



Portraits of Messiah in Isaiah

Study One

Majestic in His Person & Nature!

Dr. Deane J. Woods

Introduction

To visit the Himalayas and view Mt. Everest, is a life-changing experience. Towering above surrounding mountain peaks exceeding 8,000 metres, this highest mountain in the world stands majestically above its peers at 8,848 metres (29,029 feet).

This tallest of all mountains beckons awe-inspired tourists and challenges would-be climbers to scale its snow-covered slopes and enjoy life-changing experiences in the process.



Mt Everest

Acknowledgement of source:

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/mount_everest
Himalayas MT HTTP Human and Natural Com Data Media 8

The book of Isaiah has been rightly called "The Mount Everest of Hebrew Prophecy". This is justified because:

First, the book of Isaiah can be compared to the whole Bible, as will be outlined later in this study. Secondly, when one considers that of the 365 "messianic" prophecies in Old Testament, 131 of these are found in the book of Isaiah (see *Messianic Prophecies*, Bibleprobe.com, *ad loc.*). That's 35.9%, or over a third in the whole Jewish Scriptures. Thirdly, Isaiah is called the "Messianic Prophet". Only the Psalms have more "messianic" material than Isaiah. Fourthly, his book is quoted or referred to more times in the New Testament than any other Old Testament

prophet. The count is usually given as "85". Fifthly, Isaiah is often considered the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. He prophesied during the reigns of five kings of Judah - Uzziah (790 – 739 B.C.), Jotham (739 – 731 B.C.), Ahaz (731 – 715 B.C.), Hezekiah (715 – 686 B.C.), and Manasseh (686 – 642). Sixthly, Jesus specifically said that Isaiah saw the glory of Christ and "spoke of (Him)" in John 12:41. Seventhly, it is believed that his father, Amoz, was the brother of king Amaziah of Judah. If this was so, then Isaiah was of regal seed and explained how he had access to the royal courts of his day. Eighthly, he wrote other books that have not been preserved in Scripture. These were, "The life of Uzziah" (2 Chron. 26:22) and "a book of the kings of Israel and Judah" (2 Chron. 32:32). Ninthly, a copy of the book of Isaiah was found in Cave One among the famous Dead Sea Scrolls discovered in 1947. It has been shown to have been copied in the second century B.C., and consisted of seventeen sheets, 7.32 metres (twenty-four feet) in length by 25.5 centimetres (10 inches) high with 54 columns of text. This copy is virtually the same as the standard masoretic text of the ninth century A.D. Tenthly, Isaiah was married and had two sons, both of whose names were prophetically significant in Israel's history and played an important part in the discussion concerning the birth of Messiah. We shall discuss this phenomenon in more detail later in this investigation.

Single Objective!

The writer's goal in this present series is to show that just as the physical "Mt. Everest" has attracted the world's attention for centuries, so the "Portraits of The Messiah in Isaiah" continue to demand similar attraction and application, spiritually, for all readers - Jewish and Gentile, alike.

This first article of this new series of Bible studies shares what this prophet who worshipped and served the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob was inspired to write in regard to the Messiah. He made mention also of another "messiah" whom God would raise up to accomplish His eternal purposes. That person, historically, was Cyrus (Is. 45:1-6ff). He was the pagan Persian Leader whom God would sovereignly choose to effect the return of His people to the Land. It will be recalled that they were exiled in Babylon for seventy years because of their sins. In the general sense of meaning, he was a "messiah", God's "anointed one". However, this present series is concerned more with **the** promised divine Messiah initially prophesied in Genesis 3:15 and whose attributes, traits, mission and ministry would be further revealed through Scripture's progressive revelation through the centuries. Isaiah's messianic contribution added further detail to those former promises.



Photographic reproduction of the Great Isaiah Scroll, the best preserved of the biblical scrolls found at Qumran.

Acknowledgement of source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/isaiah_scroll

Several Perspectives!

To read Isaiah's work and discern his "Portraits of Messiah" is awe-inspiring. To appropriate the spiritual truth therein revealed, will prove life-changing.

