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MESSIANIC HOPE
IN ISAIAH

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
Asbury Theological Seminary

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Theology

by
T. Edward Davis
June 1965
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First Reader Dennis F. Kinlaw
Second Reader George A. Turner

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

DEFINITION OF TERMS

As one reads Isaiah he is impressed by the messianic hope presented by this prophet. In the midst of prophecies and recordings of despair and gloom there are found gems of Gospel light.

Isaiah's very name means "Salvation of Jehovah." Ultimately this salvation was purchased by the death of the Messiah, about whom Isaiah often speaks. That his name played a formative role in his life is not improbably since, as we have seen, it expresses the great theme of his prophetic ministry. Isaiah is preeminently the prophet of redemption. There is no wonder that the New Testament writers quote so often from this book. Many symbols used in the New Testament to express various aspects of the life and work of Christ have their roots here in the book of Isaiah. He is referred to as the Way, the Light, the Cornerstone, the Servant, and other familiar titles. "Redeemer" and "Saviour" are, however, Isaiah's favorite words.

To understand the times of Isaiah is to understand much of his message. He prophesied during four reigns, from Uzziah to Hezekiah. The first date given in the book is the year of Uzziah's death (611), which probably occurred about 740 B.C. The last historical event referred to is the death of Sennacherib (37:38) which occurred in 681 B.C. The most important event mentioned is the Syro-Ephraimitic war in the
days of Ahas, which Isaiah treated, despite its tremendous devastation, as almost insignificant compared with the far greater scourge of Assyria. Assyria is the great enemy with which much of chapters 7-39 deals; and beyond it looms an even mightier foe, Babylon, whose downfall is foretold already in chapters 13-14. Babylon is the great theme of chapters 40-52. The important fact, however, is not the involvement of Israel with Babylon or any other foe but that ever against these terrible instruments of divine judgment the prophet sees the great Messianic hope.

Though Christ, the Messiah, is foremost in the thoughts of Isaiah, he does not always make a clear distinction between the three persons of the Trinity. The dispensations of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit are all in much of Isaiah's thinking. Neither does he make a clear distinction between the two advents of Christ. Often in prophecy and especially in Isaiah, the near and far horizons blend. In many passages Isaiah seems to move from the immediate future to the distant future all in one stroke of the pen. This is quite understandable, for the Old Testament prophets did not always display a perfected chronology. This realization does no harm to a proper doctrine of the inspiration and infallibility of Scripture. It simply implies that God was not pleased to reveal all His divine plan to one man at an early date but rather chose to reveal His plan progressively to a number of persons over a period of centuries. This revelation is believed to be climax ed and culminated in the person of Christ, about whom the ancient prophet speaks often.
Isaiah used the term "that day" quite frequently and in quite a general way. In many places it appears to refer to deliverance from earthly perils which Isaiah expected within his life span. In other places it seems to imply a better day in the distant future under a divine king. It would appear that in interpreting passages of the first type there is no injustice done to Scripture by applying these figuratively or symbolically to a better day which Christ ushered in and will usher in.

THE PROBLEM

The problem for consideration in this study may be brought to focus in the form of a question. It is, "What parts of the prophecy of Isaiah may we consider as Messianic in emphasis?" Once these passages are isolated we may ask several more questions, such as: "How do they apply to the Messiah?", "Do they apply symbolically or literally?", "Do they apply to his first advent, or to the second?". These are the basic questions for consideration.

A JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

Numerous commentaries, books, and articles have been written on the prophecy of Isaiah or parts of it. A number of books have been written on the passages of Isaiah's writings which are quite clearly Messianic in emphasis. Few authors have written specifically on all the passages in Isaiah which appear to have some Messianic meaning. A study, such as this, presents itself as a rewarding, interesting,
inspirational challenge to the writer.

THE LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This treatise is not to be a general, verse by verse, commentary on the prophecy of Isaiah. Nor is it to concern itself with all the major themes of this great prophecy. Only one theme is considered. It is the Messianic theme, which this writer feels to be the central theme of Isaiah. The treasures which are ours in and through Christ, the Messiah, as seen through the eyes of Isaiah the prophet, are the scope of this study.

THE PROCEDURE TO BE FOLLOWED

Research will revolve around the question asked of Philip by the Ethiopian Burch on the desert road (Acts 8:24); "About whom does the prophet say this?" He of course had been reading a part of the prophecy of Isaiah to which we will give attention later in this paper. This question will be asked concerning each passage or verse in Isaiah which appears to have Messianic meaning. Evaluation will be made in the light of conservative and liberal findings. Recent and ancient authors will be consulted. Jewish, as well as Protestant, views will be considered.

The historical background of each verse or passage will be studied when this is pertinent to the progress of thought. When many views are found on one passage, the most representative and important ones will be chosen and considered.
Messianic teachings in Isaiah are of two basic types. Both of these will be studied. The implicit statements are those which do not state clearly that Messiah will come. They are general statements showing a hope of better days to come and are usually connected with the idea of restoration. Then there are explicit prophecies or predictions that the Messiah will come. Many of these are directly quoted or alluded to in the New Testament as being Messianic.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Decisions as to where to categorize various passages have been made on the basis of central emphasis, as some passages have more than one emphasis. Passages of similar thought have been categorized together for the sake of continuity and organization. This explains why material has not always been considered in the order in which it is found in Isaiah. Subject has been given precedence over numerical chapter order in the organization of this paper. The Biblical passage under scrutiny is given at the beginning of each section. These are taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible.
CHAPTER II

THE BOOK OF IMMANUEL

Chapters 7-12 of Isaiah are considered to be "The Book of Immanuel" by many scholars. The word "Immanuel" is used only two times in this section, however. In fact this word is only used twice in the book of Isaiah. The first time is in the fourteenth verse of the passage presently considered. The second is in 8:8. Chapters 7-12 illustrate the fact that Old Testament prophets spoke of contemporary times and future times. These prophecies were given during the reign of Ahas. At this time Syria and Israel were allied against Judah, and Ahas expected to be destroyed by these two enemies. The threat of Assyria was also seen on the horizon. God through Isaiah promised deliverance from these enemies, but He shows that the ultimate deliverance of His people can come only through the one whose name is Immanuel. This section may be outlined in the following way:

A. Birth of Immanuel (7:1-16)
   1. Occasion of the prophecy (7:1-3)
   2. Sign to the House of David (7:10-16)
B. Assyrian Invasions (7:18-8:22)
C. David's Kingdom and King (9:1-7)
D. God's Out-stretched Hand of Judgment (9:8-10:34)
E. Branch from Jesse's root (11:1-16)
F. Song of Redemption (12:1-6)

A SIGN IS GIVEN

The Passage Quoted

"Again the Lord spoke to Ahas,"
Ask a sign of the Lord your God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.

But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask, and I will not put the Lord to the test.'

And he said, 'Hear then, O house of David! Is is too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also?

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a young woman shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.

He shall eat curds and honey when he knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good.

For before the child knows how to refuse the evil and choose the good, the land before whose two kings you are in dread will be deserted.

The Lord will bring upon you and upon your people and upon your father's house such days as have not come since the day that Ephraim departed from Judah—the king of Assyria. (7:10-17)

The Passage Studied

The occasion of this prophecy was the invasion of Judah by the kings of Syria and Israel. They attacked Judah separately and then jointly. Their aim was to displace Ahaz with another king. Ahaz made appeal to Assyria's king for help. The king of Assyria responded with an invasion of Syria and North Israel, and carried their people away captive. This was the Galilee Captivity of 734 B.C. In the early part of this attack on Jerusalem Isaiah assured Ahaz that the attack would fail, that Syria and Israel would be destroyed and Judah be saved. The sixty-five years referred to in 7:8 is thought to cover the period from the first deportation of Israel (734 B.C.) to the settlement of foreigners in the land of Esarhaddon about 670 B.C.
It was a mark of degeneration among the people of Israel that one
branch of them would form an alliance with a pagan nation against the
other. This was not the first time this had happened, yet we can imagine
the consternation in the court of Ahas when word came, "Syria is con-
federate with Ephraim (7:2)." The term Ephraim is often used in the
prophets for the Northern Kingdom because of the leading place this
tribe exercised in it.

Under the reign of Ahas conditions were growing worse in Judah.
Isaiah knew during his life a world of warring nations; among these
Assyria was the greatest and most predatory. Lesser nations were con-
stantly combining against or seeking alliance with her. Ahas, as we
have seen, threatened by Syria and Ephraim (Israel), sought a protective
alliance with Assyria. Jehovah sent Isaiah to Ahas with a message of
comfort, a promise of deliverance from these foes, and an invitation for
the king to ask of Jehovah a sign. Ahas equivocated, because he had more
faith in the power of the King of Assyria than in the strength of
Jehovah.²

At this time when news had reached Jerusalem of the union of the
Syrian with the Ephraimitic army at two or three days distance from Jer-
usalem, and the court and people were in great alarm, Isaiah was commanded
by Jehovah to take with his his son Shear-jashub, whose name signified
"A Remnant shall return," and to meet Ahas outside the city in the Fuller's

²B. A. Cepass, Isaiah, Prince of Old Testament Prophets (Nashville,
Field Road. He was to exhort the king to keep calm and to assure him that Syria and Ephraim possessed no power to do Judah any serious harm. Nor would they be successful in carrying out their plan of taking Jerusalem and overthrowing the Davidic dynasty in favour of an outsider who would probably be a Syrian. Ahas is offered any sign of Yahweh's sufficiency that he wishes to choose, but he declines the offer. Isaiah then announces that Yahweh will give a sign of his own choosing. The nature and purpose of this sign has been much discussed and no general agreement has been reached. Isaiah goes on to predict that within two or three years Ephraim and Syria will be a land of ruins.2

The question which confronts us is whether or not the sign which Yahweh gives is the Messiah or not. Christian interpreters, aware of the use of Isaiah 7:14 in Matthew 1:23, have concluded for many years that the sign is an assertion that our Lord was "conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary." Jewish interpreters have throughout insisted that what Isaiah here predicts is a birth due to ordinary human intercourse, and about to take place in the normal way. Modern interpreters, whether Jews or Christians, are much divided and particularly on these points: Who is the mother and who is the son referred to in 7:14? What is the sign given by Yahweh and what does it signify? Is it miraculous? Does it signify that Judah will be delivered or that it may be destroyed, or that it will be first delivered and then destroyed?3

---


3Ibid., pp. 122-3.
George Gray believes,

The ambiguities and awkwardness of the passage are so numerous as to give little hope of reaching an interpretation that will command general assent; and under these circumstances even the dogmatic or traditional Christian interpretation will doubtless continue to find defenders, while others may infer that the text has been deeply corrupted and must be reconstructed by bold and extensive conjectures.

Who is the "almah" whose child-bearing constitutes the sign that Jehovah gives? As we have seen various answers to this question have been given in the long history of the exegesis of this famous passage.

A very ancient answer is that the "young woman" is the prophet's wife. A few verses below, at the beginning of the eighth chapter, it is said that the prophet's wife bore a son, whose name, Maher-shalal-hash-baz, is significant of impending political events. May not another son have been given the still more significant name, Immanuel, to signalize the discomfiture of the two kings, Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, who had come up against Ahaz to battle? But why should the prophet's wife, who is designated in the later passage, very naturally, as the "prophetess," be designated here as the "young woman of marriageable age," even supposing that the word "almah" means no more than that. This would seem a rather strange designation.

Another interpretation finds in the "almah" the wife of Ahaz the king, and thus the promised child was Hezekiah. This view is not favored by anything in the context. A third interpretation suggests that any young woman was meant. The thrust of this view is that a child born at

\[\text{\textsuperscript{4}}\text{Ibid.}, \text{p. 123.}\]
the time the prophecy was spoken would not have time to grow to maturity before the land whose two kings had threatened Judah would be forsaken. This view seems quite inadequate in light of the specific way in which attention is called to the young woman and her child bearing. Why should an ordinary birth be regarded as a sign? The whole setting of this verse leads us to expect something miraculous is that which the prophet proceeds to announce. The whole passage is couched in such terms as to induce a sense of mystery.  

The traditional Christian interpretation of this passage is that the Immanuel pronouncement was nothing more than a prediction of the virgin birth of Christ. Some seek to refute this view by saying, "How could Ahaz be expected to act differently on a sign which was not to be fulfilled until seven centuries later?" Others seek to bring a coalition between the two predominant opposite schools of thought by suggesting that the tentative conclusion that the proximate fulfillment of the Immanuel sign was the birth of Hezekiah does not rule out altogether the traditional interpretation of a long range fulfillment in Christ, of which Isaiah might have even been unconscious.  

Gray seeks to refute the traditional Christian interpretation. He notes that it has been repeatedly argued by Christian scholars from Justin Martyr down that the sign which Yahweh is to choose must be a


miracle, but the argument rests on a misconception of what the word "sign" really implies and of the purpose of this particular sign. The miracle here, so far as there is a miracle, may be solely in the prediction, asserts Gray. Neither the word "sign" nor the circumstances compel us to seek a miracle in the event predicted. We are safest, he concludes, in understanding the statement of 7:14-16 to mean that within a few months of the time the prophecy was spoken, a child would be born (or children) who would receive the name "Immanuel, God is with us," for the present tension would then be relieved.

