bar. 2:34; *T. Mos.* 3:9; 4 Bar. 6:21). Also, in the near context Jeremiah buys a piece of property in the promised land as a sign that 'Houses and fields and vineyards shall again be bought in this land' (32:15; cf. v. 22).<sup>48</sup> Viewing Jeremiah as a whole, moreover, restoration to the land is a more dominant motif than in any other prophet.

This theme is intercanonical in that the promise of a new land was first made explicit back in the Abrahamic call and promise of Gen. 12:1-3. This promise then progressively unfolds throughout Scripture. Thus the exodus from Egypt is so paramount because, among other reasons, it reinstated God's people in the land. I say reinstated because entering the land was, in a sense, a return to Eden – as indicated by the prophets' gloss of the promised land as Eden (Isa. 51:3; Ezek. 36:35; Joel 2:3; note also the 'garden' references in Isa. 58:11; Jer. 31:12). The land promise receives a particularly devastating setback in the exile of Israel and then Judah. The promise is then explicated in the NT as referring to the inheritance of the whole earth (Rom. 4:13; cf. Heb. 11:10-16; Rev. 21:1-5). Such whole-world rule was the original mandate to Adam, lost but slowly being recovered, the decisive world-conquering having been accomplished by Christ (John 16:33).

## 3. Kingship

Bruce Waltke has recently sought to integrate the message of the OT by emphasizing the kingship motif.<sup>49</sup> If there is one OT figure who represents this kingship more than any other, it is David, whose name appears five times in Jer. 33:14-26. Fischer subsumes Jer. 33:14-26 under the theme 'Salvation under the Future Seed of David in Jerusalem'.<sup>50</sup> The kingship theme is bound up with the messianic hope theme touched on above, since both refer to a coming son of David.

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48 Hamilton, *God's Glory*, 220. On the significance of the land promise throughout Jeremiah 32, see Nelson Klipp, *Niederreißen und aufbauen: Das Verhältnis von Heilsverheißung und Unheilsverkündigung bei Jeremia und im Jeremiabuch* (Biblich-Theologische Studien 13; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1990), 68-85. Georg Fischer provides a series of connections between ch.'s 32 and 33 in *Das Trostbüchlein: Text, Komposition und Theologie von Jer. 30-31* (SBB 26; Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1993), 178-80.

49 Waltke, *Old Testament Theology*, esp. 144, 147, 167-69.

50 Fischer, *Das Trostbüchlein*, 179. Translations of German and French in the body of the present essay are mine.

Yet we focused specifically on the ‘Branch’ metaphor above, and here we focus on the kingship theme more broadly.

Of the five references to David in Jer. 33:14-26, four speak explicitly of Davidic rule. We have already reflected on the first reference to David, which describes his son as a Branch who will bring righteousness to the land. Second, verse 17 pledges that ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel’. Here we note an even clearer resonance of God’s ‘good word’ to David in 2 Samuel 7, for there David is promised that God will permanently establish David’s rule (2 Sam. 7:13-14). This everlasting Davidic rule is then reinforced twice more in Jeremiah 33 (vv. 21, 26).

Thus the Davidic rule, the perpetual reign of a son of David, is underscored throughout Jeremiah 33. This optimistic hope of a flourishing future kingship is striking when placed against the backdrop of Jeremiah’s decidedly gloomy general portrayal of the kingship in Israel and Judah (see e.g. Jer. 21:11 – 23:8).<sup>51</sup>

This theme is intercanonical in that kingship emerges on the scene of the biblical narrative right from the start, in Eden. Goldsworthy calls Eden ‘the Garden Kingdom’.<sup>52</sup> Adam is charged to ‘fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over’ it (Gen. 1:28). Adam is a king. He failed to subdue the earth, however, and was instead himself subdued by the serpent.<sup>53</sup> The recovery and repeated re-commission of this kingly role winds its way through the entire Bible, from the promise that the scepter will never depart from Judah in Gen. 49:10 up to the saints co-reigning with the triumphant Lamb in Revelation, who is also ‘the Root of David’ (Rev. 5:5; cf. 22:16). Strikingly, Jer. 33:26 says that the ‘seed’ of David will ‘have dominion over’ (also Zech. 6:13) the seed of the patriarchs, calling to mind Adam’s call in Gen 1:28.

