

# **THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE MESSIANISM OF THE BOOK OF ISAIAH\***

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## **The Special Importance of the New Testament use of the Old Testament**

The contemporary interest in Biblical Hermeneutics shows no sign of abating. Those of us whose compelling interest is in evangelical Systematic Theology and its evangelistic and pastoral application ought to rejoice in this. We are concerned that our theology should be thoroughly based on the Bible. Between the Scriptures themselves and Systematic Theology lie a number of studies, including two vitally important disciplines, Hermeneutics and Biblical Theology. It is of great importance that evangelical Systematic Theology should constantly find enrichment and be willing to accept adjustment, if need be, from the insights of Biblical Theology. Biblical Theology in its turn rests on sound principles of Biblical Interpretation.

The use of the Old Testament in the New is a most important aspect of Hermeneutics. For evangelicals it is crucial, because we accept the authority of the whole Bible. This means that both the Old Testament writer who is quoted and the New Testament writer who quotes and interprets him are inspired and authoritative. It follows from this that Biblical interpretation is not merely a matter of subjective choice on the part of the interpreter. Not only is there a most important objective factor, but that factor is authoritative. It can then furnish an objective and authoritative basis for interpreting the Bible as a whole. The great value and importance of this quickly appears when we discover that the New Testament writers not only condemn rejection of the Scriptures but also their wrong interpretation,<sup>1</sup> and that they appear to have been guided in this by Christ Himself.<sup>2</sup>

## **The Modern Study of the New Testament use of the Old Testament**

Two names stand out in the modern study of this subject, Rendel Harris and C. H. Dodd. In 1916 and 1920, Harris published his two volumes entitled *Testimonies 1 and 2*.<sup>3</sup> In these works, he maintained that

\*Delivered at the 1985 Conference of the Scottish Evangelical Theology Society.

1. 2 Peter 3:15, 16; cf Acts 17:2, 3; 2 Cor. 3:16.

2. Matt. 19:3-9; Mark 12:18-27, 35-37.

3. Cambridge, 1916, 1920.

the early Church possessed a book or books of Old Testament quotations used mostly in apologetic against Jewish objections to the Christian message. These quotations were used with little reference to their Old Testament contexts and often quite arbitrarily.

In 1952, C. H. Dodd produced a new theory in his book, *According to the Scriptures: the Sub-Structure of New Testament Theology*.<sup>4</sup> He demonstrated that the Old Testament texts quoted and alluded to in the New Testament are not scattered throughout the pages of the Old Testament, but occur in groups in particular books and parts of books. Very often a quotation is intended to evoke, for the reader of the New Testament book, the context of the Old Testament passage as well as that passage itself.

Dodd's view carried conviction with most scholars and proved to be very fruitful in stimulating research. A number of valuable special studies on New Testament passages which employ the Old Testament were published, based on Dodd's view. *The Testing of God's Son*, by B. Gerhardsson,<sup>5</sup> examined the Matthaean temptation narrative, *Son and Saviour*, by E. Lövestom,<sup>6</sup> probed the background to the quotations in Acts 13:32-37, while *The Elect and the Holy*, by J. H. Elliott,<sup>7</sup> studied the contexts of the passages used in 1 Peter 2:4-10. Perhaps most valuable of all was B. Gärtner's masterly study of Acts 17, entitled "*The Areopagus Address and natural Revelation*",<sup>8</sup> in which he showed how close Paul kept to Old Testament thought even though, with this sophisticated and yet Biblically illiterate Greek audience, he never actually quoted from it. A number of other works, for example, *New Testament Apologetic*, by Barnabas Lindars,<sup>9</sup> and *Jesus Christ in the Old Testament*, by A. T. Hanson,<sup>10</sup> sought to understand the way the New Testament writers applied Old Testament material to Christ.

### **The Influence of Whole Old Testament Literary Units on New Testament Books**

Redaction Criticism has placed a welcome new emphasis on the unity of the Biblical books to which its methods have been applied. Even if source criticism had identified several different authors for different parts of one book, there was finally a redactor who gave the book the unity it now possesses. This ought to mean that we can now consider the influence of an Old Testament book as a whole on a New Testament book or books. The New Testament writers were quite as aware as we are that the Old Testament consisted of separate literary units. Is it not likely that a particular Old Testament book, as such, might have influenced a particular New Testament book?

