

Isaiah

Week 3 - Messiah, Anonymous Servant & Chs. 17-39

Messiah¹

What is known of the 'anointed one'² was only slowly revealed.

The early references do not specify that they refer to a single character--the Messiah.

Rather, we infer that earlier prophecies are messianic by comparing them with later clearly messianic prophecies that make the same claim(s).

Consider the following chronologically arranged revelations about Messiah:

- ◆ References to Messiah in the Pentateuch
 - He will defeat Satan - (Gen.3:15)³
 - He will be God living with the Hebrews - (Gen.9:27)⁴
 - He will bless all peoples - (Gen.12:3; 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; and 28:14)⁵
 - He will come from Judah and will rule - (c.f. Gen. 49:8-10; Ez.21:27, 32).⁶
 - He will triumph over all nations - (Num.24:15-19)⁷
 - He will be a prophet - (Deut.18:15, 18)⁸
- ◆ References to Messiah through the Davidic Period
 - He will be a king - 1Sam.2:1-10; Hanna's prayer; this is a reference to a king during the time of the judges. No king but messiah would fit the claims she's making (e.g. exaltation & strengthening) b/c this was a conditional promise to David (many years later).
 - He will be a priest - 1 Sam.2:27-36
 - He will be a king from David's lineage - 2Sam.7 (Lk.1:32b-33)
- ◆ References to Messiah in Psalms
 - He will be a conquering king and a ruling Messiah - Ps.110, 2
 - He will be rejected - Ps.118:22
 - He will be betrayed - Ps.69:21, 109:25

¹ I will not, in every case, show why each of these is believed to be a direct messianic prophecy. For further information about his area read, Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, Zondervan, 1995. I have borrowed extensively from his book for these notes.

² The Hebrew expression for an anointed person is translated 'messiah'. The Greek equivalent term is translated 'Christ'. Thus, Christ is the title Christians gave to Jesus, not Jesus last name.

³ A battle will ensue between Satan and a male offspring of Eve's which that offspring will win, though not without cost; "seed" is a collective singular form, allowing it to serve for an entire race as well as an individual within that race; the suffix for "heel" is singular, thus "his heel" and thus the translation of *hu* as a singular masculine pronoun, "he will crush..."; the LXX translators understood this to refer to a single male individual; the Targum understand this passage to be messianic and finally, Eve herself (Gen.4:1) explained Cain as "I have gotten a man, even the Lord" (see Kaiser, p.42)

⁴ Ibid; God will tabernacle with the Shemites (Semites, esp. Hebrews). This is not a slam dunk interpretation. Many scholars argue that 'he' is Japheth rather than God. However, Kaiser argues that 1. Since God is the subject in the first line, he continues to be the subject in the next line and so 'he' is God; 2. Ancient Hebrew commentaries saw 'he' as referring to God (e.g. the Targums & the Book of Jubilees) and 3. the term translated 'dwell' is *shekinah* the term used for the presence of God in the pillar of cloud/fire & filling the tabernacle w/ smoke, etc.

⁵ The verb form argues that, 'Israel is how he will bless' *niphil* is the passive verb form used in all five passages in the Samaritan version, the Babylonian and Jerusalem Targum, this form carries the notion that Israel would be a means by which God would bless the nations; the word, "seed(s)" is a collective noun with group and individual aspects, see Gal.3:16; Abraham's offspring (plural and singular) will be a vehicle through which God will bless all people

⁶ It would be through Abraham's great-grandson Judah that Israelite kings would arise until, "he to whom the rule rightfully belongs comes"; Shiloh is most likely a transliteration of a word *seloh*, *se* from *aser* "which" "whose"; *lo* "belonging to" and *oh* "him"; this is how the LXX and the Babylonian Targum interpret it; in fact both Targums translate it, "until (king) Messiah comes"

⁷ A male Israelite would arise who would triumph over Moab, Edom and the rest of the world; This cannot be referring to David's conquering b/c it's repeated by Jeremiah (48-49) although, for the present, it's not clear who the Edomites are any more; If sons of Sheth = sons of Seth, Then all peoples are intended, since Noah descended from Seth and all humanity from Noah.

