

Christ in Isaiah.¹ Maryland.

Good evening.

First, let me explain what I have in mind for this week and next. Over these two weeks I plan to look with you at what the prophet Isaiah has to tell us about the person and work of our Lord Jesus. God willing, next Wednesday, we will turn the spotlight on Isaiah's so-called 'Servant Songs', but tonight I will attempt to conduct a quick survey of many of the key passages throughout his book.

Our subject, therefore, this evening is that of 'Christ in Isaiah'. And Isaiah has certainly not left us short of material from which to construct an almost complete history of the Saviour's life on earth, together with His existence before and after that.

It is no exaggeration to say that it is possible (metaphorically, of course) to paint an almost full length portrait of the Lord Jesus from the colours which we find on the prophet's artist-pallet.²

But, before we dive in to our subject, I want to make two comments by way of introduction.

First, I need to explain that we are necessarily going to encounter several passages (and even single verses) which straddle and blur the distinction between our Lord's first and second advents – two events which we now know to be separated by at least 2,000 years or so.

From the prophet's vantage point, our Lord's two advents are viewed as two great mountain peaks in the far distance. As he sees them, the two peaks appear to touch each other. It is only with the benefit of hindsight, as we are privileged to look back on the events surrounding the Saviour's first coming, that we can see that, in fact, a very wide valley extends between them.

By way of example only, we might think of the well-known verses in chapters 9 and 61.³ I guess that Isaiah must many times have scratched his head as he attempted to piece together in his mind the timings involved in the sufferings of the Messiah and the glories which were to follow after.

Second, as well as I can, I will avoid overlapping my comments on our subject this evening with that which, God willing, we are to consider in greater detail next Wednesday – namely, the so-called 'Servant Songs of Isaiah', which are spread through several later chapters of his book.⁴ But we cannot altogether ignore the contents of these so-called Songs, because Isaiah's portrait of our Lord Jesus would be woefully incomplete without them.

We begin, not with the conception and birth of Jesus, but, as John does in the beginning of his gospel, with that which took place long before that.

Chapter 6 opens with Isaiah's well-known account of his vision of God's heavenly temple/palace. This took place, he says, 'in the year that King Uzziah died'.⁵ Uzziah's reign had been days of prosperity unrivalled since the days of Solomon,⁶ and his throne (as that of Solomon⁷) must have been most impressive and imposing. But the throne of Uzziah was nothing compared to the far greater throne with which the prophet was confronted.

And, sitting on that throne, Isaiah saw One who he described as 'the sovereign Lord',⁸ and as 'the King, the Lord of hosts'.⁹ Fiery heavenly beings known as 'seraphim' hovered humbly in His presence (indicating their readiness to perform His will¹⁰), while simultaneously ascribing the perfection of holiness to the majestic Throne-sitter.

In chapter 12 of his gospel, the apostle John reported that, 'These things said Isaiah, because he saw His glory (the glory of the Lord Jesus) and spoke about Him'.¹¹ John, that is, made it clear that 'the sovereign Lord' on His exalted throne was none other than the Lord Jesus, leaving us to reflect, with awe and wonder:

(i) that the 'Lord of hosts' of chapter 6 would one day become the 'man of sorrows' of chapter 53,¹² and

(ii) that the One now sitting on the throne of heaven would one day be hanging on a tree on earth,¹³ when the One now 'lifted up', high on His glorious throne, would one day be 'lifted up' in an entirely different sense,¹⁴ when He would exchange His gorgeous royal robe, which now filled the heavenly temple, and which no seraph would ever dare touch, for the garments of a man – garments which soldiers would not only touch, but would strip from Him, and for which they would gamble,¹⁵ when, in contrast to the seraphim, which hid their faces in reverence on account of His transcendent glory,¹⁶ men would turn away and hide their faces from Him in disgust at His brutally disfigured features.¹⁷

We do well to marvel that the majestic Throne-sitter who here 'sent' *Isaiah*¹⁸ would *Himself* be 'sent' some 735 years later, although not, as Isaiah, to be a prophet/preacher speaking of a coming Saviour, but Himself to be that very Saviour.¹⁹ Which brings us neatly from chapter 6 into chapter 7.