Some seek to refute the traditional view by indicating that we cannot be assured that Isaiah taught the virgin birth of Christ here. Attention is called to the fact that "young woman" or maiden is the only correct translation of the Hebrew word used and that "virgin" is taken from the Greek word found here in the Septuagint. They further assert the quotation in Matthew 1:23 to be from the Septuagint and not from the Hebrew. It should be noted, however, that the Hebrew word does denote a girl of marriageable age, but not married, and thus a virgin by implication.

Some seek a mediating view, believing the statement "a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son," like so many prophecies of the Old

Testament, to have a double meaning. These hold the language of verses 15 and 16 to point to an early deliverance within the lifetime of the child, and the second and complete fulfillment to refer to the birth of Messiah, as seen in Matthew 1:23.10

The very use of the word "sign" would lead us to think that it was some extraordinary event. An ordinary birth can hardly be said to constitute a sign but a miraculous birth might be a sign. If the mother was an unmarried woman, two possibilities of interpretation lie before us. On the one hand, she could have become pregnant in the ordinary way out of wedlock. Such a birth would not be a sign. On the other hand, the mother may be one who is truly a virgin and yet have a child. A birth of this type is a miracle and a true sign.11

Though modern criticism may try to prove that this passage has no reference to Christ, nothing can dissociate it in the minds of devout believers from the birth of our Lord.12 It cannot apply to Hezekiah for he was a young man at this time.13 It must apply to Messiah.

Matthew finds the complete fulfillment of this promise in the miraculous birth of our Lord, and in the name He was to bear.14 To the objection that this could not be a sign to Ahas, since the fulfillment did


not come until long after his day one is called to note that the statement was not merely made to the individual, Ahas, but to the "house of David," which Ahas represented, though very poorly, in his generation. There is no need to see in this prophecy two children, one born at that time by natural processes and the other the virgin-born Son of God. The quotation of this passage in Matthew 1:23 is no doubt the strongest point in considering this verse as Messianic in content. The name "Immanuel" sets forth both the deity and humanity of Christ. For the conservative this passage does not need to be reconstructed by bold and extensive conjectures. Who is capable for such a task?

A STONE OF STUMBLING

The passage quoted

But the Lord of hosts, him you shall regard as holy; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread.

And he will become a sanctuary, and a stone of offence, and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

And many shall stumble thereon; they shall fall and be broken; they shall be snared and taken. (8:13-15)

The passage studied

What is the historical setting in which Isaiah gives us these verses? Conspiracy was in the air, the conspiracy to dethrone Ahas, and the king's proposal to conspire with Assyria. Assyria, of course, had

proposed an invasion. The scene was one of predominant fear. Speaking to this mood, under the prompting of God, Isaiah cried, "Conspire with God, fear him and no one else." The reference to disciples in 8:16 seems to indicate a development of the remnant idea. The prophet, no doubt realized that the nation, as a whole, was past hearing. Thus he addressed himself to the "Faithful few." If this is so it marked a turning point. It was the first time in Jewish history that a representative of God turned from the nation and urged an elect group within the nation to stand against their fellows for God and truth.15

In every century the church has been kept spiritually alive by the quiet but unsurrendered faith of the few, living and moving, not by the pretensions of the unthinking majority, but by the fidelity and devotion of the elect community whose lives were a sustained conspiracy of faith.16

We cannot be assured that Isaiah refers to Christ in this passage. It is true that I Peter 2:8 refers to this passage. Certainly Peter means Christ when he refers to "a stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall." This does not prove, however, that Isaiah had Messiah in mind. Christ's own words, in Matthew 21:44, are based on Isaiah 8:13-15. This verse in Matthew says "he that falleth on this stone shall be broken to pieces; but on whomsoever it shall fall it will scatter him as dust." This is a disputed verse, however. The Revised Standard Version does not include it, except in the form of a footnote. The American Revision contains it but notes in the margin that some

16Ibid., p. 226.
ancient authorities omit it. Again, however, let it be said that if Matthew 21:44 is an authoritative verse and Christ is quoting from Isaiah this does not imply that Isaiah necessarily had Christ in mind when he wrote 8:13-15.

A CHILD IS BORN

The passage quoted

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined.

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called, 'wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'

Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

The passage studied

When Isaiah began to prophecy, there was current among the people of Judah the expectation of a glorious king. How far this expectation was defined it is impossible to determine; but the expectancy is a historical fact. A promise was made to David, and was recorded in II Samuel 7:4-17. This promise guaranteed the permanence of his dynasty. Eternity was not promised to any individual descendant, however, but to the dynasty. Besides the weight of proof afforded by David's own last words in II Samuel 23, there is the manifest impossibility of dreaming of an ideal kingdom apart from an ideal king. Orientals, especially those of the period referred to, were incapable of imagining the triumph of
an idea or institution without connecting it with a personality. It is worth noting that Isaiah made his first intimation concerning the Messiah, when the throne was not worthily filled by an Uzziah or a Jotham, but when a fool and traitor to God was in power. This was also a time when the foreign conspiracy to set up a Syrian prince in Jerusalem imperiled the whole dynasty. The setting for this prophecy was the fall of Israel which Isaiah had just predicted in chapters 7 and 8. Isaiah was convinced that Yahweh was in control of events, however, and that his purpose to set up his kingly rule of peace over the nations was sure. 17

Here again we find a tremendous leap is made across the centuries. Actually two leaps are made. The New Testament asserts this prophecy to be partially fulfilled in the ministry of Christ in Galilee at His first advent. Matthew 4:16 is a quote taken from Isaiah 9:1,2. Here as elsewhere in prophecy, the two advents of Christ are brought together in one prophecy. The birth of Christ, prophesied in Isaiah 9:16, took place two thousand years ago. His universal reign has not yet been fulfilled. We today stand between the two fulfillments of this prophecy.

"The people that walked in darkness" can only refer to the whole nation, Judah and Israel, while the "land of the Shadow of death" refers to the darkest misery of captivity. 18 Isaiah is promising restoration


culminated and perfected in the person of Christ, the light of the world. This light is set in contrast to the "distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish" and the "thick darkness" with which the preceding chapter closes. 19 For the Christian faith this great prophecy has had its fulfillment in the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. 20

When Isaiah expected the birth of Messiah to take place cannot be gathered from this prophecy. There is no reason, however, for supposing that this reference is to a child already born. The birth of the child is most naturally conceived as taking place in the age of miracles which followed, at some future date, the overthrow of the Assyrian menace. 21

The magnificent prophecy of verse 6, which forms one of the greatest choruses in Handel's Messiah, cannot, without extravagance, be applied to any other sovereign than Immanuel already predicted in chapters 7 and 8. Although these exact words are not quoted in the New Testament, the passage is evidently referred to in the annunciation of the birth of our Lord in Luke 1:26-33. 22

Unescapably to a Christian, this whole great passage (verses 1-7) is bound up with faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God; phrase by phrase, line by line, all that Isaiah proclaimed about the coming Messiah has been fulfilled in the person and mission of our Lord,

19 Matthew Henry, Commentary on the whole Bible (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co.), IV, 57.


and for two thousand years the Christian church has taken up and sung in thanksgiving the good news from God; Unt. as a child is born, unto us a son is given, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, the "unspeakable gift."  

The lofty titles and qualities of the divinely endued king...are four...so that the comma between Wonderful and Counselor (K.J.V.) is a mistake. The first two declare that the king participates in the divine attributes of wisdom and might, while the third and fourth proclaim the nature of his rule. 

Wonderful Counselor indicates that he is the fountain of wisdom or "Wonderful in Purpose." This construction implies either "a wonder of a counsellor" or "one who counsels wonderful things." Justly he is called wonderful, for he is both God and man. His love is the wonder of angels and glorified saints. In his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, he was wonderful. He is counselor because he is intimately acquainted with the counsels of God from and through all eternity. 

"Mighty God" implies that he is "Divine in Might." The construction here allows two possible interpretations; either "God-like Hero" or "Hero-God." The second is preferred.

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23 Kilpatrick, op. cit., p. 234.
25 Ibid., p. 233.
26 Skinner, loc. cit.
27 Henry, op. cit., p. 60.
28 Skinner, loc. cit.
"Everlasting Father" is better rendered "A Father Forever" because it is not the king's continued existence but his constant care for his people that is in question.\(^{29}\) He is the Father of everlasting life and happiness to them. He is the Father of the world to come. He was, from eternity, Father of the great work of redemption.\(^{30}\)

Finally, he is the "Prince of Peace." It is well to remember that the Hebrew word for peace implies more than mere cessation of war. It is rather a condition of rich, harmonious, and positive well-being.\(^{31}\) As a King, Christ preserves the peace, commands peace and creates peace. He is our peace, and it is his peace that both keeps the hearts of his people and rules in them.\(^{32}\)

This prophecy is perhaps accepted as Messianic by more scholars than many of the other prophecies of Isaiah to which reference is made in this paper. In this passage we see the Messiah from two, not one, vantage points. Here we see his two natures in one Person. "A child is born" implies His perfect humanity. "A son is given" implies His absolute deity. There is no reason not to accept this passage from Isaiah as Messianic in meaning.

A SHOOT FROM THE STUMP OF JESSE

\(^{29}\)Scott, loc. cit.

\(^{30}\)Henry, loc. cit.

\(^{31}\)Scott, op. cit.; p. 234.

\(^{32}\)Henry, loc. cit.
The passage quoted

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear;

but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.

Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.

The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall feed; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox,

The suckling child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the people; his shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious. (11:1-10)

The passage studied

Chapter 11, in its entirety, and chapter 12, deal with the same topic. We have quoted only the first verses of chapter 11 as they are the key verses as well as introductory verses. Chapters 11 and 12 should be read to secure a complete picture of the subject before us.
The following outline will put this section before us:

(1) The King's ancestry (11:1).
(2) The source of the King's power: the sevenfold Spirit (11:1).
(3) The character of his reign (11:2-5).
(4) The quality of the kingdom (11:6-8).
(5) The extent of the kingdom (11:9).
(6) The organization of the kingdom (11:10-16).
(7) The worship in the kingdom (12:1-6).

It is difficult to determine the period of Isaiah's career to which the prophecy belongs. The affinity with 9:1-7 suggests the reign of Ahaz, to which it is assigned by Guthe in accordance with a particular theory of the development of Isaiah's eschatology. But there is no evidence that the idea of the Messianic King ever lost its significance to the prophet's mind, it might be referred to any subsequent period of his ministry. Some scholars place this in the later part of Isaiah's long life. 33

Chapter 11 has been entitled "The Messianic Age," verses 1-9, the "Davidic Messiah" and verses 10-16, "The Messiah and the Future Restoration of Israel." 34 While chapter 11 is a picture of the kingdom-age, chapter 12 is considered a psalm of praise. As the deliverance from Egypt was celebrated by Moses' Song of Triumph (Exodus 15), so the prediction of future redemption is followed by a notable song or psalm of praise and triumph. 35 These two chapters explain 2:2-4; 4:2-6;

7:14, and 9:1-7, other passages which are considered in this study.

With the above introductory material at hand we turn to consider our key passage more specifically. Some hold that this passage (11:1-10) refers to Hezekiah exclusively, and according to others it is a type of Christ. It has been referred to Zerubbabel and to the Maccabees, who were not even descendants of Jesse. The Targum explicitly applies it to the Messiah when it states: "And a king shall come forth from the sons of Jesse, and an Anointed One (or, Messiah) from his sons' sons shall grow up." Modern Jews suppose it to be yet unfulfilled.

It has been objected that Christ was not a descendant of Jesse unless he was actually the son of Joseph. But even if Mary had been of another tribe, her marriage would entitle her offspring to be reckoned as a son of David, much more when she was of this same lineage. The fact of Christ's descent from David is not only repeatedly affirmed, but constantly presupposed in the New Testament, as a fact too notorious to be called in question or to call for proof.

Significance is attached to the use of the word "stump" in this section, rather than seed, root, trunk or stem. The stump, the part remaining above ground when the tree is felled, symbolizes the idea, not merely of descent or derivation, but derivation from a reduced and almost extinct family. Jesse is named as the last progenitor before

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the family attained royal rank.\textsuperscript{38} The idea is that the towering cedar has fallen, but, by way of contrast, a shoot shall come forth from the stump. The royal house of Judah may be cut down, but as an oak it will send forth from its stump a shoot, even the predicted Immanuel of 11:1.\textsuperscript{39}

In this passage Isaiah, having turned from predicting the overthrow of the Assyrian army, gives attention to the distant future and gives us a very clear picture of what shall transpire then. By comparing the history of the times of Christ with this and other parallel prophecies we conclude that many aspects of these prophecies were not fulfilled at Christ's first advent and must therefore refer to his second advent.

This prophecy of Messiah's reign will find its complete fulfillment in the perfected kingdom of Christ. The ideal king is to rule in righteousness. It will be a reign of peace. Even the fiercest of the lower animals are pictured as living in harmless companionship with helpless children.\textsuperscript{40} His kingdom has already been seen in 9:7 as bringing peace; here the emphasis is on the righteousness which will characterize it. Men are always looking for peace, but are not always ready for peace based on righteousness.

\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 249.