#### 4. Priesthood

Continuing through the second half of Jeremiah 33 we come upon the theme of priesthood. The priestly dimension to the passage can be seen by noting three subthemes: the Levitical line, sacrifice, and temple. The first two are explicit, the third implicit. Together they comprise the who, the what, and the where of the Israelite cultus.

First, the Levitical order is mentioned three times. In verse 18 we read that ‘the Levitical priests shall never lack a man in my presence...’ In verse 21 God

51 Klaus Seybold, *Der Prophet Jeremia: Leben und Werk* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1993), 96-100; Fischer, *Jeremia* 26-52, 232; Marvin A. Sweeney, ‘Jeremiah’s Reflection on the Isaian Royal Promise: Jeremiah 23:1-8 in Context’, in *Uprooting and Planting: Essays on Jeremiah for Leslie Allen* (ed. John Goldingay; Library of Hebrew Bible/OT Studies 459; New York: T&T Clark, 2007), 308-21.

52 Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel and Kingdom*, in *The Goldsworthy Trilogy* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2000), 60.

53 G. K. Beale sanely suggests that Jesus’ exorcising of demons was a successful discharging of what Adam was to have done – drive Satan out of Eden (‘The Eschatological Conception of New Testament Theology’, in Mark W. Elliott and Kent E. Brower, eds., *Eschatology in Bible and Theology: Evangelical Essays at the Dawn of a New Millennium* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1999], 29-30).

refers to 'my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers', and he promises in verse 22 to multiply the Levitical priests.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps all this is a reiteration of the promise made to Phinehas, a Levite (Exod. 6:25), in the wake of his godly zeal (Num. 25:1-13). For in that event Phinehas was promised a 'covenant of peace' (Num. 25:12) and a perpetual priesthood (Num. 25:13; cf. Jer. 33:18).

Second, we find a reference to sacrifice. The Levitical priests will always have a man to offer sacrifices (v. 18). As with the promise of a permanent priesthood, doubtless the concern here is not only the corrupt priesthood but also Jerusalem's imminent destruction, prophesied repeatedly by Jeremiah. For then the temple will be destroyed and the priesthood and sacrificial system will come to an abrupt end.

Third, not only the *who* (the Levites) and the *what* (sacrifice) of the cultus but the *where* is present in Jeremiah 33 – the temple. While an explicit reference to the temple (*hekhal*) is absent, two other temple-related Hebrew roots do appear: *shekan* (16) and *bayit* (vv. 14 [twice], 17; cf. 2 Sam. 7:13; 1 Kgs. 5:3-5). Moreover, the repeated references to the priesthood and sacrifice implicitly conjure up the temple motif.<sup>55</sup>

Priesthood, too, is strongly intercanonical. The priestly themes that converge in Jeremiah 33 began in Eden, where Adam was not only a king but a priest, keeping and guarding Eden as he met with God in the original temple (cf. Ezek. 28:13-18). The Qumranites called Eden 'the Temple of Adam' (4QFlor. 1:6) and Jubilees described it as 'the holy of holies and the dwelling place of the Lord' (Jub. 8:19).<sup>56</sup> Adam failed in his priestly role, however, and God called Abraham and his line to be a 'kingdom of priests' (Exod. 19:6). In a particularly striking development in Zech. 6:12-13, Zechariah places a crown on the head of Joshua the high priest, who is thereby designated the 'Branch' (*tsemaḥ*) who will build the 'temple of the LORD' (4x in in Zech. 6:12-15). As in Jeremiah 33, then, Zechariah 6 brings together kingship, temple, and the coming 'Branch' (cf. Ps. 132:16-17). (The Targum on Zech. 6:12-13 replaces 'Branch' with 'Anointed', explicitly reading 'Branch' in messianic terms.)<sup>57</sup>

### 5. Covenant

Whether or not one embraces Reformed theology's covenantally-framed structuring of the Bible in conservative biblical scholarship or Walther Eichrodt's

54 Jeremiah 33 provides the only mention of 'Levites' in Jeremiah, though 'priest' occurs some forty times throughout Jeremiah (Stüpp, *Sondergut des Jeremiasbuches*, 135).

