

Messianic Prophecies in Isaiah #4: The Earthly Ministry of the Messiah, continued

Out of all the OT prophets, Isaiah gives the most complete picture of the predicted Messiah. We are looking at the messianic prophecies of Isaiah, but will see how they relate to other scriptures also.

Last time we saw the prediction of John the Baptist's ministry to prepare the way for the Messiah, in Isa. 40:3-5, and how Jesus began his public ministry by reading Isa. 60:1-2 in the synagogue.

Preacher of the Gospel

Isa. 52:7 – “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!”

Nah. 1:15 – “Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace! ...”

Mt. 4:17 – “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Mt. 4:23 – “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.” (Mk. 1:38-39)

Mt. 11:5 – “The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.”

But Jesus is not the only one who preaches the gospel of peace – he committed that to us also. Rom. 10:14-15 – “...and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!”

Healing and Deliverance Predicted

Back in Mt. 11:5 (above), Jesus reassured John the Baptist by citing the physical miracles he was doing (blind, lame, lepers, deaf, dead) as a confirmation that he really was the Messiah. He was alluding to other places in Isaiah that predicted those things, like these:

Isa. 29:18-19 – “And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness. The meek also shall increase their joy in the LORD, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.”

Jesus is still opening the blind eyes, physically and spiritually.

Mk. 12:37 – “... And the common people heard him gladly.”

1 Cor. 1:20-31 – not many mighty, not many noble are called, but weak, foolish, base, and despised

Isa. 35:4-6 – “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; he will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert.”

Why does the passage mix the “coming with vengeance” and the blessings of healing and deliverance? They are both true concerning the coming of the Messiah, but separated by his first and second comings. This is similar to Isa. 61:2, which we saw previously. The OT often gives the whole picture of the day of the Messiah, without distinguishing between events that in history have been separated by long periods of time. OT predictions are also not always in chronological order. e.g. Mic. 5:2 predicts the birth of the Messiah, but the previous verse describes his sufferings (“... they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek.”

Isa. 35 clearly predicts the abundance of healings that the Messiah would bring, and the gospels are full of accounts of Jesus healing the deaf, dumb, blind, and crippled.

The Meekness and Compassion of the Messiah

Isa. 42:1-7 – “Behold my servant, whom I uphold: mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law. ... I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.”

Jesus was not a rabble rouser, even though great multitudes followed him. When they would have made him king, he went away from them.

“A bruised reed shall he not break”. If we are using reeds for weaving, a bruised reed might be considered no good and so thrown out. So of people – those who are broken or wounded, or looked down upon, God does not throw out. These are the ones he came to save. Publicans, prostitutes, and lowly sinners all find acceptance and restoration from Christ. He doesn’t condone their sin, but delivers them from it. To the woman caught in adultery, “Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more.” To the lame man healed in John 5, “Behold, thou art made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee.”

The “smoking flax shall he not quench”. Apparently this is a reference to a flax or linen wick in an oil lamp. We can interpret it as those who are beaten down in discouragement through hard circumstances, whose light is flickering and about to go out. Jesus doesn’t “pile on” and beat us down as worthless and unworthy excuses for Christians, or even human beings. He comes to awaken that smoldering, trim the wick, and bring it back to a bright flame. We are as brands plucked from the burning. He wants us to be shining lights, reflecting God’s glory through his working in us, for all the world to see. He sees worth in us, even when we cannot. What worth? That we are his creation, and the work of his hand.

Jesus is not content to use us like “hubcap art”. He doesn’t leave us as we were, and call it somehow beautiful. He transforms us, even to the extent of melting us down in trials and tribulations to remove impurities, and then casting or molding us into what brings him glory and honor. He loves us, not because of our sin, but in spite of it. His love is not based on worth, but on compassion. He does not see sinners as beautiful, but as having the potential for true beauty under his cleansing and transformation.

Examples:

- ugly weathered board or log (run it through saw or planer and see the real beauty of the wood)
- A bucket of scrap copper or brass or lead can be melted, purified, and recast into beauty
- A wheel rotor or hub casting before turning on a turret lathe or automatic chucking machine

He “opens the blind eyes”. There are countless examples of Jesus healing the physically blind in the gospels, but what of spiritual blindness? Lord, open our eyes, that we may see.

He “brings out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.” He didn’t come to eliminate prisons for criminals, or to plot jail-breaks. It refers to the prisons of the mind and spirit. There are prisons of sins and addictions, of negative thinking and depression, of demonic and occultic oppressions.

Jn. 10:10 – “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”

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