\textsuperscript{39} Erdman, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 45.

\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 45-46.
From the local and temporary national deliverance the prophet passes . . . to the end of all prophecy—the everlasting deliverance under Messiah's reign; not merely his first coming, but chiefly his second coming. The language and illustrations are still drawn from the temporary national subject with which he began, but the glories described pertain to Messiah's reign. 41

Many are disposed to allegorize or spiritualize the Old Testament prophecies concerning the kingdom. Fulfilled prophecy, however, furnishes us a standard by which to interpret prophecy yet unfulfilled. If the prophecies concerning the sufferings and death of Christ were fulfilled literally, and they were, then can we not expect the prophecies concerning his earthly reign to likewise be fulfilled literally. The New Testament tells us that eventually even the material creation is to be delivered from the bondage into which it came because of man's sin. Paul pictures this quite clearly in Romans 8:19-22. This picture in Isaiah shows us something of the coming glory of that day. In conservative thought this passage is a backdrop for John's development of the millennial doctrine in Revelation 20.

CHAPTER III

THE MESSIAH AS KING

In this chapter we deal with four different prophecies from Isaiah which are taken from four different chapters of his book: First, a study of 16:4b, 5 is made under the title, "On A Throne In the Tent of David"; Secondly, 28:5,6, "A Crown of Glory," is considered; Thirdly, 32:1,2,14-18, "A Reign of Righteousness," is studied; and finally, 33:17,20-22, "The King in His beauty," commands our attention.

ON A THRONE IN THE TENT OF DAVID

The passage studied

When the oppressor is no more, and destruction has ceased, and he who tramples under foot has vanished from the land, then a throne will be established in steadfast love and on it will sit in faithfulness in the tent of David one who judges and seeks justice and is swift to do righteousness. (16:4b,5)

The passage studied

This prophecy falls in the section of Isaiah which might be entitled, "The Burden of Moab" (Chapters 15-16). Chapter 16:1-6 is an exhortation to the Moabites to seek again allegiance with the house of David for deliverance. 1

Varied views are suggested as to whom this prophecy refers. The throne has been made to refer to that of the Jewish viceroy in Edom. It, for some, refers to Gedaliah, who was appointed viceroy by

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Nebuchadnezzar. It has been taken as a promise that the Jewish government would hereafter exercise kindness towards the Moabites. Many understand it as a promise of stability to Judah itself.2

Many see in this prophecy nothing more than a reference to Hezekiah. Clarke says, "May not this refer to the throne of Hezekiah? Here we have the character of such a king as cannot fail to be a blessing to the people."3 The Jews explain the whole of this prophecy as referring to Hezekiah.

The analogy of other cases, according to Alexander, makes it probable that the words were intended to include a reference to all the good kings of the house of David, not excepting the last king of that line, who was to reign over the house of Jacob forever.4 Ellicott shows partial agreement with this when he suggests the prophet to here make reference to the ideal king of chapters 9:4-7 and 11:1-5, whom he expected after the downfall of the Assyrian oppressor; Hezekiah being a partial type and representative of him.5

For many this is a reference to none other than Messiah himself. The Targum seems to present this position when it states: "Then the


3Adam Clarke, Commentary on the whole Bible (New York: N. Bangs and J. Emory, 1827), III, 737.

4Alexander, loc. cit.

thron of the Anointed one (or, Messiah) of Israel shall be established in goodness." Cheyne and G. A. Smith accept with this interpretation. Calvin also says it cannot be explained as referring to any other than Christ.

Lange is in agreement with giving this a Messianic interpretation. That the prophet has in mind the great Son of David, whose friendliness and righteousness has already been pictured in 9:5 and 11:1 cannot be doubted, states Lange. Continuing, he asserts that when the prophet speaks of ceasing from violence and injustice and building a kingdom of righteousness and of loving mildness, the Messianic kingdom is meant.

This author believes Isaiah to have both a near and far view in this passage, as is true of so many of his prophecies. Present oppression makes a desire for immediate release. In viewing this release Isaiah also jumps the centuries to view in generalities the future kingdom of Christ.

A CROWN OF GLORY

The passage quoted

In that day the Lord of hosts will be a crown of glory, and a diadem of beauty, to the remnant of his people;


and a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, and strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate. (28:5,6)

The passage studied

Israel was in trouble at the time this passage was spoken. Her ship of state, leaking at every seam, without compass or competent helmsman and with its crew demoralized, was sinking.9 The social crimes that Amos had denounced had rent the fabric of society, setting brother against brother, class against class, section against section, till Israel no longer held together as a nation. The fall of Samaria is announced in 28:1-6. To the south, things were not much better since relations were not good between Judah and Assyria.

"In that day" points to the indefinite future of the Messianic Age, not to the day of the judgment on North Israel, which we have seen is the thrust of 28:1-6. Whether the "remnant of his people" denotes the survivors of the Northern tribes, or those of Judah, or of the whole nation, it means a converted remnant; and there is no reason to suppose that Isaiah at any time expected the conversion of Judah to follow immediately the destruction of Ephraim. He is looking beyond the whole series of national judgments. This is a Messianic pendant to the foregoing picture of Samaria's fall.10

Some believe the residue or remnant, referred to here, is primarily Judah in the prosperous reign of Hezekiah and antitypically,


the elect of God. Clarke believes the remnant to be composed of the
two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, who were to continue a kingdom after
the final captivity of the Israelites. 12

Who then is the Lord of hosts? Clarke indicates his belief
that it is the Messiah, when he says: "In that time Messiah, the Lord
of hosts... shall be a crown of joy and a diadem of praise to the
residue of his people." 13 Simeon called Christ "the glory of his people
Israel." The Targum refers to the Lord of hosts as the Anointed One
(or, Messiah). 14 No doubt in the first six verses of this chapter
Isaiah again makes the prophetic leap from that which is near to that
which is in the distant future for him.

A RANGE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

The passage quoted

Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will
rule in justice.

Each will be like a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from
the tempest, like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade
of a great rock in a weary land.

For the palace will be forsaken, the populous city deserted;
the hill and watchtower will become dens for ever, a joy of wild

11 A. R. Fausset, A Commentary on the Old and New Testaments

12 Adam Clarke, Commentary on the whole Bible (New York: N.
Banks and J. Emory, 1827), III, 770.

13 Ibid., 770-1.

14 J. F. Stenning, The Targum of Isaiah (London: Clarendon Press,
1949), p. 86.
asses, a pasture of flocks;

until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest.

Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field.

And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust for ever.

My people will abide in a peaceful habitation, in secure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. (32:1,2,14-18)

The passage studied

This prophecy is located in a portion of Isaiah which is referred to by the title, "Prophetic warnings" (28:1-35:10). Chapters 28-33 contain discourses dealing principally with the relation between Judah and Assyria.

Chapters 31 and 32 point out the folly of the Egyptian alliance. It meant trusting in chariots and horsemen instead of the Holy One of Israel, relying on the flesh and not the spirit, looking to the material world for help instead of the spiritual world. With this background there follows a striking description of the new age under the coming King. It would provide a refuge from wrong and evil. It would be marked by just and beneficent rule, by spiritual and moral transformation, and by the recognition of real worth and the exposure of folly and evil in character.15

15 John Mc Nicol, Thinking Through the Bible (Toronto: The Upper Canada Tract and Book Society, 1944), pp. 110-1.
The promise is that a new era will dawn upon Judah. Society will be regenerated. King and nobles will rule in righteousness, and the poor will find justice. The renovation of society will begin at the top. Those who were once spiritually blind and deaf shall at length understand; those who thought aforetime only superfluously, will think deeply; and those who stammered when speaking on religion, will henceforth speak clearly and forcibly. Conscience also will be sharpened, and moral distinctions will no longer be confused. 16 "The aristocracy of birth and wealth will be replaced by an aristocracy of character." 17 This is the picture presented in 32:1-8, which can be considered the introduction to this section.

These verses (32:1-8) belong to a class of prophecies which we may call Isaiah's "esapces." Isaiah, like Paul, when he had finished some exposition of God's dealings with His people, burst into a splendid vision of the future, and with roused conscience and voice resonant from long debate, He took his loftiest flights of eloquence. 18

To whom then does this prophecy apply? There are interpreters who apply this only to Christ while some see in it more of a general application.

It is evident, says Smith, that in verse 2, Isaiah is not thinking of Messiah alone or particularly. when he says simply "a" man,


he means the ideal for every man. Isaiah has described personal influence on so grand a scale that it is not surprising that the Church has leapt to his words as a direct prophecy of Christ. They are indeed a description of Him. He was, and is, the Rock, but the prophet here has no individual especially in his view, but is rather laying down a general description of the influence of individual character, of which Christ was the highest example. 19

Alexander sees this prophecy as a general one with a partial fulfillment in the reign of Hezekiah. He states:

It is a question among interpreters whether the king here predicted is Hezekiah or the Messiah. The truth appears to be that the promise is a general one, as if he had said, the day is coming when power shall be exercised and government administered, not as at present (in the reign of Ahas), but with a view to the faithful execution of the laws. Of such an improvement Hezekiah's reign was at least a beginning and a foretaste. 20

In the thought of many this passage has primary reference to Messiah and his reign. Skinner displays this thought in the title he gives to 32:1-8: "The Ideal Commonwealth of the Messianic Age." He sees in this passage all the marks of an independent prophecy, although many expositors treat it as a continuation of chapter 31. Though the time of its composition cannot be determined with certainty, it is perhaps most naturally assigned to the close of Isaiah's ministry, when his mind was occupied with the hope of the ideal future, continues Skinner. 21

19 Smith, loc. cit.
Lange sees this as Messianic when he states, the king that will rule righteously must be the Messiah while the time when Israel will be cleansed and purified, and live and be ruled according to truth and righteousness, is the Messianic time. The prophet here does not promise immediate salvation. He sets the glorious Messianic last time over against the pernicious present time, yet in a way that over leaps the long centuries that intervene, and sees the future directly behind the present, concludes Lange.

Erdman also sees Messianic meaning here. After describing the destruction of the enemy, Isaiah gives a glimpse of the ideal future promised to the people of God. The condition of its blessedness is found in the establishment of just and righteous government. Such a condition can exist only when this prophecy has its complete fulfillment and Christ is acknowledged as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

What then do we conclude? There seems to be here a blending of a near view and a far view. The near view is of Sennacherib's invasion, and the immediately following release, while the far view is of the day of the Lord and the kingdom blessings it will provide. As Isaiah is thinking of the joyous aftermath of Zion's deliverance from the Assyrian army, and the consequent vastly increased prestige of King

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Hezekiah's kingdom, there comes in the distant line of his vision a picture of a supreme king, to whom all Old Testament prophecy pointed and toward whom all Old Testament history moved. This king is Messiah. Though this prophecy is more general than some, the Messiah is no doubt in the "far view" of this prophecy.

THE KING IN HIS BEAUTY

The passage quoted

Your eyes will see the king in his beauty; they will behold a land that stretches afar.

Look upon Zion, the city of our appointed feasts! Your eyes will see Jerusalem, a quiet habitation, an immovable tent, whose stakes will never be plucked up, nor will any of its cords be broken.

But there the Lord in majesty will be for us a place of broad rivers and streams, where no galley with oars can go, nor stately ship can pass.

For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our ruler, the Lord is our king; he will save us. (33:17, 20-22)

The passage studied

This prophecy falls into the same basic division of Isaiah into which the preceding prophecy fell. As was then noted, chapters 28-33 contain discourses dealing principally with the relation between Judah and Assyria.

The major question for consideration in this passage is, who is the "king in his beauty" and what is "the land that stretches afar?" Delitzsch sees no "imperial meaning here. For some, the "king in his beauty" is primarily Hezekiah, no longer seen in sackcloth and ashes;
but in beauty.

we are given a description of the time when the oppressor shall be gone and when the Lord Himself shall reign in Zion and His people shall dwell in peace and security and fulness of life. This passage, according to McNicol, foreshadows the Messianic age and the Christian dispensation, and ultimately refers to the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory.25

Fausset indicates that the reference to the land in verse 17 should be rendered "the land of far distances" or "the land in its remotest extent." He concludes that it could not be very far off unless it refer to heaven, the Jerusalem above which is to follow the earthly reign of Jesus at literal Jerusalem.26 This land, for McNicol, is primarily the whole land of Israel, prosperous and peaceful when freed from the foe, but typically or symbolically representing the spiritual world of the new creation, the "better country" of Heb. 11:16, the "heavenly places" of Ephesians 1:3, and also the Fathers house of John 14:2.27

Here as in verses 5 and 6 of this chapter, the salvation of the near future which is of a physical nature, merges into the great, final, spiritual salvation of the Messianic period and following.

25 John McNicol, Thinking Through the Bible (Toronto: The Upper Canada Tract and Book Society, 1944), p. 112.


27 McNicol, loc. cit.
CHAPTER IV

THE MESSIAH RENDERS ALL THINGS NEW

In this chapter three thoughts shall be considered: First, the idea of New Life as seen in 25:6-9 - 26:19a; secondly, the idea of the New Heavens and New Earth is seen in 65:17 and 66:22.

NEW LIFE

The passage quoted

On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.

And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.

He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken.