55 So Hill, 'Book of Jeremiah', 160-62, 167. Robert P. Carroll detects temple allusions throughout Jer. 33:14-26 (*Jeremiah: A Commentary* [OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986], 638-39). On the Jeremianic concept of the temple throughout Second Temple Judaism, see Wolff, *Jeremia im Frühjudentum und Urchristentum*, 61-71.

56 Meredith G. Kline (*Images of the Spirit* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980], 35-42) and Beale (*Temple and the Church's Mission*, 66-80) argue that Eden was a miniature temple, further underscoring Adam's priestly role. I am indebted to Beale (ibid., 78) for directing me to the Jewish texts referenced here.

57 See G. K. Beale, *The Book of Revelation: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (NIGTC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 563; cf. 355, 1146.

centralizing of the covenant motif for OT theology in the more critical *Religionsgeschichte* school, one is hard pressed to find a more significant intercanonical theme than covenant. And while Jer. 31:31-34 is rightly held forth as the key *new* covenant text in the Bible, here in Jeremiah 33 the theme of covenant is once more thick on the ground.<sup>58</sup> Four covenants crop up: creational, Abrahamic, Davidic, and Levitical.

First is a reference to a creational covenant (vv. 20, 25; cf. 33:2; 31:35-37).<sup>59</sup> God's commitment to his people is as sure as his commitment to bring up the sun each day.<sup>60</sup> We are not referring here to the current tortuous discussions concerning an alleged covenant of works in Eden. Rather, Jeremiah 33 speaks of a 'covenant' of sorts with the created order and cosmos (thus the Noahic covenant of Gen. 8-9 may be more in view here than Gen. 1-2).<sup>61</sup> God's pledge to uphold the cosmic order takes on significance in light of Israel's disobedience, which earlier in Jeremiah is described as undoing creation (Jer. 4:23-26; 9:10-11; 12:4; 14:1-6). Significantly, in the Book of Consolation some of the promises take on the form of re-creation (e.g., 31:5, 12).

Second, we are reminded of the Abrahamic covenant. Jeremiah 33:22 reads, 'As the host of heaven cannot be numbered and the sands of the sea cannot be measured, so I will multiply the offspring [seed: *zera'*] of David'. Though it is David's (not Abraham's) seed mentioned here (cf. 22:30), the reference to the host of heaven and the sand of the sea in the context of a divine promise of multiplication of one's offspring points us back to Gen. 22:17, where the Abrahamic promise is reiterated by recourse to 'the stars of heaven' and 'the sand that is on the seashore'.<sup>62</sup>

Here in Jeremiah 33, interestingly, this Abrahamic promise is transposed onto God's commitment to David, both in verse 22 and in verse 26. This brings us to the third covenantal stratum of this passage. In verse 21 the Lord speaks of 'my covenant with David my servant'. The reference is to God's promise of 2 Samuel 7, reinforced through a handful of psalms, that the Davidic line would never lack a man on the throne, as is reiterated in verse 21. This promise is perhaps alluded to in verse 26 with the reference to one of David's offspring ruling over the offspring of the patriarchs.

One other covenant is mentioned, briefly – a covenant between the Lord and

58 See Tiberius Rata, *The Covenant Motif in Jeremiah's Book of Comfort: Textual and Intertextual Studies of Jeremiah 30-33* (Studies in Biblical Literature 105; New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 71-88.

59 On the similarities between Jer. 31:35-37 and 33:20-26 see Joëlle Ferry, *Illusions et salut dans la prédication prophétique de Jérémie* (BZAW 269; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999), 344-45.

60 Drawn out at length by Helga Weippert, *Schöpfer des Himmels und der Erde: Ein Beitrag zur Theologie des Jeremiabuches* (SBS 102; Stuttgart: Verlag Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1981), esp. 42-48, 58-59, 90.

61 So Vos, *Biblical Theology*, 54; Gamble, *Whole Counsel of God*, 305.

62 John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah and the Lamentations* (trans. John Owen; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003; repr.), 263. Cf. Gen. 15:5; Jer. 15:8.

the Levitical priests. It comes in verse 21, where God says that not only is the Davidic covenant as certain as the very creation ordinances, but also God's covenant with the Levites is this certain (note Mic. 2:4). This has been discussed above under the motif of priesthood.

