

CHAPTER 5

MESSIANISM AND MESSIANIC PROPHECY IN ISAIAH 1-12 AND 28-33

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Summary

Messianism and messianic prophecy are not the same. The Book of Isaiah illustrates this well. Early prophetic messianism as found in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33 is an expression of hope or expectancy with regard to a Jerusalemite king on the part of a particular group of his people (often called the 'remnant'), headed mostly by a prophet. Whenever the king and the remnant practised justice and righteousness as David did (2 Sa. 8:15) and as required by the prophet, messianism arose. It developed until that hope was foiled by the failure of the given king and the remnant to observe justice and righteousness; generally the hope was transferred to the next descendant of the throne.

Certain texts, however have for centuries been taken for more than that. In Isaiah these are Isaiah 7:10-17, 9:1-6 and 11:1-9. While they are part and parcel of messianism, they contain details which for a number of New Testament writers and uncounted believers since pointed in varying degrees to Jesus of Nazareth, as the Messiah par excellence.

I. Introductory

'It's all about Jesus!' my first Bible teacher used to say, a little over 25 years ago. 'The Bible is all about Jesus.' I did not know whether he was simply restating Luther's famous hermeneutical principle 'Was Christum treibet' (how does it relate to Christ?) or whether he actually read of Jesus in the Old Testament. At any rate, as a fledgling student of the Bible, I often wondered where Jesus was in the Old Testament. I trust the following study of Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33¹ will help to illuminate one aspect of this question.

The term 'messianism' comes from the word 'Messiah', which has been and remains to this day a rather loaded notion.² It is used in the Old Testament to refer to a deliverer from trouble, but is nowadays used for just about any professed or accepted champion of a hope or good cause.³ The word 'Messiah' is derived from the Hebrew root מָשַׁח, 'to anoint', mostly used in connection of anointing a person for an office; though other uses do occur (e.g., at Je. 22:14 it is used of applying varnish to wood).⁴ The noun מָשִׁיחַ 'anointed one', 'Messiah', occurs fairly frequently in certain books of the Hebrew Bible (above all 1 and 2 Sa. and Pss.), rarely or never in others (especially the Prophets). As to the people to be anointed, the reference is mostly to kings.⁵ Thus, the term 'Messiah' and kingship are closely related.⁶

In our view the word 'messianism' has much more to it than just an etymological link with the Hebrew root מָשַׁח. While the term 'Messiah' has traditionally always denoted a particular person, a deliverer from trouble, above all Jesus of Nazareth for the Christian

¹Only these chapters in Is. 1-39 contain messianism and messianic prophecies as defined below. C. Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny: The Development of the Book of Isaiah, A Reassessment of Isaiah 36-39* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991) 61, speculates that even Is. 36-37 is of a piece with Is. 8:23-9:6; 11:1-10 and 32:1-8 and not, as often purported, a secondary embellishment of post-exilic times.

²Recent studies of the subject, from both the conservative and the critical sides of the spectrum, are: G. van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990); J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Messiah* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992); P.D. Wegner, *An Examination of Kingship and Messianic Expectation in Isaiah 1-35* (Lewiston: Mellen, 1992); E. Stegemann (ed.), *Messias-Vorstellungen bei Juden und Christen* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1993); cf. also H. Strauß, 'Messias/Messianische Bewegungen I', *TRE* XXII (1992), 617-21 and M. de Jonge, 'Messiah', *ABD* IV (1992), 777ff. In our view, Charlesworth's compendium is the most illuminating.

³Sadly, it has come to be used today as a term to describe a religious guru more often than anyone else; e.g., for David Koresh (April 1992, in Texas) and for Shoko Asahara, leader of Aum Shinrikyo (March 1995, in Tokyo).

tradition, the term 'messianism' goes far beyond what the root מָשַׁח denotes. One scholar has even spoken of 'messianism without Messiah'.⁷ Thus, while Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33 do not contain the root מָשַׁח, we think it correct to speak of a 'prophetic messianism' in these chapters.

Our working definition of messianism as it relates to Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33 is as an expression of hope or expectancy with regard to a Jerusalemite king on the part of a particular group of his people (often described as 'the remnant'), headed mostly by a prophet. This hope relates particularly to the practice of מִשְׁפָּט ('justice') and צְדָקָה (righteousness): whenever, according to the demand of the prophet, the king and the remnant practice justice and righteousness,⁸ as David is said to have done (2 Sa. 8:15), we may speak of the fulfilment of a messianic hope; similarly, the hope can be thwarted by the misbehaviour of the king and his people, a failure to practice justice and righteousness. Generally, the hope is then transferred to the next royal descendant.⁹

Bearing this definition in mind, let us begin by examining what Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33 have to say about kings.

⁴A look at the references that contain the root מָשַׁח ('anoint', mostly the verb, in Qal about 70 times, substantive מָשִׁיחַ 38 times) leads one to the conclusion that מָשִׁיחַ, with the article, 'the Messiah' became with time a *terminus technicus* for the king, starting with Saul (1 Sa. 12:3; cf. however Jotham's fable, Judg. 9:8) and ending with Cyrus (Is. 45:1). The only exception is Lv. 4:3 where מָשִׁיחַ is the priest. In 1 Ki. 19:16, a text often cited to point out the anointing of prophets (cf. Is. 61:1; Ps. 105:15), the prophet Elijah is only told to anoint his successor Elisha (alongside Jehu, the king), but actually casts his mantle upon him, nothing more (1 Ki. 19:19-21). The 'shield of Saul not anointed with oil' in 2 Sa. 1:21 (cf. Is. 21:5) probably serves as a metonymy for his kingdom. Interestingly enough, with the exception of Lv. 4:3 and 2 Sa. 1:21, the LXX translates מָשִׁיחַ and מָשִׁיחַ always with χριστός, 'Christ'.