It will be said on that day, 'Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.' (25:6-9)

Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise, 0 dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy! (26:19a)

The passage studied

Chapters 25-27 are Songs of Salvation. Robinson sees in 25:6-9 a description of Jehovah's bountiful banquet on Mount Zion to all nations, when keeping with 2:2-4, came up to Jerusalem to celebrate. While the people are present at the banquet, Jehovah removes their spiritual blindness so they behold him as the true dispenser of life.
and grace. "The earth" (Judah in particular) becomes the blessed abode of the redeemed, living in peace and happiness.\(^1\) The salvation referred to in 25:6-9, according to McNicol, is described in terms that are foregleams of the new spiritual and heavenly order created by the Lord Jesus Christ.\(^2\)

Many interpretations coincide in applying 26:19 to a resurrection of the dead. The question is: what resurrection is referred to? Answers to this question may be reduced to three. First, the general resurrection of the dead or, the exclusive resurrection of the righteous at the last day. Second, the resurrection of the Jews already dead, not as a possible event, but as an expression of a desire to replenish the depopulated land. Third, a representation of the restoration of the exile and of the theocracy under the figure of a resurrection. According to Alexander, the obvious objection to the first of these possibilities is that a prediction of the final resurrection is much out of place here. The choice therefore lies between the other two hypotheses, he concludes.\(^3\)

Robinson does not agree completely with any one of the three above mentioned possibilities, but is very close to the third view, when he indicates that this first clear statement of the resurrection


in the Old Testament is national and restricted to Israel here. For him it is merely Isaiah's method of expressing a hope of the return of Israel's faithful ones from captivity (Hos. 6:2; Ezek. 37:1-14; Dan. 12:2). 4

Erdman sees in this prophecy a primary application which is national. In contrast with the inability of his people to save themselves, is the promise of God's power and purpose to give them new life. Such words as "thy dead shall live, with my dead body shall they rise. O dwellers in the dust, awake and sing for joy," find their real fulfillment in the life and immortality brought to light in the Gospel, and the glorious consummation of Christian hope, he concludes. 5

Erdman is no doubt correct in seeing in these verses a primary reference which is national and physical and a secondary reference to a future time of spiritual life. Isaiah may here be transported into the age of the New Heavens and New earth. He furnishes a song of praise to God for the redeemed to sing. Paul in I Corinthians 15:54 quotes Isaiah 25:8. This verse is seen in Revelation 7:17 and 21:4 also.

NEW NAMS

The passage quoted

4 Robinson, op. cit., p. 103.

The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord will give. (62:12)

You shall leave your name to my chosen for a curse, and the Lord God will slay you; but his servants he will call by a different name. (65:15)

The passage studied

Both of these verses fall within the last major section of Isaiah (40:1-66:24) which may be called "The Being and Destiny of the Church of God." In chapter 62 we see in verse 1 the idea that the Servant will continue until righteousness and salvation shine forth, while in verses 2-12, God's people are recognized by the nations, and all the world seeks Zion, so that she is called, Sought out; a city not forsaken. In 65:11-16 the idea is presented that unbelieving Israel will be ashamed, but the true servants of God will sing for joy of heart.

We might almost have thought the promise to have reached its maximum at the close of chapter 61, and that nothing greater could be added. This, however, is not the case. Chapter 62:1 indicates that the Messiah speaks of increasing effort which he will put forth to bring Jerusalem to the highest pinnacle of glory. The speaker here, according to Lange, is not the prophet but the Messiah although the later interpreters for the most part, he notes, regard the words as an utterance of

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7 Ibid., p. 222.
the prophet. How could he hope to see all stages of this salvation which was to take place gradually and how could he appoint the watchers spoken in verse 6, asks Lange.8

The Vulgate applies "the Lord" of 62:2 to Christ. Some apply it to Cyrus, as the illustrious patron of the Jews, and a type of Christ. Some suppose an allusion is made in this verse to the oriental practice of imposing new names on towns which have been ruined and rebuilt.9 Some apply it to the act of giving the city a new name corresponding to her glorious character.10

This prophet speaks of a new name here which is past human imagination and which, like the new heaven and the new earth, depends upon the appointment of the Creator. This verse (62:2) can profitably be compared to Revelation 2:17 and 3:12.11

The object of address in 65:15 is the body of the Jewish nation, from which the believing remnant is distinguished by the names "my chosen" and "my servants."12 Instead of leaving their name as a curse, the servants of God shall glorify His name as a God of

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12 Alexander, op. cit., p. 449.
righteousness and truth. In these verses Isaiah no doubt make reference to immediate restoration of Israel and their being called by a new name, while in the distance may be seen the new name which Messiah will give the Christians in his future kingdom.

NEW HEAVENS AND EARTH

The passage quoted

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. (65:17)

For as the new heaven and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me, says the Lord; so shall your descendants and your name remain. (66:22)

The passage studied

Some understand 65:17 to predict an improvement in the air and soil, conducive to longevity of life and good health. Some make it a prediction of the renovation of the present earth and sky after the destruction at the day of judgment. Some regard it as a figurative prophecy of changes in the church. These views shall be considered in more detail.

Better than all these, because requiring less to be assumed, and more in keeping with the usage of prophetic language, is the explanation of the verse as a promise or prediction of entire change in the existing state of things, the precise nature of the change and the means by which it shall be brought about forming no part of the revelation here.

Throughout the Old Testament, especially among the prophets,

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13 Erdman, op. cit., p. 156.
14 Alexander, op. cit., p. 452.
15 Alexander, loc. cit.
the redemptive acts of God are reflected in the natural world. The time of salvation for the elect community is ushered in by a new creation. To a new age belong "new heavens and a new earth." Many feel that the meaning here is not that this present world will be completely destroyed and a new world created, but that the present world will be completely transformed.

This will be a time when men will live and grow old like the patriarchs. They will possess houses and vineyards and enjoy them. An era of peace will be ushered in with the coming of the Messianic age. 16

To picture the blessedness of Israel, redeemed and restored to her own land, the prophet employs a figure of speech so expressive as to be used twice in the New Testament to describe the future "restitution of all things" (II Peter 3:13 & Revelation 21:1). 17

That the words are not inapplicable to a revolution of a moral and spiritual nature, we may learn from Paul's analogous description of the change wrought in conversion (II Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15), and from Peter's application of this very passage . . . (II Peter 3:13). 18

Since 65:17 is just two verses removed from one of the verses considered in the preceding section, much of what is said concerning one, as to time of fulfillment, etc., may be rightly said of the other.

The passage 65:17-25 evidently refers to the millennial kingdom of Christ

18 Alexander, loc. cit.
and the New Heavens and Earth which follow. Certainly verse 25 has not as yet been fulfilled and it would seem that reference is made here to that basic change in all of creation which shall be a part of the end time.

The Jews understand 66:22 as a promise that their national pre-eminence shall be perpetual. Several writers give it the same sense in reference to the New Jerusalem or Jewish state after the Babylonian exile. Some, while considering it a promise to the Jews, believe it merely means that they shall never be rejected but shall form one fold with the Gentiles under the Messiah. 19

The Bible reaches its final climax in a magnificent vision of the New Heavens and the New Earth in Revelation 21. This closing chapter of Isaiah points toward the closing chapters of the Bible. Though some liberal scholars either spiritualize the reference to New Heavens and New Earth or else assert that it was added by a redactor at some date later that Isaiah, it appears logical to this author to conclude that it was written by Isaiah and that he does see in the future, dimly though it may be, that which John the Revelator describes more in detail.

19 Alexander, op. cit., p. 479.
CHAPTER V

WHY THE MESSIAH COMES

In this chapter three references will be considered: First, 35:5,6 will be studied under the title, "The Messiah's Miracles," secondly, 59:20 will be considered under the title, "The Redeemer," and finally, 61:1-3 will be studied under the title, "The Messiah's Salvation." Sections two and three have a very close affinity one for the other. These sections help answer the question, "Why did the Messiah come?"

THE MESSIAH'S MIRACLES

The passage quoted

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped;

then shall the lame man leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy. (35:5,6)

The passage studied

This prophecy falls within the section of Isaiah which may be entitled, "Prophetic Warnings." (28:1-35:10) Chapters 34 and 35 form a smaller unit within the larger section. Chapter 34 consists of a threat of God, first against the nations generally, and then particularly against Edom. Chapter 35 is a picture of the glorious Messianic future.1

We may consider 35:5-10 as one paragraph. Verses 8-10 will be considered in Chapter VI, "The Messiah's Highway," section. The following outline will place 35:5-10 before us:

- The removal of physical infirmity—5, 6.
- The transformation of nature—6, 7.
- Holiness of life and freedom from defilement—8.
- Fulness of joy and freedom from sorrow—10. ²

Isaiah's message here is that the world's renewal will be brought about by the coming of the Lord Himself. He came in the incarnation, and with that transcendent event the new creation began.

As we have seen, 35:5-10 gives us a beautiful description of the salvation that should be realized as the result of His coming. Two significant features mark its fundamental spiritual character: a new source of life, "streams in the desert," and a new way of life, "the way of holiness," which shall be studied later in this paper.

The miracles performed by the Messiah while He was on earth are enumerated in 35:5, 6. These miracles of healing which Christ performed during His earthly ministry were credentials of His Messiahship and fore shadow the conditions which shall be characteristic of the Millennium.

By his miraculous cures our Lord not only in part fulfilled this prophecy, but also showed Himself to be the great Deliverer by whom it was to be accomplished in all its fullness. ³

²John McVical, Thinking Through the Bible (Toronto: The Upper Canada Tract and Book Society, 1906), pp. 113-7.

Let it be concluded that these verses look forward to the two advents of Christ and the miracles which characterize these advents. Christ quoting from this passage in Matthew 11:2-6, concerning his ministry, provides some weight of evidence in this direction.

The REDEEMER

The passage quoted

And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord. (59:20)

The passage studied

The thought progression of chapter 59 is as follows: Israel's imiquities have separated her from God, (verses 1,2); these sins and their effects are set forth, (verses 3-15); and the Lord will intervene to save the true Israel by a Redeemer (verses 16-21). 4

McNicol sees in this last paragraph of the chapter a reference to the advent of Christ. He sees a new section beginning actually in the middle of verse 15: "And Jehovah saw it" —the repentance of His people —, and it displeased Him that the penitents were still under oppression. When there was no one to help them, God undertook to save them and to deliver them from oppression. The promise is that a Redeemer would come to Zion for those who should turn from sin. He would make his covenant with them, and His spirit should abide upon them forever. This prophecy, concludes McNicol, has been fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ in the

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transactions of the Cross and Pentecost.  

The best evidence that this verse has Messianic meaning is Paul's use of it in speaking to his own people, the Jews, in Romans 11:25, 26. Here he tells his people that he would have them understand that a hardening in part had befallen Israel until the fulness of the Gentiles is completed. Then shall all Israel be saved for there shall come out of Zion, the deliverer. Here Paul seems to push the final and complete fulfillment of this prophecy to the very end of time. It may well be concluded that this verse ultimately refers to the Messiah.

THE MESSIAH'S SALVATION

The passage quoted

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;  

to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;  

to grant to those who mourn in Zion—to give them a garland instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and mantle of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified.  

(61:1-3)

The passage studied

Chapters 61-63 form the heart of this concluding section of Isaiah's prophecy. it is within this section that we locate the above

5McKeeol, op. cit., pp. 134-5.
quoted passage, 61:1-3. The question naturally arises, to whom does this prophecy refer. Slotki entitles chapter 61, "Israel's Glorious Destiny," and believes the herald (61:1-3) is probably the prophet himself announcing his mission. As to the anointing, this he indicates may be understood literally since we find that prophets were anointed, or it may be taken metaphorically for 'appointed.' The Targum seems to apply this to the prophet. It begins chapter 61 in the following manner: "The prophet said, The spirit of prophecy from before the Lord Elohim is upon me . . . ." This would seem to be the typical Jewish view.

There is much evidence, however, which applies this passage very definitely to the Messiah. Alexander notes, however, that it must be admitted that the words of Christ, when he quotes this in Luke 4:18-19, do not necessarily imply that he is the direct and only subject of this prophecy, even if the subject were Isaiah, or the prophets as a class, or Israel, if at the same time the foretold event was coming to pass, the Lord might still appropriately speak these words as he does, concludes Alexander.

The context within which Christ speaks these words seems to indicate that he believes them to refer directly to himself. He begins

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his ministry in the synagogue of Nazareth with these words. Christ read only a part of this prophecy in the synagogue in Nazareth, stopping in the middle of a sentence. The reason is obvious, for the Lord followed His reading by announcing, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears." (Luke 4:21) He read only the part that was fulfilled that day. The part which speaks of the day of vengeance of our God was not fulfilled then, nor has it yet been fulfilled.

We see here, as in many other places in the prophets, a blending together of the two advents of Christ. The present age between the events is not the specific subject of Old Testament prophecy. In fact, Peter tells us that the prophets themselves were perplexed about the seeming contradictions in the predictions concerning the "sufferings of Christ and the glory which should follow." (I Peter 1:11)

Many scholars see Messianic teaching throughout the entire section in which this passage occurs (Chapters 61-63). Thus chapter 61 is sometimes called "The Messiah's Ministry," chapter 62, "The Result of the Ministry in Israel's Restoration," and chapter 63, "The Day of Vengeance and the Prayer and Praise of the Believing Remnant."