It has long been assumed that the five-fold pattern of the Pentateuch

4. London, 1952.

5. Lund, 1966.

6. Lund, 1961.

7. Leiden, 1966.

8. Lund, 1955.

9. London, 1961.

10. London, 1965.

had an influence on later literature, such as the Book of Psalms, the Megilloth and the first Book of Enoch, and many have seen its influence in the five blocks of our Lord's teaching given in the Gospel of Matthew. It must, however, be said that such an influence would seem to be purely formal, for there are no real similarities between the contents of the five books of the Pentateuch and the five discourses given in the Gospel of Matthew.

In 1961, Simon Kistemaker issued his monograph, *the Psalm Citations In The Epistle To the Hebrews*.<sup>11</sup> In this work, he sought to demonstrate the great importance of the Psalter for the whole argument of Hebrews, and especially the fact that 4 Psalms, 8, 95, 110, and 40, interpreted Christologically, exercise a dominant influence on the whole Epistle. We need, though, to remember that the Book of Psalms is a collection of separate literary entities, even though there is some evidence in it of thematic arrangement.

The treatment of Psalm 110, however, by the Writer to the Hebrews, does hold special interest because he goes beyond the normal use of this psalm in the New Testament. Psalm 110: 1 has an honoured place in the New Testament, for it was interpreted Christologically by our Lord Himself at the close of the Day of Questions (Mark 12:35-37). Not surprisingly, quite a number of New Testament passages reveal its influence.<sup>12</sup> It is only the Epistle to the Hebrews, however, which applies the language of verse 4 to Christ, but this is done in a most detailed way in Hebrews 7:15-28, where the writer brings out different points about Christ's priestly ministry from different phrases in the verse. He has therefore learnt from the Psalm, not only the heavenly session of Christ as King, but also the eternal priestly ministry which then commenced. C. F. Evans, in a chapter entitled "A Christian Deuteronomy" in *Studies in the Gospels*, edited by D. E. Nineham,<sup>13</sup> dealt with Luke's Travel Document (Luke 9:51-18:14). He argued that "Luke has cast that section of his gospel which is made up of non-Markan material into the form of a journey to the borders of the promised land, a journey which follows that of Deuteronomy by way of correspondence and contrast".<sup>14</sup> This fits in with Luke's great interest in Jerusalem<sup>15</sup> as the place of destiny for Jesus. It would also make even more significant the fact that the temptation narrative in Luke (as in Matthew) is dominated by quotations from Deuteronomy, chapters 6-8.

Although there is material in Deuteronomy which could be thought of as having Christological bearing, dealing, for example, with the institution of the king, prophet and priest,<sup>16</sup> there is no integration of the material to furnish a Messianic programme.

There is, however, one major book of the Old Testament which makes

11. Amsterdam, 1961.

12. See especially Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42, 43, 1 Cor. 15:25, 27; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3, 13.

13. Oxford, 1957, pp. 37-53.

14. p. 51.

15. The name occurs 31 times in his Gospel.

16. Deuteronomy 17:14-18:22.

an outstanding contribution to the thought of the New Testament. This paper will argue that the Book of Isaiah has an importance for New Testament Christology which has not yet been adequately recognised that there are unusual features in its Christological contribution, and that there are quite a number of New Testament passages which reflect the influence of these unusual features.

### **The Special Importance of Isaiah in the New Testament**

This is not easily missed by the careful reader. Quotations and allusions from Isaiah are exceeded only by the Psalter, which is almost forty percent greater in length, and it is quoted in the New Testament nearly as often as all the other prophetic books put together. This is remarkable as the remaining prophets taken together occupy almost three times as much space as Isaiah.<sup>17</sup> J. A. Sanders, in an article, "Isaiah in Luke",<sup>18</sup> says that there are 590 references to 63 chapters of Isaiah in 23 of the 27 New Testament books, with 239 from Isaiah 1-39, 240 from Isaiah 40-55 and 111 from Isaiah 56-66. Sanders says, "Isaiah was apparently the most helpful single book of the Old Testament in assisting the Early Church to understand the sufferings and crucifixion of the Christ, but Isaiah also provided help in understanding nearly every phase of Jesus' life, ministry, death and resurrection. Isaiah was of service, too, in helping the early churches to understand who they were and what their role was as witnesses to the Christ event and as those who prepared for the eschaton's fulfilment by proclamation of what God had done in and through Christ. Christology and Ecclesiology were formulated in the early churches with the help of Isaiah.