⁵While only Lv. 4:3 calls the priest מָשִׁיחַ 'the Messiah', priests, above all Aaron and his sons, are quite often said to be anointed (Ex. 28:41; 29:7; 30:30; 40:13,15; Lv. 6:15; 7:36; 8:12; 16:32; Nu. 3:3; 35:25; 1 Ch. 29:22).

⁶R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1965) 103f.

⁷de Jonge, *ABD* IV, 778.

⁸The two nouns appear 8 times together in Is. 1-39, *ABD* V:728f. Cf. H. Cazelles, 'De l'idéologie royale' in *JANES* 5 (1973; Fs. T.H. Gaster) 59-73, esp. 71.

⁹For an additional element of messianism that we hesitated to include, cf., below, fn. 50. Wegner, *Kingship*, 3f pleads for a more restricted definition: 'The hope which is engendered by the belief in the future deliverer/ruler who will set up an everlasting kingdom and bring salvation to the people of God.' Definitions are legion; Cazelles, *Le Messie de la Bible: Christologie de l'Ancien Testament* (Paris: Desclée, 1978), 217ff has summarized no fewer than 26.

II. Kingship in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33

Perhaps to our surprise, Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33 do not make frequent mention of kings. Other officials and dignitaries are mentioned much more often.¹⁰ All of them are scolded by the prophet, mostly for social evils and moral decadence, but, interestingly, never the king.¹¹ When we discover in 3:6-7, for instance, that a number of officials are named because of their failure to provide leadership in the land, naturally we are led to ask: Where is the king? Again, YHWH himself removes the leadership, 'warrior and soldier, judge and prophet, diviner and elder, captain of fifty and dignitary, counsellor and skilful magician and expert enchanter' (3:1-3), but, strangely, not the king.¹² When the 'daughters of Zion' (3:16), probably the wives of those in charge (3:25), are accused of living in too much opulence, symbolized by the multitude of their luxurious ornaments (3:18-23, a description in prose) again we wonder: Why is there no queen among the accused? Would she not be a prime target of the prophet's critique?

Coming to Isaiah 6, the next text which mentions a king, one asks: Is YHWH alone considered to be king (6:5)? Where is the earthly king in all this exaltation of YHWH? After all, it is dated in the year of king Uzziah's death (6:1). Is it precisely because of this that the prophet's eyes are turned to the heavenly king exclusively, at least for the time being? Finally, when a king is mentioned by name, Ahaz, son of Uzziah (7:1ff, again in prose), no accusation is levelled against him

¹⁰1:10, 'rulers of Sodom', 1:23, 'rebel rulers' (cf. 1:31, 'the mighty one'). 3:2-3 contains a whole gamut of dignitaries: 'hero, prophet, judge, elder' (cf. 3:14; 9:14) etc.. The 'garland' or 'crown of the drunkards of Ephraim' (28:1) denotes the pride and revelry of the leaders of Samaria, but no king is singled out, whereas priest and prophet alike are (28:7). The 'scoffers' and 'rulers of his people' (28:14), the ones 'who hide a plan too deep for the Lord' (29:15), the 'rebellious children' (30:1; cf. 1:4) or 'lying sons' (30:9) who descend into Egypt (30:2; 31:1) may, but do not necessarily include the king. But, we ask: why is he never mentioned, except in Is. 30:33 where 'the king' must be the king of Assyria (cf. 36:14 and Wildberger, 1223)?

¹¹The same is the case with Isaiah's contemporary or 'country cousin', the prophet Micah. Rarely does he mention the king (e.g., Mi. 1:14), let alone scold him, but he does not hesitate to rebuke the officials one after the other, including prophets and priests (3:1, 5, 9, 11; 7:2-3).

¹²No wonder most commentators are at a loss concerning its historical context; cf. H. Wildberger, *Jesaja 28-39* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener, 1972) 120; J.N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 1-39* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986) 133; A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Leicester: IVP, 1994) 60. B. Duhm, *Das Buch Jesaja* (4th ed; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1922) 44, thinks of 'weak' Ahaz; Delitzsch, 132, suggests that the omission is intentional since he had sunk into the mere shadow of a king-

personally, with the exception, perhaps of a rather lenient reminder in 7:9 that he had to trust [God], but the imperative is in the plural, addressed to the 'house of David' (7:13). The only other kings mentioned in Isaiah 1-12 are kings from the North. Peqah of Israel is referred to in 7:4, 9 (rather disparagingly: he is a [mere] 'son of Remaliah', i.e., probably a [Canaanite?] usurper, cf. 2 Ki. 15:25). Then in 8:21, the next text referring to a king, the reference to the 'hungry roamer' who is cursing 'his [unnamed] king and his god', actually says little against the king himself. It is against the darkness and distress of the situation in general, in all probability the Assyrian invasion in 734-732 BC (see below), that he is railing (8:22). In Isaiah 10:5-11, it is 'the Assyrian' (10:5) who issues the threatening words 'Are not all my commanders kings?' (Is. 10:8). This is obviously a rhetorical question, expressing contempt for all aspirations of Assyria's subjects to rebel by usurping the throne again and claiming independence. In Isaiah 28-33, the king is rarely mentioned and when he is, it is mostly in a positive manner (32:1; 33:17, 22).¹³

In the light of this preliminary survey of Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33, it might seem that too little is said about the king to allow one to speak of messianism in any substantial form. However, according to our definition, messianism is not only an expression of hope or expectancy with regard to a king, but is linked to the establishment of justice and righteousness, as proclaimed by the prophet. We now examine other aspects of Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33, in particular the oracles of hope which speak of *צדק קוה* and *הישפט*.