Young sees chapter 61 as Messianic when he says, the Servant (here the Messiah) who is to bring about a great change is introduced as speaking, describing the object of His ministry in verses 1-3 and the blessing which flow as the result of His work in verses 4-11.9

This author's conclusion is seen in the words of another. He

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agrees with Erdman, when he says, as to the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy we have the assurance of Christ himself. This prophecy was an outline and picture of the ministry of Christ and the salvation He provides. This was the Savior's definite interpretation of the prophecy even though the words, when first spoken, applied to the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon and the restoration of Jerusalem. Here again we have a blending of a near view and a far view.

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CHAPTER VI

THE WAY, THE WATER

Seven passages from Isaiah are considered in this chapter. They are as follows:

(1) The Messiah's ways and paths (2:2-4)
(2) The filth washed away (4:2-6)
(3) The Messiah's highway (35:8-10)
(4) Prepare the way! (40:1-5)
(5) A way and water in the wilderness (43:11,18-24)
(6) Water and spirit (44:3)
(7) Come ye thirsty! (55:1-7)

THE MESSIAH'S WAYS AND PATHS

The passage quoted

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be raised above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it,

and many people shall come and say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.' For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem,

He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation neither shall they learn war any more. (2:2-4)

The passage studied

These verses fall within the first main division of Isaiah (Chapters 1-12) which may be entitled "Prophecies Concerning Judah and Jerusalem." A view of the historical background of these verses will

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indicate that war was imminent when Isaiah wrote this passage in 736 B.C. Probably Zekiah of Isaiah and Hadar of Damascus were already planning to strike a death blow at Jerusalem.

These verses are found, with very little variation, in Micah 4:1-3. Some suppose that a quotation has been accidentally transferred from the margin to the text of Isaiah. Some feel that both prophets draw from Joel; others feel that both quote from an older unknown writer. Some think Micah quoted Isaiah while others think Isaiah quoted Micah. This diversity of judgment may at least suffice to show how vain conjecture is in such a case. Alexander thinks that the close connection of the passage with the context, as it stands in Micah, somewhat favors the conclusion that Isaiah took the text or theme from the younger though contemporary prophet.

Cheyne deals with the similarity between Micah and Isaiah in the following way: Three questions may have to be asked, (1) Is the passage really the work of Isaiah, or in the main taken from Micah? (2) If in the main it is taken from Micah, by whom was it inserted where it now stands, by Isaiah or by an editor? (3) If in the main taken from Micah by an editor, to whom does the original passage in Micah owe its present position, to the prophet Micah or to an editor? In answer to the first question, we may assert confidently that the passage is in the main

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borrowed from Micah. In support of this he notes several points; that this prophecy is found in a more original form in Micah; that it is unnecessary where it now stands as there is already a very full Messianic prophecy in 4:2-6; that its position is against the established usage, which requires the announcement of judgment to precede that of mercy; and that neither the phraseology nor the ideas are distinctively Isaianic.

With regards to the second question, it would be almost too absurd to suppose that Isaiah not only quoted from a younger prophet but placed his extract in this prominent position. Nor would such a theory be consistent with our present knowledge of the composition of the prophetic books. In answer to the third question, we may safely ascribe Micah 4:1-5 to an editor or editors of the Book of Micah. Cheyne, here of course presents the old higher critical approach to the Old Testament, an approach to which this author cannot subscribe.

With this background in mind we now consider our main question: To whom does this prophecy apply and to what time does it make reference? The phrase "and it shall come to pass" nowhere else occur at the beginning of a prophecy. The phrase "in the latter days" may best be rendered, "in the after-days" or "in the sequel of the days." This is a much debated phrase which occurs only here in Isaiah, though it is used by other prophets.


This prophecy points to a time to which the whole Christian world has been looking. In the glorious day predicted here, conditions will be radically changed. War shall have ceased. Right shall be dominant as sin now is. That this time is not yet present is evident to thinking people. The much desired universal peace has not yet appeared. The prophet saw these ideal conditions coming to pass only in connection with the Messianic hope and Messianic reign. The vision is of Zion exalted and idealized. All nations are seen voluntarily going up to Jerusalem to be taught Jehovah's law and to be instructed in His ways. Isaiah thus predicts an era of universal peace in the latter days. This passage is one of hope, and according to Robinson and many others, it is definitely Messianic.

This author believes 2:2-4 to have definite Messianic meaning—agreeing with Young when he indicates that the phrase "the latter days" is clearly eschatological. Without a doubt this prophecy was uttered against the dark background of the sinfulness of the nation at that time. He is describing, however, what will take place long after he and his contemporaries have departed from the scene of earthly existence.

THE FILTH WASHED AWAY

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The passage quoted

In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and glory of the survivors of Israel.

And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem,

when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning.

Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy and a pavilion.

It will be for a shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain. (4:2-6)

The passage studied

This passage falls within the same basic division of Isaiah into which the preceding section fell. Higher criticism does not allow this to be a Messianic passage nor even to be written by Isaiah. Several reasons are suggested by these critics as to why this must be assigned to a post-Exilic editor. (1) The awkward, incoherent style. (2) The absence of rhythm, and the slight amount of parallelism. (3) The presence of a non-Isaianic word, and (4) the predominantly late ideas and images. As to its Messianic emphasis, Scott indicates that "the branch of the Lord," though used in Jer. 23:5 and Zech. 3:8, etc., of the messianic king as sprouting from the stock of David, cannot be so used here because the parallel expression "the fruit of the earth" shows

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that it has its primary meaning in "new growth," "vegetation." Gray presents the same idea when he notes that the Hebrew word, translated "branch" in the Revised Standard Version, does not mean branch, but rather whatever grows or shoots forth from the ground, whether herbage or trees.

Slotki attacks both the idea that this is not Messianic and that it is not written by Isaiah when he states this to be a further description of the Messianic age and the happy state of the survivors of the storm in which all the wicked have been swept away. He insists that the argument for the assignment of this passage to a later writer on the grounds of style and its pronounced apocalyptic character is not convincing since Isaiah's prophecies provide many parallels with the ideas here expressed.

Young believes this to be Messianic in content. He entitles 2:1-4:6, "Messiah's reign and judgments upon the people," and asserts that in 4:2-6 Isaiah closes this section by recurring to the Messianic theme, showing the internal condition of the Church when Messiah reigns.

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The Targum presents the same truth when it renders 4:2: "At that time shall the anointed one (or, Messiah) of the Lord be for joy and for glory . . .".14

This passage is a prophetic description of the spiritual order of the Christian dispensation. A remnant of Israel, purified by the judgment, should realize God's purpose in Zion, and His presence should be manifested in their midst. This was to be accomplished "by the spirit of justice, and by the spirit of burning," which for McNicol refers to the Cross (John 12:31), and to Pentecost (Matt. 3:11).15

The above evidence, plus a comparison of this prophecy with Jeremiah 23:5 and 33:15 as well as Zechariah 3:8 and 6:12, causes this author to conclude that the Messiah and his reign is in the distant view here.

**THE MESSIAH'S HIGHWAY**

The passage quoted

And a highway shall be there, and it shall be called the Holy Way; the unclean shall not pass over it, and fools shall not err therein.

No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast come upon it; they shall not be found there, but the redeemed shall walk there.

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with gladness, with everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. (35:8-10)

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The passage studied

This passage is taken from the same paragraph as the first passage considered in chapter V. Much of what was said concerning this paragraph earlier would thus apply here. The thought of a highway, or way, is often seen in Isaiah (30:21; 40:3; 42:24; 55:8; 58:2; 11:16 etc.). This motif is used by some authors to support the unity of the book.

This "way" for some is the way to the temple. For others it denotes the improvement of the roads in Judea. Some understand it as referring to the way the exiles will use in their return to their own country. For others it is the way of Christ, faith, and the sacraments.16

For McNicol, this whole picture is symbolical of the new order of the present Christian age. The closing feature of the picture is that of the Lord's ransomed people coming home to Zion in the enjoyment of the complete and perfect bliss.17 Let it be concluded that this passage, though describing the return of exiles, looks forward to a glorious Messianic future.

PREPARE THE WAY!

The passage quoted

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God,

Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is over, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins.

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17 McNicol, op. cit., pp. 113-4.
A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain.

And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.' (40:1-5)

The passage studied

Scholarship in general recognizes a basic division between chapters 39 and 40 of Isaiah. Stevenson entitles chapters 1-39, "God over all" while chapters 40-66, he calls "The Gospel before the Gospels." Chapters 40-66 have merited for Isaiah the name, "Evangelist of the Old Testament." Some see chapters 1-39 as looking toward the captivities while chapters 40-66 look beyond the captivities. Chapter 40 is an appropriate introduction to this section.

Liberal scholarship has suggested a Second Isaiah, or a multiplicity of authors or editors as writers of the second basic division of the book. C. C. Torrey, in his book, The Second Isaiah, expresses the belief that chapters 40-66 were written by someone other than Isaiah. He laments the fact, however, that these chapters have been victims of such extreme dissection, rearrangement, and alteration. It would seem that to take one step and acknowledge the belief in a Second Isaiah is to simply open the door for this extreme type of rearrangement.

while it is not within the scope of this treatise to give a detailed treatment of the one-Isaiah, deuterio-Isaiah, multiple-Isaiah problem, there are a few points which should be noted and it is virtually impossible to consider any passage within this last division of the book without being brought face to face with this problem.

Young gives a strong defense of one author for all the book. The view he adopts is that Isaiah the son of Amoz is the author of the entire book, and this for several reasons. First, the New Testament quotes Isaiah more than all the other prophets, and this is done in such a way as to leave no room for doubt that in the eyes of the New Testament, Isaiah was the author of the entire book. Secondly, the tradition of the Isaiahic authorship appears as early as Ecclesiasticus. Third, the heading of the prophecy ascribed the book to Isaiah and the heading serves for the entire book. Fourth, the author of chapters 40-66 was a Palestinian and shows a real acquaintance with Palestine but no familiarity with the land or the religion of Babylon such as we might expect from one who dwelt among the captives. Fifth, there are passages in this last section which do not fit the time of the exile. Sixth, if one begins to divide Isaiah, it is impossible to stop at two divisions. Seventh, the arguments which are generally used for refusing Isaiah the authorship of chapters 40-66 are capable of refutation when we note the real purpose of this section. Eighth, there is a unity in the prophecy which is too often overlooked. Finally, there are passages in Zephaniah, Nahum, Jeremiah and Zechariah which seem to reflect upon parts of chapters 40-66, indicating that the latter portion of Isaiah was
in existence when these prophets wrote. Thus it may be concluded that
these last chapters were probably written by Isaiah during the reign of
Manasseh, but were written not only for the prophets contemporaries, but
also for the future Church of God. The theme of these chapters then is
the Church in its relations with God and man and in its purpose, progress,
design, and vicissitudes. The prophecy far transcends the life past historical events and embraces the advent of the Messiah and the
fortunes of the spiritual Israel.

The theory of a Deutero-Isaiah, while solving one problem,
creates another. If this theory were true it would mean that the greatest
genius among the Hebrew prophets, the one who was endowed with the high-
est quality of prophetic inspiration and made the richest contribution to
Messianic prophecy, has disappeared from history without leaving any
trace of his personality. There is no other case in the literature of
Old Testament prophecy where the name and identity of the prophet has
not been preserved along with his writings. That being the case, the
most reasonable way to deal with the problem is to take the book as
it has come to us from the Jews themselves and as we find it in the Bible.

With this background material before us to introduce Isaiah 40-66
in general, and Isaiah 40:1-5 specifically, let us turn our attention to

19 Edward J. Young, An Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand

20 Ibid., pp. 216-17.

21 John McNeil, Thinking Through the Bible (Toronto: The Upper
the meaning of the passage presently considered noting whether or not it is a messianic section. Erdman suggests the words "Comfort ye, my people," to sound the keynote of the majestic music which fills the remaining chapters of Isaiah. The message is one of consolation, pardon, restoration, and future glory. It is addressed to the Hebrew captives in Babylon yet it finds its ultimate fulfillment in the redeeming work of Christ. To each of Christ's followers it can bring comfort, consolation, and cheer. 22

Chapter 40, verses 1-11, the prologue to the remainder of Isaiah, records four celestial voices. The first, a message of pardon: "Speak ye comfortably" (40:1-2). The second voice speaks of providence (3-5). Though there is much that captive Israel must do, deliverance and restoration must be ascribed to the Lord. All obstacles will be removed, and all flesh will see the glory of God's mighty acts as He leads Israel in triumph back to the land they love. The third voice contrasts the feebleness and frailty of man with God's unfailing promise (6-8). The fourth proclaims the Good News of the coming of the Lord in power as well as grace (9-11). 23 The first two of these voices interest us at this point. The fourth voice is studied in another chapter of this thesis.