It is widely recognised, of course, that the Fourth Servant Song has a special place of influence in the New Testament.<sup>19</sup> M. D. Hooker, in her book *Jesus and the Servant*,<sup>21</sup> challenged the view that Jesus saw Himself specifically as the fulfilment of the Servant passages in Isaiah.

She also maintained that many authors, in their preoccupation with the Servant Songs, have read their influence into a number of New Testament passages which, more objectively considered, are not really patient of any such interpretation.<sup>22</sup> Even if we accepted her thesis completely, it would still be true that the influence of these passages, and particularly of the fourth Song, on the New Testament writers, has been very considerable.

C. H. Dodd attached some importance to Isaiah, and he discovered that a number of passages within it were of considerable importance for the New Testament writers. The main passages were Isaiah 6:1-9:7; 11:1-10; 28:16; 40:1-11; 42:1-44:7; 49:1-13; 50:4-11; 52:3-53:12; 55:3 and

17. See H. M. Shires, *Finding the Old Testament in the New*, Philadelphia, 1974, pp. 227-232.

18. *Interpretation*, 36, 1982, pp. 144, 145.

19. The maximizing view is well represented in V. Taylor, *The Atonement in New Testament Teaching*, London, 1940.

20. *op. cit.* p. 145.

21. London, 1959.

22. Her conclusions are summarised on pp. 101, 102, 126-128, 147-163.

61.<sup>23</sup> In its extent this goes far beyond material from any other Old Testament book. In view of this, it is surely legitimate for us to inquire whether the book as a whole may be regarded as providing testimony to Christ? It should be noted that in this list Dodd only brings together the main passages used, so that the list is by no means exhaustive.

### **The Messianic Teaching of the Book of Isaiah**

The Book of Isaiah is the longest single literary entity in the Bible. From a literary point of view, there is a great deal of beauty in this book. Indeed, the reader who has a strong aesthetic awareness needs to remind himself from time to time that the chief value of the book lies in its message, not in its purely literary qualities. It is good, however, to recall that our God is the God of beauty as well as of truth. Not the least aspect of its aesthetic qualities is its literary structure. A study of it makes it increasingly clear that the material has been carefully arranged.<sup>24</sup> It is worth our while to remember that, if the whole book is by Isaiah of Jerusalem, chapters 40-66 may never have been delivered orally at all, but put straight into written form, perhaps during the dark days of Manasseh.<sup>25</sup> It may well have seemed most appropriate, then, to put the other material into ordered sequence, with these chapters finding their place as the climax of the book.

Most conservative writers have maintained the unity of Isaiah in terms of its authorship.<sup>26</sup> Old Testament scholarship generally is far from accepting this, but the redaction critics now feel free to speak of "The Unity of the Book of Isaiah," as this was the title of a recent article by R. E. Clements.<sup>27</sup> Redactional unity is certainly not the same as authoral unity, but in terms of the interpretation of the book as a whole, it is a step in the right direction.

We propose to approach Isaiah's Messianic teaching in three ways, borrowing terms from music in order to do so.

**A. The Thematic aspect.** A marked feature of this book is the appearance of a number of great themes in it which develop and gather connotations as the book proceeds. These are not all Messianic at first, but they become so as the book proceeds. Some of the more important motifs which undergo this treatment are those of the branch, the stone, the light, the child, the king and the servant. This list is not exhaustive. We will briefly indicate something of the development of three of these. The theme of the branch, relates initially to the fruitfulness of the good land of Canaan (cf. Deuteronomy 11:8-12).

This good land had been judged and devastated through the Assyrians as a judgment from God (Isaiah 1:7-9) but once again one day the land would flourish under the blessing of God (4:2; 35:1ff:41:18,19; 55:12,13).

