

Week- 4(June)

Messianic Messages in Isaiah

There is more Messianic prophecy in the Prophecy of Isaiah than in any other book of prophetic literature. Isaiah is quoted more in the New Testament than any other Old Testament prophet. As you read the Book of Isaiah, look for the Messianic prophecies in his preaching. In Isaiah you will find this prophecy concerning the names by which the Messiah is to be called when He comes: “His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6) Isaiah made it clear that the Messiah would be God in human flesh, or “Immanuel”, meaning, “God with us”. (Matthew 1:23) Isaiah also tells us the essence of the Spirit that will be expressed through the Messiah when He comes: “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from His roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD — and He will delight in the fear of the LORD.” (Isaiah 11:1–3) This is referred to in The Book of Revelation as, “the seven Spirits of God.” (Revelation 3:1; 4:5; 5:6) Since the number seven represents perfection in the Bible, as Isaiah tells us about the coming Messiah, what he’s really saying is, “The Messiah will be the perfect expression of the Spirit of God.”

The Messiah will express the spiritual essence of God in these seven ways. Out of His life will come the Spirit of knowledge, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of might, the Spirit of worship, and the Spirit of the Lord.” As you read the four Gospels, what kind of memorial portrait of Jesus forms in your mind? According to Isaiah, this is what the Messiah will be (was) like: His life will express the Spirit of knowledge and the Spirit of understanding. He will know and understand the Word of God perfectly. The Spirit of wisdom means the application of knowledge, so Jesus will also demonstrate the Spirit of wisdom as He applies the Word of God to His own life and the lives of others. This means He will demonstrate the Spirit of counsel. When He does, there will be a life-changing dynamic in His life and ministry, demonstrating the Spirit of might and of power.

Finally, Isaiah prophesies that the Messiah will express and demonstrate the Spirit of worship, or of the fear of the Lord. He adds the commentary that He will delight in this last expression of the Spirit of worship. When you read the Gospels, you will find, that when Jesus is not ministering to people, He is praying and worshiping in solitude. Read the four Gospels looking for this sevenfold, perfect expression of the Spirit of God fulfilled in the life of Jesus.

In the last half of the twentieth century, there has been a revival of interest in the Holy Spirit. As we interpret our experiences of the Holy Spirit, we create a lot of division and confusion because we make some mistakes in the way we label our experiences with the Holy Spirit. For example, have you ever heard people refer to a Spirit-filled believer, pastor or church? The implication is that there are two kinds of believers, pastors or churches. There are Spirit-filled believers, pastors and churches and then there are all those other believers, pastors and churches - who are never Spirit-filled.

Is that what the Bible means when it describes believers being filled with the Spirit? All believers are commanded to: "Be filled with the Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18) The original language literally commands us to "Be, being filled with the Spirit." This instruction in the Greek language is structured in a way that it is clearly a commandment and not an option for an authentic disciple of Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to be filled with the Spirit? We are told in the Book of Acts that Peter, "filled with the Spirit," preached that great sermon on the Day of Pentecost. Later we read, "Peter, filled with the Spirit," preached again and thousands were saved. Still later we read, "Peter, filled with the Spirit," did this or did that. Now, in between those times the Scripture tells us Peter was filled with the Spirit, was he filled with the Spirit? The Holy Spirit is not a liquid. The Holy Spirit is a Person, and we either have the Person of the Holy Spirit in our lives or we do not.

The real question is not, "How much of the Spirit do we have?" but "How much of us does the Spirit have?" When He has all of us, then we are filled with the Spirit. A Spirit-filled believer is a Spirit-controlled believer. Before Paul commanded us to be, being filled with the Holy Spirit, he wrote: "Be not drunk with wine, which is excessive, but be, being filled with the Holy Spirit." (Ephesians 5:18) Just as a person who is drunk is under the influence, or control of alcohol, we are to be under the influence, or control of the Holy Spirit.

This beautiful prophecy of Isaiah should teach us that none of us should fear being Spirit-filled. Because, if we are Spirit-filled, if we are absolutely controlled by the Spirit of God, if we are expressing the essence of what God is in His Spirit, then we will be like Jesus Christ when He exhibited and expressed these seven dimensions of the Spirit of God. Isaiah is telling us here that Jesus Christ was the perfect expression of the Spirit of God. Jesus Christ was one hundred percent controlled by the Spirit all the time, or He was Spirit-filled all the time. The Spirit of God was perfectly expressed in the life of Jesus Christ. And what was He like? Read the four Gospels and see. Can anyone read the Gospels and not want to be like Jesus? Obviously, His life is the model by

which all of us should live our lives as we express the spiritual essence of our God - Who is a Spirit.

God's Highway

In Isaiah 40 we find another beautiful Messianic prophecy: "A voice of one calling: 'In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill made low; the rough ground shall become level, the rugged places a plain. And the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all mankind together will see it.'" (3-5)

When John the Baptist came preaching the sermons of Isaiah, this is the sermon he preached (Luke 3:4-6). This is one of Isaiah's greatest sermons. He preaches that God is coming into this world in the Person of His Son, the Messiah. Isaiah compares this to a king going on a journey. If a king were going on a journey to a distant village, his subjects would build him a highway on which to travel.

They called it "the King's Highway". When you build a highway you do four things: you level mountains, fill in valleys, straighten out crooked places, and smooth out rough places. Isaiah uses this everyday illustration and says, in essence, "God wants to travel into this world, but He needs a highway on which to travel. The highway on which God will come into this world is going to be the life of His Son. The life of God's Son will be a life of which it can be said, that the mountains of pride will be leveled, the valleys, or the empty places, will be filled, the crooked places of sin will be straightened, and the response of God's Son to the rough spots will be such that the rough spots will be made smooth. Then there will be a Highway on which God can travel into this world, and all flesh will see salvation and the glory of God through that Highway."

