



Portraits of Messiah in Isaiah

Study Two

Majestic in His Appearance!

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In our last article, we discussed those passages in Isaiah which dealt with the promised Messiah's "Person and Nature". We cited the book of Isaiah as being "the Mount Everest" of the Bible's prophetic books. We took this analogy even further, suggesting that Isaiah's prophetic portraits of the Messiah were also "Mount Everest-like", majestic and without rival! We saw these messianic characteristics in terms of His "Majesty" and "Magnitude" – incomparable to any other Being because of His eternity and sovereignty.

There is one other character trait of Messiah in Isaiah that is a corollary to His "Person and Nature", and that is the prophesied aspects of His coming to planet earth. We turn now to the "Manner" in which God's "Anointed One" was made manifest in His Incarnation and subsequent salvific fulfillments. Editor.

The Manner of His Appearance!

Those who view Mt. Everest, whether tourist or climber, are unified in their expressions of awe – "Spectacular"! Similarly, the scriptural counterpart, Isaiah, causes students and scholars alike to express the same verbal assessment. Our study has shown how spectacular Isaiah's portraits of Messiah are relative to His "Person and Nature". The same is true when it comes to His "Appearance".

Isaiah, son of Amoz, revealed two monumental aspects as to Messiah's manifestation on earth. These were His First Advent (His Incarnation) and His Second Advent (His Second Coming). We will treat these separate, though inter-related historical events, in turn.

A. His First Advent: Messiah appeared as a humble baby, lived in relative obscurity, ministered in Israel, and died an ignominious death on a Cross, bearing a crown of thorns. Notice these characteristics in His Life and Ministry:



First, His birth was prophesied (Is. 7:14; 9:6). He would come to earth as a baby as a gift from God, eventually to be a Ruler, (verse 7; cf. Lk. 1:31-33). The place of His birth would not be Babylon (cf. the general context of "Consolation, Comfort and Hope" presented in chapters 40-66 to the Jewish exiles there for 70 years!), but Bethlehem, Ephrathah (Mic. 5:2). His home region would be that of

"the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali" – Galilee of the Gentiles (Is. 9:1).

As we celebrate this stupendous event in history again at this Christmas Season, may we, whether Jewish or Gentile, ponder afresh the magnitude of God's grace in Christ, available to us all!

Secondly, Isaiah was explicit in that Messiah's human lineage fulfilled the divine Plan. Though the tree of David had been cut down (cf. Is. 6:13), a shoot or branch would grow up from the stump of Jesse (Is. 11:1), David's father (1 Sam. 17:12). The fulness of the

Holy Spirit and absolute integrity would characterise Him and His ministry (Is. 11:3-5).

Thirdly, Messiah's predecessor was clearly prophesied (Is. 40:1-5). John the Baptist prepared the way for His ministry of eternal salvation (Mt. 3:3).

Fourthly, His ministry as "Servant" was foretold (Is. 49:1) In this passage, He (as "Servant") was designated "Israel" because in Messiah alone all His Father's expectations were realized (Is. 49:3). His divine "mission" would be to restore Israel to God and bring light to the gentiles (verse 6). In His First Advent, He would be despised, but He will be worshiped at His Second Advent (Is. 53:3; 60:1ff; 62:11-12).

Fifthly, His missional ministry to which He was commissioned would be by divine unction of the Holy Spirit (Is. 61:1-2a), and notably, be marked by being "the acceptable year of the LORD" (verse 4a; Lk. 4:18).

It must never be overlooked that when Jesus quoted this passage in the synagogue in Capernaum in fulfilment of the prophecy, He stopped half way through the sentence. He deliberately omitted the last phrase, "and the year of vengeance of our God". Today, His gospel is available to all. In that day, His holy love spurned will bring divine judgement!

His Second Advent: Having fulfilled His redemptive mission at Calvary, Jesus, Isaiah's prophesied Messiah, was exalted and glorified to sit at the Father's right hand (Heb. 1:1-4) and exercises His High Priestly Office of "intercession" (Heb. 7-9, especially 7:16,25) until He will appear in the clouds and returns to planet earth (Rev. 1:7; 19:11-16). His crown (Greek, *stephanos*, garland, crown) of thorns, so roughly and mockingly thrust on His head at Calvary, will be changed to a royal diadem (Greek, *diadema*, a golden crown [of royalty]) as triumphant Ruler at the end of the Church Age. As King of Kings and Lord of Lords, He will set up His millennial kingdom and rule over the earth from David's throne in Jerusalem, and then in the Eternal State, forever!

Note these aspects were specifically prophesied by Isaiah in chapter 60. First, he revealed the glory of Jerusalem and Israel *in the kingdom*. Even the gentile nations shall share in these blessings (verse 5; cf. Is. 11:10).

That this referred to the Second Coming of Christ and not His First Advent, is indicated by the fact that, by the nations bearing gifts worthy of His praise in the Holy City, included "gold and frankincense" **but "myrrh"**



is omitted. We suggest that such an omission was deliberate and conveys an extremely relevant point.

It will be remembered that the magi presented their gifts of "gold, frankincense and myrrh" when they found baby Jesus in Bethlehem's manger (Mt. 2:11). Why were these three gifts chosen and what do they represent?