The first eleven verses of chapter forty have the advent of Christ as their subject. Verses 3-5 are quoted in all four New Testament


23 Ibid., pp. 90-1.
Gospels as referring to Christ's arrival in the earth (Matthew 3:3; Mark 1:3; Luke 3:4-6; and John 1:23). The voice of verse 3 is a prophetic reference to John the Baptist who was the forerunner of Christ. The basis for this message of comfort, which sounds the key note for chapters 40-66, is the view of a coming Messiah who will bring a cessation of judgment upon Jerusalem. This passage (40:1-5) is clearly Messianic.

A WAY AND WATER IN THE WILDERNESS

The passage quoted

I, I am the Lord, and besides me there is no saviour.

Remember not the former things, consider the things of old.

Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

The wild beasts will honor me, the jackals and the ostriches; for I give water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert, to give drink to my chosen people,

The people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise. (43:11,18-21)

The passage studied

This passage falls within the same division of Isaiah which have been discussed earlier. It is quite evident that verse 11 is an allusion to the deliverance of Israel as a people from external sufferings or dangers. It does not speak explicitly of the Messiah but may have some minor eschatological significance. It should not be restricted, if applied at all directly, to the final salvation of the
individual believer through the Messiah. 24

Some refer verse 18 to the advent of Christ but not to the fall of Babylon and the restoration of the Jews from exile. 25 The admonition in this verse which reads, "Remember not the former things," seems quite strange at first since the prophet is constantly calling upon Israel to remember (44:21; 46:8,9; 47:7). The explanation of the command is obvious, however. The poet speaks rhetorically. The new event is, by comparison, so much greater than the old that it is to be remembered while the old is forgotten. The former things are no doubt the events of the Exodus and sojourn. Isaiah is calling upon Israel to turn from memory to hope; from epochal events of the past to redemptive events of the future. As God has made a way in the sea, a path through the waters (vv. 16), so now he is to make a way through the wilderness. As we have seen, the motif of the way or road is quite prominent throughout Isaiah. This figure is well suited to Israel’s geographical environment and historical consciousness. The new thing that the Lord is doing is the making of a way for his people to return from the exile to Palestine. 26

Let it be concluded that this verse has very little if any application to Messiah.


25 Ibid., p. 156.

The passage quoted

For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon your descendants, and my blessing on your offspring. (44:3)

The passage studied

This passage is a part of the same section of Isaiah as the passage just considered. Some understand this as a promise to send prophets to the Jews in exile, such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. Some suggest that the "water" and "floods" (streams) here, as elsewhere, denote the influence of the Holy Spirit. McNicol believes we here have foreglimpses of the Cross and Pentecost.

The "water on the thirsty land" phrase continues the motif of the previous passage which has just been considered (43:10-21). Here the thought is pressed more clearly into an eschatological context. The Septuagint reads, "For I will give water to the thirsty who walk in a dry land." The Hebrew has only "upon the thirsty," but the parallelism suggests that the land is meant.


29 John McNicol, Thinking Through the Bible (Toronto: The Upper Canada Tract and Book Society, 1944), p. 123.

It would appear that we have no particular Messianic thought here though perhaps an eschatological thrust.

COME YE THIRSTY!

The passage quoted

Ho, every one who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price.

why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Harken diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in fatness.

Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.

Behold, I made him a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples.

Behold, you shall call nations that you know not, and nations that know you not shall run to you, because of the Lord your God, and of the Holy One of Israel, for he has glorified you.

Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon him while he is near;

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. (55:1-7)

The passage studied

Chapters 54-57 are directly related to chapter 53 which we will consider in the final chapter of this thesis. Chapter 55 may be entitled "Salvation Free for All." It is an invitation to all who realize their need to come and enjoy the spiritual blessings of salvation which are now offered freely (vv. 1,2). The Lord promises to extend to them
the blessings of the covenant made with David. These blessings, it is implied, have been secured by the work of the Servant, and other nations are called to share them with Israel (vv. 3-5). The only requirement is that they turn from their wicked ways and seek the Lord who will abundantly pardon (vv. 6-7). His way of accomplishing redemption transcends all the ideas of men (vv. 8-9). His promise of salvation is declared in His word which has power to fulfill itself (vv. 10-11). The result will be a new life for men, the removal of the curse from the earth, and everlasting glory to God (vv. 12-13).

Throughout this chapter there is a combination of spiritual and material blessings. The work of the Servant creates a new spiritual order as a basis for a new material order. The new spiritual creation which Christ introduced by His first coming awaits the triumphant consummation of salvation at His second coming (Romans 8:18-23).

It is not without significance then that chapter 55 follows chapter 53. It is only because the servant was "wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities," that there is healing for our incurable disease of sin. His cross opened this fountain of living water to which all are invited. He paid the immeasurable cost to put salvation within the reach of the poorest and most unworthy sinner. 31

It may be said then that chapter 55 is the Servant's invitation to all the world to enter His kingdom and share His blessings. To

those who hear and obey this gracious invitation there comes assurance
of new spiritual life and of all the blessings promised to David. These
will include, and find as their climax, the Person and work of the Son
of David who has been represented as the suffering servant, who was
unto the, by virtue of His vicarious death, a divine "Witness" to the
truth, the "Captain" of salvation, the "King of Kings." Concerning
"the sure mercies of David" (v. 3), Irwin states:

it is evident that the main and ultimate subject of the promise is
the Messiah and His saving work; and to Him the Apostle Paul applies
these words in Acts 13:34.33

The way of salvation could hardly be more clearly stated than it
is in verses 6-7. Whether for nation or individual it is a complete
reversal of the "way" of life, resulting from a change of thought and
purpose. Those who do "return unto the Lord" can be certain to receive
His gracious forgiveness and His abundant pardon. Verses 12 and 13
describe the glad new life of those who return to the Lord. All nature
seems to be changed before them.34

Some regard this chapter as an invitation to the exiles that
they should be freed as soon as they were brought into a proper state
of mind, and that they would be able to obtain for nothing in their own

33 C. H. Irwin, Bible Commentary (Philadelphia: The Jn C.
land of their oppressors. Though this may be the immediate historical situation which motivated this prophecy it must certainly be concluded that this passage looks forward to the time when the restrictions of the old dispensation are gone and the Church stands open to the entire world.
CHAPTER VII

THE LIGHT, THE CORNERSTONE

In this chapter two thoughts from two chapters of Isaiah are considered. First, "The Light of the World," based on chapter 60 is noted, and secondly, "The Precious Cornerstone," from chapter 28 is considered.

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

**The passage quoted**

Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.

For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the people; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.

And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.

The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you by night; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.

Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. (60:1-3,19,20)

**The passage studied**

There are several ways of dividing chapter 60. Young believes the chapter presents a contrast between the new and the old dispensations and suggests the following outline:
v. 1 - the change which awaits the spiritual Israel is a new and
blessed light upon Zion.
vv. 2-14 - from the entire world those who dwell in darkness shall
come to Zion.
vv. 15-22 - Zion is to be greatly glorified forever.¹

McNicol believes chapter 60 deals with the New Jerusalem, sug-
gest ing that with the coming of the Redeemer to Zion (59:20), a new age
dawns upon her and she is called to arise. He divides the chapter in
the following way: The light of the glory of the Lord should shine upon
her, and all the nations should be blessed thereby (vv. 1-3). Then there
follows a description of her great enlargement and her manifold blessed-
ness. Her sons and daughters should gather to her, bringing the wealth
of the nations (vv. 4-9). Her walls should be built up by foreigners,
and through her open gates should come treasure and the glory of the
nations to beautify the sanctuary of God. The sons of her former foes
should pay her homage, and recognize her to be “The city of Jehovah,
the Zion of the Holy One of Israel” (vv. 10-14). Instead of being hated
and shunned, she should be provided abundantly with the wealth of the
nations, and peace and righteousness should rule in her (vv. 15-18). The
presence of the Lord in her midst should be her light and her glory
forever, and all her people should be righteous. The Lord Himsel will
bring this to pass in due time (vv. 19-21).²

¹Edward J. Young, An Introduction to the Old Testament (Grand

²John McNicol, Thinking Through the Bible (Toronto: The Upper
Most authors unite in applying this chapter either directly or indirectly to Messiah—that is either to his Church or to his future reign and kingdom. Coffin notes that the present application of chapter 60 is to the glory of the church in faithful companionship with her God, and to human society in obedience to his righteous will. This chapter must be interpreted in the light of Hebrews 12:22-24 and Revelation 21:9-27. It is the spiritual and heavenly city that is foreshadowed here. The description is given in terms of the old Zion, but it manifestly transcends everything earthly.

The prophet sees in the distant future the restoration of Jerusalem and its exaltation to unparalleled everlasting glory. He sees, at first, night prevailing over the whole earth. Where Jerusalem is he beholds a growing brightness as at the rising of the sun. He calls to Jerusalem to receive the glory which Jehovah is about to impart to her, and to let that glory unfold itself. It would appear that this glory includes the Lord of Glory, Jesus Christ. The darkness which has shrouded Zion still spreads its veil over the heathen nations of the world, but they are to share also in the light which is to stream forth from the new Jerusalem.

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4McCleol, loc. cit.
5John Peter Lange, Commentary on the Holy Scriptures (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House), II, 647.
Let it be concluded then that especially in verses 17-22 the prophet speaks of the return from Babylon and the restoration of Jerusalem. Yet he employs figures of far wider application. The "glory of the Lord" which was to arise on the nations will be none other than that which was embodied in the divine Saviour who is the light of the world. As for the city, it is a symbol of the New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb, the Church of Christ, which John describes in Revelation 21:23-25.

THE PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE

The passage quoted

Therefore thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I am laying in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, of a sure foundation: 'He who believes will not be in haste.' (28:16)

The passage studied

Note the historical build up to this verse in chapter 28. This chapter is the first of a series of six chapters—all of which refer to the invasion of Sennacherib in 701 B.C. Verses 1-6, however, seem to have been spoken before the downfall of Samaria (722 B.C.).

After pointing in warning to the proud drunkards of Ephraim, whose crown (Samaria) is rapidly fading (vv. 1-6), the prophet turns to the scoffing politicians of Jerusalem, rebuking especially the bibulous priests who stumble in judgment, and the staggering prophets who err in vision (vv. 7-8). But they, looking up with bleared eyes, only mock in burlesque mimicry his monotonous preaching. (Each word in verse 10 is a monosyllable in Hebrew.) Whereupon, Isaiah hurls back the sarcastic but serious retort that Jehovah will one day speak to them in Assyrian monosyllables (vv. 11-13). Then, without openly denouncing their desires to make an alliance with Egypt, he assures them that to suppose that they had made a "covenant with death" is a delusion, that judgment is imminent, and that the only
true element of permanency in Zion is the "sure foundation" stone of faith (v. 16). 7

Who or what is this stone? Slotki believes it to be either the Messiah or Measkiah, or that it indicates generally the inscrutable purpose of God in His relation to Israel. 8 Tasker, connecting this verse with Romans 9:33, believes it to refer to the Messiah. 9 The Targum sees no connection between this verse and the Messiah but renders the verse in the following way:

Therefore thus saith the Lord Elohim, Behold, I will appoint in Zion a king, a strong king, powerful and terrible. I will make him strong and powerful, saith the prophet; but the righteous who have believed in these things shall not be dismayed when distress cometh. 10

Cheyne sees in this verse a reference to Jehovah, noting that we are told in scripture elsewhere that Jehovah is 'the rock of Israel' on the one hand, and 'a stone to fall against' for many nominal Jews, on the other hand. 11 Skinner suggests the stone is not Jehovah Himself, since it is Jehovah who lays it; it is not the temple, nor Mount Zion, nor the Davidic dynasty, for these are at most but vivid symbols of a spiritual fact disclosed to the prophet's faith. 12

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Alexander sees a Messianic connotation here for he states:

This foundation is neither the temple, nor the law, nor Zion itself, nor Hezekiah, but the Messiah, to whom it is repeatedly and explicitly applied in the New Testament. (Romans 9:33; 10:11; I Pet. 2:6). The objection that the stone here mentioned was already laid, has no weight, as the whole theocracy existed with a view to the coming of the Messiah. 13

Lange is in agreement with Alexander as to the identity of this stone. He asks, "What kind of a stone is this which the Lord has laid in Zion?" and then proceeds to answer this question. It must be a stone which really guarantees truth and right, consequently it cannot be Zion itself, nor the royal house of David, nor Hezekiah, nor the temple. It might be regarded as the law, or the word of God in general, but the law and word, so far as they are laid in Zion as objective means of salvation, suppose a still deeper and personal foundation. The law supposes him through whom the revelation of the law took place. The spoken and written word supposes the living, personal word of God Himself, the Logos. Lange concludes that the Logos, the only mediator between God and men, the Messiah promised in the Old Covenant who has appeared in the New, this is the personal and living stone laid in Zion, on whom the whole building fitly framed together grows unto a holy building. 14

Matthew Henry also sees a development here which culminates with Messiah. For him this foundation is (1) the promises of God in general—his word—his covenant with Abraham. (2) The promise of Christ in particular; for to him this is expressly applied in the New Testament, as we have already seen. ¹⁵

What then may be concluded. Whether Isaiah understood the fulness of this prophecy or not, the Holy Spirit plainly contemplated its full fulfillment in Christ. These verses point toward the Lord's coming. The use of the "stone" idea by both Paul and Peter in the New Testament in referring to Christ gives additional evidence that this verse is Messianic.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SERVANT SECTION


MY CHOSEN SERVANT

The passage quoted

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations.