Consider, first, that there is a sense in which Isaiah resembles the Bible, "in miniature". The first thirty-nine chapters correspond to the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament, and stress the righteousness, holiness and justice of God. In a word, God's **"Condemnation"** of Israel and her sins, was manifested historically in the "exile of His People to Babylon for seventy years". The Old Testament that began so majestically in Genesis 1:1, "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth", ends (in the English Bible, but *not* in the Hebrew Tenach, which, according to the Talmudic order - *Tractate Baba Bathra 14b* - ends with Chronicles) with these dramatic words: "Lest I (the LORD of hosts) come and strike the earth with a **curse**" (Mal. 4:1, 6 - *emphasis added*).

Secondly, the last twenty-seven chapters compare to the twenty-seven Books of the New Testament. As the New Testament opens, God turned "the curse" into "blessing" with the coming of Jesus and His gospel message of salvation. God's **"Consolation"** for His People was revealed as "a remnant returned home" through the provision of "a messiah (Cyrus)" – a subsumed portrait of the "promised Messiah – the Prophet, Priest and King" - Jesus, through whom all may experience salvation! In this context, the prophet revealed God's "Greatness" (Chs. 40-48); His "Grace" (Chs. 49-57) and His "Glory" (Chs. 58-66).

Thirdly, within this suggested perspective and general outline, a much more detailed and significant literary motif is found. It is "The Messiah", *the main focal point* of this series.

Fourthly, as both writer and reader begin ascending this biblical "Mt. Everest", both can be assured of God's promised "salvation and security" (Is. 30:15; 45:22; 52:10). So, as we all apply ourselves to the rigorous task ahead, let's ensure that we have equipped ourselves with the "sure safety harness" of the promises of God's infallible, eternal Word (Is. 40:8), and we will be "safe and secure", forever. This is certain, for "the mouth of the LORD has spoken it" (Is. 1:20; 40:5; 58:14)!

I. The Majesty of His Person!

As mentioned, Isaiah revealed further aspects of Israel's promised Messiah by adding to previous prophecies in the progressively revealed truth in Scripture. The first reference to the "gospel" in Scripture was the "proto-evangelium" recorded in Genesis 3:15. This was followed by such significant prophecies involving the Tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10) and the Line of David (2 Sam. 7:7-14ff). With his prophetic contemporary, Micah (who prophesied concerning Messiah's birth in "Bethlehem Ephratha" in Micah 5:2, Isaiah revealed other special aspects of His birth (Is. 7:14; 9:6-7). Remember, too, that his long history of ministry extended from about 740 B.C. to 680 B.C., witnessing how Assyria became a growing international power that, eventually, conquering the sinful Northern Kingdom, Israel, in 722 B.C.

Yet, Isaiah was another of God's instruments whom He used to show that His messianic promises would (and never could), fail! Messiah existed from eternity past (Ps. 21:4; 89:27-29; 90:2; 93:1-2) and had a united, familial relationship with His Father (Ex. 23:20-21; Ps. 16:8-11; 20:4-6; 89:26-27) – all truths to which Isaiah himself would attest (Is. 42:21 and 49:5).

Furthermore, God's prophet showed how Messiah was the Creator (Is. 44:1-8, 21-26), the Anointed One of Israel (Is. 4:2; 49:6). This majestic One was described in Psalm 95:1-3 as "the Rock of our salvation", "the great King above all Gods" and was further named and given titles by Isaiah. These were: "Wonderful Counsellor", "Mighty God, Everlasting Father", "Prince of Peace" (Is. 9:6).

With this kaleidoscopic collage of biblical messianic promises, prophetic predictions and literary presentations, prudent observers can at once see the eternal majesty of the Messiah. He is a Person who has inhabited eternity, yet will appear on the stage of human history as One who would be a "child ... born, ... a Son ... given ... and of the increase of His government and peace, there will be no end" (9:7). The passage continued: " ... and upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgement and justice, from that time forward and even forever".