The covenant motif, manifested through God's relations with creation, Abraham, David, and the Levites, is integral to Jer. 33:14-26. And this motif is intercanonical, stretching from creation to the new creation (Heb. 8:6-9:20).

### 6. Election

Finally, a sixth intercanonical theme that crops up in the second half of Jeremiah 33 is election. The key verse here is verse 24: 'Have you not observed that these people are saying, "The LORD has rejected the two clans that he chose" [bħr]? Thus they have despised my people...' Calvin rightly speaks of the reference to Israel being 'chosen' in terms of election.<sup>63</sup> We find the language of choosing/election once more in verse 26. God chose the two clans of Israel (v. 24) and will choose a future seed to rule over his people (v. 26).

The electing choice of God is an intercanonical theme – God freely elects Abraham, and then time and again chooses one side of Abraham's lineage to inherit the covenant promises and not the other. In viewing the whole-Bible motif of election one thinks especially of Pharaoh and Paul's treatment of him in Romans 9.

A related theme that courses through Jer. 33:14-26 (as well as the whole Bible) which could merit its own category but will be mentioned here with the theme of election is that of divine initiative. The unilateral nature of God's promises comes through clearly in Jeremiah 33.<sup>64</sup> Time and again God defiantly declares 'I will...'

### *Two macro-hermeneutical lenses*

Other intercanonical themes could be mentioned, such as the patriarchs, or divine mercy (*hesed*). But we move on to two more all-encompassing hermeneutical lenses that can deductively illuminate this passage beyond what has been explored inductively thus far. The foregoing intercanonical motifs in Jeremiah 33 coinhere; it is in light of the following two categories that we see how.

#### 1. Eschatology

This caption could perhaps be labeled 'promise and fulfillment'. This would accord with the explicit wording of the divine pledge of verse 14 to 'fulfill the promise' to Israel and Judah. Promise and fulfillment is, moreover, the macro-motif within which some have sought to tie the whole Bible together, such as J.

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63 Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 264-65.

64 Kenneth Mulzac, 'The Remnant and the New Covenant in the Book of Jeremiah', *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 34 (1996), 242-44; Rata, *Jeremiah's Book of Comfort*, passim.

C. K. von Hofmann or Charles Scobie.<sup>65</sup> We will opt for the label ‘eschatology’ in describing this lens, however, for this is likely somewhat more illuminating than promise and fulfillment for viewing the above motifs. For while Christ and accompanying soteric realities of the NT were promised and anticipated in the OT, the NT also indicates that Christ reveals a previously hidden ‘mystery’. Christ was both anticipated and, in other ways, unanticipated: his coming brought new revelation.<sup>66</sup>

By ‘eschatological’ we do not mean ‘future’ in a strictly temporal sense but rather having to do with *that coming glorious age in which all the ever-heightening hopes and promises of the OT are decisively launched*. That is, eschatology here refers to the explosion in the middle of history of what was expected to happen at the end of history.<sup>67</sup> While a systematics text can validly treat ‘eschatology’ in its final chapter, a biblical theology text should treat eschatology in every chapter. Vos rightly argues that every aspect of soteriology is eschatological – as Gaffin pithily puts it, ‘soteriology is eschatology’<sup>68</sup> – and Scobie suggests that every aspect of *theology* is eschatological.<sup>69</sup>

And Jeremiah 33, we suggest, tingles with eschatological fervor. The introductory declaration, ‘Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD,’ is fraught with eschatological significance, especially in Jeremiah, occurring 15 times, five in Jeremiah 30-33.<sup>70</sup> These coming days are mentioned again in vv. 15 and 16, and throughout the passage the Lord speaks of what he ‘will’ do in these days ahead (vv. 22, 26). Thus there is built in to this passage an anticipatory tilt, a yearning for the coming days to be no longer future hope but present reality. While return from exile is the restoration on Israel’s immediate horizon, Jeremiah 33 is ultimately fulfilled in the eschaton. The coming days (*yamim ba’im*) will usher in a new age in which God’s enemies will be judged and his people restored. This use of *yamim* draws the reader’s mind to the references elsewhere in the prophets to the ‘latter days’ (*‘aḥarit hayyim*). To understand the ‘coming days’ throughout Jeremiah in similarly eschatologically charged ways is not inappropriate because in Jeremiah too we find some of the very passages that speak of the ‘coming days’ to refer also to the ‘latter days’ (Jer. 23:20; 30:24; cf. 48:47;

65 J. C. K. von Hofmann, *Weissagung und Erfüllung im alten und im neuen Testamente: ein theologische Versuch* (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck, 1841); Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, esp. 90-93, 123-24.