We do not have time to dig into the fascinating background to the 'sign' which the Lord pressed upon King Ahaz, save to say that, at the time, the kingdom of Judah faced a very serious threat of attack from the north in the form of an alliance of Syria and Israel, and that King Ahaz had foolishly and rudely rejected God's gracious offer of a sign to demonstrate that the Lord stood ready to deliver Judah.²⁰

In response, God declared that He would therefore provide a sign of His own choosing; namely, that a young woman of marriageable age,²¹ though as yet unmarried, would have a child who she would name Immanuel (meaning, 'God is with us'), and that, before the child would be of age to know good from evil, the longed-for deliverance would come.²²

Personally, I believe that this sign received a twofold fulfilment,²³ the one being short-term and the other long-term ... the one being an early partial fulfilment, and the other a later complete fulfilment.²⁴ As I see it, the sign must have received some preliminary fulfilment in the days of Ahaz if it was to serve the purpose of assuring the King that God would indeed deliver Judah from the planned attack by the confederacy in the north²⁵ ... that a mature young woman, then unmarried, would soon marry and in due course have a child, which, in faith that God would be with His people in their hour of need, she would name Immanuel.

But we know that the complete and ultimate fulfilment²⁶ came over seven centuries later with the true 'virgin' conception and birth of our Lord Jesus,²⁷ when a young woman then still unmarried and sexually pure would give birth to a son.²⁸ But whereas the name Immanuel given to the baby born in the days of Ahaz simply testified to his mother's trust in God's faithfulness to His promise not to abandon His people, the son born to Mary would fulfil the deepest meaning of that name, and would Himself truly be 'God' come down to be 'with' His people,²⁹ whose abiding presence is wonderfully assured to us in our own day.³⁰

And, while on the subject of our Lord's incarnation, we certainly cannot ignore Isaiah's well-known and much-loved declaration in verse 6 of chapter 9: 'For to us a child is born', and so on. And the opening word 'For' alerts us to the direct connection with the verses immediately before. What magnificent, all-powerful figure is this, that earlier passage prompts us to ask, through whom 'the zeal of the Lord of hosts'³¹ will, at Messiah's second advent, miraculously overthrow³² Israel's oppressor and cause all instruments of war to be reduced to ashes, causing wars to cease? 'To us', the prophet explains, 'a child is born ...', for in His coming all that results from that coming is assured and guaranteed, pointing us to One who, we might say, as a child born, is the *Son of man* ... who as a son given, is *the Son of God*³³ ... and who as a ruler upon a throne, is the *Son of David*.³⁴

Our Lord Himself drew much the same distinction as Isaiah when He spoke to Pilate of His, not only being 'born', but of His 'coming into the world'.³⁵

For now, we simply marvel at some of the obvious paradoxes which Isaiah shares with us ... that 'the mighty God' is a child born, and that 'the everlasting Father' is a Son given.

And we can hardly overlook the contrast between the word of the prophet, spoken on behalf of the blest recipients – the people of Israel ('to **us** a child is born'), and the word of the angel spoken by no more than an interested messenger to the shepherds in the field of Bethlehem ('to **you** is born').³⁶ For, truly, 'He did not take hold of angels with a view to helping them, but He took hold of the seed (the descendants) of Abraham'.³⁷

The first verse of Isaiah 11 is the most likely main source for Matthew's claim that the Saviour's dwelling in Nazareth (as we know, for towards thirty years) provided a fulfilment of the prophetic announcement³⁸ that 'He (our Lord) should be called a Nazarene'.³⁹

Isaiah envisaged a time to come when it would seem that the kingly line of David had ceased to exist. But, Isaiah insisted, the 'root of Jesse' (of King David's father) was most certainly *not* dead, and out of that seemingly dead stump would spring a 'branch' (a '*nētzet*' ... 'a fresh green shoot or sprout', as the word means).

In context, the revival of Israel's royal hopes stands in marked contrast to the fate of Assyria, the dominant world power of Isaiah's day.⁴⁰ For, over against that great Gentile power which would be humbled at a time when it was most exalted, the house of David would be exalted at a time when it would be most humbled!

It seems likely that the town of Nazareth received its name on account of its relative smallness and insignificance compared to the other towns around⁴¹ – as it were, just a small 'shoot' among the surrounding trees – and that the very word which Isaiah used ('*nētzet*') formed the basis of the name of the place where our Lord grew up.⁴² What more appropriate, therefore, than that He should 'be called a Nazarene'? ... and, indeed, no less than 18 times He is spoken of in the New Testament as 'Jesus of Nazareth' or as 'Jesus Christ of Nazareth'.