Just as this Isaiah had witnessed personally the majestic glory of the exalted, Holy One of Israel as he visited the Temple to worship "in the year that king Uzziah died" (Is. 6:1-2), thereby falling prostrate

before Him in broken reverence, adoration and praise (vss. 6-8), so he wrote of Him in terms of His majestic Person. Purposely, he sought Israel and all subsequent readers to do the same.

Have you seen the majesty of this messianic Person? Did you ever contemplate the magnanimity of this eternal, One True God, the One who is the "High and Lofty ... who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy, (who dwells) in the high and lofty place"? He has pledged "... (to also dwell) with him who has a humble

and contrite in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble and to revive the heart of the contrite ones ..." (Is. 57:15; cf. Ps. 51:17; Is. 66:1-2). That is why He graciously continues to invite both Jew and Gentile to respond in faith, acknowledging Him personally as majestic, eternal King!

II. The Magnitude of His Nature!

Mt. Everest's first conquerors were the late Sir Edmund Hillary and Nepalese Sherpa mountaineer, Tenzing Norgay. The date 29th May 1953 is etched in history because they finally reached the highest place on earth. In their subsequent interviews, these (now famous) men gave account of the challenges they faced since they had set out from the last Base Camp. The challenges on their final, arduous ascent to the summit were met head on with dogged determination. No matter what, they would achieve their objective!

As they slowly pick-axed their way along the last stage of their epic climb, two things were impressed on their minds. First, the nature of this "unchanging mountain". Secondly (in direct contrast), the ever-present "swirling winds" and the threat of dreaded "white-outs" that had briefly engulfed them at lower elevations. Yet, as others who have since made it to the top have testified, they too expressed the sense of satisfaction and fulfilment in realising their goal!

When it comes to Isaiah's "Portraits of The Messiah", Everest's "unchanging nature"

finds its counterpart in a similar trait: His essential "Being" or "Nature", never changes! Isaiah chapter 40 provided a prime example.

That chapter began the second section of his book. Contrasting the first section with its condemnation and judgement on His people for their sins, it highlights the bright promises of His restoring Israel to the Land (see chapters 40-48), the coming of Messiah (see chapters 49-57) and the millennial blessings for Israel when He comes to establish His kingdom on earth

(see chapters 58-66).

Messiah is implicit (rather than explicit) in the text, from the outset of this chapter (see Is. 41:4-8). There, He was seen in the reference to the LORD going before His people on their 2,000 kilometre journey from Babylon back

to the Land – a prefiguring of John the Baptist's ministry who hundreds of years later, would prepare the way for Messiah's ministry of eternal salvation (Mt. 3:3).

Two other references underscore His immutable Nature. Speaking regarding His predicted judgement on Assyria in Isaiah 14:24 (later fulfilled in her destruction recorded in 37:21-38), the prophet stated:

The LORD of hosts has sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand.

Moreover, in a context of His judging Babylon in Isaiah 46:10-11, God's faithful servant recorded:

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executes my counsel from a far country: yes, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it."

These literary portraits of Messiah's "unchanging nature" were expressly stated

in terms of His sovereignty and immutable purposes. They were not only magnificent but comprehensively magnanimous! His "Nature" of "Being" was spoken of both overtly as well as by implication in numerous passages. Indeed, the book is replete with such references. To substantiate this contention, this writer has purposefully summarised them in terms of five inter-related categories to show the cogency of Isaiah's presentations:

A. Messiah's Substance - "God-Man"!

First, Isaiah highlighted both the deity and humanity of Messiah. He was truly God and truly Man – "Immanuel, God with us" (Is. 7:14 and quoted in Mt. 1:23). That is to say, He is complete, undivided, consubstantial, in "hypostatic union" with the other Two Persons of the Triune Godhead, as the Early Church Fathers would later affirm. Isaiah did this in two ways: Initially, in terms of His being "the Son of God" (see Is. 43:1-28), and then by revealing Him as the "Son of Man" (Is. 7:14; 9:6-7).