Gold is a precious metal and as such was a very valuable commodity. Just think of it: Was its commercial value used to finance Joseph and Mary's later trip to Egypt? We are not told, but it could have! According to tradition, "gold is a symbol of divinity". In Exodus, The Ark of the Covenant is said to be overlaid with gold (Exodus 25:10-17). Nebuchadnezzar's image had a head of gold (Dan. 2). The Magi's gift of gold to the Christ-child is considered to be symbolic of His divinity. The Messiah, Christ, is God Incarnate, God in flesh.

Frankincense is a white resin or gum. It is obtained from a tree by making incisions in the bark and allowing the gum to flow out. It is highly fragrant when burned and was therefore used in worship by priests and others, where it was burned as a pleasant offering to God (Exodus 30:34). Frankincense is therefore said to be a symbol of "holiness and righteousness". The gift of frankincense to the Christ-child was symbolic of His willingness to become a sacrifice, wholly giving Himself up, like a burnt offering, in sacrifice for sinful man who, through His death is the One who enables true worship.

Myrrh was also a product of the Middle East (especially Arabia), and was obtained from a tree in the same manner as frankincense. It was a spice and was used in embalming. It was also sometimes mingled with wine to form an article of drink. Such a drink was given to the Messiah, the promised Saviour when He was about to be crucified, as a stupefying potion (Mark 15:23).

Matthew referred to it as "gall" (Mt. 27:34). Myrrh is therefore said to symbolize "bitterness, suffering, and affliction". Baby Jesus would grow up to suffer greatly as a man and would pay the ultimate price when He gave His life on the cross for man's sin.

With this background information, we can at once see why "myrrh" was omitted in the context of Isaiah 60. Jesus' death on the Cross for man's sins was an accomplished, historical fact. Now in the Kingdom established at the Messiah's Second Coming, He is the "Son-KING" (symbolized by the nations bring gold) and the "Son-High Priest" (symbolized by their gift of frankincense).

Secondly, two phenomena are God's required prerequisites for the Messiah to establish His Kingdom on earth: Israel's repentance towards Him and their acceptance of His Messiah (Is. 65:1-16; Cf. Acts 15:16ff). After a severe season of judgement lasting seven years (Jer. 30:7; Dan.9:24-27; Rev. 6-18), a "righteous remnant" of one third of that particular generation of Abraham's descendants will be born spiritually "in a day" (Zech. 13:9; Is.66:8; cf. Rom. 11:25-26a).

Thirdly, Isaiah also highlighted the blessings of the Kingdom in the context of the "new heavens and the new earth" (65:17-25). According to John in the book of the Revelation, this will be associated with the millennium which follows the Tribulation, but probably after it culminates with the Great White Throne judgement (Rev. 20:11-15; 21:1ff).

Will you be ready when this promised Messiah comes again? Scientist, Author, and Hymnwriter Isaac Watts penned a song long ago that was originally intended to make reference to Christ's Second Coming. Since then,

it has become associated more with Christmas. Whichever way you want to take it, let this one line motivate you to respond in faith to The Messiah, Jesus, the Christ, Saviour and Lord!

"Let every heart, prepare Him room!" Like the cattle stall in the Bethlehem Inn-keeper's lodgings was open to receive Him to be born in a manger, so may every person's heart be open to receive Him who is "Majestic in His Appearance", so that He may "be born in us today"!

*Joy to the world, the Lord has come!
Let earth received her King;*

Let every heart prepare His room,

*And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and nature sing,
And heaven and heaven and nature sing,*

*Joy to the world, the Saviour reigns!
Let men their songs employ;*

*While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy*

*No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.*

*He rules the world with truth and grace
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love*

Conclusion

With such dramatic and challenging portraits of Messiah, Isaiah has led faithful, obedient, followers to the summit of his literary "Mt. Everest" masterpiece! The views as we climbed higher and higher were increasingly majestic and magnificent. Now on the summit, we can appreciate the magnitude of His Person, the magnificence of His Nature and the majesty of His Appearing – first in Bethlehem Ephrathah, the second when He returns to rule over all the earth!

MAY ALL WHO READ THIS ARTICLE ENJOY A BLESSED CHRISTMAS!





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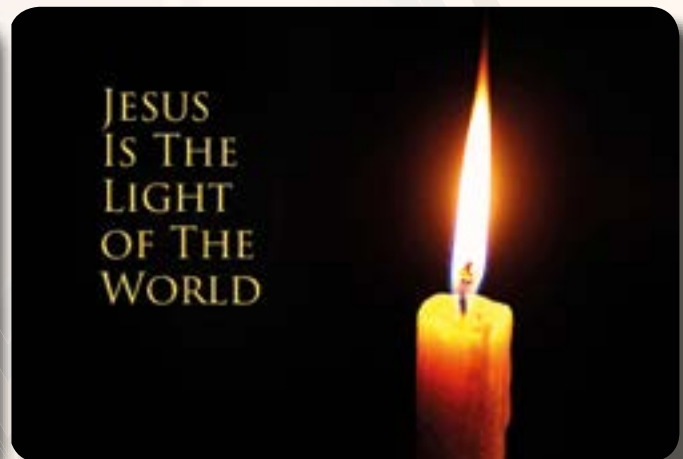
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AND A NEW YEAR FILLED WITH GOD'S BLESSINGS!

and to all our Jewish Friends

A HAPPY & HOLY HANUKKAH!



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Sunday, 13th January, and re-open again
on Monday, 14th January 2019.