Our next port of call, courtesy of Isaiah, is the preparatory role played by John the Baptist and the incident of our Lord's own baptism.

We certainly have no difficulty identifying the first of the three 'voices' said to 'cry' in Isaiah 40.⁴³ We have only to recall the answer which John the Baptist gave to the priests and Levites from Jerusalem who asked him, 'Who are you?' Disclaiming that he was either the Christ, Elijah or the expected Moses-like Prophet,⁴⁴ he declared himself to be simply 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness, "Make straight the way of the Lord", as the prophet Isaiah said'.⁴⁵

And the implication of John's following description of Jesus as the One coming after him⁴⁶ was unmistakable – that He (Jesus) was none other than the Lord (Jehovah) Himself.⁴⁷

For John was but 'a voice';⁴⁸ whereas Jesus was 'the Word'⁴⁹ ... John was but a lamp;⁵⁰ whereas Jesus was the Light.⁵¹

And, when John baptized Jesus, we read of 'the Spirit of God' coming 'upon' Jesus and of a voice from heaven which declared God's unbounded pleasure and 'delight' in Him.⁵² Both of these expressions are unmistakable echoes from the opening verse of Isaiah's chapter 42,⁵³ which clearly foretells the baptism of the Lord Jesus as His official inauguration into His Messianic office, with the coming of the Spirit 'upon Him'⁵⁴ representing His anointing for His work.⁵⁵

Our Lord's baptism was in fact the first of two separate occasions⁵⁶ when God the Father spoke from heaven to declare His unqualified 'delight' in the One who Himself ever found unqualified 'delight' in doing His (God's) will.⁵⁷

Isaiah next homes in on the starting point of the Saviour's public ministry. The opening verses of his chapter 61 comprise the passage which the Lord Jesus deliberately sought out to read in the synagogue of Nazareth soon after His baptism and wilderness temptations.⁵⁸

Perhaps the main point to note is that, in His reading, the Lord Jesus stopped at the words concerning 'the year of the Lord's favour', and didn't read on to 'the day' of His 'vengeance'. He was well aware, of course, that a day *will* come when He *will* execute God's judgement and 'vengeance' on a sinful world,⁵⁹ but, by stopping where He did, He drew attention to the fact that His mission at His first advent was not then to judge the world but to save it.⁶⁰ One commentator referred quaintly to the first comma of Isaiah 61 verse 2 as a '2,000-year-old comma between the two phrases'.⁶¹

And we should perhaps note the distinction which Isaiah makes between the two time measurements, that it is 'the year' of God's favour (His good pleasure),⁶² but 'the day' of His vengeance. Truly, in God's book, 'mercy rejoices (triumphs) over judgment'.⁶³

But Isaiah speaks not only of the starting point of our Lord's public ministry; he also focuses our attention on the main geographical area of that ministry.

Historically, Zebulun and Naphtali were two of the first tribes to go into exile to Assyria.⁶⁴ When Isaiah prophesied, they were already under threat of suffering acute affliction at the hands of the plundering Assyrians. **And their immediate prospects were grim in the extreme – for them only 'distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish'.**⁶⁵

But their long-term prospects were wonderfully different.

For, when the promised 'great Light' (brought by the presence of the coming Messiah) shone upon them, their gloom would be turned to joy, and their darkness to light.⁶⁶ For, we are told, over against 'the former time' when God 'brought into contempt the land of Zebulun and of Naphtali', in 'the latter time' He would 'make glorious the way of the sea (the area on the coast, that is)' which formed part of that which Isaiah described as 'Galilee of the nations'.

And that 'latter time' dawned when, following the violent reaction by the townsfolk of Nazareth to the latter part of His synagogue message,⁶⁷ the Lord Jesus left His home there (Nazareth lying about 18 miles from the nearest shoreline of the Sea of Galilee) and went to dwell and to minister in Capernaum which lay directly on the northwest coast of that Sea, in the territory of Naphtali,⁶⁸ and which henceforth served as the main base of operations for our Lord's public ministry,⁶⁹ soon to be graced with the enviable description, 'His own city'.⁷⁰

And, as He Himself made clear, on account of 'the mighty works' which He performed there, there was no more favoured spot on earth than Capernaum.⁷¹ Isaiah wants us to know that the very presence there of 'the Lord of glory'⁷² would render 'glorious' the previously contemptible region, when those who had previously walked in darkness suddenly found themselves blinking at the brightness of 'the Light of the world' Himself.