III. Oracles of hope in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33

Most commentators agree that Isaiah 1-12 forms the first major part of the whole book,¹⁴ though there is much less agreement as to the number of its constituent parts, their authorship and date.¹⁵ Many view Isaiah 1 as an introduction to the whole book, because of the number of themes it contains that are found in subsequent parts of the

¹³As to the question whether Hezekiah, most probably the king of Is. 28-33 was seeking help from Egypt (Is. 30 and 31), an idea commonly held, see Seitz's well-argued refutation, *Zion's Final Destiny*, 75ff. He lays bare an obvious and current reductionism with regard to Is. 36-37.

¹⁴TRE 16:638 (O. Kaiser, 1987); ABD III: 480 (C. Seitz, 1992); Motyer, among others, subdivides into 1-5 and 6-12. Is. 28-31 at least, less so Is. 32-33, are most often associated with Is. 1-12 as belonging roughly to the same time.

¹⁵The best discussion to date is C. Seitz in ABD, III, 479ff

book. Others question whether it is an introduction as such, because there are other later and no less important themes that are absent from Isaiah 1.¹⁶ In our view Isaiah 1 contains enough of these later themes, at least *in nuce*, to suggest that it was indeed composed with the aim of giving a bird's eye view of the whole book.

The first large section within Isaiah 1-12 is chapters 2-5, usually subdivided into, on the one hand, 2:1-4 (5) and 2:6-4:1 and, on the other, 4:2-6 and 5:1-30. This section demonstrates the characteristic pattern of Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33, long oracles of doom interspersed with short oracles of hope. This pattern (AB or ABA) can be seen from Isaiah 1 on: 1:2-25 (doom); 1:26-27 (hope); 1:28-31 (doom); 2:1-4 (hope); 2:5-4:1 (doom); 4:2-6 (hope); 5:1-30 (doom), *etc.*

Isaiah 6:1-9:7 [Heb. 9:6] is, with few exceptions, considered to be a literary unity, often called a 'memorial' (*Denkschrift*) of the so-called Syro-Ephraimite war (734-732 BC), now more appropriately termed the 'Syro-Ephraimite debacle' (Seitz¹⁷) as it never came to a war. Unlike Isaiah 1-5, it contains a number of historical markers and it is there that we find the first texts that have traditionally been taken to be 'messianic prophecies', including the classic texts 7:14 and 9:6-7 [Heb. vv. 5-6]. We shall return to them later.

Isaiah 9:7 [Heb. v. 6]-10:34 is often linked to 5:1-30 and to chapters 28-31, mostly because of the similarity of the 'woe-oracles' found therein. There are no oracles of hope in this section and hence there is no messianism either.¹⁸

Isaiah 11 and 12 stand in a category by themselves, Isaiah 11 often being considered a composite oracle of hope, subdivided into 11:1-9 and 11:10-16, and Isaiah 12 a psalm put there at some indefinable time to round off the first major section of the whole book.

Finally, Isaiah 28-33 reverts to the (AB or ABA) pattern found in 1-12, long oracles of doom interspersed with short(er) oracles of hope: 28:1-4 (doom); 28:5-6 (hope); 28:7-15 (doom); 28:16-17 (hope); 28:18-29 (doom); 29:1-16 (doom); 29:17-24 (hope); 30:1-17 (doom), 30:18-24 (hope); 30:25-31:3 (doom); 31:4-32:8 (hope); 32:9-15 (doom);

¹⁶M.A. Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4 and the Postexilic Understanding of the Isaianic Tradition* (BZAW 171; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1988) 186; W.J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994) 80; H.G.M. Williamson, *The Book Called Isaiah* (Oxford: OUP, 1994) 154, fn. 83; for Wildberger, *Jesaja 1-12*, 1554 who calls Is. 1 Isaiah's own 'Vermächtnis' (testament), there is no 'messianic hope' in ch.1.

¹⁷ABD III:480.

¹⁸Cf. Motyer, *Prophecy*, 112; Williamson, *Book Called Isaiah*, 132ff.

32:16-20 (hope); 33:1-16 (doom); 33:17-24 (hope).

Whatever the constituent parts of Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33 and their respective origins may be, an issue on which scholars will probably never agree entirely, when it comes to messianism, it is, in our view, futile to seek to determine how and when messianism grew within Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33, since as these chapters now stand, messianism runs through the whole and is difficult to extricate from its literary context.¹⁹ The apparently random juxtaposition of oracles of doom and oracles of hope still remains to be explained. The two are inextricably linked. The question is how?

One approach is that of R.E. Clements²⁰ and his student P.D. Wegner (who limits his study to Isaiah 7:10-17; 8:23-9:6; 11:1-9 and 32:1-8). They suggest that in these messianic texts we simply have 'new wine poured into old bottles'; that is, Isaianic passages have been considered by later editors to be messianic and thus reshaped or 'reread' (the concept of *relecture* is important in Wegner's treatment) to express messianic expectation.²¹ Thus they envisage a continuing updating of the prophetic corpus, mostly during or after the Babylonian exile. Is this the best way to account for the apparently haphazard juxtaposition of oracles of doom and oracles of hope? Do they represent inherently different oracles addressed to different audiences living at different times? Or do they address different audiences, but audiences that lived more or less at the same time? The classic question of method, synchronic vs. diachronic, is here posed.²²

Before we advance concrete suggestions, we must bring Zion theology, one of the major themes of Old Testament prophecy in general and of the book of Isaiah in particular, into our discussion.

¹⁹Radical redating of the biblical material (Wellhausen, Duhm, Kuening) broke the back of the traditional understanding of the growth of OT messianism' (B.S. Childs, *Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments*, [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993], 453). Wegner's basic weakness in this regard is that he believes he is able to apply the strengths of both methods, the synchronic and diachronic, but as the saying goes, you cannot have your cake and eat it (cf. our review of Wegner in *Themelios* 20:3 [1995] 21). We concur, however with S. Talmon ('The Concept of *Mašiah* and Messianism in Early Judaism' in J.H. Charlesworth [ed.], *The Messiah*, 79-115, esp. 93) that the biblical concept of the Messiah is multilineal and that we move from historical reality to ideation and idealization. On this, see below.