⁸ A prophet, like Moses, would arise one day; Moses spoke with God face to face (Nu.12:6-8)

- He will die and be resurrected - Ps.22:15,20; Ps.16:10
- He will be triumphant - Ps.68, 72
- ◆ References to Messiah by 9th and 8th century prophets
 - He will be a teacher - Joel 2:23
 - He will be a second David - Hosea 3:4—5
 - He will be the resurrected house of David - Micah 2:12-13
 - He will be a coming ruler - Micah 5:1-4
- ◆ The Messiah in Isaiah
 - The Messiah will be a God/man ruler
 - ⇒ 4:2--The Branch is a man, the Davidic messiah, a servant and God.⁹
 - ⇒ 7:10-15--God with us will be born of the virgin.¹⁰
 - ⇒ 9:1-7--A God/man will be born to rule the world.¹¹
 - ⇒ 11:1-16--The son of Jesse will have a world wide reign at a time and in a manner which has not yet come to pass.
 - ⇒ 24:21-25--Clearly eschatological but there's an oblique reference to Messiah in verse 23.¹²
 - ⇒ 28:16--Tested, precious and the cornerstone

The Anonymous Servant

In many cases God's servant is Israel (41:8-10; 44:1-3, 21; 45:4) and in a few cases Cyrus, but it is also clear that the servant is an individual with a mission to Israel and the world (42:1-4; 49:1-7 and see the explanation for 52-53 below).

These passages are known as the anonymous servant passages or the Servant Songs (42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12).

That the servant is also the Messiah is supported by the mission of the servant - to be an atoning sacrifice (Heb.9:11-10:18).

However, it is important to realize that the nature and mission of the servant was not intended by God to be clear at this time (1Pet.1:10-12; 1Cor.2:6-9).

- ◆ 49:1; 53:2,3, 8 - He is a man
 - There's no evidence that 49:1 is a personification or anthropomorphism; he is contrasted with Israel in 53:2,3 and in v.8 he dies, something that never happens to Israel
- ◆ 42:1-7/49:1-7--His manner will be meek; he will establish his law over the whole earth and will be a light for the Gentiles.
- ◆ 50:4-9--He will be scorned and rejected.
- ◆ 52:13-53:12--He will be an atonement for sin. This cannot be Israel because:
 - Isaiah 52 uses a singular personal pronoun;
 - 53:8 "my people" would have Israel speaking to Israel;
 - 53:9 claims his character is diametric to Israel's character described in chapter 29;
 - 53:10 *asham* is a flawless guilt offering which could never be said of Israel¹³

⁹ Jeremiah 23:5-6 refers to the *branch of David*; Zechariah 3:8 refers to *my servant, the branch*; Zechariah 6:12 indicates the branch is a man and Isaiah 4:2 claims the branch is of the Lord, thus emphasizing his deity. Who else can forgive sin (Isa.2:5-4:1; 4:3-4)

¹⁰ Kaiser identifies the near reference with Hezekiah. It seems, though, that the text itself argues most strongly for identification with Maher-shalal-hash-baz (i.e. 1. immediately after the prophecy the "sign" points toward is the call for witnesses concerning the naming of the child; 2. Isaiah "draws near" the prophetess an expression used for first sexual contact btw. a man and his *alma*; 3. the theology of the *alma* sign concerns YHWH's sovereignty over the nations which the name Maher-shalal-hash-baz also signifies; 4. The prophecy of the sign is expanded upon right through the prophecy of the *messiah* strongly arguing that the *messiah* will 'fill-to-overflowing' the sign of the *alma* - namely God's sovereignty expressed through the sign).

¹¹ That the child is born and is of David indicate his human qualities whilst most of his titles indicate his deity; *pele'* = wonderful, one who does difficult or miraculous things; the names *Mighty God* and *Everlasting Father* clinch the deity of this character

¹² Chapters 24-27 are explicitly apocalyptic; the claim that the *Lord Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously*, v.23 must be the messiah b/c Isa.2:1-4 and Micah 4:1-4 which clearly portray the Messiah doing this.