Elaborating these aspects, we draw attention to chapter 43, the first twenty-one verses. The One who is Israel's "Creator" (vss. 1,7,15,21) is also Israel's "Redeemer" (vs. 14; cf. vs. 11 "beside Me there is no Saviour") and He is none other than "the LORD, the Holy One of Israel" (vss. 1, 3, 15), their "King"! As the "Son", He is the only "Saviour" for His people, who will accomplish His divinely-given "mission"! Note especially, Isaiah 9:7b "The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this".

These statements are unqualified - pregnant with assurance - as he further expanded this salvific theme. The foretold "Son" would certainly fulfil His role for Isaiah revealed Him as "The Lamb of God" (Is. 53:7). In this literary image, the prophet picked up on other passages in the Jewish *Tenach* which dealt with the same motif. (See Gen. 22:8; Ex. 12:5-24; Lev. 16:1-31 and Num. 28:3-4). Moreover, consider this progression: A "lamb" for an individual in Genesis 4; for a family in Exodus 12; for a nation in Isaiah 53; and finally, for a world in John 1:29!

Furthermore, this "Son" would be "The Son of Man" (cf. Dan. 7:13; Ps. 2). Two passages in Isaiah prophesy that this would be so: Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6-7. It is noteworthy that there was obviously an immediate fulfilment, and a final fulfilment to these prophecies. Author, Teacher and Bible scholar Warren W. Wiersbe

(*Expository Outlines on the Old Testament*, pp. 501-2, 507), observed:

Isaiah gives a rich prophetic picture of Jesus Christ. We see His birth (7:14 with Mt. 1:23; also 9:6) ... (as to Isaiah's "Two Sons") ... The symbolical names of his two sons (7:3 and 8:1-3) illustrate the two main messages of Isaiah's book. "Shearjashub" means "a remnant shall return" and ties it in with the second part of the prophecy, the return of the remnant from Babylon. Maher-shalal-hash-baz means "speed to the spoil, haste to the prey" and ties in with chapters 1-39, the defeat Assyria ...

It is possible (but not necessary) there was some kind of immediate fulfillment of the prophecy as a sign to the king and the nation. This does not mean a miraculous virgin birth, since only Jesus Christ could be born in that manner. But it does suggest that a Jewish virgin was wed and within the next year gave birth to a child. Before this child could reach the legal Jewish age of accountability (12 years old), the enemy nations of Israel and Syria would be defeated. If this sign was given in 735 B.C., as it probably was, then by 721 the promise would be fulfilled. As we have seen, Syria fell in 732 and Samaria in 721. It is possible that the "sign child" was born to Isaiah's wife; the record is given in 8:1-8. This would mean that the prophet's first wife (the mother of Shear-jashub, 7:3) had died, and the prophet married the second wife shortly after uttering this prophecy. In spite of King Ahaz's unbelief and scheming (he robbed the temple to bribe Assyria – 2 Chron. 28:21, 24-25), God graciously delivered Judah from her enemies. But Judah was left enslaved to Assyria and only a divine intervention in Hezekiah's day delivered the nation (see Is. 36-37).

The prophet also provided further information concerning this "God-Man" Son. As to His deity, he revealed His omnipotence (Is. 22:22; and especially regarding His triumphant victory and miracles (Is. 40:10 and 50:2). He is also shown to be omniscient and omnipresent (Is. 40:10; 66:1-2). Finally, He revealed the glory of God. This aspect was describe in detail by Isaiah. In chapter 4, verse 2, the Messiah was described as "the Branch of the LORD ... beautiful and glorious ...". Following, in chapter 12:1-6, he gave a Hymn of Praise predicting how that Messiah's people will "in that (Millennial Day) cry out, sing and praise their all-glorious, all conquering Saviour,

the one who is “great in the midst ... the Holy One of Israel”. Then in chapter 49:3, the text revealed that Israel would be shown “His glory”. To cap off this aspect, the prophet gave ample instruction as to Messiah’s glory to be revealed in the millennial kingdom. His glory would rise on His people (vss. 1-2). Nations will come to “the light”, and “kings to the brightness of (their) rising” (vs. 3). Israel, His people, will be returned to the Land by His grace and “be radiant”, their hearts thrilled with rejoicing as the “abundance of the nations” is brought to them. All will bear good news of the praises of the LORD (vss. 5-6).