23. *op. cit.*, pp. 107, 108.

24. See e.g., R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, Grand Rapids, 1969, pp. 780-785.

25. Jewish tradition maintained that he was sawn apart by Manasseh, cf. Heb. 11:37.

26. There are some exceptions, e.g. D. F. Payne, "Isaiah", in *A Bible Commentary for Today*, London, 1979, pp. 763-765.

27. *Interpretation*, 36, 1982, pp. 117-129.

Not the land, however, but the people living in it were unfruitful and blessing on the land served to symbolise the judgment and blessing of the people who dwelt in it (5:1-7; 27:2-6). Although the people as a whole was to be judged, there would be life, with all the possibilities of fruitfulness, in the faithful remnant (6:13). Most of all, for true fruitfulness, God's people need the Messiah (11:1ff). If the King and Servant are one, it is clear that this fruitfulness can only come through the suffering and death of the Servant (53:2).

Isaiah had a very full experience of kings, with all their failures. Ahaz was a rebellious unbeliever (7:10ff), and although Hezekiah was more responsive to the word of God, even he sought alliances instead of God from time to time (e.g. 39:1ff). Perhaps it is particularly significant that it was in the year that King Uzziah died, that Isaiah saw the divine King (6:1ff). This vision is succeeded almost immediately by the promise of a child to the house of David (7:13, 14), and succeeding chapters depict the Messianic king of the future (9:6,7; 11:1ff; 7:32:1; 33:17). The picture of the Servant depicts him as having a ministry of unostentatious humility (42:2; cf. Zechariah 9:9), but there are definite suggestions of kingship also in the Servant Songs. His law will come to the remote coastlands (42:4; cf. 49:7ff), and he will be exalted to supreme sovereignty through his sufferings and death (52:13; 53:12). He therefore becomes "a leader and a commander for the peoples" (55:3).

The servant theme dominates much of chapters 41-53. The first of the Servant Songs (42:1ff) occurs in a context which speaks critically of Israel as God's blind and deaf servant. If we interpret the Servant Songs along the lines suggested by Delitzsch in terms of a pyramid, with the nation as the base, the faithful remnant as the centre and the unique individual Servant as the apex,<sup>28</sup> this is in fact in line with the general tendency of the book to develop themes from lowly beginnings to sublime conclusions. In this way, the reader is educated gradually by the prophet, so that he comes to see the principle of faithful servanthood focused on a person, in whom alone perfect service is to be found.

**B. The Contrapuntal Aspect.** The theme referred to above and others like them are not entirely discrete. Not only does the prophet develop each theme, but he interrelates them to a certain extent, after the fashion of musical counterpoint. The branch theme, for example, is related both to that of the king (11:1ff) and the servant (53:2), while the kingly and servant themes also engage with each other (42:4; 52:13; 53:12). There are many other instances of this phenomenon. It is interesting, and, probably, significant, to note that the same kind of thing occurs in the New Testament gospels. Note, for example, the way that the themes of the Son of Man, the Christ, the Son of God, and, probably, the Rock are brought together in Matthew 16:13-20.

The presence of this contrapuntal factor in the material strongly suggests that the prophet has no intention of presenting us with two or more figures who are to occupy the foreground of God's purposes in the

28. A more recent interpretation along similar lines may be found in W. S. La Sor, D. A. Hubbard, F. W. Bush (eds) *Old Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, 1982, pp. 392-395.

future, but one only, in whom all these themes find their ultimate focus. C. **The Programmatic Aspect.** J. A. T. Robinson, in his work *Redating the New Testament*,<sup>29</sup> decided to try an experiment. He would assume that all the New Testament books were written before A.D. 70, and see if there was evidence sufficient to support this proposition. The result is now well-known. The present paper also presents a kind of experiment. Let us assume that the material which the New Testament relates to Christ was intended by the author himself to be an integrated whole, and see what is the result. It is interesting incidentally to note the comments of F. F. Bruce in his chapter "the Servant-Messiah" in his work, *This is That*.<sup>30</sup>