²⁰R.E. Clements, 'The Messianic Hope in the OT', *JSOT* 43 (1989), 14.

²¹cf. Wegner, *Kingship*, Preface, p. VII and titles of chs. 2-5.

²²Wegner (*ibid.*) admits to wanting to combine the diachronic and synchronic methods.

1. Zion Theology in Isaiah

The expectation of change for the better with regard to the king and a particular group of his people more closely associated with him is more often than not linked to an expression of hope in regard to Zion/Jerusalem. Messianism as we defined it and what is known as 'zion theology' are inextricably linked, so much so that for all practical purposes Zion theology is part and parcel of messianism.²³ What, then is Zion theology?

Simply put, Zion theology denotes God's ruling in and through 'Zion', the theological name for Jerusalem. God's rule is not only linked to the idea of him 'dwelling' in Zion in some abstract way (Dt. 12:11), but also to his ruling there through his representative on earth, the king. In Zion, 'divine and earthly spheres intersect'.²⁴ In the Book of Isaiah they intersect to the point of practically holding the whole book together.²⁵ Hints of this are to be found as early as the opening chapter, which introduces so many of the book's themes:

And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counsellors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed by justice [מִשְׁפָּט] and those in her who repent, by righteousness [צְדָקָה]. (Is. 1:26-27)

Commentators, unfortunately tend to separate these two verses, mostly because of what precedes and of what follows and consequently consider Isaiah 1:21-31 to be composite, though not necessarily inauthentic (dates vary anywhere between 722 and 701).²⁶ But do we not have here the classic prophetic pattern of accusation (1:21-23), purification (1:24-25) and restoration for those who 'return' (who are redeemed and who practise justice and righteousness, 1:26-27) and judgment for those who do not and continue to rebel (1:28-31)? There are two kinds of people and two kinds of messages, both linked to Zion. The pattern continues in chapter 2.

In Isaiah 2:1ff Zion is not just another subject among others to fit a certain pattern, it is the chapter's central theme.²⁷ The most glori-

²³See esp., G. von Rad's seminal study 'The City on the Hill' in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and Other Essays*, (London: Oliver & Boyd, 1966), 232-42.

²⁴Dumbrell, *Search*, 82.

²⁵Dumbrell, *Search*, 80-95 and 110-25; Seitz, *Zion's Final Destiny*, 202-205; cf. *ABD* III, 481.

²⁶Sweeney, *Isaiah 1-4*, 130f; Motyer, *Prophecy*, 50.

²⁷For Dumbrell, *Search*, 81, Jerusalem is the key to the movement of the whole book of Isaiah.

ous hope of all concerning Zion perhaps comes to expression here. Alongside the pride of those who worship their riches, their military hardware and their false gods in whom they put their trust (2:6-22),²⁸ Zion is described as the centre of the world to which nations and peoples flow, and from which the word of the Lord, his law flows out.²⁹ So effectively does the Lord banish evil that universal peace ensues and 'they will learn war no more' (2:4d). The question, of course, is: Where is Israel in this wishful thinking? And: Where is her king?³⁰

For most commentators the answer is easy: They are gone, both of them! Gone into exile to Babylon in 597 or 587 BC, together with those idolaters of the second part of the chapter. Only a dreamer over there, whose 'dross has been smelted away as with lye', whose 'alloy has been removed' (Is. 1:25) by means of the exile and whose only remaining hope is YHWH himself, can imagine a utopia such as in Isaiah 2:1ff. All hope in Israel and/or her king is gone forever! We ask: Is this so, or are there alternative audiences, people deserving to hear such messages of 'roses and lavender' amidst all the 'blood and iron'?³¹

Those who reason that there is no other explanation for Zion theology in the form it takes in Isaiah 2:1ff do so on the premise that before the Babylonian exile prophets were exclusively 'to afflict the comfortable and not to comfort the afflicted'.³² Why? Simply, because there were, allegedly, only comfortable (people)! For such scholars, this position is sufficiently proved by the fact that there are many more oracles of doom than there are oracles of hope in practically all prophetic books coming from the eighth century BC. It was Wellhausen who decreed well over a century ago that a prophet would not all of a sudden 'make milk and honey flow from the cup of the wrath of God'.³³ Before the Babylonian exile, it is argued, there never were any people in Zion to whom an oracle of hope as Isaiah 2:1-4 might have been addressed. Only the exile to Babylon and the hard times that followed brought about a change in some of the people at least so as to

²⁸The pattern can be seen elsewhere, e.g., 'He who believes' (Is. 28:16) or is 'saved in returning and rest' (Is. 30:15) in contrast to the 'rebels and lying sons' in Is. 30:9.

²⁹A. Alonso-Schökel, *Estudios de Poética Hebrea*, (Barcelona, 1963) 196f.

³⁰Dumbrell, *Search*, 85, believes the lack of Davidic messiahship exercised from Jerusalem in Is 2:1ff must be balanced by the messianic oracles found in Is. 7-11. We are not so sure, however that it is absent here.

³¹J. Wellhausen, *Die Kleinen Propheten Übersetzt und Erklärt* (4th ed; Berlin 1963) 96.