Isaiah passes little comment on our Lord's outward appearance, and I think it likely that, when he reports the men of Israel as claiming that 'He had no form or majesty, and ... no beauty that we should desire Him',⁷³ Isaiah is simply saying that there was nothing outwardly about the Lord Jesus to suggest Messiahship or kingship – that He possessed none of the external credentials for which they were looking.⁷⁴

By and large, they expected the Messiah to come as a military conqueror and prince, appearing in great pomp and splendour, to deliver them from the Roman yoke and restore their nation to its former greatness and glory. But what did they see? Nothing that corresponded to their expectations ... no royal robes, no diadems on His brow, no magnificent retinue in attendance, no men of earthly rank and status to support His cause.

They saw only a plain Galilean tradesman, accompanied by a small band of followers boasting no great learning or scholarship, and supported by a group of pious women.⁷⁵ Frankly, He offered them none of the external insignia of royalty which they associated with the coming Messiah.

Think of the reaction of the men in the synagogue of Nazareth to Jesus' teaching when He returned there in the course of His later ministry. They were staggered that the One they knew as 'the carpenter, the son of Mary' should teach as He did.⁷⁶ In their eyes, He was far more likely to *make* a pulpit than ever He was to *occupy* one! No, Isaiah is saying, many of the men of account of His day saw nothing in His outward appearance to attract them to Him.

But on the other hand Isaiah showers us his readers with countless reasons why we should be attracted to Him.

For example, when speaking of the Saviour's life of service, he points us to:

(i) our Lord's gracious teaching and inner life of daily communion – to His morning-by-morning appointment with God,⁷⁷ to a tongue ever filled with the appropriate word to help and sustain the weary on account of an ear filled first with the word which came from God.⁷⁸

Then too (ii) the way in which the Lord Jesus always responded with willing obedience to every word which He heard from God.⁷⁹ Not once did He either *rebel*, or *retreat* from the path which God had mapped out for Him. Nothing could ever deflect 'the man with the determined face'!⁸⁰

Isaiah spoke also (iii) of the mighty works which Jesus performed during the days of His flesh as a foretaste of the blessings of the coming millennial kingdom age, when all the sad consequences of sin will be removed.⁸¹ So that, when John the Baptist's faith began to wane and he sent messengers to Jesus to enquire whether or not He really was the expected Messiah, Jesus simply referred John (employing the language of Isaiah's prophecies⁸²) to a summary of His miracles and ministry.⁸³

But Isaiah also noted (iv) that the ministry of the Messiah would be marked by freedom from any self-advertisement, noise or ostentation.⁸⁴ No loud trumpeters went before Him; no earthly ambition or craving for the limelight ever motivated Him. Ever seeking to avoid the publicity which His healings naturally attracted (often requesting those He had blessed not to make Him known⁸⁵), and to avoid unnecessary confrontations and unprofitable disputes with His opponents, in His own self-effacing way, He quietly went about His Father's business.

And not only so, but Isaiah draws attention also to the gentleness with which the Saviour responded to those who had stumbled or fallen – to those who morally were as bruised reeds, useless as a support or for anything else. Neither were any so far gone – as smouldering wicks – that He would give up on them and snuff them out completely.⁸⁶ You have only to ask the woman of the city in Luke 7 with her dubious past, to ask the Baptist with his doubts, or to ask Simon Peter with his denials.

And, Isaiah stresses, the Servant of the Lord Himself stands in marked contrast to such. For, in the following statement that 'He shall not fail', the word 'fail' means to burn low and to smoulder, and in the next, 'nor be discouraged', the word "discouraged" signifies to be bruised.⁸⁷ So that, Isaiah is saying, the One who will not break the bruised reed, will not Himself be bruised, and the One who will not quench the faintly burning wick, will not Himself burn low or dimly. The Servant, Isaiah is saying, may be subject to the same pressures and blows which threatened to immobilize and shipwreck others, but they will not deter or deflect Him!

