

Summary of Dissertation***Restauratio und Resurrectio
in der Jesaja-Apokalypse***

by

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The subject of this dissertation is introduced by an allusion to the disagreement among the scholars as to whether Isaiah 26:19 points to *spiritual renewal*, *national restoration* or *individual resurrection*. It is further said that, detached from its context, this verse could, *à la limite*, have any of these meanings. If at all, then a decision between the different propositions is only possible if the concerned declarations are interpreted in the light of its overall context. The discussion becomes particularly complicated by the fact that until this day a striking dissension prevails among the biblical scholars concerning questions as for example the origin, unity, structure and perspective of the so called Apocalypse of Isaiah. This thesis represents mainly an attempt to find a solution to this controversial question and is developed in four main steps (chapters).

In the **first chapter** we present, in a **first step**, a survey of the research done on Isaiah 24—27 in the last two centuries by summarising contributions of different scholars. This summary serves to give a survey of the different hypotheses of the genesis and the interpretation of the Isaianic Apocalypse. In a following synthesis the different propositions and hypotheses are summarised. In a **second step** we expose and discuss the main arguments claimed by critical scholars against the unity and the authenticity of the Apocalypse of Isaiah. The demonstration of the considerable *dissensus* among the critical scholars concerning the history of the text of Isaiah 24—27 should also serve to question the credibility of the various critical "genesis-theories" of these four chapters. The **third step** serves then to present the arguments which plead for the unity and the authenticity of Is. 24—27. Special emphasis is made on the argument derived from the structure of these four chapters, which is the style of continual alternation between *eschatological oracle* and *song/prayer* and between the *hostile city* and *Zion*, as well as the concentric structure of the different pieces of the whole Apocalypse. Consequently it is suggested that the structure of the text seems to rule out any growth- and/or gloss-hypothesis of the Apocalypse of Isaiah. This will be argued in more details in the exegetical analyses in the second chapter.

The **second chapter** contains a thorough exegetical and linguistic commentary on all four chapters including structural analyses of each passage. Importance is attached to show the concatenation of the different passages of the Isaianic Apocalypse and continual information about linguistic and thematic parallels to other parts of the Book of Isaiah is given. Each passage begins with a literal translation of the text followed by a detailed commentary.

In the **first section** (24:1-20) we emphasise the universal and eschatological character of the announced judgement and try to show that the perspective of the prophet is futuristic. Even the fall of the *city of chaos* (24:10) is still to come. The expression *on that day* at the beginning of the **second section** (24:21—25:12) points to the fact that the here announced events are to be considered as eschatological as well. We enumerate the different interpretations proposed by the commentators for *the host of the high* and their disagreement concerning the expression וְיָמֵם וְיָמָרָב in 24:22. We believe that the context and parallel (or related) passages favour the meaning according to which on that eschatological judgement day the hostile kings (or nations) and fallen angels will be imprisoned in a dungeon while Yahweh reigns in Jerusalem in the presence of his people. But the imprisoned hostile powers will be judged at a later time (*after many days*). *Few people* will survive the universal judgement (24:6.13), among them will be a remnant of Israel (25:8c; 26:1; 27:6.13) as well as people out of the nations (25:6-7) who will, on that day, glorify Yahweh (25:3). Since the prophet says that the reign and feast of Yahweh take place *on that mountain* (25:6-10a), it is obvious that the kingdom spoken of here is an earthly kingdom. We try to show that the structure of the text favours the originality of the important prophecy of 25:8a (*he will swallow death for ever*). We enumerate the various propositions of interpretation made by the commentators of this passage and admit that its full meaning in this context is difficult to establish. We will refer again to that passage in the last chapter. The **third section** (chap. 26) consists of three main pieces (Vv 1-6; 7-19 and 20-21). It is especially characterised by a continuous thematic and literary concatenation, as well as by its style of concentricity and contrast. The fall of the hostile city (26:5-6) is still to come as well as the restoration of the city of the people of Yahweh in the land of Judah (26:1-2). The expression *on that day* in 26:1a points to the period indicated by the same expression in 24:21 and 25:9, that means to the eschatological age. We explain why we believe that 26:7-19 represents a prayer of the prophet in which he expresses his confidence that Yahweh will soon intervene, judge the ungodly and restore the just. In 26:20-21 the prophet turns to his people, exhorting them to wait in patience until the present distress will pass when Yahweh will come out of his place in order to judge the inhabitants of the earth. The **fourth section** (chap. 27) consists of five pieces; the first two and the last two are all (like in 24:21; 25:9 and 26:1) introduced by the expression *on that day*, which points (in this context) to the eschatological age. Only the central piece (Vv 7-11) is not introduced with this *formula*. This is because that passage deals with the *conditio sine qua non* of the restoration of Israel, that means the repentance of God's people. In this section Israel and its future restoration contrast with its enemies and their destruction.