Writing about Isaiah 55:3,4, he says "the new leader and commander to the peoples in whom, as these promises imply the holy and sure blessings of David are to be fulfilled, may with high probability be identified with the Servant of the Songs".<sup>31</sup> Also, writing about Isaiah 61:1-4, he says, "while it is not usually reckoned among the Servant Songs proper, (it) breathes the same sentiments and almost certainly was intended by its author to express the mind and mission of the Servant of the Songs".<sup>32</sup>

Chapters 1-5 present God's people in all their spiritual need but with a great destiny, for Jerusalem is to be the centre of a worshipping, obedient and peaceful world. In chapter 6, the prophet is assured of God's holy rule and of the fulfilment of His purpose through a remnant of His people, but meantime the people will react to His word in blind unbelief. In chapter 7, God reveals Himself in the Child immanuel, whose coming is declared in the context of the unbelief of Ahaz. God will in fact show himself to be either a sanctuary or a stone of stumbling to his people, according to their reaction (chapter 8). Unbelief darkens the mind, but a day will come when light will shine again in Galilee. The Davidic Child, with Divine names, destined to rule the whole world in righteousness and peace (chapter 9), will be endowed with the Spirit of God in all His fulness (chapter 11) and God's people will proclaim His mighty acts to all the nations (chapter 12). Meantime these nations are in darkness and face judgment (chapters 13-23), and that judgment is seen to be universal, with Jerusalem as the one place of secure hope for the future (chapters 24-27).

Chapters 28-39 underline lessons already learned in earlier chapters. Chapters 28-33 remind us of Israel's blind unbelief and refusal to trust in the God who lays a foundation only in Zion (cf. 8:11-15). We are also to recall the King's beneficent rule and wide territory (chapters 32,33: cf. 9:1ff; 11:1ff) and (Chapters 34,35; cf chapters 24-27) the ultimate issues of God's plan in judgment and salvation. Chapters 36-39 also remind us, through Hezekiah's oscillation between faith and unbelief, of the need for a perfect King (cf. chapter 7). In chapter 40, the Lord's forerunner speaks and in chapters 42 and 49 the Lord's Servant views his

29. London 1976.

30. Exeter 1968.

31. p. 83.

32. op. cit. p. 84.

ministry both prospectively and retrospectively. This ministry will bring God's saving rule both to Israel and to the nations.

In it he glorified God, so proving to be the true Israel, over against empirical Israel which continues to be blind and deaf. Chapters 49 and 50 show men in unbelief rejecting and inflicting pain and shame on Him. His sufferings are presented as sacrificial and substitutionary (chapters 52, 53), and God will glorify Him through them. Now the joyous offer of pardon is made to the penitent (chapters 54-61), but the rebellious are warned of judgment. The Davidic King will rule all peoples (55:3-5), and all nations will be attracted to the light shining in Jerusalem (60:1ff).

The great prototype preacher (61:1ff) offers joy and liberty, but warns too of judgment, which is spelled out in Isaiah 63:1ff. The people are reminded of their past history and of His present grace (chapters 63-65) and the prophecy ends with a new creation, providing the setting for a joyous and peaceful Jerusalem. Rebels, however, are warned of awful judgment.

We see then, how Messianic teaching appears in the context of God's eschatological purposes, how the child of great promise becomes a man, and, after the voice of the Lord's forerunner is heard, the servant's ministry comes to a climax in death and exaltation, with the proclamation of glad tidings being succeeded by a new creation from which the unbelieving and impenitent, whose presence is never far away in the prophecy, are excluded.

### **New Testament Books in which this Programme is Reflected**

The thematic and contrapuntal aspects of Isaiah's Messianic presentation represent the background to the Messianic programme, as he presents this within the wide context of God's great purposes. The New Testament writers were convinced that in Christ the age of promise had been succeeded by the age of fulfilment.<sup>33</sup> Their constant use of Isaiah in their proclamation of Christ, and their exposition of the significance of the fact of Christ, would lead us to expect some trace, not only of particular Messianic passages from Isaiah, but also the Messianic programme itself, as there presented. We might also expect some recognition of the Messianic themes contained in Isaiah. We will only be able to take a selection from the material available.