No, He certainly would not fail nor be discouraged. So much so that, even when (as Isaiah tells us) it seemed that – in spite of His sparing no effort – His ministry towards His own nation appeared to achieve nothing,⁸⁸ His trust in God remained unshaken⁸⁹ as He looked on to the final outcome of His labours⁹⁰ ... when, as we know, not only will God's purpose for Israel reach its glorious climax in the future millennial kingdom, but the Gentiles will then share in the benefits of Israel's salvation.⁹¹

Turning quickly from the few years of our Lord's public ministry, I hardly need to tell you that Isaiah has packed in a tremendous amount of information concerning our Lord's passion and death. Let me briefly touch on just a few of the topics which he mentions.

He speaks much of Jesus' *physical* sufferings, predicting events and actions which, mainly from the record in the New Testament gospels, we know to be fulfilled in fine detail, events such as His being scourged, ridiculed and spat on.⁹² It was, I note in passing, one thing for Him to endure such treatment, but it was quite another, as Isaiah predicted, for Him to gladly submit to it without defending Himself.

And Isaiah foresaw that the Saviour's features and appearance would be so disfigured by the brutality of men that He would no longer be recognisable as a man, when all who saw Him would shrink back in horror.⁹³ How different, Isaiah adds, it will be in that coming day of power and glory when the very kings of the earth will be struck dumb at His splendour.⁹⁴

Pondering our Lord's emotional sufferings, Isaiah spoke twice of the Saviour as being 'despised' (disdained, considered worthless) by men.⁹⁵ And not only so, but, in their blindness, the men of His own nation looked upon His sufferings as divine punishment for His own sins,⁹⁶ with His extreme sufferings marking Him out, in their eyes, as a special object of God's anger.⁹⁷ No doubt, they imagined that, as was true in the case of the two men crucified alongside Jesus, He too received the 'due reward' of His deeds.⁹⁸

But deeper far than either His physical or His emotional sufferings, there was His spiritual suffering. For at Golgotha it was, Isaiah says, God who caused the iniquity of men to fall upon Him as some violent foe,⁹⁹ it was God who willed to bruise (to crush) Him and put Him to grief,¹⁰⁰ and it was there and then that His soul was made a trespass (or guilt) offering for sin.¹⁰¹ Most certainly, He bore much more than the cross that day, for, though He bore *His cross to Golgotha*,¹⁰² Isaiah makes it clear that He bore *our sins at Golgotha*.¹⁰³

And Isaiah wants us to know that, throughout His ordeal, the Lord Jesus made no attempt to vindicate Himself; Isaiah twice reporting that 'He opened not His mouth'.¹⁰⁴ For while it is most certainly true that nobody ever spoke like Him,¹⁰⁵ it is equally true that nobody was ever silent like Him. Caiaphas, Pilate and Herod were each being struck by His unexpected silences.¹⁰⁶

You and I can only marvel that the One before whom the whole world stands guilty, with every mouth stopped,¹⁰⁷ should Himself have once stood silent in the face of the injustice and brutality of sinful men.

But Isaiah assures us that, if our Lord was silent before *the accusers*, He was numbered with *the transgressors*.¹⁰⁸

For, although He was *not* a transgressor, He was treated as a transgressor. He was subjected to a transgressor's scourging. He carried a transgressor's cross. He was hanged between two transgressors and in the place of a third. He died a transgressor's death. And the grave planned for Him was a transgressor's grave. Well then did Isaiah insist that 'He was numbered with the transgressors'.

But, additionally, not only does Isaiah tell us that our Lord was numbered with one set of transgressors, but he tells us also that our Lord most graciously made intercession for another set.¹⁰⁹

I said just now that 'the grave planned for' our Lord 'was a transgressor's grave'.¹¹⁰ And so, as Isaiah informs us, it was.¹¹¹ But God had very different plans, and so Isaiah tells us that, far from being associated physically with 'wicked men' (the Hebrew is plural) in His burial, Jesus was associated with 'a rich man' (the Hebrew is singular) following His death.¹¹²

'Dead and buried'? Yes. But He stayed neither for long! For Isaiah declares that God would bless Him (His Servant, our Lord Jesus) with many spiritual descendants (many spiritual children) and would 'prolong His days' (by raising Him from the dead, of course).¹¹³ And it is wonderful to know that, though we once strayed as sheep,¹¹⁴ when we returned to the Shepherd¹¹⁵ it was to become His children!

And now we know Him – in Isaiah's words – as 'exalted, lifted up, and made very high'.¹¹⁶ And I can well understand why many link these three verbs to the three stages of our Lord's resurrection, ascension, and present station at the right hand of the Father.¹¹⁷

Well do we sometimes sing the words of Thomas Kelly:

The highest place that heaven affords
Is His by sovereign right.¹¹⁸

Amen to that! And Isaiah has many things to tell us about our glorified¹¹⁹ Lord Jesus in the present. But I must change gear, and briefly mention just a few.

