

OLD TESTAMENT BIBLICAL LITERACY

Lesson 41

Isaiah – Part Three Messianic Prophecies

I. Background

Isaiah belongs in the Hebrew book of "Prophets." Isaiah himself was a prophet, sometimes called "The Prince of Prophets." Isaiah's ministry began in "the year King Uzziah died" (Is. 6:1), which we can date to 740 B.C. His ministry lasted through at least 681 B.C., according to events described in Isaiah (the death of Sennacherib).

A great deal of Isaiah's prophecies occurred during the reign of Hezekiah. Frequently, King Hezekiah sought counsel and the word of the Lord from Isaiah. The book of Isaiah contains prophecies that extend to the Babylonian captivity. Although the captivity occurred after the death of Isaiah, Isaiah prophesied this captivity during the reign of Hezekiah (2 Ki. 20:16ff).

Biblical prophesy often has multiple layers of application. There are frequently immediate or impending events discussed in ways that often apply a second time to the times of Christ. Many times, these same prophecies will also have application to the end times as well. In this vein, prophecies sometimes follow themes as well as specific turns of events. Isaiah itself delivers a great number of prophecies that are "messianic" (concerning the life and times of Jesus the Messiah), including many of the most well known. Those prophecies will be the emphasis of this third and final class on Isaiah.

II. Messianic Prophecies

A. Isaiah 2–4

There are assorted Messianic prophecies throughout Isaiah. In Isaiah 2–4, there is talk about the "last days," a phrase that references the times that began with the coming of the Messiah. These passages reference a time when Jesus has already come in the incarnation. Similarly, there are passages in Isaiah (including chapter 4) where the "branch of the Lord" is referenced. This is typically seen as a Messianic title of Jesus.

B. *Isaiah 7*

Isaiah 7 contains the well known Messianic passage about Jesus and his birth. This chapter was covered in class in an earlier lesson but bears inclusion here as well. Verse 14 says,

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with a child and give birth to a son, and he will call him Immanuel.

This passage is seen fulfilled in Christ and is quoted by the apostle Matthew in Mat. 1:22-23.

C. *Isaiah 9*

Isaiah 9 is again a strong prophesy that found fulfillment in the birth of Christ. Verses 6 and 7 note:

⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of the government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.

Of course, not only does this prophesy resonate with countless New Testament references to Jesus, but it also serves as the basis for Handel's Messiah as well.

D. *Isaiah 11*

In Isaiah 11, we once again see references to the Messiah as a "branch." Verses 1-3 read:

¹A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a branch will bear fruit. ²The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD – ³and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

Although these passages are not quoted verbatim in the New Testament, there are many places where the language or content of these prophetic passages find fulfillment in Jesus.

As we continue through Isaiah 11, the chapter also references the time when Jesus' kingdom is fully and finally made whole (the second coming). Verse 6 notes great safety and security then when saying:

The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them.

This passage continues in verse 10 noting:

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.

Paul chose this passage to reference in Romans 15:12 where Paul writes, "And again, Isaiah says, 'The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.'"

E. Isaiah 22

Some passages echo thoughts and themes consistent with fulfillment in Messianic terms, although not exclusively relegated to the Messiah. For example, in Isaiah 22:2-22, we read about God summoning Eliakim son of Hilkiah. Yet, the summoning of Eliakim has references that are seen in the New Testament as part of Jesus and his kingdom. In Isaiah verses 21-22, we read:

²¹He will be a father to those who live in Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. ²²I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts, no one can open.

In the letter to the church in Philadelphia recorded in Revelation 3:7, Jesus is referenced as the one who is "holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open." These keys to the kingdom are also echoed in the

words of Jesus in Matthew 16:19 as given to Peter for use. Peter, of course, uses the keys to open the "church" at Pentecost as recorded in the early chapters of Acts.

F. Isaiah 25

Isaiah 25 is not a typical chapter pulled out for strong Messianic scriptures. Two items, however, are worth noting in the course of biblical literacy. First, Paul uses language from verse 8 to talk about death in light of our salvation and victory in Christ. Isaiah writes, "he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign *LORD* will wipe away the tears from all faces." Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15:54-56, "Death has been swallowed up in victory....He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." A second biblical literacy note for Isaiah 25 is the opinion of some that Bob Dylan took the key to his song "Shelter from the Storm" from Isaiah 25:4!

G. Isaiah 29

Isaiah 29:18 prophesies about a day beyond the Assyrian domination when Israel will be restored. That will be a day when "the deaf will hear" and "the blind will see." When messengers of John the Baptist asked Jesus whether Jesus was the Messiah, the message Jesus sent back hearkened to the words of Isaiah. Jesus told the messengers to tell John that the blind were seeing and the deaf were hearing (Mt 11:5; Lk 7:22).