- Only God can forgive sin 43:25; Mk.2:7; Lk.5:21
- Targum Johnathan (the Jerusalem Targum), the Talmud, the Midrash view and all available rabbinic literature until 500 A.D. claim this passage refers to the Messiah, as well
 - ◆ 53:10 - He is raised from the dead.
 - ◆ 49:7; 52:15; 53:12 - He is glorified

An Overview of Chapters 17-39

- ◆ Major themes
 - ◊ The foolishness of depending on any but God
 - ◊ Retributive justice and discipline
 - ◊ The apocalypse
 - ◊ The future time of God's rule
- ◆ Selected textual notes
 - ◊ God is the judge of all nations (continued)
 - Syria and Israel 17:1-11
 - Reprise: God is the judge of all nations (17:12-18:7)
 - Egypt 19:1-20:6
 - Reprise: God's judgment upon Babylon and her allies (21:1-17)
 - God's judgment of Jerusalem (22:1-25)
 - God's judgment of Tyre (23:1-18)
 - God is triumphant over the nations for his people (24:1-27:13)

The Babylonian creation epic includes an account of Marduk killing the sea monster Tiamat;
 Ugarit literature has a similar story of a sea monster, Lotan;
 Hittite writings have a similar story too.
 Apparently, what was common to each account is that this sea serpent created chaos and was constantly in opposition to those gods that created order.
 Biblically, the myth was picked up, not to vindicate it but to show God was sovereign over chaotic events (Ps.74; Job 41).

- So, it is foolish to trust the nations (28:1-34:4)
 In Isaiah 30:18-21 The translation "teachers" or "teacher" are both possible but the translators of the NASB and the NNAS as well as Motyer (i.e. *The Prophecy of Isaiah*, p.250) believe the best translation is singular with the implication that the teacher is YHWH.
 Motyer's argument is that the grammar of the passage permits it and the poetic parallelism of the passage forces the conclusion that it refers to YHWH because it sets the blessing against the discipline of God - *YHWH disciplines now but one day YHWH will be your teacher.*
 Inductive study of Isaiah 32
- Edom (34:5-35:10)
 - ◊ A case study: Hezekiah's faith in God (36:1-39:8)
 Sennacherib's Annals do not recount the horrible defeat described in 37:36 but what they do say is interesting - that he shut Hezekiah up like a bird in a cage.

¹³ Some argue that the servant is a righteous remnant of Israel. Consider, however, that in most (3/5) of the servant passages where Israel is clearly the servant, the passage ends with God saying he himself would redeem Israel from their sins.

If the unrighteous go to *sheol*

Then it's the righteous who are redeemed by YHWH from bondage.

If so, then how can Israel (i.e. even a righteous remnant of Israel) be the servant/redeemer described in the anonymous servant sections (i.e. they are the ones being redeemed).

Also, in Isaiah 53, it's hard to grant that Israel or even a righteous portion of Israel could ever be described as a guilt offering - an *asham*.

This confirms he did not take Jerusalem which is a very odd military decision in light of the devastating attacks he leveled against other cities and against Egypt.

Also, though the plague is different¹⁴, the historian Herodotus tells that the army was plagued and thus Assyria had to withdraw.

It seems likely that the effect of the retreating shadow was due to some localized refraction of light (2Chr.32:31) than reversal of the earth's spin.

Merodach-baladan rebelled against Assyria from 721-710 under Sargon, from 705-703 under Sennacherib and continued to foment rebellion in Elam thereafter. It's likely that his visit to Hezekiah was in 712/711.

See 2 Chr. 32:31. Hezekiah still had the seed of trust in humans.

HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

- ◆ Read and annotate chapters 40-55
- ◆ Memorize at least one of the following passages: 40:27-31; 46:9-10; 55:11
- ◆ Prepare responses to the following questions:
 1. How might God's references to himself as *Maker* relate to idolatry?
 2. How does Hezekiah's character speak to your character?
 3. Prepare an inductive study of the oracle(s) of Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

¹⁴ In Herodotus, the plague was mice which ate all their bow strings; some see this as suggestive of bubonic or pneumonic plague.