He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street;

A bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice.

He will not fail or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law.

Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread forth the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it:

'I am the Lord; I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations,

to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness." (42:1-7)
The passage studied

As indicated in the introduction above, this is the first of four short songs which express the Servant motif. So much has been written concerning these songs, and especially the last one, that it is difficult to adequately cover the variety of views in the space of one chapter. In keeping with the procedure which has been set for this thesis an attempt to be brief but thorough will be made. One factor in our favor is the fact that much of what is said about one of the songs will hold for the others.

Many pages have been wasted in considering whether or not these songs were written by Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah, or someone else. This area of thought provides some interesting research but is outside the scope of this thesis. This author proceeds on the assumption made by Young in his Isaiah Fifty-Three concerning the last song, namely that Isaiah, the son of Amoz is the writer.¹

There are few more intricate questions than those on the Servant motif. One might naturally expect that so indispensable and important a figure would be defined past all ambiguity, as to his time, person, and name, but the opposite is the case. We are often left wondering if he is a person or a personification? If the latter, is he a personification of all Israel or a part; or ideal Israel or of the order of the prophets? If a person, is he the prophet himself, or a martyr who has already lived

and suffered, like Jeremiah or another. Or is he a person yet to come, like the promised Messiah.  

North enumerates the various groups which have been considered as the Servant by those who hold to a collective view and those who hold to a historical individual view. The collectivists suggest all Israel, ideal Israel, the Remnant, the prophets and the priests. Those who hold to a historical individual interpretation have suggested Hezekiah, Isaiah, Ussiah, Jeremiah, Deutero-Isaiah, Zerubbabel, an unknown teacher of the Law, Eleazar, Jahoiachin, Moses, Ezekiel, Syrus, Josiah, Job, Meshullam, etc.  

Who then is the Servant in chapter 42? Young believes the Servant to be the nation and its head, the Messiah. Verses 1-9 refer to the Messiah while verses 18 and following refer to the nation. Our primary concern here is with verses 1-7, as indicated above.  

Erdman notes that this section introduces the most majestic and mysterious figure which appears in Isaiah's prophecy. He suggests the Servant is first of all Israel, then more specifically the believing purified remnant; but definitely and supremely the coming Messiah and Saviour. He calls attention to the fact that this passage is quoted in Matthew 12:17-21, and that it is not only quoted but declared to be fulfilled in the ministry of Christ. Since Israel failed

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in her high calling, which was to make God and His redeeming grace known to all the world, a Redeemer was to come to fulfill this glorious task.\(^5\)

Copass also leans toward a Messianic interpretation of this passage in expressing the idea that the servant of this chapter is certainly an individual, a gentle, gracious, faithful man, sent out with a definite twofold mission. He is to minister to God's chosen people. He is, secondly, to bring justice to the Gentiles. His central mission thus is salvation for all.\(^6\) Who could fit this description more clearly than Christ?

Several important features are mentioned here which are characteristic of the servant's person and work. First, his endowment: Jehovah puts his spirit upon him. Second, his mission: he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will teach the nations honesty and righteousness. Third, his method: not violence, but meekness and peace are the means which he employs to bring salvation. Fourth, his success: he will not fail or be discouraged till he has performed his entire mission. Fifth, his mediatorial office: a covenant of the people.\(^7\) Robinson's thinking here expressed is quite similar to that of Copass expressed above. Again the question, who can fit this description more clearly than Christ?


Irwin agrees generally with the ideas already advanced. As used in verse 1,

the Servant of Jehovah is a phrase denoting Israel in its ideal character, as chosen by Himself, to execute His commission, and to show forth His praise. This character in its perfection, belongs to the Son of God alone. Hence the present passage is quoted in Matthew 12:18-21, with direct application to our Lord.\(^8\)

Assuming that the Messiah is the servant of Jehovah introduced at the beginning of this chapter there are only two ways of accounting for the subsequent use of the same language with respect to Israel. The first way is to allege a total difference of subject in the different places; which is in fact to decline all explanation of the fact in question. The second way is to say that the Servant in the later prophecies of Isaiah is the Messiah with the church, which is His body, sent by Jehovah to reclaim the world. This agrees exactly with the mission of the Redeemer and His people as described in Scripture.\(^9\)

Robinson speaks in the following manner with reference to this passage. He suggests that not only a temporal agent (Cyrus) shall be raised up to mediate Israel’s redemption, which is the first step in the process of the universal salvation contemplated, but a spiritual factor, Jehovah’s servant shall be employed in bringing the good tidings of salvation to the Gentiles also. He further suggests that this passage describes this ideal figure and the work he is called to execute. As


Jehovah's Spirit rests upon him, he will teach the world true religion, he will restore Israel, and bring justice and light to the Gentiles, and his advent will be a definite guarantee of Jehovah's predictions. All this is given by Robinson without any clear statement as to who he thinks the Servant is.

Alexander notes that the office ascribed to the servant of Jehovah as a teacher of truth, makes the description wholly inappropriate to Cyprus, who is nevertheless regarded as the subject of the prophecy, not only by Saadias among the Jews, but by Henseler, Koppe, and even Ewald. Aben Ezra, Grotius, and some later writers, understand the passage as a description of Isaiah himself. This hypothesis is modified by De Wette and Celsius to embrace all the prophets as a class. If Isaiah had thus spoken of himself, he would have proved himself a madman rather than a prophet. It is true that the prophets were often subjected to persecutions. To speak of these as vicarious and expiatory would be forced and arbitrary as well as contradictory to Scripture. The ancient doctrine of the Jewish Church and of the great majority of Christian writers, is that the servant here spoken of is the Messiah.

Continuing, Alexander suggests that in favor of the Messianic exposition may be urged, not only the tradition of the Jewish Church,

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10 Robinson, op. cit., p. 124.
and the perfect facility with which this hypothesis at once accommodates itself to all the requisitions of the passages to which it is applied, but also the explicit and repeated application of these passages to Jesus Christ in the New Testament. 12

In seeking an answer to the question as to who this servant is, several thoughts need to be considered. In fact, our answer will depend largely on our opinion as to when the prophecy was composed. If chapters 40-60 are exilic (550-538 B.C.), then the servant cannot well be an individual, but Israel collectively. On the other hand, if Isaiah wrote these oracles at the close of the eighth century B.C., then the servant might be consistently conceived of, in vision, as arising from the sorrows the exile already begun. This latter idea is not only possible but probably in the thinking of Robinson. 13

In conclusion we note the thoughts of two authors which are in diametric opposition one to the other. Both are quite emphatic but both cannot be right. Knobel positively asserts that the Old Testament Messiah is nowhere represented either as a teacher or a sufferer, and that the latter chapters of Isaiah contain no allusion to a Messiah at all. 14 Meyer, on the other hand, indicated emphatically that there is

12 Ibid., p. 130.


14 Alexander, loc. cit.
no doubt of the applicability of this passage to our Lord.\textsuperscript{15}

what conclusion may then be drawn as to the identity of the
Servant in this passage? This author's opinion is that the true focus
of this passage is on the Messiah.

YOU ARE MY SERVANT

The passage quoted

Listen to me, O coastlands, and hearken, you peoples from afar.
The Lord called me from the womb, from the body of my mother he
named my name.

he made my mouth like a sharp sword, in the shadow of his hand
he hid me; he made me a polished arrow, in his quiver he hid me
away.

And he said to me, You are my servant, Israel, in whom I will
be glorified.

But I said, I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength
for nothing and vanity; yet surely my right is with the Lord, and
my recompense with my God.

And now the Lord says, who formed me from the womb to be his
servant, to bring Jacob back to him, and that Israel might be
gathered to him, for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord, and my
God has become my strength—

he says: 'It is too light a thing that you should be my servant
to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of
Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation
may reach to the end of the earth.' (49:1-6)

The passage studied

The figure studied here as appeared before, as we have already

\textsuperscript{15}F. E. Meyer, \textit{Christ in Isaiah} (New York: Fleming H. Revell,
seen. It is the most prominent figure in the second major division (chapters 40-66) of Isaiah. Four paragraphs in particular define the character and mission of the servant. These, known as the servant songs, are 42:1-9; 49:1-13; 50:4-9; and 52:13-53:13. One of these we have already considered; two will be considered following this immediate study.

This chapter marks the beginning of the second section of the second part of Isaiah. Chapters 40-48 bring Cyrus and Babylon into view. Chapter 49 brings the servant of Jehovah, who is Christ, into view. Many scholars see a definite break in thought between chapters 48 and 49. Chapters 40-48 have as their leading idea God's predictions of the future as evidence of His deity. Chapters 49-55 develop more at length the idea of the servant of God. Some make chapters 49-57 one section. The following outline presents this view:

A. God's salvation through the servant (49).
B. Exhortations to the unbelieving (50).
C. Exhortations to the righteous (51).
D. Zion's joy in the Lord's deliverance (52:1-12).
F. Restoration of Israel to the place of blessing (54).
G. Appeal to come to God for salvation (55).
H. Moral exhortations in view of God's salvation (56).
I. Contrast of the contrite and wicked (57).

Already Isaiah has alluded to the Servant of Jehovah speaking of him both collectively and as an individual. Now he defines with greater precision both his prophetic and priestly functions, his equipment

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for his task, his sufferings and humiliation, and his final exaltation.
In these "Servant Songs," Isaiah seems to rise above the collective masses of all Israel to at least a personification of the pious within Israel, or to a unique person who embodies within himself all that is best in the Israel within Israel, asserts Robinson.  

Robinson suggests that if we ask who the Servant in this second servant poem is, our decision should probably halt between Israel and a personification of the truly spiritual Israel. This, he says, is because in verse 3 "Israel" is explicitly declared to be Jehovah's Servant while in verse 5 the Servant is distinguished from Israel as the redeemer of Israel. The dominant notes of the passage, he concludes, point to a personification.

Another view is that the servant is a personification of Israel, but in three distinct aspects. First, the phrase represents the nation as a whole. Secondly, the words indicate the godly group of the people, the "Israel within Israel," or the righteous remnant. Thirdly, the "Servant" is more than personification, it is also a Person. He embodies in himself the noblest qualities and ideals of his people and through vicarious suffering becomes the Saviour of the world. Erdman concludes, there can be no doubt that the prediction of such a Saviour

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19 Ibid., p. 144.
is fulfilled only in the person and work of Christ.  

This song is a natural sequel to 42:1-7. The features are as follow: (1) The Servant's consciousness of his mission (49:1-3). (2) His confession of failure in the past (49:4). (3) His quickened faith in the revelation that Jehovah has raised him up for a still greater purpose; to be his organ of salvation to the ends of the earth (49:5-6).

Some have become confused in their identification of this servant because 49:3 speaks of Israel as the servant. Jewish interpreters usually look upon the word "Servant" as referring to the nation rather than to an individual. That is not the full explanation is evident from the following reasons: (1) In 49:6 this One is said to bring Jacob and gather Israel to God. This indicates that the servant is one separate from Israel. (2) Chapter 49:1 supports the idea that the servant is an individual in stating that he was called from the womb and from the bowels of his mother. (3) The reason this one is called Israel in 49:3 may be that in him all that was best in Israel's life found embodiment.

Meyer, in making reference to 49:2, says these are the words of the Messiah, speaking in the name of the elect race, and representing its genius, not as warped by human prejudice, but as God intended it

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21Robinson, loc. cit.

What then may be concluded? This author believes 49:1-6 to make reference to the nation Israel and its head, the Messiah. In this closing portion of Isaiah there appears to be a progressive unfolding of the Servant idea. This second song tells more about the Servant than did the first. The two following songs develop the idea still further.

THE SUSTAINING SERVANT

The passage quoted

The Lord God has given me the tongue of those who are taught, that I may know how to sustain with a word him that is weary. Morning by morning he wakens, he wakens my ear to hear as those who are taught.

The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I turned not backward.

I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I hid not my face from shame and spitting.

For the Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been confounded; therefore I have set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame;

he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who is my adversary? Let him come near to me.

Behold, the Lord God helps me; who will declare me guilty? Behold, all of them will wear out like a garment; the moth will eat them up. (50:4-9)

The passage studied

Chapter 50 falls logically into three paragraphs. Paragraph one, verses 1-3, give the reason for God's breach with Israel. Paragraph

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two, verses 1-3, give the reason for God's breach with Israel. Paragraph two, verses 4-9, the passage here considered, embodies the revelation concerning the incarnation of Christ. Paragraph three, verses 10-11, gives counsel for those who walk in darkness.

Three voices are heard in this chapter. The first paragraph is the voice of the Father addressing the divorced nation. The second paragraph is the voice of the Son in anticipation of His incarnation. The third contains valuable counsel of the Holy Spirit. The trinity is thus presented here. In this introduction to chapter 50 it is easily seen that Coltman considers 50:4-9 as thoroughly Messianic in thought.

This passage is the third "Servant Song." The Servant is speaking, although He is not specifically named. The sum of this section is as follows: The Servant listens for the divine message and thus is enabled to give courage to those who are faint. He knew the fate which men usually mete out to the true prophets. They are scorned and scourged, sawn asunder, burned, beheaded, stoned, and crucified. Yet He was not dismayed nor does His courage fail. He rests in the realization that His enemies will be consumed and He will be vindicated against those who may claim that His sufferings were deserved.