66 See D. A. Carson, ‘Mystery and Fulfillment: Toward a More Comprehensive Paradigm of Paul’s Understanding of the Old and the New’, in *Justification and Variegated Nomism* (ed. D. A. Carson, Peter T. O’Brien, and Mark A. Seifrid; 2 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001, 2004); 2:393-436. Cf. Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 92.

67 Cf. Oscar Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (London: SCM, 1951); Geerhardus Vos, *The Pauline Eschatology* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1994; repr), 1-61.

68 Richard B. Gaffin, Jr., *Resurrection and Redemption: A Study in Paul’s Soteriology* (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian & Reformed, 1987), 138.

69 Scobie, *Ways of Our God*, 93.

70 (see also 1 Sam. 2:31; 2 Kgs 20:17; Isa. 39:6; Amos 4:2; 8:11; 9:13; see Ferry, *Illusions et salut*, 118, 297).



49:39). And in these latter/coming days God is going to 'fulfill' or 'establish' his promise, his 'good word', to Israel and Judah.

Jeremiah 33:14-26 is shot through with eschatological flavor, then. Beyond this, however, we are viewing this passage through the macro-lens of eschatology because each of the six intercanonical themes is itself eschatological when viewed from the perspective of the whole Bible, and because an eschatological lens unites the various intercanonical themes into a coherent and meaningful whole.

*Messianic hope* is eschatological because it is in the latter days that the Jews expected the Davidic ruler to come, as is made explicit here in our passage (vv. 14-15; cf. Hos. 3:5).

The *land* theme is eschatological in that it was in the latter days that the land promise was to be finally realized (Isa. 60:21; 62:4; 65:16; Jer. 30:3; 32:15; Zech. 9:16; 14:10). The specific mention of Jerusalem dwelling securely in Jer. 33:16 anticipates the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven in Revelation 21. Stated differently: Eden, the first temple, was meant to spread throughout the whole earth. After the Fall and the expulsion from Eden, the OT is then the story of God's people trying to get back into, and stay happily in, the land promised to them, Eden restored. If we see Eden as the place where God dwells with mankind, however, the sacred land was restricted to a portable tabernacle and then the temple, even when the people dwelt in the land. In the new earth the initial purpose of Eden is then explosively realized as the whole earth becomes the temple it was meant to be (Rev. 3:12; 21:22).<sup>71</sup>

*Kingship* is eschatological in that the coming ruler would, in the Jewish hope, usher in the eschaton. In a Genesis *peshet* (rabbinic interpretation) found at Qumran, a ruler from the tribe of Judah is linked with 'the messiah of righteousness', 'the branch of David', who will never be cut off from David's throne and to whom there is 'given the kingship of his people for everlasting generations' (4Q252 5.1-5; see also Gen. 49:10; Ps. 72:17; 89; Isa. 9:7; Ezek. 37:25; John 12:34; Ps. Sol. 17:4; 1 Enoch 49:1). Also, Jesus' final command to subdue the world by multiplying disciples all over the earth (Matt. 28:18-20) is probably an eschatological fulfillment of the mandate of Gen 1:28 for Adam to subdue the world by multiplying sons all over the earth.<sup>72</sup>

*Priesthood* is eschatological in that it was in the latter days that God's people would be the royal priesthood they were called to be (Exod. 19:6 [cf. 1 Pet. 2:9-10]; Isa. 61:6). In Isa. 2:2-3 and Mic. 4:1-2, for instance, the 'latter days' describe the time when the law issues forth from Jerusalem as the nations flow to Zion to be instructed in Torah by Yahweh – the fulfillment of the priestly task of Torah instruction (cf. Mic. 3:11). Another way the priesthood is eschatologically clinched is that the eschaton renders the mediating dimension of the priesthood unnecessary, as God and his people will know one another face to face (cf. Jer.