The **third chapter** contains a detailed exegetical, philological and theological commentary on the — we may call it the *key verse* for our subject — *crux interpretum* Is. 26:19. Continual reference is made to the old versions and to the Qumran scroll (this is true as well for the exegetical commentary in the second chapter). All four sections of this verse are analysed and the various translations proposed by the old versions and/or modern commentators enumerated and discussed. Furthermore we try to explain the relation of this verse to the preceding and the following verses. Its complete embedding into the concentric construction of the whole piece (the prayer vv 6-17) reveals the fragility of the assumption which consists in asserting that this verse has to be considered as a later addition. In a last step in this chapter, the three proposed meanings of this verse are weighed in the light of the overall context of the Isaiah Apocalypse and parallel passages in other parts of the Book of Isaiah are taken into consideration as well. It seems to us that the context excludes the meaning of *spiritual birth* or *revival*. We then summarise and explain the different arguments which are asserted in favour of the interpretation according to which this verse points metaphorically to

the national restoration of Israel: (1) Several times allusion is made to the land of Yahweh's people: 26:1[Judah].10.15; (2) The people of Yahweh contrasts with the nations or is especially mentioned: 25:8c; 26:2.11.20; (3) The mention of Israel or Jacob: 27:6.13. The vineyard in 27:2-5 is a reminiscence of 5:1ff. The birth-metaphor in 26:17-18 symbolises the state of helplessness of Israel (cf. 49:21; 54:1; 66:7-9); (4) 27:12-13 announces the return of Israel to Jerusalem; (5) The mention of the elders in 24:23 is a reminiscence of Ex. 24:9ff etc. It is true that — as the advocates of the metaphorical interpretation argue — the vocabulary of 26:19 requires not a priori physical resurrection. In Is. 5 the exile is also described as death (cf. vv 13-14.25) and in Ez. 37:1ff the deliverance of Israel from exile is also metaphorically described as resurrection (revivification of the bones). None the less we believe that mainly the analogous (and with verse 19 contrasting) verse 26:14 and the following verse 26:21 plead for the meaning of *physical resurrection* in verse 19. If the *dead*, respectively the *shades* in 26:14 are real dead ones this should be assumed for the *dead* of Yahweh in 26:19 as well. The descriptions of the *shades* in sheol in 14:9-21 plead additionally for the assumption that the *shades* in 26:14 are to be considered as physically dead men. The mention of the blood disclosed by the earth and the slain, whom the earth will no longer cover in 26:21, seem to allude as well to individual resurrection. When Yahweh will let fall the *dew of lights* on the *land of the shades* (26:19b) then the earth will disclose Yahweh's dead. The mention of the destruction of death in 25:8a may as well favour this interpretation. The omnipotence and perfect justice of Yahweh are questioned if only Israel as nation is restored but his believers, who died in faith, remain in the sheol where they cannot glorify and praise Yahweh. We conclude this chapter with the statement that the Apocalypse of Isaiah announces both: *national restoration* and *individual resurrection*. We suggest that, whereas 26:19 points primarily to physical resurrection of the just, 27:2-13 announce the eschatological national restoration of Israel.

In the **fourth chapter** we try to show why it is not necessary to speak of tensions or even contradictions within the Apocalypse of Isaiah or between these four chapters and other parts of the Book of Isaiah. We suggest that if we admit an intermediate messianic kingdom on earth several alleged contradictions are proved to be unfounded. This would explain as well why the events of national restoration of Israel and the physical resurrection of the just are announced in the Apocalypse of Isaiah to take place — so to say simultaneously — when Yahweh will reign *on that mountain* in Jerusalem *on that day*.