A. **The Gospel of Mark.** Mark's Gospel delineates the ministry (i.e. the service) of Jesus, and does not begin with his childhood. It is therefore appropriate that the evocative word "gospel", (cf. Isaiah 40:9), should be followed immediately not with references to the Child born to be King, but with a reference to the forerunner (Mark 1:1-3cf. Isa. 40:3).

The Gospel goes straight on to His baptism by the forerunner and the descent of the Spirit, so often linked with Isaiah 42:1 because of the reference to the Divine pleasure (Mark 1:10,11). He is Christ, the anointed one (Mark 1:1), so we can perhaps see the baptism as inaugurating a ministry in which Isaiah 11:1ff; 42:1ff:61:1ff (in each of which there is a reference to the Spirit) are all fulfilled, but with special

33. e.g. Mark 1:15; Acts 2:16ff, 2 Cor. 1:19, 20; Heb. 1:1, 2; 1 Pet. 1:10-12, 20.



emphasis on the Servant. Then comes Christ's declaration of the good news (Mark 1:14,15). This proclamation was not always met with faith, as Isaiah was warned (Mark 4:13; Isaiah 6:9,10).

If the Christ and the Servant are one, it is no surprise to find Jesus teaching His disciples that the Christ should suffer many things and be rejected and killed (Mark 8:29,31; 9:12,13,31; 10:33,34). Scourging (Mark 10:34) recalls Isaiah 50:6; and a life given as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45; Isaiah 53:10-12). The longer ending gives the command of Jesus to preach the good news to the whole creation, and follows this with an emphasis on faith (so much stressed in Isaiah). This may well reflect the worldwide dimensions both of the Kingdom and of the Servant's ministry in that same book of Isaiah.

Mark then presents Jesus, preceded by his forerunner, anointed by the Spirit, experiencing rejection and scourging, giving his life for many, and in all this fulfilling His destiny as the Christ of God and establishing good news to be proclaimed everywhere so that the Servant/King may influence the whole world. Here then is a messianic programme following lines established in the prophecies of Isaiah.

**B. The Gospel of Matthew.** The use of material from Isaiah in Matthew is fuller than in Mark, and that prophet's delineation of the Messiah's programme finds more detailed mention. This is what we might expect, in view of the obvious interest of the author in structuring his material.

The first four chapters, which provide the introduction to the story of Jesus in Matthew, contain an exceptional amount of material from Isaiah. There are three formula quotations (Matthew 1:23; 3:3; 4:14-16) and, as we shall see, another which represents a theme which began in the prophecy of Isaiah (Matthew 2:23). Each of these is programmatic, referring to a different stage in the life of Christ. We have, in sequence, references to Bethlehem, Nazareth, John the Baptist's preparatory ministry, and the beginning in Capernaum of Christ's Galilean ministry. The quotation in Matthew 2:23 has long puzzled scholars.

It should be noted that it is the only Matthaean quotation attributed to prophets rather than a prophet. It could therefore sum up a theme of prophecy, and appears to relate to the Messianic branch (Hebrew *Nézer*), which is a title for the Messianic King in Isaiah 11:1. The Gospel itself opens with a reference to Christ as the Son of David and this emphasis is clearly important for the whole of the first chapter, as a glance at verses 1,6-11, 17-20, will reveal. The Immanuel Prophecy was, of course, given to Ahaz as the representative of the house of David (Isaiah 7:13,14).

Rather surprisingly, in view of the fact that Isaiah 53 normally relates to the atoning work of Christ in the New Testament, Matthew applies passages from the Servant Songs to the healing and teaching ministries of the Saviour. His somewhat flexible approach to fulfilment shows itself in the way he relates Isaiah 53:4 to the healing. Perhaps this reflects a sense that the saving work of Christ, to be effected once for all at Calvary, cast its shadow before it. After all, it may well be that many of the miracles recorded in the Gospels owe their place there to the fact that in them the gospel is so vividly presented in picture form. Matthew 12:17-21 gives an extended quotation from Isaiah 42, which certainly appears to be very apt

in the context of Christ's earthly ministry. It is worth noting that, almost immediately after giving this quotation, Matthew records the question of the people. "Can this be the Son of David?" Perhaps this is Matthew's way of underlining the identity between the Son of David and the Servant of the Lord. The probability of this is underlined when we discover that the reference to the Spirit in this quotation recurs in Matthew 12:28,31,32. In view of the Great Commission with which this gospel comes to its close, it is also worth noting that Matthew includes two references to the Gentiles in this quotation, and he could certainly have cut the extract short before the second of these. Isaiah 6:9-10 (Matthew 13:14-15) and 29:13 (Matthew 15:7-9) underline the unbelief and hypocrisy of those Jews who rejected Christ.