³²L.C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah and Micah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976) 243

³³Wellhausen, *ibid.*

lead a prophet to express such hope.³⁴

We disagree with this view. Why should the sixth century BC be regarded as the earliest date at which such Zion-utopia could be imagined?³⁵ Admittedly, the universalism of Isaiah 2:1-4 is striking and rather unlike the Jewish particularism for which large parts of the Old Testament are known. But in this passage nothing is actually said of Israelites, only matters concerning her God. He dwells in his house on Mt. Zion and whole nations flock there to be instructed by his word.³⁶

We see a parallel here with an earlier period. Solomon did not invite people to come to Jerusalem: they came on their own, attracted by what they had heard about Solomon's wisdom. We would agree with Dumbrell in tracing the origins of the vision of a passage such as Isaiah 2:1-4 to the time of Solomon.³⁷ The account in 1 Kings tells us that people from almost everywhere flocked to Jerusalem to hear his wise counsel (1 Ki. 4:34 [5:14]). The queen of Sheba's coming gives an idea of the extent of Solomon's fame (1 Ki. 10). Why, then, should such Zion-utopia be limited to, say Deutero-Isaiah only, especially if, as Williamson argues, Isaiah 40-55 has drawn on 2:2-4 and not vice versa?³⁸ True enough, this does not yet answer the question how one can best account for these nations' interest in the law (תּוֹרָה). But wisdom (חֵכְמָה), which kings from everywhere came to admire in Solomon, is closely linked to תּוֹרָה, a word meaning first of all 'instruction'.³⁹ Doing what it says results in the practice of justice and righteousness.

In our view, then, the oracles of hope in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33 arise from previous experiences of kings who practised justice and

³⁴R. de Vaux, 'The remnant of Israel according to the prophets', in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East*, (ET: London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1972) 22f; F. Dreyfus, 'Reste d'Israël' in: *DBS X* [1981], 415ff. His distinction between 'reste rescapé' and 'reste d'élite' is a particularly lucid one.

³⁵Cf., S. Stohlmann, 'The Judean Exile after 701 BCE', in W. Hallo *et al.*, (eds.), *Scripture in Context II* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1983) 147-75.

³⁶Elsewhere (Schibler, *Le Livre de Michée* [Vaux-sur-Seine: Edifac, 1989] 90), we suggested that both Isaiah and Micah cite here an ancient promise of peace. It has nothing to do with the so-called belief in the inviolability of Zion, a myth Seitz has well debunked (*Zion's Final Destiny*, 147).

³⁷Dumbrell, *Search*, 75ff.

³⁸Williamson, *Book Called Isaiah*, 152 (see all of pp. 150-52).

³⁹Cf. Ecclesiasticus 15:1. Or is the issue, rather the belief that there was, at the time of Isaiah no Law at all yet, at least not officially, in line with Wellhausen's other decree: Prophets come before the Law?

righteousness (e.g., Is. 1:27; 28:16-17; 32:16-17). These texts are not to be viewed as later additions (reflecting a concept of the Messiah's good deeds) made to the much more frequent condemnatory texts so as to provide a balance. Rather, they may be dated to the eighth century BC, and the hope they express may properly be termed messianic.

2. *Dynastic Messianism and Royal Ideology*

Undoubtedly much of the messianism found in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33 is a form of dynastic messianism, that is, it expresses a belief and hope that all descendants of David will match him in practising justice and righteousness, beginning with Solomon whose proverbial wisdom had attracted people from everywhere to Zion to hear it. It is linked to the so-called royal ideology found especially in Psalms 72, 89 and 132.⁴⁰ As David was the king *par excellence*, so there will always be a descendant of David like him: 'justice and righteousness are the foundation of his throne' (Ps. 89:14 [Heb. v. 15]; cf. 72:1-2); 'I will establish his line forever, and his throne as long as the heavens endure' (Ps. 89:30).

This ideology suggests an extraordinary expectation concerning David's descendants that gave hope to people who often represented but a mere remnant and were living in difficult circumstances. A classic example is Isaiah 9:6-7 [Heb. vv. 5-6]. Who was witnessing the 'great light' (9:2 [Heb. v. 1])? The land of Zebulun and Naphtali, *i.e.*, people from the Northern kingdom. With regard to Israel as a whole, they represent but a remnant. Yet, they will see the great light, the birth of the new heir to the throne. The fact both psalmist (see above) and prophet alike place such hopes on the arrival of a new heir to the Davidic throne suggests a strongly-held dynastic messianism, such that each Davidide could realize their ideal, that is, be the Messiah *par excellence*.⁴¹ But it also means that often the ruler on the throne at the time did not live up to that expectation and that he needed to be replaced. The kings in power at the time of Isaiah are a

⁴⁰J. Coppens, *Le Messianisme Royal: Ses origines. Son développement. Son accomplissement*; (Lectio Divina 54; Paris: Cerf, 1968); H. Cazelles, *Le Messie de la Bible*, ch. 2; S. Talmon, *King, Cult and Calendar in Ancient Israel* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1986) ch. 1; Wegner, *Kingship*, 307f;

⁴¹J. Coppens, 'Messianisme' in *Catholicisme-Hier-Aujourd'hui-Demain*, Vol. 9, col. 13: 'Si les psalmistes et les prophètes ont salué à leur avènement en termes aussi grandiloquents les davidides, c'est qu'en raison de leur foi en un messianisme dynastique ils pouvaient envisager et espérer en chacun des monarques de la lignée davidique la venue d'un roi susceptible de réaliser leur idéal, et, à ce titre... susceptible d'être envisagé comme un messie potentiel.'

good case in point. Is 1-12 and 28-33 are most often linked to Ahaz and Hezekiah (1:1).⁴² Both were living through two major political crises, the Syro-Ephraimite debacle in 734-732 BC and the invasion of Sennacherib in 701 BC. These traumatic events were just as much occasions for these two kings to have their 'dross smelted away as with lye' and their 'alloy removed' (Is. 1:25) as the events of 597 and 587 BC were for the last kings of Judah. 'Within the cleansing judgements of 734 and 701 lie the seeds for future hope and restoration. Against the faithlessness of Ahaz and his generation is to be viewed the trust of a righteous king and a faithful remnant'.⁴³ Hezekiah plays a major role in the book of Isaiah.⁴⁴ He is clearly depicted as supporting the prophet Isaiah (Is. 36-38), in stark contrast to his predecessor, Ahaz (Is. 7-8), whose role is comparable to that of king Jeroboam with regard to Amos (Am. 7) or of king Jehoiakim with regard to Jeremiah (Je. 19:1-15). Hezekiah was without doubt Isaiah's first Messiah.⁴⁵ According to Jeremiah 26:19, he was known for having been obedient to the divine word proclaimed by Isaiah well over a hundred years afterwards.

