

Isaiah's Messianic Message

As a whole, the prophets point to Jesus Christ (Acts 3:24). Yet with all of the messianic messages throughout the prophets, there is a reason Isaiah is known for being a messianic prophet. His

work is filled with strong messages and prophecies of the coming Messiah. As one put it, "Some of the most explicit messianic prophecies are found in Isaiah, and the New Testament quotes from Isaiah frequently."* While Isaiah is often seen as divided into two or even three parts, there is a unifying message throughout and the New Testament attributes all of the parts to Isaiah.

The first 39 chapters are addressing Isaiah's contemporaries mostly. He is warning Judah, especially, of failing to trust in God. Given that Isaiah spanned the time in which Israel (the northern kingdom) was destroyed and taken captive by the Assyrians (ca. 722/1 B.C.), Isaiah was able to point to the sins of the north and warn the south (Judah) that if they followed that same path, they would wind up in the same situation. Sadly, that is exactly what happened.

From chapter 40 to the end, Isaiah looks ahead and speaks to those who would later be in Babylonian exile and beyond. While chapters 1-39 contain many messianic promises, chapters 40-66 especially point ahead to the restoration



that would be found in Christ. Following is a brief overview, as it would be impossible here to detail all of the messianic pictures and prophecies in Isaiah.

Early on, Isaiah speaks to the character of the

kingdom under the Messiah. Isaiah 2:2-4 promised the establishment of the "mountain of the house of the Lord" (i.e., God's government or kingdom) as something to which all nations would flow (a promise that looked to the gentiles joining with the Jews under Christ). The law would go forth from Jerusalem (cf. Acts 1:8) and the character of those entering would be one of peace, not warfare (cf. also Isa. 11:6-10).

In the context of Isaiah telling Ahaz to trust Yahweh, the prophecy was made in 7:14 of the virgin who would bear a son called "Immanuel" (God with us). Matthew quoted this as being finally fulfilled in Jesus (Matt. 1:23). Then, 9:6-7 speaks of the child that would be born as being "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." He would sit on the throne of David to rule over His kingdom in justice and righteousness (cf. Isa. 16:5).

Later, in addressing Babylonian captives, Isaiah spoke of the "voice" that would be calling, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness..." (40:3-6). Matthew quoted this as a reference to John the Immerser,

who would precede Jesus and prepare the way for Jesus to do His work. It is interesting that in these chapters of Isaiah, the prophet contrasts Yahweh as the true and living God with the idols that could do nothing. Clearly, if salvation were to be accomplished, it had to come from the one and only living God who could make it happen.

Isaiah 53 contains one of the clearest prophecies of the agony of the Messiah, who was known as the suffering Servant. Here we learn that there was nothing about His appearance that would draw people to Him (i.e., He likely looked like an average Jew). He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He bore our sorrows, carried our iniquities, and was pierced and crushed for our transgressions. By His scourging, we are healed. We have all been like sheep going astray, but He was willing to have our iniquities fall on Him. He was like a lamb led to the slaughter. Yet God was satisfied with His sacrifice. “By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities” (vs. 11). What a powerful testimony to the purpose of Jesus coming to die for our sins! Only by God’s inspiration could Isaiah have known that many years in advance what the Messiah, the suffering Servant, would one day go through so that He might intercede on behalf of sinners.

Isaiah 61 also points to the work of the Messiah’s message:

“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
Because the Lord has anointed me
To bring good news to the afflicted;
He has sent me to bind up the

brokenhearted,
To proclaim liberty to captives
And freedom to prisoners;
To proclaim the favorable year of the
Lord...” (Isa. 61:1-2a).

This is the passage that Jesus quoted about Himself in Luke 4:18-19 as He began His public ministry. As everyone watched and listened, Jesus said of this passage, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (vs. 21). Indeed, Isaiah’s messianic messages are all fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

While Isaiah issued strong condemnation against those who refused to repent of their idolatry, mere ritualism, and social injustices, he was also clear in the message about the future: the Messiah is coming and will restore the people back to Yahweh. Today, as Christians, we are participants in this fulfillment and restoration. God be praised!

Doy Moyer

*Daniel Hays, *The Message of the Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010), 100.