So Matthew picks up the theme of Jesus the Child as the Son of David and Jesus the Man as God's light and God's Saving Servant, with the virtue of his redeeming work being experienced during his early ministry, no doubt in anticipation of his death (Matthew 17:12; 20:28).

C. **Luke/Acts.** It has been long recognised that Luke had a special interest in Isaiah.<sup>34</sup> What we are concerned to establish is the fact that he treats that book's Christology programmatically. We cannot attempt a full study but will note several significant points.

Luke presents a picture of faithful piety among those who awaited the Messiah's coming. Clearly they had nourished their hope through the O.T. Scriptures, and each of the so-called hymns in Luke 1-2 shows the influence of Isaiah. There is one however which is just saturated with the language and ideas of that prophet, i.e. the *Nunc Dimittis*, together with its immediate context (Luke 2:25-35). I have tried to show this in detail in an article entitled "The light and the Stone".<sup>35</sup> Simeon was awaiting the consolation of Israel, apparently to be realised through the Lord's Christ, who is also God's salvation. He is the sign against which Ahaz spoke, He is the stone over whom many will stumble, although some initially stumbling would rise again in faith. He would suffer, and would bring light both to Israel and to the Gentiles. The phrase "according to thy word" (Luke 2:29) probably refers to the Book of Isaiah from which Simeon had learned so much of the messianic hope.

Luke places our Lord's sermon at Nazareth right at the forefront of his ministry (Luke 4:16-37), and it was based on Isaiah 61:1-2. So the good tidings are proclaimed first by God's unique Servant before, in the missions of the Twelve (Luke 9) and the Seventy (Luke 10), the apostolic preaching of the gospel after Pentecost is anticipated. Perhaps the commissioning of the 12 and the 70 relate to the involvement of the disciples in the mission of the unique Servant to Israel and to the Gentiles respectively. Isaiah 61 is also quoted at the beginning of a ministry which provides illustration after illustration of Christ's salvation both in His miracles and in His parables. In relation to the Acts of the Apostles, the Gospel records all that Jesus *began* both to do and teach (Acts 1:1) and he must be shown to be pre-eminent in gospel preaching as in all else.

34. Sanders op. cit.

35. In H. H. Rowdon (ed.) *Christ the Lord*, Leicester, 1982, pp. 161-167.

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Luke 24:44-49 refers to the encounter of the risen Christ with his disciples and the instruction he gave them from the O.T. The Book of Isaiah was probably prominent in this, for there the sufferings of the Christ are certainly declared. His resurrection is implied in the references to His exaltation in the Fourth Servant Song.

The preaching to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem, perhaps relates to Isaiah 2:1-5 and the reference to witness (cf. Acts 1:8) may recall Isaiah 43:8-12.

It is interesting to note the use of this by Peter in Acts 3:13,26; 4:27,30. This is the term used for the Lord's Servant in Isaiah and it can mean either child or servant. Its use may perhaps reflect the fact that, in Isaiah, the Messiah is presented as both.

Acts 13:47 is especially interesting as it shows Paul and Silas accepting as relevant to them the command to be a light to the Gentiles (cf. Isaiah 49:6). This must mean that they saw the primary fulfilment in Christ not as exhausting its significance, but as making way for a corporate interpretation, because Christians are in Christ. It also reminds us of the fact that in Isaiah the Servant Songs are set in the context of a wider servant theme, with Israel as the servant, and that Isaiah 49 itself could be understood of a faithful remnant with a mission to the whole nation and to the Gentiles. Acts 28:25-28 sets the Gentile mission in the context of Israel's rejection of the gospel and quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 in this connection. So in Luke/Acts these references seem to reflect an understanding of the prophecy as a whole, different parts and aspects of it being treated in an integrated way.