Thus messianism, kingship and Zion-theology are closely linked and part and parcel of the hope oracles found in Isaiah 1-12 and 28-33. However, within these chapters certain texts have been singled out for centuries as expressing more than messianic hope as defined above. Christians have believed that these texts point to Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah, mostly on the basis of the New Testament's quoting of them or alluding to them. These texts, Isaiah 7:10-17; 9:1-6 and 11:1-9, came to be known as 'Messianic Prophecies'. To these we now turn.

IV. Messianic Prophecies⁴⁶

The first two of these texts, 7:10-17 and 9:1-6, belong to the so-called memorial, a section that can just as appropriately be called 'the Book

⁴²Wegner, *Kingship*, 289-301 (Excursus) shows how the dating of Is. 28-33 depends on that of 1-12.

⁴³Seitz in *ABD* III:482, col. 1; again see Stohlmann, *op.cit.*,

⁴⁴This is Seitz's basic thesis in: *Zion's Final Destiny*,

⁴⁵Some even find archaeological support for this view: D.P. Cole, 'Archaeology and the Messiah Oracles of Isaiah 9 and 11' in M.D. Coogan *et al.* (eds.), *Scripture and Other Artifacts: Essays on the Bible and Archaeology in Honor of Philip J. King* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1994) 53-69. In our view, however, the new evidence is scanty.

of the Immanuel'⁴⁷ or 'the Book of Signs'.⁴⁸ The reason for this alternative nomenclature is obvious: both the name Immanuel and the term 'sign' play a pivotal role in the interpretation of Isaiah 7:10-17. At stake is the question whether or not King Ahaz will trust YHWH's word brought to him by Isaiah during the Syro-Ephraimite debacle (*cf.* 2 Ki. 16:5-9). That word is: Ask for a sign, any one (Is. 7:10-11)! But Ahaz will have nothing of it. He does not want 'to put YHWH to the test' (Is. 7:12), he says in a pretence of piety. Amazingly, Isaiah gives him a sign anyhow: 'The young woman (הַיְעֲלָמָה; note the definite article) shall conceive and bear a son whose name will be Immanuel' (7:14). Interpretations of the Hebrew noun יְעֲלָמָה here are legion.⁴⁹ In our view, the term refers to someone in the entourage of Ahaz, and there is much to be said for the opinion that 'Immanuel' refers to the new heir to the throne, that is, Hezekiah. For Isaiah, Hezekiah's birth heralds the presence of God among the faithful in Jerusalem in a most precarious situation.⁵⁰ Hence the theophoric name Immanuel = 'God is with us' (*sc.* even during the Syro-Ephraimite debacle).⁵¹ The two kings threatening Ahaz are merely 'two smouldering stumps of firebrands' (Is 7:4); God is indeed with Ahaz and Jerusalem.

The truth encapsulated in the name Immanuel is emphasized in Isaiah 8:8, 10 and has for that reason probably led to the belief that it is more than just a promise made to Ahaz; it is a premonition or foreshadowing of additional things, yet to come:

A deeper meaning in the promise was apparent to the Jews of later

⁴⁶See Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation*, *ad loc.*; *cf.* also the recent reprint (1992) of F. Delitzsch's last book, written one month before his death: *Messianische Weissagungen in geschichtlicher Folge*. (Basel/Giessen: Brunnen, 1992). The classic remains: E. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions*, 4 Vols. (reprint; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1956). *TRE* 16:648, would give as traditional messianic prophecies: Is. 9:1-6; 11:1-9; 32:1-8; 16:4b-5; and 'possibly' 7:14-16, but regards them all as exilic or postexilic. Contrast with Motyer's long list, p. 13, fn. 1, but he singles out the three classic ones (Is. 7:10-15; 9:1-7 [Heb. 8:23-9:6]; 11:1-16).

⁴⁷Cazelles, *Le Messie*, 99

⁴⁸*TRE* 16:645; *ABD* III, 480f.

⁴⁹To our knowledge, the most thorough study is still: G. Brunet, *Essai sur l'Isaie de l'histoire*, (Paris: Picard, 1975).

⁵⁰A. Caquot ('Leçons sur le Messianisme' in: *Annuaire de l'Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes* [5ème section], Paris, 1964, 79) suggests that messianism occurs only in the context of a crisis which from a human perspective is insurmountable, such as the Syro-Ephraimite debacle in 734-732 or Sennacherib's invasion in 701, from which the new-born heir to the throne would deliver Jerusalem.

⁵¹A. Laato, *Who is Immanuel?* (Abo: Abo Akademis Forlag, 1988) 136-59 (Excursus).

centuries... as yet unrealized... [though] congruent with the larger picture. Matthew [for one], unquestionably delighted with the agreement between the tradition about Jesus' birth and the words of Isaiah...⁵²

We know this first messianic prophecy in Isaiah was discussed by Jews and Christians alike for centuries; but this was only because of Matthew's quotation of it (Mt. 1:23).⁵³ Matthew was simply following a well-established Jewish tradition, the annunciation type scene which probably had its origin in Samson's birth (Judg. 13) and linked the name Immanuel to the miraculous birth of Jesus of Nazareth. Now as with Isaiah and the exceptional birth theme, this birth is not a matter of God being physically 'with us' but God acting on our behalf.⁵⁴ If this is what Immanuel means, then we understand why Matthew includes the reference to this important name. At any rate, the name is not germane to his aim of finding Old Testament support for the virgin birth, nor was Jesus actually called thus. But, as God did not simply deal with Ahaz as he was expected to deal with his anointed, but wanted to act tangibly on his behalf, so in the miraculous, physical birth of Christ, God is with us in that he acted tangibly on behalf of his people to save them from their sins (Mt. 1:21).⁵⁵

As to the second text, Isaiah 9:6-7 [Heb. vv. 5-6], we noted above that it is an excellent example of dynastic messianism.⁵⁶ Yet, as with Isaiah 7:14, it has been received as more than that for centuries. What looks like an enthronement text, most probably of Hezekiah—'establishing his kingdom for ever in justice and righteousness (Is. 9:7

⁵²D.A. Hagner, *Matthew 1-13* (Dallas: Word, 1993) 20.