H. Isaiah 32

Isaiah 32 again foretells of a coming time of righteousness for Israel which clearly would carry import as a reflection and prophesy of the Messianic age and kingdom. The passage begins with "See, a king will reign in righteousness" (32:1). This is a time when "the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed and the ears of those who hear will listen" (32:3). The Spirit will be "poured upon us from on high" and blessing will reign (32:15ff). Isaiah then adds the coming judgment upon the nations stating God's wrath will be poured out as "all the stars of heaven will be dissolved and the sky rolled up like a scroll" (34:4).

Christ himself declares about his second coming that it will accompany the time where "the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken" (Mt 13:25). This will be a time of

joy for the Redeemed of God. In fact, people “will see the glory of the LORD” (35:2), will be told “Be strong, do not fear” (35:4) and “the eyes of the blind will be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped” the “lame will leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy” (35:5-6). These phrases are echoed not only in the words of Jesus and his disciples but in the deeds recounted in the life of Christ as well.

I. *Isaiah 40*

As noted in earlier lessons, Isaiah 40 is loaded with prophetic pronouncements about the Messiah’s coming and the comfort the Messiah would usher in to his people. This passage is where comfort is offered because the people’s “sin has been paid for” (40:2). The references to the ministry of John the Baptist as the precursor to the Messiah are set out as a prophesy of, “a voice of one calling: ‘In the desert prepare the way for the LORD’” (40:3). This is referenced in Matthew (3:3), Luke (3:4), and John 1:23. This will be a time where the Lord “tends his flock like a shepherd” and “gathers the lambs in his arms” (40:11). For this reason, the people were encouraged to wait patiently because:

*Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not
grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (40:31)*

J. *The Servant Songs*

Isaiah also contains four “servant songs.” These are four passages of poetry that speak of the “Servant” of the Lord. The servant in each of these songs is clearly Jesus, the Messiah.

1. Isaiah 42

Isaiah 42:1-4 sets out the first Servant Song. It begins:

¹Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. ²He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. ³A bruised reed he will not break and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice; ⁴he will not falter or be discouraged till he establishes justice on earth.

Matthew quotes this passage extensively in Matthew 12:15-21. Matthew does so when referencing that Jesus was healing even on the Sabbath. As Jesus healed many, he would withdraw for service and ministry instead of trumpeting his achievements in the street.

2. Isaiah 49

Isaiah 49:1-6 is the second Servant Song. The song references the Servant as called by the LORD before the Servant's birth (49:1). God has made the Servant's "mouth like a sharpened sword" (49:2). This image is sustained in the vision John had recorded in Revelation. Rev 1:16 records John seeing Jesus who "in his right hand held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword." Isaiah says this Servant will not only "restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept" but he will also be "a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth" (49:6).

3. Isaiah 50

Isaiah 50:4-9 has the third Servant Song. Here, the Servant is described as one who listens to the voice of God and offers instruction to the people. The Servant has "the word that sustains the weary" (50:4). The Servant is one who does not rebel against God, even as he suffers at the hands of man. "I have not been rebellious ...I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting" (50:5-6). Isaiah does add that the Servant would receive ultimate vindication from God. These prophecies clearly found fulfillment in Jesus, including the vindication as explained in 1 Timothy 3:16 (Jesus "appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit").

4. Isaiah 52-53

Isaiah 52:13-53:12 is the fourth and longest Servant Song. This song is five stanzas with three verses in each stanza. It is the most quoted Old Testament passage in the New Testament. The song is also frequently called the "gospel in the Old Testament." Because of its length, it is not fully reproduced here. It should be opened and read in conjunction with this study. Some of the noteworthy parts of the song are reproduced here in italics with the New Testament references in normal type:

* *the “servant will act wisely” and “will be raised and lifted up and highly exalted”*

Acts 2:33, 3:13; Eph 1:20-23; Philippians 2:9

* *“there were many who were appalled at him”*

* *“He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him”*

* *“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering”*

Mt 16:21; Heb 5:8; Lk 18:31-33

* *“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God”*

Mt 8:17

* *“he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed”*

1 Pet. 2:24-25

* *“we all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way”*

1 Pet. 2:24-25

* *“the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all”*

* *“he was oppressed and afflicted yet did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter”*

Mt27:12-14; Mk 14:60-961; 15:4-5; Jn 19:8-9; 1 Pet. 2:24-25

* *“as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth”*

1 Pet. 2:24-25

* *“by oppression and judgment he was taken away”*

Acts 8:32-33

- * *“he was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth”*

I Pet. 2:22; Lk 20:50-53

- * *“he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors”*

Mk 15:27; Lk 22:37

III. Points for Home

- A. Isaiah, what a book!
- B. Jesus, what a Savior!
- C. Yahweh, what a God!
- D. Life is going to be alright.