ways.[45] The main thrust of the exclamation is clear. The Lord was involved in her bearing a son. True, her husband had "known" her, and she had conceived and brought forth a son. But the Lord had brought it to pass. Motherhood and offspring were a reality. The Lord was fulfilling his word. For Adam and Eve the first step of restoration had been taken; this set the stage for further realization of the hope that had been proclaimed to them.

The Messianic Character of Genesis 1–4

In what sense can Genesis 1–4 be considered to have a messianic character?[46]

At this point, reference must be made to a previous discussion about the wider and narrower views of the messianic concept.[47] If the narrower messianic view, which refers directly to a royal person who has a specifically political mission, is to be considered the only valid view, the passage under study cannot be considered messianic. If the wider view of the messianic concept, which contains the royal as well as the prophetic and priestly offices, is the correct one, this view refers to one, some, or all of the following: a royal person, characteristics identifying the person, the task,[48] the sphere to be influenced, and the final goal to be realized. In this study the task to be performed is to include, in fact, to center on, the atonement for sin which is to be made on behalf of others. That is to say, satisfaction to be made by a substitute is an integral aspect of the messianic concept.

A study of Genesis 1–4 renders unavoidable the conclusion that there

45. In the Hebrew text (*gānôtî 'îš 'et-yhwh*), *'èt*, which signifies the accusative case (or direct object; cf. KoB, p. 99), could invite the following reading: "a man, i.e., the Lord." Commentators opt for "with the Lord" or add "with the help of the Lord" (cf. NIV, RSV); the KJV reads "from the Lord."

46. Among those who do not consider Gen. 3:15 messianic in any sense are Mowinckel, Westermann, Driver, Simpson, and Jacob. Walter Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, trans. J. A Baker, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1967), vol. 2, chaps. 15–16, does not discuss that pivotal passage either. It is interesting to note that those who strongly reject Gen. 3:15 as messianic tend to omit the substitutionary and satisfaction aspects of the atonement.

47. See chap. 1.

48. The purpose or task of the Messiah continues to be a matter of discussion among conservative writers. As a rule, the initial task, or dimension of the overall task, is seen as making atonement for sin specifically. There is no debate on the issue that the Messiah came to die to remove sin and guilt and to satisfy the wrath of God against sin.

There is much difference in the views concerning the Messiah's task in regard to: (1) the time and manner of the restoration of the kingdom; (2) the establishment of the New Testament church and its relationship to the kingdom; (3) the ramifications of the Messiah's work for the present age, particularly in regard to the great social issues; and (4) the participation of the Jews as a nation in the Messiah's work in the future.

A somewhat recent work which has presented variations on the Messiah's task is H. Verweij, *De komende Messias—Wereld en Welzijn in Profetisch Perspectief* (Kampen: Kok, 1971). Verweij distinguishes between three specific messianic tasks: (1) atonement for sin; (2) establishment of the church in which messianic grace reigns; and (3) theocratic righteousness in which all nations can participate, even those who do not know the Messiah's atonement and founding of his church. The Jews particularly are singled out as benefiting from the Messiah's work of enacting righteousness, as well as the so-called noble pagans.

is no direct reference to a single royal person whose task has been delineated in detail. There is, however, reference to the seed of the fallen royal agents. There is no indication whether this seed is to be considered singular or plural.[49] Eve understood it as the former, but she was incorrect in assuming the first of her offspring was to be the one to fulfill the promise. At any rate, the stage is set for a royal person to come forth.

There is a reference to the task that is to be performed. It will require dominance over the tempter and power to crush him. Here the royal aspect of the Messiah is presented and, more specifically, the task is understood as having consequences for others, that is, the substitutionary aspect is present. The goal held before the fallen royal couple is victory over the one(s) causing their fall and the real possibility of a reversal in their situation that will result in restoration to their full royal status, position, and function.

By way of summary, the messianic aspects of Genesis 3:15 are: (1) an agent arising from a "royal" source; (2) a task performed which demands sovereign and royal authority and power; (3) a substitutionary victory to be gained on behalf of others; and (4) the setting of the stage for the full restoration of the fallen royal image-bearers of God to their original status, position, and service.

The Eschatological Perspective of Genesis 3

The messianic aspects referred to above carry a definite forward-looking motif. The messianic task will be executed; there will be an agent. There will be a time when the crushing of the tempter and its consequences will take place. Positing these factors is to say that there is an eschatological perspective presented in Genesis 3. Nothing definite is said in regard to a time framework; the details of the means to be employed are not even hinted at; the place where the task is to be carried out is not mentioned; who specifically will benefit from the messianic work is not clarified; and the involvement of the messianic work with the cosmos under curse is not specified.

In our conclusion we must stress three facts. First of all, there are prophetic utterances included in the passage.[50] The message given to Adam and Eve was for them, then and there. But the message spoke also of the future: there was prediction and foretelling. What had not yet been realized would surely become a historical reality.

Second, the stage is set for the unfolding of the messianic task, that is to say, from this point onward there is to be a development of an eschatological perspective. The fact that there is to be a conflict, that there is to

49. Cf. Calvin, *Commentary on Genesis*, 1:170.
50. Cf. our discussion of prophecy in chap. 2.

be an eventual complete crushing of the tempter, and that there is to be the possibility of a reversal on the part of the royal couple are essential ingredients in the stage. More information is required for a fuller understanding of the plan of God which is to be unfolded in the future. Indeed, much more is necessary for the formulation of eschatology.

Third, to think of eschatology is to think of the messianic task. Biblical messianism and eschatology are inseparable. The seed of the woman will determine the full dimensions of the restored fellowship between the sovereign Lord and his vicegerents. It will determine the future of mankind's status, position, and function in the cosmos, and because of that, a future for the cosmos as well.