⁵³Justin Martyr, *Tryphon* LXXI; Irenaeus, *Against Heresy*, III, 9.1; IV, 33.11; Calvin, *Institutes*, I, II; ch. iv;

⁵⁴There are... strong reasons for believing that in Matthew 1:23 μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ θεός signifies that in Jesus God is present to bring salvation to his people rather than that Jesus as ὁ θεός is personally present with his people. Matthew is not saying, "someone who is 'God' is now physically with us, but 'God is acting on our behalf in the person of Jesus'" (M.J. Harris, *Jesus as God: The New Testament Use of Theos in Reference to Jesus* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992] 258).

⁵⁵For centuries scholars have made attempts to identify this Immanuel and the accompanying signs surrounding his coming. For the evangelist Matthew, finally there was no doubt any more. When Jesus of Nazareth was born, the full light had come. He is the Immanuel of the world and his virgin birth the accompanying sign (Mt. 1:18-24). For centuries, too and despite many onslaughts against it, that fulfilment in Jesus has been accepted by uncounted millions of Christian believers as a fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy.

⁵⁶As to authorship, both Is. 7:10-17 and 9:1-6 are essentially attributed to Isaiah himself; cf. Wildberger, 371.

[Heb. v. 6])—is clothed in language that is too exalted, but also too militaristic (Is. 9:4-5 [Heb. vv. 3-4]) to be no more than a text celebrating either a new king's birth or coronation. But unlike Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6-7 is not cited in the New Testament, though there is a possible allusion to it in John 14:7b. Only 9:1 [Heb. 8:23] is (partly) cited in Matthew 4:14-16 (cf. Lk. 1:79), but with respect to Jesus' sojourn in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, not with respect to his divinity.

However, on grounds of the hermeneutical principle of *sensus plenior*,⁵⁷ much Christian tradition (not just Händel's *Messiah*; see also Lk. 1:32-33) has for a long time understood the whole Immanuel tradition including Isaiah 9:6-7 [Heb. vv. 5-6] to contain incipient christological soteriology and has therefore felt it appropriate that it be read at Christmas as a proper text underlining Christ's divinity. The reason must be the appellations: 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace'. After all, of the traditional messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, only this text uses אֱלֹהִים (in 'Mighty God'; Ps. 45:7-8 has אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל). It is always used with reference to either divinity or the true God (cf. Is. 5:16; 12:2; 31:3; 40:18; 42:5). It is no doubt significant, too, that of the four word-pairs describing this extraordinary being, only אֱלֹהִים is repeated in the next chapter (Is. 10:21) where the referent is clearly 'YHWH, the holy one of Israel' (Is. 10:20)⁵⁸. Now as Harris observes:

If the rendering of 'God is [emphasis mine] with us' find support in the dual use of אֱלֹהִים Immanu'el in Isaiah 8:8, 10, the translation 'God with us' looks to the messianic title גִּבּוֹר אֱלֹהִים *el gibbor* [Mighty God] in Isaiah 9:6 [9:5 MT] (cf. Is. 10:21) for justification, for if Isaiah 7:1-9:7 is considered a closely integrated unit containing the prophetic message to Judah... Isaiah 7:14 could be interpreted in the light of Isaiah 9:6.⁵⁹

For other exegetes, the other word-pairs also point either individually or cumulatively to divinity, *i.e.*, in an Ancient Near Eastern sense,⁶⁰ especially Egyptian, or with regard to the one true God of the Bible.⁶¹

⁵⁷R.E. Brown, *The Sensus Plenior of Sacred Scripture*, (Baltimore: 1955) 92; cf., 'Interpretation' *ISBE* (rev. 1992) II:870, col. 2.

⁵⁸Delitzsch's discussion (*Isaiah*, 248-50) of the telling accentuation of the MT is still one of the best.

⁵⁹Harris, *Jesus as God*, 257, fn. 7.

⁶⁰Wildberger, 381 (but see 386-88); Wegner, *Kingship*, 190;

⁶¹Motyer, *Prophecy*, 104f; Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 247f; Delitzsch, *Weissagungen*, 102; *Isaiah*, 251, 253 is more nuanced.

There seems to be no *via media*.

The third messianic prophecy in Isaiah 1-12 is found in 11:1-9. It is centred mostly on the twin expressions 'shoot' and 'branch' in v. 1. The shoot comes out of 'the stump of Jesse'. A stump implies the cutting of a tree, but its shoot implies, that there is still life in it. The image is clearly one of hope regardless of what caused the cutting of the tree.⁶² Now the tree is the tree of Jesse, King David's father. Once more, hope is associated with kingship. But this is no mere messianism such as we defined it above. The spirit of YHWH, *i.e.*, 'the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD' (Is. 11:2) shall reside on this shoot and the lost paradise be regained. Not only will the shoot coming out of the stump of Jesse judge justly, but nature will change so that wild animals will no longer kill. 'They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea' (Is. 11:9). As Talmon observes, we have passed from historical reality (Is. 7:14-16) to ideation (the creation of an idea, Is. 9:5-6) and now to idealization (Is. 11:1-10)⁶³. But, along with this progressive dehistoricisation comes a gradual opaqueness, a move away from the *hic et nunc*. With the unusual reference to Jesse rather than David, it is quite possible that the text is meant to refer to more. It is no longer a matter of a mere continuance of the Davidic line, but probably a question of a wholly new beginning.⁶⁴ 'The movement is from qualifications to performance to results...'⁶⁵ No wonder, then, that ever since Jerome at least, it has been believed that Matthew (in Mt. 2:23), in what is basically a word-play, alludes either to Jesus as a 'Nazirite' or to the promised 'branch' in Isaiah 11:1.⁶⁶ Thus Isaiah 11:1-4 refers to more than a descendant of David; it refers to a new David, one who will judge with justice and decide with equity.⁶⁷ For Christians it is clear: only Jesus of Nazareth, God's incarnate son, the Messiah *par excellence* fulfils this text ultimately⁶⁸.