In a **first step** we explain what we believe is speaking in favour of an earthly messianic kingdom: (1) The *promise of a land* given to Abraham and his descendants (cf. Gen. 12:1ff; 13:14-18; 15:16-21 etc.) calls still for a fulfilment since Yahweh promised that Israel will remain for ever in its country (cf. Am. 9:15; Is. 60:21; Jer. 31:40; Ez. 37:25 etc.). Since after the return from the Babylonian exile into its homeland, Israel had again been driven out of it by the Romans in 70 A. D., this prophecy has obviously not yet been entirely fulfilled. Passages like 11:15-16 and Ez. 47:13ff predict an eschatological accomplishment of this promise. (2) The Apocalypse of Isaiah announces the eschatological return of Israel in its country (27:12-13; cf. 26:1). Israel will be a blessing for the whole world and fill it with fruit (27:6). In the Apocalypse of Isaiah the national restoration of Israel and its return to the homeland obviously coincide with the eschatological judgement on the nations and passages like 26:1.10.15.18b and 27:6.12-13 seem to exclude the assumption that this promise will be fulfilled in the new creation. The term *on that mountain*, shows that the prophet speaks of this Jerusalem and not of the one to come. This is additionally supported by the mention of the *land of Judah* in 26:1a. 27:4 suggests that *on that day*, when Israel will be restored and fill the earth with fruit, war and judgement will still be a reality on earth. We refer to several scholars

who affirm that the mention of these circumstances have no place anymore after the events announced to take place *on that day* in 26:19—27:1. Consequently some explain this alleged contradiction by multiauthorship, while others excise or emend the expressions *on that day* in 27:2 and *in the coming [days]* in 27:6 in order to contest its eschatological character. Some among them apply the same arbitrary method in 26:1 by excising the expressions *on that day* and *in the land of Judah*. We believe that to the advocates of an intermediate messianic kingdom these descriptions and expressions pose no problem and it is not necessary to envisage internal contradictions or to emend the given text. (3) We show that in other passages in the different parts of the Book of Isaiah and in other books of the Old Testament allusions to conditions and events in the eschatological kingdom can be found which cannot be applied to the new creation, that means to the final state: here we mention a few of the examples and passages given: (a) the mention of a *temple* and/or *sacrifices* in 2:3; 60:7ff and 66:20-21; cf. Ez. 40:1ff; Zech. 14:20-21 etc.; (b) the mention of *war, judgement, destruction, death, night, giving birth* and various topographical descriptions in 11:4; 54:15-17; 65:20.23; cf. Ez. 39:12; 47:22; Zech. 14:4-11.17-19 etc. We therefore suggest the following interpretation: The duration of the earthly kingdom of Yahweh on the mount Zion in Jerusalem (24:23; 25:6-10a; 27:13; cf. Zech. 14:3ff), in the land of Judah (26:1), is identical with the period during which the hostile powers will be imprisoned until they will be judged (24:22). In the day when Yahweh will come out of his place, in order to judge the ungodly world (24:1ff; 26:1a), his dead, the just ones, will rise from the dead (26:19.21b) and participate in the reign of Yahweh on Zion (compare with the *elders* in 24:23) whereas his enemies will be visited, i. e. judged (24:21; 26:21a; 27:1 etc.) and their dead will not rise in order to participate in the kingdom (26:14; cf. 14:20-21), they will rather have to wait until the final judgement (24:22).

In a **second step** we try to show that the prophetic-telescopic view of the intermediate messianic kingdom and the final state as one, shows that the assumption of contradictions within the Apocalypse of Isaiah and/or between the Isaianic Apocalypse and other parts of the Book of Isaiah or other books of the Old and the New Testament is unnecessary: (1) While 24:6.13 (cf. 25:3) suggest that some people will survive the world-judgement, the ending verses of the first section of the Apocalypse (24:19-20) predict the complete destruction and end of the world. While some critics consider 24:19-20 to be an exaggeration, others assume that either 24:20 or the whole passage 24:16b-20 is the work of another author. We rather suggest that these passages refer to two different events: 24:1ff to the judgement which will precede the messianic kingdom and 24:19-20 to the end of this universe, after the messianic kingdom. The interval between the two judgements would then correspond to the period that separates the imprisonment and the judgement of the hostile powers to which is alluded to in 24:22 by the expression *after many days*. (2) While 25:8a predicts that Yahweh will swallow death for ever *on that day* (25:9), 27:4 suggests that in the future kingdom, when Israel will be restored (see the expressions *on that day* in 27:2 and *in the coming [days]* in 27:6), war and destruction are still reality. We suggest the same solution as we assume for the related passage 65:17-25 where in verse 17 *new heavens* and a *new earth* are predicted but *Jerusalem* in verses 18-19 is not (yet) characterised by the word *new*. This is however the case in Rev. 21:1-2. We conclude that 65:18-25 alludes to an intermediate messianic kingdom analogously with 27:2ff. If this be so, then the promise of the destruction of death in 25:8a may know a partial fulfilment by patriarchal age of those who will survive the universal judgement and then enter into the messianic kingdom and a first accomplishment by the resurrection of the just (26:19.21b) who will be in the presence of Yahweh when he reigns on Zion (24:23). In relation to this point we mention some other examples which show that sometimes a prophecy may experience more than one accomplishment or it is fulfilled in two or even more stages.