Since Jesus was showing us how to live, this means that our lives are to be highways for God. Let me challenge you to pray this prayer, "God, make my life a highway on which You can travel into this world." Once you have prayed that prayer, do not be surprised if God's "spiritual bulldozers" show up and start leveling your mountains of pride, filling your valleys and empty places, straightening out your crooked ways of sin, and smoothing your rough spots. When you and I pray that prayer, God will hang a sign on our lives: "Caution: God at work!"

The Nazareth Manifesto

Another wonderful sermon of Isaiah is found in chapter sixtyone. This is a Messianic prophecy of the public ministry of Jesus. When Jesus began His three years of public ministry, He began with a manifesto, which scholars call “The Nazareth Manifesto”. Jesus went into His hometown synagogue and asked for the scroll of Isaiah the prophet. He rolled out the scroll almost to the end and read these words: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” He then announced that the words He had read were being fulfilled that very day. (Isaiah 61:1,2; Luke 4:18)

If you compare the prophecy of Isaiah in chapter sixty-one to the Lord’s quote of it in Luke, chapter four, you will notice that He stopped His quotation of Isaiah in the middle of a sentence. Isaiah continues, “and the day of vengeance of our God.” Jesus did not read that part of the verse because it is describing His Second Coming. The Messiah will come back and take vengeance on all the enemies of God. Jesus stopped in the middle of that verse and handed the scroll back to the Rabbi because He was announcing His Manifesto for the three years of His ministry that began that day. Then He said, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Isaiah 61:1,2; Luke 4:18-21) Jesus was saying, “The Spirit of God is upon Me.

He has anointed Me to preach a message to poor people.” These poor people were poor in the sense that they were blind. Their blindness meant that they did not know their right hand from their left. They were also poor in the sense that they were bound, which means they were not free. And they were poor in the sense that they were broken and bruised. That day in His hometown synagogue, Jesus essentially announced: “My ministry is directed to blind, bound, broken, and bruised people. When I proclaim My Gospel to these poor people, the blind will see, the bound will be set free, and the broken and bruised will be healed.” Having declared that great Nazareth Manifesto, Jesus began His three years of public ministry. The Nazareth Manifesto is a beautiful framework through which you can view the ministry of Jesus Christ in any of the four Gospels, but especially in the Gospel of Luke. When Jesus, Who was God with us, wanted to announce a manifesto that would describe Who He was, what He was, and what He was doing here, He, like John the Baptist, preached one of the sermons of Isaiah. As you read the four Gospels, observe what Jesus did for three years after He announced His manifesto. He gave sight to the blind. Although He literally healed blind people, through His ministry of teaching, He also gave spiritual sight to those who were spiritually blind. He had great compassion for the multitudes because they were like sheep that did not know their right from

their left. Giving sight to the spiritually blind was obviously a metaphor that profiled His ministry of teaching. In His counseling ministry, He set the prisoners free. He promised the bound people He would lead them to the Truth that would set them free if they would follow Him. (John 8:30-35)

If you are spiritually blind, if you are confused, if you do not know your right from your left, the ministry of the Messiah is directed to you. His mission is to meet your need, to see that you receive sight in your blindness. If you are not free, if you are addicted, if you are controlled by habits and appetites and lusts, the Messiah's ministry is directed to you. He came for people just like you. He wants to set you free. If you are bruised and broken because your life is difficult, remember that Jesus came for people like you. He wants you to be healed. He wants to make you whole.

If you have already experienced the miraculous salvation Jesus and Isaiah profiled in the Manifesto of the Messiah, then, as you go out into the world and interact with people, remember that the ministry of Jesus is also directed to them. Ask yourself, "Are they blind? Are they bound? Are they broken?" The Christ Who is in you wants to have a ministry in their lives like the ministry He has had in your life. He now wants to have that ministry through you. When He spent His last hours with the apostles before He died on His cross, Jesus told them that He would send them the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, Who would be in them. That is what the New Testament means when it tells us that we, the followers of Jesus Christ, His Church, are "the Body of Christ". He lives in us.

We are His hands, His feet, the very body through which He expresses Himself today, giving sight to the blind, freedom to the bound, and healing to the broken and bruised people of this world.

The Suffering Savior

Another dimension of the Messianic preaching of Isaiah focuses on the death of Jesus Christ. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is the greatest chapter in the Bible on the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ. In this beautiful chapter Isaiah begins with the question, "Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?" Remember, Isaiah was commissioned to preach to people who would not believe him. He was clearly aware of the fact that when the Word of God is preached, unless the Holy Spirit reveals the meaning of that Word to people, they will not understand or believe it. What Isaiah was really asking was, "Who really understands the meaning of the death of Jesus?" The heart of Isaiah's teaching in this chapter is found in verse six: "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." How did the God lay

our iniquity on the Messiah? “He was wounded for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed.” (5) Verse six begins and ends with the word “all”. The first time Isaiah uses the word all he says we are all like sheep. Does that include you? Recall that in Psalm 23 it is written, “The LORD is my shepherd. He makes me lie down in green pastures.” (1–2) When we confess that the Lord is our Shepherd, we are also confessing that we are sheep. Now, here in this profound verse in Isaiah we find another place where the Scripture exhorts us to confess that we are sheep.

We are all sheep who have gone astray. In other words, we are all sinners; we have all turned to our own ways. The second time Isaiah uses the word “all” he gives us the Good News. “The LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Do you believe that you are included in that last “all” of Isaiah? If you will confess that the first “all” includes you, and if you will confess that the last “all” includes you, then you are confessing what you need to confess to apply the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ on the cross to your life. You can then experience the salvation that was revealed when God used the life of His Son as a Highway on which He traveled into this world.