⁶²Wegner, *Kingship*, 231ff discusses the question whether it implies the bypassing of David's line.

⁶³Talmon, 'The Concept of *Mašiah*', 95, 97; Seitz: 'a certain obscurity', *ABD* III, 481.

⁶⁴So von Rad, *Old Testament Theology II*, 170 followed by Dumbrell, *Search*, 91. Similarly Motyer, *Prophecy*, 121: '...the shoot is not just another king in David's line but rather another David.'

⁶⁵Oswalt, *Isaiah 1-39*, 278.

⁶⁶Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 40-42.

⁶⁷Whether he is the Immanuel of Is 7:14 (Hagner, *ibid.*, 41) is another question which cannot be answered on the basis of Is. 11.

All three traditional messianic prophecies have an expectancy about them that sets them apart from the rest of the texts that express hope in Isaiah 1-12, and a particular person to whom a particular name or term is attached is mentioned: 'Immanuel' (7:14), 'Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace' (9:6 [Heb. v. 5]) and 'shoot', 'branch' (*cf.* 4:2) and 'root' (11:1,10). All of these names or terms have 'a measure of intended opaqueness' (Talmon) about them that simply eludes exegesis. And yet, as with other enigmatic terms found in the Old Testament—'seed of the woman' (Gn. 3:15), 'Shiloh' (Gn. 49:10), 'star and sceptre' (Nu. 24:17), 'prophet like Moses' (Dt. 18:15), to name only the ones in the Pentateuch—they have traditionally been taken to denote somebody special.⁶⁹ Who? That is the question. As one reads of these persons and what is expected of them or associated with them, it is as if one were to go beyond the immediate historical context and one's hope were transferred to a more distant and thus opaque future leader. We should, perhaps not speak of 'progressive dehistoricisation' (Talmon), but simply of gradual opaqueness that increased until the expected final light that these names and terms express would actually arrive. When Jesus of Nazareth had come, New Testament writers, above all Matthew but also Paul, knew 'the times were fulfilled' (Gal. 4:4), *i.e.*, the age-old promises of the Old Testament had come true. We have difficulties in discerning the degree to which the promises actually came about, a question Old Testament Theology wrestles with; but that they were believed to have come about, there is little doubt. What P. Beauchamp says concerning Isaiah 53 applies to all traditional messianic prophecies: 'Prévoir un médecin est une chose, le désigner à l'avance en sa singularité en est une autre.'⁷⁰ Old Testament writers saw that there would be a doctor, but they never disclosed his identity entirely. So it is vain to seek complete disclosure in the Old Testament. Only the New Testament discloses entirely.⁷¹ What is important is to realize that messianism in general and messianic prophecies in

⁶⁸Unlike Isaiah 7:14 and 9:6 [Heb. v. 5]), Isaiah 11:1ff has, ever since Duhm (1892), generally been considered to be of late, post-exilic origin. However, it is again 'under investigation' as to whether it does not belong to the initial Isaianic corpus after all, at least in part. *Cf.* Williamson, *Book Called Isaiah*, 233 (referring to H. Barth, J. Vermeylen and K. Nielsen)

⁶⁹S.H. Levey, *The Messiah: An Aramaic Interpretation. The Messianic Exegesis of the Targum*, (1974) 44, 52

⁷⁰P. Beauchamp, 'Lecture et relecture du quatrième chant du Serviteur. D'Isaie à Jean', in J. Vermeylen (ed.), *The Book of Isaiah* (BETL LXXXI; Leuven: Leuven UP, 1989) 354.

particular all had a beginning, a *terminus a quo*, and an end, a *terminus ad quem*, and in between a whole range or history of fulfilments. But when Jesus of Nazareth had come, the early church and generations of Christians following it have believed that, ultimately speaking, every messianic prophecy, every messianism even, found its fulfilment in Jesus, the 'Christ' which—let us not forget this each time we say it—means the Messiah. It is thus that we understand Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:19-20:

'For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you, Silvanus and Timothy and I, was not 'Yes and No' but in him it is always 'Yes'. For in him every one of God's promises is a 'Yes'. For this reason it is through him that we say the 'Amen', to the glory of God.'

CHAPTER 6

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD IN THE 'SERVANT SONGS' OF ISAIAH: A SECOND MOSES FIGURE¹

G.P. Hugenberger

Summary

No explanation for the identity of the servant of the Lord in the 'servant songs' of Isaiah commands a scholarly consensus. This study attempts to overcome the pre-sent impasse by rejecting the dismemberment of Isaiah 40-66 advanced by Duhm and others, who isolate the 'servant songs' from their immediate literary context. Taking account of that context, which is dominated by a pervasive second exodus theme, this essay argues that Isaiah's servant figure is to be identified with the expected 'prophet like Moses' (Dt. 18:14ff.; 34:10ff.). Such an approach enriches the interpretation of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 in particular and offers substantial support for the New Testament's messianic interpretation without presupposing that interpretation, as is often done.

⁷¹C.K. Beale (ed.), *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the use of the Old Testament in the New*, (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).

¹This essay is a revised version of a paper read on 5th July 1994 before the Old Testament Study Group of the Tyndale Fellowship in Swanwick, Derbyshire.