He is, Isaiah tells us, the great Preacher of Peace.¹²⁰ For He came and (through His apostles and evangelists, I take Paul to mean) preached the gospel of peace (of peace with God) – to both Jews and Gentiles. Peace, that is, not only horizontally between Jew and Gentile,¹²¹ but vertically between both and God.

And He is the great Cornerstone of the church,¹²² the main foundation stone on which the whole edifice rests.

But Isaiah makes it clear that the same Lord Jesus who is the precious chief Cornerstone of the believing company will prove a stone of stumbling to all those who refuse to believe¹²³ – in context, in particular to unbelieving Israel.¹²⁴ But all who reject Him as the foundation-stone will discover Him to be the stone over which they trip and fall.

Yet to those who *do* believe and who set Him apart as Lord, the Saviour becomes a ‘sanctuary’, a holy refuge and defence,¹²⁵ so that His people have no need to fear the opposition of unbelieving men.¹²⁶

And our Lord Jesus, Isaiah also indicates, (prefigured by Eliakim, a senior official in the royal court of King Hezekiah) holds ‘the key of David’, a description signifying that He (our Lord) exercises unrestricted and unquestionable authority in every realm, whether that of salvation, of judgement, of providence, or of the church.¹²⁷

But we must move on quickly from considering our Lord’s role and activity in the present age, because Isaiah has much to tell us about the future glories of the Lord Jesus.

Immediately prior to the spectacular overthrow of the ten-kingdom Gentile confederacy gathered against the nation of Israel at the close of the Great Tribulation, the word goes out in Zion, ‘Behold, your Salvation is coming’,¹²⁸ and the watchmen are on red alert.

‘Who is this?’, the residents of Jerusalem had asked when, immediately before His crucifixion, the Lord had entered their city ‘meek, mounted upon a colt the foal of an ass’.¹²⁹ Now the watchmen there¹³⁰ ask the very same question as they see Him approaching in glorious garments spattered and stained red.¹³¹ In response, our Lord makes it clear that (unlike on His first advent¹³²) the day of His vengeance had now come,¹³³ and that the visiting of judgement was His work and province alone,¹³⁴ just as we know had once been His work of securing salvation.¹³⁵

He comes to ‘tread the wine-press of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty’,¹³⁶ and it is fitting, I feel, that ‘the winepress was trodden *outside the city*’,¹³⁷ for it was outside that very city that He had once been crucified.¹³⁸ Then, of course, it had been *His own* blood which had been shed there,¹³⁹ now it is that of *His foes*.¹⁴⁰

And many indeed are the images which Isaiah employs to depict our Lord’s advent in judgement. He speaks, for example, not only of Him treading a winepress of blood, but of Him coming in a judgement of fire.¹⁴¹ And yet Isaiah knew as well as any that, in one sense (to use another image), the Lord’s all-powerful spoken word alone will suffice to deal with every last one of His foes.

Alas, we just do not have time to even take *a quick look* at what Isaiah has to say, for instance, about:

- (i) the salvation which our Lord’s second advent will spell for the godly remnant of His people Israel,¹⁴²
 - (ii) of their national repentance when they recognise Him as who He is,¹⁴³
 - (iii) of His coming to Zion,¹⁴⁴
 - (iv) of the glorious kingdom which He will then establish in righteousness,¹⁴⁵
 - (v) of the universal peace He will introduce, along with the destruction of all weapons of war,¹⁴⁶
 - (vi) of the undoing of the sad consequences of man’s sin – both on man and on the world around him,¹⁴⁷
 - (vii) of His victory over death itself,¹⁴⁸
 - (viii) of His wiping away of tears from every face,¹⁴⁹
 - (ix) of how His people (who once saw no beauty in Him) will be blessed in seeing Him (the King) in His beauty¹⁵⁰
 - ...
- and so on ... and so on!

Believe it or not, even if I had been able to pass comments about each of those aspects of the future glories of the Lord Jesus, I would still have left uncovered many other things which Isaiah wrote concerning Him.¹⁵¹ But, from the little which we have managed to sketch out this evening, surely we cannot fail to be amazed at just how comprehensive the portrait is which he has painted for us.