Robinson views this song in the following way:

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24 Coltman, op. cit., p. 94.
In this song, as in the first of the series, the Servant is free from all national limitations. The concept is not bound to Israel either in their totality, or as a spiritual church. Rather the Servant is portrayed as an individual, as a prophet, sinless, and obedient to the divine will... In short, he is described as an ideal prophet made perfect through sufferings.  

Slotki notes that the servant is said to be Isaiah himself but that others regard him as the personification of the saintly minority of Israel, the faithful remnant. The Targum does not indicate a Messianic significance here either but simply assumes the prophecy to refer to the prophet.

Coltman views this passage as a remarkable prophecy of God becoming man. Here the preincarnate Christ, anticipating His incarnation, voices His yet unrealized experience through the prophet Isaiah. The incarnation spoken of here is a genuine flesh and blood king. The marks of real humanity are definite. Note the references to various parts of the body in the passage under consideration—the tongue, ear, cheeks, hair, face, and back. This description corresponds most minutely to the account in the Gospels. Young agrees in viewing this passage as


Messianic, stating that in this song the Servant is best regarded, not as a corporate person, but as the Messiah alone.\(^1\)

What then may be concluded concerning this song? The greatest weight of evidence seems to prove this passage definitely Messianic. The quoting from this passage by Matthew 26:67 and 27:30, for the conservative, proves this song to refer specifically to Messiah.

THE SUFFERING SERVANT

The passage quoted

Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.

As many were astonished at him—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the sons of men—

so shall he startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they shall see, and that which they have not heard they shall understand.

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?

For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearsers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief; whom he makes himself an offering for sin, he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand;

He shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he poured out his soul to death, and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (53:13-53:12)

The passage studied

Chapter 53, which is the major part of the passage now under consideration, is the middle chapter of the second major division of Isaiah. That is if one considers, as do the majority of scholars, that chapters 1-39 comprise the first division and chapters 40-66 the second. This fourth of the "Servant Songs" contains what is probably the best known and most precious chapter of all the prophecies of Isaiah.
One thing perhaps more than any other causes this Servant Song to stand out above the others. It is the idea of death which is a new thought. In the previous songs, according to Robinson, the Servant has been described as a prophet; while here he is pictured as a priest, vicariously suffering for the sins of others. 31

This song consists of five paragraphs, each containing three verses. This is based on the assumption that 52:13-15 is a part of the song. The correctness or incorrectness of this assumption will be discussed later in this section. 52:13-15 is the first paragraph and describes the future exaltation of the Servant following his deep humiliation. It reveals that suffering may be part of a mysterious divine plan and may issue in triumph and glory.

The second paragraph (53:1-3) depicts the Servant as misunderstood, despised, and rejected. He lived in humility, was familiar with sickness, poverty, and pain. "who hath believed our report?" implies that no one has believed what has been reported to us concerning this Saviour.

Nowhere in Scripture is the reality of vicarious sufferings more forcefully set forth than in this third paragraph (53:4-6). The fourth paragraph describes the meekness and the ignominious death of the Servant (53:7-9). The vindication and reward of the "Suffering Servant" are expressed in the fifth and final paragraph (53:10-12). 32

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Who is meant by "my Servant?" An individual, or a collective body? If the latter, is it Israel as a whole, or its righteous remnant, or the prophets, or the priests? If the former, is it Moses, Abraham, Uzziah, Josiah, Jeremiah, Cyrus, Hessekiah, Isaiah, Deutero-Isaiah. (Sellin believes this to be a poem concerning the martyr-death of "Second" Isaiah, written by "Third" Isaiah.) If reference is made to a collective body, could the reference be to the Maccabees, or to the nobles carried off by Nebuchadnezzar, or to their descendants who returned, or to the house of David? If reference is to an individual is he an anonymous prophet, an unknown prophet who suffered martyrdom during the exile, or the Messiah? "Of whom speaketh the prophet this?"

Missfeldt espouses the collectivistic interpretation of this section. In order to rightly identify the Servant, he thinks we must first understand the nature of Hebrew thought concerning the relationship between the community and the individual. According to the Israel-itish way of thinking, unity came before plurality, and the society before the individual, or at least they were contemporary. The actual reality or entity was the community in which the individuals originated. This was particularly true with respect to actual or fictitious blood communities such as the family, clan, tribe, etc. These groups were not a composition of individual members, a firmly held unity which came

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from a tribal ancestor and was bound up in him. The Israelite, therefore, regarded his people as a unity, an individual.  

Slotki believes the servant is the ideal Israel or the faithful remnant, noting that this is not an individual. This is the opinion of all Jewish and most modern non-Jewish commentators. He very emphatically states that whatever causes may have tended to stimulate the advocacy of a Christological interpretation here it is important for Christian exegeses to recognize that the path of Jewish exposition is in the main the right path.  

In 1921 Sigmund Mowinckel suggested that the Servant was none other than "Deutero-Isaiah," the supposed author of Isaiah 40-55, for some authors. A glaring weakness in this view soon manifested itself. Isaiah 53 stresses the past tenses. It describes the suffering and death of the Servant as having already taken place. How could this be, if the Servant were talking about himself? Mowinckel eventually gave up his interpretation.  

Robinson points out that the Servant of chapters 40-66 is the loyal, spiritual kernel of Israel personified. He also records Delitsseh's view which is to the following effect: The idea of the Servant forms a pyramid. The base is Israel. The middle section is

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34 Ibid., pp. 105-6.
36 Young, op. cit., p. 110.
Israel after the Spirit. The summit is the person of the Mediator of salvation arising out of Israel. A. B. Davidson's view, according to Robinson is that the Servant is a conception incarnated, a being which does not belong to the Israel of any particular age, but which is permanent. Robinson believes the Servant idea rises in these Servant passages to the full stature of an individual. 37

O. B. Gray and C. A. North view the servant of this section in the following way: This section leaves the almost overwhelming impression that an individual is in mind. The most likely solution of a very difficult problem is that the prophet started with the equation "the Servant equals Israel," and came at last to see that the perfect Servant of God is such an one as no nation, not even Israel, can ever be, one who by the sufferings, culminating in death, which are the inevitable lot of the perfect Servant of God in this evil world, would reconcile both Israel and the world to God. In this sense, the Servant of 52:13-53:12 and its companion passages foreshadows the sufferings, death, and resurrection of Christ. And no matter what view any individual Christian scholar may hold about who the original Servant was, his last word on the subject is almost invariably that the only person in history who has ever completely embodied in himself the person and mission of the Servant, is Jesus Christ. This is said in all good faith not as a concession to traditional orthodoxy or to conventional piety. 38


Alexander believes the Messiah is being presented in this song in his own personality rather than in conjunction with his people. The ideal of the body recedes and that of the head becomes exclusively conspicuous. Young agrees with this thought. He observes that in chapters 42 and 49 the body, the Church, receives some prominence, while in chapters 50 and 53 the body recedes into the background and the Head alone appears. He thus regards the Servant of this song as a corporate person, Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. This whole section is the description of the Suffering Servant of God. It is a unique portrait drawn centuries before Christ appeared in human form. Although particular features of it may be found in other personalities, it is only in Christ that they are all combined.

Certainly the profoundest thoughts in the Old Testament revelation are to be found in this section. It holds first place in Messianic prophecy. So far as fact and accuracy are concerned, it might well have been composed after Christ's death at Calvary. We can easily see why Meyer wrote, "There is only one brow which the crown of thorns of Isaiah 53 will fit."
Every verse in the passage presently under consideration is tremendous. Perhaps three of the most outstanding are verses 3-5. To whom else could they apply save our Lord Jesus Christ? It is said that when Handel, in composing his great oratorio, "The Messiah," came to Isaiah 53:3, "He was despised and rejected of men," he was found with his head on the table, weeping. With reference to "surely He hath borne our griefs," (53:4) Irwin points out that the quotation of these words in Matthew 8:17, with reference to some of the effects of sin, seems to point to Christ's work in the removal of all sin. The words "borne" and "carried" imply the idea of "taking upon himself" and "taking away." (Irwin 258) Spurgeon is said to have remarked concerning 53:5, "he was wounded for our transgressions," "I have lost the power to doubt Him when I see those wounds." 45

Besides the tradition of the synagogue and church, the analogy of the other places where the Servant of Jehovah is mentioned, the wonderful agreement of the terms of the prediction with the character and history of Jesus Christ, and the express application of the passage to Him by himself and his inspired apostles, who appear to have assumed it as the basis of their doctrine with respect to the atonement, and to have quoted it comparatively seldom only because they had it constantly in view, as appears from their numerous allusions to it; so that even Jocenius, while in one place he argues from their silence that they did not find the doctrine of atonement in the passage, says expressly in another, with a strange but gratifying inconsistency, that most Hebrew readers, being already familiar with the notions of sacrifice and substitution, most of necessity have so explained the place, and that undoubtedly the apostolic doctrine as to Christ's expiatory death rests in a great measure upon this foundation. 46

44 Robinson, loc. cit.
45 Robinson, loc. cit.
46 Alexander, loc. cit.
some sever 52:13-15 from the thought of chapter 53; suggesting that
the Messiah is the subject of these closing verses of chapter 52 but not
of chapter 53. The Masoretic Hebrew text regards verse 13 as connected
with what precedes it rather than introducing a new section. Alexander
points out, however, that it is important that the connection of 52:13-15
with 53 be maintained, in order that the Servant of the Lord, whose
humiliation and exaltation are here mentioned, may be identified with
that mysterious person, whose expiatory sufferings and spiritual triumphs
form the great theme of the subsequent context. 47

This section has a wealth of terms, expressive of the idea of
suffering, which are most applicable to Christ as the Suffering Servant.

Note some of these.

Despised
Rejected of men
Man of sorrows
Acquainted with grief
Born of griefs, carried sorrows
Wounded for our transgression
Bruised for our iniquities
Chastisement of our peace was upon Him
Our iniquity was upon Him
Oppressed
By oppression and judgment he was taken away
Cut off out of the land of the living
The stroke due to the transgression of His people
His soul was an offering for sin
Travail of soul
Poured out his soul unto death
was numbered with transgressors
Bore the sin of many
Made intercession for transgressors

47 Ibid., 284.
The stronger expressions for the violent and painful death language did not afford.

We come now to our final consideration. What evidence does the New Testament offer which indicates that this passage is Messianic? Perhaps the greatest proof of the Messianic thrust of this passage is the New Testament declaration that it is a prophecy of Jesus Christ. There are at least eighty references to Isaiah, either directly or indirectly, in the New Testament and the majority of these are references to Isaiah 53.

The New Testament speaks loudly then in proclaiming this passage as Messianic. Philip met the Ethiopian treasurer and was asked concerning this chapter: "Of whom speaketh the prophet this?" Philip did not hesitate but "opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus." (Acts 8:35) In addition to this there are at least six direct quotations in the New Testament taken from Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

52:15 is quoted in Romans 15:21.  
53:1 is quoted in John 12:38 and Romans 10:16.  
53:4 is quoted in Matthew 8:17.  
53:5,6 is quoted in 1 Peter 2:22-25  
53:7,8 is quoted in Acts 8:32,33.  

What then may we safely conclude? It would appear that if we accept the New Testament as inspired and infallible we must accept this song as Messianic.

Young's words express so clearly this author's beliefs and feelings concerning Isaiah 53.
When...the warm sunshine of God's grace enters the heart, a very strange thing takes place. It now becomes clear to us that, since our minds are created, they cannot know all things, but rather must seek to think God's revealed thoughts after Him. And before these revealed thoughts we bow, like little children, in humility and gratitude. No longer do we seek in our own unaided wisdom to understand the Bible, but we gladly accept it as the Word of God.

Thus the strongest arguments against the Messianic interpretation of Isaiah fifty-three disappear from before our eyes...Others may try to explain the chapter as primarily a human message, called forth by certain circumstances existing in the prophet's day. He however who is willing to accept the testimony of the Bible as trustworthy...knows that it is what it claims to be and what the New Testament says it is, a prophecy concerning God's servant who was to deliver mankind from the guilt and pollution of sin. And he would bow in humble adoration before the God of history and prophecy who, in the sending of His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, has so wondrously fulfilled that which He earlier revealed unto His servant the prophet, concerning Him who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities.48

CHAPTER IX
CONCLUSION

In this thesis consideration has been given all passages in Isaiah which, to this writer, appear to have any possible Messianic significance. Several factors reveal themselves.

Near and far views are mingled in Isaiah's prophecy. Often in the same passage, and sometimes within the scope of one verse, the prophet presents happenings which are separated by centuries. An example of this is the mingling of ideas concerning Christ's first and second advents. To read Isaiah, without access to New Testament revelation, one might think these advents to be very close together in time. Thus the prophet does not have a perfectly developed or crystal-clear chronology. This is not to degrade the prophet but simply to recognize the reality of progressive revelation. Isaiah is the prophet of the two advents. He gives attention, not only to the birth, life, suffering and death of the Christ, but also to the future triumph and millennial kingdom which Christ will establish upon his return.

Isaiah's prophecy is rightly called "the Gospel before the Gospels."