**D. The Gospel of John.** In Luke, an important quotation from Isaiah 61 sets the scene for the whole public ministry of Christ right at its beginning. In John two quotations are set in the context of the conclusion of his public ministry (John 12:37-41). Light is a great theme in Isaiah, especially in the Messianic passages. As the cross draws near, Jesus speaks to the people about the light of God, which shines in and from Him. The theme of light is found in diverse sections of the book and so it is appropriate that John should quote two passages about blind unbelief from Isaiah 53 and Isaiah 6 respectively.

**E. The Epistle to the Ephesians.** The theme of light is also important here (Ephesians 4:17,18; 5:7-17). In Ephesians 5:14, Paul says, "Therefore it is said,

Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead,  
and Christ shall give you light".

These words are often taken to be from a primitive Christian hymn.<sup>36</sup> The introductory phrase (ὁὶ λέγει) however, is one that is everywhere else used of Scripture and is translated, "it says" or "he says".<sup>37</sup> Awakening from sleep (Isaiah 51:17; 52:1), arising from the dead (Isaiah 25:8; 26:19) and receiving light from the Messiah (Isaiah 9:2; 42:6,7; 49:6; 60:1ff) are all Christological themes in Isaiah, and Paul probably had them in mind.

36. C. L. Mitton, *Ephesians*, London, 1973, in loc.

37. See especially B. B. Warfield, *Revelation and Inspiration* Grand Rapids, 1981, pp. 283-332.

**F. The First Epistle of Peter.** The use made of Isaiah in 1 Peter is most extensive. We cannot comment on everything but will seek to select material illustrating our main thesis.

Peter has a great interest in Isaiah 53, and the description of the patient sufferings of Christ given in 1 Peter 3:22-25 is saturated with language from that chapter (cf. especially Isaiah 53:5,6,9,11,12 and perhaps 50:7-9). In view of this and the many other Isaiah references in the letter, we should probably interpret the repeated phrase, "the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory" (1 Peter 1:11; 4:13; 5:1), chiefly in terms of the Fourth Servant Song. Peter also emphasises the identification of the Christian with Christ in this respect (1 Peter 4:13, 5:1,10). This means that even the Fourth Servant Song, presenting an unique atoning work, is a model for Christian living in terms of the spirit of obedience to death there manifested.

Peter employs the Isaianic word "gospel" (1:12,24) and, by the use of the stone prophecies of Isaiah 8:14,15 and 28:16, stresses the importance of faith in Christ, the corner-stone of the temple, in whom Christians become temple stones.

## **Conclusion**

We have surveyed enough N.T. material to arrive at certain fairly definite conclusions.

(a) The Book of Isaiah was a primary source for the N.T. conviction that the O.T. bears witness to Christ.

(b) The great Messianic themes of the book sometimes appear as themes in N.T. passages, e.g. the Branch in Matthew 2:23.

(c) The way these themes are linked together in Isaiah also appears in some N.T. passages — e.g. Ephesians 5:14.

(d) The Messianic programme delineated in Isaiah, with the Child's anticipation of world dominion, the forerunner's ministry of preparation, the compassionate and faithful ministry of the Servant, His sufferings and exaltation, and on the basis of this, the proclamation of salvation to the believer and judgment on the unbeliever, is reflected in many a N.T. passage, with a selection of material from the programme according to the need to be met by the N.T. book concerned. Not surprisingly, this factor is most evident in the Gospels.

(e) All this means that the N.T. writers reproduce not only the Messianic teaching of Isaiah but the forms in which it was given and the overall Messianic structure of the book.

(f) Their interpretation not only affected their understanding of objective Christianity, the person and work of Christ, but also of subjective Christianity, for they recognised that elements of the programme needed to be reproduced in the Church, which was to be identified with Christ in His obedience unto death. So the study of the book by a Christian believer should deepen his thankful awareness of what God has done for him in Christ and challenge him to accept the Divine pattern of death and resurrection in its application to his own life.