71 See Beale, *Revelation*, 1109-11; idem, *The Temple and the Church's Mission*, passim.

72 So Warren A. Gage, *The Gospel of Genesis: Studies in Protology and Eschatology* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Carpenter, 1984), 28.

31:34; Heb. 8:13) with no need for a temple (Rev. 21:22-23).

*Covenant* is eschatological in that the OT authors yearned for the time when God would decisively clinch the covenant promises he had made to his people, despite these promises being undermined time and again by the people's recalcitrance (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 34:25-31; Hos. 2:16-23, esp. v. 18). The NT announces that this definitive covenant confirmation, expected to take place at the end of history, has taken place in the middle of history (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25; Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15; 12:24).

*Election* is eschatological in that the eschaton brings to full blossom all the blessings for which the people of God were chosen. Also, God's people are not only elected to receive blessing but to channel blessing, and it is in the eschaton that this, too, is fulfilled (Isa. 2:2-3; Mic. 4:1-2).

In sum, each of our six themes looks backward and forward: backward because each takes up what has been a snowballing motif throughout Israel's corporate historical experience, forward because each has also come up short and is only decisively fulfilled in the coming days.

The *way* in which this fulfillment-bringing eschaton would be ushered into the middle of history brings us to our second macro-hermeneutical lens.

## 2. Christ

The second interpretive lens is Christ himself. Here we come to an even more all-encompassing interpretive rubric than eschatology.

Christ himself, the Jewish God-Man, the one for whom the whole OT prepares and to whom the whole NT bears witness, is the only hermeneutical reality that finally makes coherent sense of Jeremiah 33. By viewing this passage through a Christ-lens the fog lifts and we are enabled to see how the diverse whole-Bible strands of this text coinhere. Indeed, one could virtually subsume the whole macro-hermeneutical category of eschatology itself under Christ, since Christ is the one through whom the eschaton was launched.<sup>73</sup> The same would hold true if we cast the previous lens not as eschatology but promise and fulfillment since Paul says that 'all the *promises* of God find their Yes *in him* [Christ]' (2 Cor. 1:20).<sup>74</sup>

It is only through Christ that we are able to see how the optimism of the Book of Consolation does not blatantly contradict the searing denunciations of Israel,

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73 Hoekema does not go far enough in perceiving the eschatological nature of the NT, saying that (e.g.) the resurrection from the dead and the final judgment have not yet happened (Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 14). Yet in Christ both of these events *have* decisively (not fully) taken place. Jesus was raised, and believers are raised in him. Jesus was judged on the cross, and we were likewise co-crucified with him. For the believer who is in Christ, these events have definitively taken place even if there remains the visible manifestation of these realities.

74 See Herman Bavinck's superb outline of a Christocentric relating of the OT to the NT in his *Reformed Dogmatics* (ed. John Bolt; trans. John Vriend; 4 vols.; Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003-2008), 4:660-62.

and especially her kings and priests, in the rest of Jeremiah.<sup>75</sup> For Christ himself *bore* the denunciations, and Christ himself *was* the faithful priest and the righteous king. When God repeatedly swears to turn away from his people due to their covenant unfaithfulness, this was not an empty threat that eventually dissipated. He did turn away from his people – his people as representatively embodied in the single true Israelite, the only Israelite who did not deserve to have God turn away from him, Jesus.

We turn then one final time to our six intercanonical themes. Here we remember that not only did Paul say that all things in heaven and on earth are recapitulated (*anakephalaioō*) in Christ (Eph. 1:10) but that Jesus himself taught that the Scriptures testify about him (John 5:39, 46) and that 'everything written *about me* in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled' (Luke 24:44).<sup>76</sup> Thus the NT not only allows but mandates that Jeremiah 33 be read with Christ as its ultimate reference point and true blossoming.<sup>77</sup> Briefly, then:

*Messianic hope* is fulfilled in Christ in that Christ is the Messiah, the anointed one, the righteous Branch who sprang up for David, and the one who, in contradistinction to faltering Zedekiah ('The Lord is my righteousness'), gave flesh-and-blood meaning to the name, 'The Lord our righteousness'.

