

Note: this reading is the 1st in a 4-part series on Isaiah's portraits of the Messiah

Isaiah 1-37 – The Righteous King

Isaiah, the greatest prophet of the Old Testament, gives us three panoramic prophetic portraits of Israel's coming Messiah. These portraits contain different elements, describing three distinct-but-interrelated roles that Messiah will play in His redemption of Israel and the whole world.

Isaiah's first portrait of Messiah (chapters 1-37) is that of a righteous and just King, descended from King David, whose reign will bring unparalleled blessing and social justice to the nations, and glorious beauty and harmony to His creation. Let's take a look at some of the passages that describe Him and His reign:

- *Isa. 7:14 "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.*

This King will be both fully human ("the virgin will be will be with child . . . and bear and son") and divine ("she will call His name Immanuel ["God with us'])." Therefore, He was born in a unique way – to a virgin mother – to signify that He is a unique Person to bring God's presence to humanity in a unique way.

- *Isa. 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.*



This divine-human child will descend from David, to whom God promised an everlasting kingdom (presumably ruled over by an eternal King). As God's chosen King, His wisdom ("Wonderful Counselor"), and his government will be characterized by justice and righteousness.

- *Isa. 2:2 Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; and all the nations will stream to it. ³ And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; that He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴ And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war.*

God's King will govern with fairness and wisdom that settles people's disputes. He will also instruct people on how to live according to His ways. The result will be unparalleled, world-wide peace. Warfare will cease forever, and humans will use their resources for productive rather than destructive ends.

- *Isa. 11: ¹Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. ² The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. ³ And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; ⁴ but with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. ⁵ Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist. ⁶ And the wolf*



will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. ⁷ Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸ The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. ⁹ They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

The result of the righteous King's reign includes the transformation of nature. Because humans are filled with the knowledge of God, God's creation will flourish under redeemed human care-takers. The savage hostility of nature's "fang and claw" will be replaced by harmony between its creatures.

- *Isa. 35:1 The wilderness and the desert will be glad, and the Arabah will rejoice and blossom; like the crocus ² it will blossom profusely and rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of the LORD, the majesty of our God . . . ⁶ . . . For waters will break forth in the wilderness and streams in the Arabah. ⁷ The scorched land will become a pool and the thirsty ground springs of water; in the haunt of jackals, its resting place, grass becomes reeds and rushes. ⁸ A highway will be there, a roadway, and it will be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean will not travel on it, but it will be for him who walks that way, and fools will not wander on it. ⁹ No lion will be there, nor will any vicious beast go up on it; these will not be found there. But the redeemed will walk there, ¹⁰ and the ransomed of the LORD will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion, with everlasting joy upon their heads. They will find gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away. Even in our fallen world, nature's beauty points to God's glory (Ps. 19:1). But under the King's reign, all creation will blossom profusely in praise of its Maker. Best of all, everyone who has*



been ransomed by God through Jesus' death will come safely home to be with Him in never-ending and ever-increasing joy!

With such a glorious future promised to us, let us encourage one another to live faithfully for the King until He comes:

Isiah. ^{35:3} Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble. ⁴ Say to those with anxious heart, "Take courage, fear not. Behold, your God will come . . . He will save you."

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