Thus, Isaiah laid a solid foundation as to Messiah’s “Essence”, “Being” or “Substance”. He was, is, and forever will be, “The God-Man”, Emmanuel – “God with us” (Is. 7:14; Mt. 1:23).

B. Messiah’s Sovereignty – “All-Authoritative Sovereign, yet loving Shepherd”!

Three passages in Isaiah revealed Messiah as being all-authoritative, yet expressing love, compassion and forgiveness to His people. In terms of His authority, Isaiah 40:9-11 and 49:2-7 indicated just how powerful and forceful He is. Judah’s cities were to take a good, long, contemplative look at the sovereign, covenant-keeping God! (See vs. 8). In fact, this same One is compassionate and loving, tending His people like a good shepherd gathering and gently leading His flock (vss. 10-11). This is made possible by the LORD’s Spirit “(resting) on Him”, or as Isaiah 42:1 stated, He “put (His) Spirit upon (His) Servant, Messiah), thus manifesting the eternal love of the Father who sent Him (see Is. 11:1-3; 48:16).

What a mind-boggling statement is found in Isaiah 48:16! Isaiah expressly revealed the **Trinity of the Godhead!** “Selah”!

Think of it: Messiah, co-equal with His Father in “Essence” in every way, is also the King,

who manifest His love for His people (Is. 62:4-9). Israel will be restored, no longer “Forsaken” or “Desolate”, but finally designated “Hephzibah” (“My delight is in her”) and “Beulah” (“married”). This will occur when the Messiah returns to planet earth, “(making) Jerusalem a praise in all the earth” (vs. 7).

Dear friend, have you bowed to this mighty Sovereign LORD and Shepherd who loves you with an everlasting love? Do you care for His promises to comfort and guide you as a shepherd does his sheep? Did you ever consider the fact or give credence to the truth that: *Eternal love spurned must inevitably bring righteous and just judgement?* As the apostle Paul would later say of those who repudiated God’s love in the Saviour He sent, they thereby “... judge (themselves) unworthy of eternal life” (Jn. 3:16, 36; Acts 13:46)!

Interim Conclusion

This initial study has noted just a few of Isaiah’s prophetic perspectives. They are best described as being increasingly majestic and magnificent in the eyes of those “climbing” higher and higher

up the heights as seen in his literary portraits of the Messiah. Now, as we pause before ascending to the supreme messianic “summit” of his book, readers would do well to continue reflecting on the “Magnitude of His Person” and “Magnificence of His Nature”.

This initial article was set to consider five chosen categories relative to Messiah’s “Majestic Nature”. Two of these attributes (the second being only partially addressed), together with the remaining three to be included in the next article, provide a complete portrait of the Messiah’s “Nature”. As will be shown, every one of His messianic traits would be realized in the epochal event of the Incarnation of Jesus, the Christ. He was the Messiah, born of the Virgin Mary in Bethlehem around 4 B.C., the “God-Man” who came to fulfil His Father’s eternal “mission” to provide salvation for Jews and Gentiles, alike. We invite you then to prayerfully anticipate the next messianic portrait Isaiah gave us - “Messiah: Majestic in His Appearance & Incarnation”.

(To be continued).



Deane & Margaret Woods
Ministry Representatives

The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry (Australia) Inc.

P0 Box 171 Melrose Park SA
5039 Australia

Office and Books:

c/o EBC Community Centre
Suite 406 (Upstairs)
Cnr. Rothesay Ave and Dorene St
St Marys SA 5042 AUSTRALIA

Phone/Fax: (+ 618) 08 8276 1333
Email: australianoffice@foi.org