The *land* is fulfilled in Christ in that the promise was made to Abraham and his seed that he would inherit the world (Rom. 4:13), and Paul connects the salvation-historical dots for us by saying explicitly that Abraham's 'seed' is Christ (Gal 3:16). Christ is *the* heir, the true heir, of the world – the whole land. From another angle: Eden, through Adam, was to be a spreading temple; and then Jesus showed up and he himself 'tabernacled' among us, no longer in a building but a body (John 1:14).

*Kingship* is consummated in Christ in that, simply, Christ is the king, the true king, the final king. He is the unstoppably reigning son of David, as the very beginning of the NT (Matt. 1:1) and the very end of the NT (Rev. 22:16) underscore (also Matt. 9:27; 15:22; 20:30; Mark 10:47-48; Luke 1:32; Acts 13:22-23; Rev. 5:5). Christ is the king Adam failed to be. In Christ the kingdom of God dawns (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 8:12; 2 Tim. 4:1). Adam was commissioned to conquer and rule the world, and failed; Christ came and said that he had done exactly what Adam failed to do (John 16:33; cf. Phil. 3:21; Heb. 2:8-9; Rev. 5:5).

*Priesthood* is filled out in Christ in that, once more, Christ is the priest. Jesus is the priest who ends the long line of priestly succession (Heb. 7:23-24; 9:12).

75 See Nelson Kilpp, *Niederreißen und aufbauen: Das Verhältnis von Heilsverheißung und Unheilsverkündigung bei Jeremia und im Jeremiabuch* (Biblich-Theologische Studien 13; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1990), 99.

76 Here see the fascinating monograph of France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*.

77 Goldsworthy speaks of a 'macro-typology' by which all of reality, and preeminently the Bible, are interpreted through the lens of Christ (Graeme Goldsworthy, *Gospel-Centered Hermeneutics: Foundations and Principles of Evangelical Biblical Interpretation* [Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2006], 245-57, esp. 251-52).

He acted as priest once and for all, and sat down. Jesus was not only the priest, he was also the sacrifice (Eph. 5:2; 1 Pet. 1:19) and the temple (John 2:19-22; Rev. 21:22). Jesus thus embodied in himself that which was offered, the one who offered it, and the place in which it was offered. Further, Adam, the first priest, created in the image of God, was partly divested of this image when he fell. Yet in the priestly office there is a renewed investiture, first of glorious clothing (OT) and then of 'putting on' the glory of Christ himself (NT).<sup>78</sup> The whole cultic system finds its true home in Christ.

*Covenant* is fulfilled in Christ in that Christ's blood inaugurated and sealed the new covenant (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). More than this, the whole covenantal structure of the Bible reaches its pinnacle and achieves coherence only in Christ. Jesus is the true covenant-keeper, and yet he also took the curses of the covenant onto himself. The almost bipolar feeling to God's constant swiveling between declaring doom for Israel's covenant faithlessness on the one hand and declaring restoration for the people on the other hand find no true resolution except in Christ.

*Election* is summed up in Christ not only in that, as Barth so trenchantly argued, Christ is in some sense the elect one,<sup>79</sup> but also in that Christ secures the election of his people. Christ's vicarious work ensures the election of his people despite their failings.

Christ fulfills Jeremiah 33. He is the ultimate macro-hermeneutical lens making Christian sense of this remarkable text.

#### 4. Two objections

We pause briefly here to address two possible objections to what is being suggested about Jeremiah 33.

First, are we not overstating the case for some sort of centrality to this chapter? For not every intercanonical theme is here. The inclusion of the nations/Gentiles, for instance, is conspicuously absent. How could a passage provide a centre to Scripture when it does not address a theme so clearly crucial?

This is a valid concern and must be duly appreciated. Even here, however, let us be sure to read closely and, while being careful not to read *in*, nevertheless read *in light* of the canon as a whole. In doing so we see that there may be hints in Jeremiah 33 of the calling of the nations. In the allusion to the Abrahamic covenant, one cannot help but think of the promise that in him all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:3). And whereas in Jeremiah 23:5 it is the Messiah who is identified as the Branch, in 33:16 it is the people of God; thus there is a move toward the corporate from chapter 23 to chapter 33.<sup>80</sup> One also thinks of the rejection of both houses of Israel in Jeremiah 33:24, which may point forward

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<sup>78</sup> See Kline, *Images of the Spirit*, 29, 32, 35, 47.