(3) While 26:19 announces that the dead who are just will rise, 26:14 expresses that the wicked dead will not rise. They are destroyed. Does this contradict the prediction of the end of death in 25:8a as some interpreters consider? Furthermore does 26:14 not suggest the contrary of what is foretold in passages as for example Dan. 12:2; John 5:29; Act. 24:15 and 1 Cor. 15:21ff (where the resurrection of the just and of the wicked is alluded to)? We suggest that the related passage 14:9-21 may help to explain this alleged contradiction. The declaration in 26:14, according to which the (wicked) dead will not rise and the memory of them will be wiped out, must not absolutely exclude their resurrection but it rather means that they will not rise from the dead in order to intervene again on that earth. This interpretation is supported by the analogous words in 14:21: the sons of the king of Babylon should be killed so that they will not rise again in order to conquer the world and fill it with their cities. It is said that they will not be able to rise from sheol in order to intervene again on this earth, but not that they are annihilated. 14:9ff shows that the wicked dead do not stop to exist. In fact this passage may well give an insight on the fate of the imprisoned hostile kings in 24:21-22 who are waiting in the dungeon to be judged. The announcement of their visitation *after many days* in 24:22 may indirectly point to their resurrection.

In a **third step** we show that the New Testament teaches clearly two resurrections. We suggest that Rev. 20 and 1 Cor. 15:22-28 plead for an intermediate earthly kingdom between the two resurrections and we explain that the prophets of the Old Testament did not yet strictly distinguish between the earthly messianic kingdom and eternity. This is illustrated by some passages in which the biblical writers predict two or more events in one breath but which have been (or will be) fulfilled in different epochs.

In a **fourth step** we analyse the various parallels between the Apocalypse of Isaiah and the Apocalypse of St. John. In a short **fifth step** we suggest that the parallels between the two Apocalypses may favour the chiliastic interpretation of Rev. 20.

The **sixth step** contains theological and christological considerations. We believe that Yahweh, who reigns in Zion in 24:23; 25:6-10a; 27:13, is identical with Christ. We try to argue for this interpretation by alluding to 6:1ff and John 12:38-41 as well as to 4:2-6; 9:1ff; 11:1ff and other passages. We show that in various passages in the Old Testament the name Yahweh is attributed to the Angel of the Lord whom we believe to be identical with the eternal Son of God who appeared to several persons in the Old Testament and who preceded Israel on the occasion of the exodus out of Egypt. We believe that Yahweh, who comes out of his place to judge in 26:21 and then reigns on Zion (24:23), is identical with Yahweh who comes out and puts his feet on the Mount of Olives (Zech. 14:3ff; cf. Act. 1:9-12) in order to reign in Jerusalem over the whole earth (Zech. 14:9). We insist on this point because many scholars claim that the Messiah is absent in the Apocalypse of Isaiah and avoid to envisage the possibility of an earthly messianic kingdom whereas we believe that the above mentioned alleged tensions and/or contradictions can only really be answered if an intermediate kingdom is taken into consideration. In a last point we try to show that the central theme of the Messiah in the whole Book of Isaiah seems to favour this christological and eschatological interpretation. To finish, we suggest that whereas the first part of the Book of Isaiah (chap. 1—39) contains the announcement of the resurrection of the just (26:19.21), the second part (chap. 40—55) contains the prediction of the death and the resurrection of the Messiah (53:7-12) and — maybe — 66:24 in the third part of the Book (chap. 56—66) alludes to the resurrection of the wicked.