<sup>79</sup> See Barth, CD II/2, 103-6, 115-17, 339-42. Cf. Kimlyn J. Bender, *Karl Barth's Christological Ecclesiology* (Barth Studies Series; Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 95-129.

<sup>80</sup> Noted by Calvin, *Jeremiah*, 255; Ferry, *Illusions et salut*, 48.

to a day when God's people would be comprised of more than ethnic Israelites.<sup>81</sup> After all, elsewhere in Jeremiah some of the judgments sounded against the nations close on a note of restoration for *those nations* (16:19; 48:47; 49:6, 39).

Second, Jeremiah 33 is not picked up in any self-conscious way in the NT. While Hebrews 8 makes much of Jeremiah 31, chapter 33 is virtually ignored in the NT. Surely we have focused in this essay on the wrong portion of Jeremiah's Book of Consolation!

Once more, such an objection ought to inject a dose of hermeneutical sobriety into our conclusions. Such sobriety warns us against implicitly claiming that we have understood the flow of the biblical text and the meaning of various OT texts better than the apostles. Yet the apostles themselves, while providing a pattern for our own exegesis and interpretation today, utilized the OT in ways that were historically situated and contextually circumscribed. If they did not deem Jeremiah 33 directly pertinent to their own situations and audiences, this ought not to bother us too much, nor dissuade us from acknowledging the biblical-theological significance of this passage as we seek to put the whole Bible together today for our own time as the apostles did for theirs. The apostles have given us a trajectory for how to read the OT, and we are suggesting in this paper that if we apply that hermeneutical trajectory to Jeremiah 33, we discover a passage which, because of its unique constellation of intercanonical themes, provides a 'centre' to the entire Bible.

## 5. Conclusion

William Dumbrell's *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament* identifies five motifs that snowball through the whole Bible and are brought to culmination in its last two chapters: the new Jerusalem, the new Israel, the new temple, the new covenant, and the new creation.<sup>82</sup> It is striking that *Jeremiah 33 gathers up all five of these motifs*. The same goes for Siegfried Herrmann's identification of land, covenant, and the Davidic promise as the three main pillars of prophetic 'saving-expectation' (*Heilserwartung*).<sup>83</sup> Perhaps it ought not to surprise us to see a text from Jeremiah so loaded with eschatological and Christological import in light of the way the Hebrew canon ends with 'the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah' being 'fulfilled' (2 Chron. 36:22).

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81 See Kidner, *Jeremiah*, 115. Jeremiah's ministry to the nations is central to Bullock's treatment of Jeremiah in *Old Testament Prophetic Books*, 185-214.

82 William J. Dumbrell, *The End of the Beginning: Revelation 21-22 and the Old Testament* (Homebush West, NSW: Lancer Books, 1985). Dumbrell suggests that new creation is the theme under which the other four can be subsumed.

83 Siegfried Herrmann, *Die prophetische Heilserwartungen im Alten Testament: Ursprung und Gestaltwandel* (BWANT 85; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1965). Müller similarly treats the OT as eschatologically charged and builds this eschatological hope around the three motifs of God's working in history, the covenant, and blessings and curse (Müller, *Ursprünge und Strukturen alttestamentlicher Eschatologie*).

In Jer. 33:14-26 we find converging the six intercanonical themes of messianic hope, land, kingship, priesthood, covenant, and election, all of which are eschatological and all of which ultimately find their true home in Christ. This passage's unique clustering of important whole-Bible themes creates a rich canonical intersection through which the Scripture can be panoramically viewed. The second half of Jeremiah should be more often and more thoroughly incorporated into the current recovery of biblical theology in twenty-first century evangelicalism.

### Abstract

The article draws attention to a neglected passage in the current recovery of biblical-theological sensitivity to the Bible: Jeremiah 33:14-26. Drawing out six intercanonical themes that cluster here as God promises at the conclusion to the Book of Consolation to restore his people, the article suggests that this text forms a unique whole-Bible intersection. The article begins with an introduction clarifying what is (and what is not) being argued before moving on to point out the neglect of Jeremiah 33 in biblical theology. The heart of the article reflects on the six intercanonical themes that emerge. Two objections are handled before the article draws to a close.

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