And surely we can only marvel that all we have seen – and so much more – was revealed to and through the son of Amoz well over seven centuries before the subject of his portrait first entered our world.

Notes

¹ 'We are blessed to be able to read our Bibles from back to front', Begg and Ferguson, 'Name above all names', page 136. That is, we are blessed to be able to read the Old Testament through the lens of the New Testament.

² Clearly we are unable in one meeting to cover in any detail the person and life of Jesus as seen through the eyes of Isaiah, and, frankly, we can hope to do no more than skim the surface.

³ Isa. 9. 6-7; 61. 1-2.

⁴ Isaiah 42. 1-7; Isaiah 49. 1-7; Isaiah 50. 4-9; and Isaiah 52. 13-53. 12.

⁵ Isa. 6. 1.

⁶ 'The little realm had now an extension and prosperity to which it had been a stranger since the days of Solomon', *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, article 'Uzziah'.

⁷ 1 Kings 10. 18-20.

⁸ אֲדֹנָי ('Adonai), Isa. 6. 1.

⁹ Isa. 6. 5.

¹⁰ They 'stood', waiting on their seated sovereign Lord.

¹¹ John 12. 37-41.

¹² Isa. 53. 3.

¹³ Acts 5. 30.

¹⁴ John 12. 32-33.

¹⁵ Matt. 27. 35.

¹⁶ Isa. 6. 2.

¹⁷ Isa. 53. 3.

¹⁸ Isa. 6. 8-9.

¹⁹ 1 John 4. 14.

²⁰ Isa. 7. 1-13.

²¹ העלמה ('*almāh*). This word is never used in the Hebrew Scriptures of a married woman, but is used of a young woman of marriageable age.

²² Isa. 7. 14-16.

²³ See the comments of Craig Blomberg, *Matthew (The New American Commentary)*, page 60 (on Matt. 1. 22-23), and of John Broadus, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, page 12 (on Matt. 1. 22-23).

'Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord', Psalm 118. 26, provides a clear case of double fulfilment. There was (i) a partial fulfilment at our Lord's first advent, Matt. 21. 9 (Mark 11. 9-10; Luke 19. 38; John 12. 13), and (ii) a full and final fulfilment at His second advent, Matt. 23. 39 (Luke 13. 35, after the forthcoming fall of Jerusalem). It is possible that the prophecy of Joel 2. 28-32 is another case of an early partial fulfilment and a later complete fulfilment. See a good summary of the various views in Thomas Constable's comments on Acts 2. 16 in his 'Expository Notes'.

²⁴ The interim near horizon fulfilment is presented only as a foreshadowing and preview of coming attractions.

²⁵ Isaiah addresses Ahaz as the representative of the royal house of Judah, Isa. 7. 13. I note that a God-given 'sign' did not need to be miraculous; see Exod. 3. 12 and Isa. 8. 18.

²⁶ Matthew's use of the word 'fulfil' does not exclude the verse he cites from having another separate meaning; cf. his seeing in verses 15 and 17-18 of chapter 2 the 'fulfilment' of Hosea 11. 1 and Jer. 31. 15 in events around the infancy of Jesus, when both Old Testament verses have a separate and original meaning.

²⁷ Matt. 1. 20-23. Matthew cites the more specific Greek word found in the Greek Old Testament; namely, *παρθενος*, the usual Greek word for 'virgin'. Matthew is the only New Testament writer who mentions Jeremiah by name; cf. 16. 14; 27. 9. There are different ways of deciding how many citations of Isaiah appear in Matthew's Gospel. Most agree that there are at least eight clear citations of Isaiah; see page 55 at https://www.academia.edu/12805230/Matthews_Peshar_Gospel_Structured_Around_Ten_Messianic_Citations_of_Isaiah.

²⁸ Wonder of wonders ... He who dwells in the bosom of the Father, John 1. 18 (the place of intimacy and mutual love), once lay in the bosom of a mother, Luke 11. 27!

²⁹ Contrast the naming of the child Ichabod, born to Eli's daughter-in-law when the ark of God was taken and the glory departed from Israel; 'the women attending her said to her, 'Fear not, for you have brought forth a son', 1 Sam. 4. 19-22. The child's very name testified that God and His glory was not with them, whereas the name Immanuel given to the Lord Jesus testified that now God was in a very real way with His people.

³⁰ Matt. 18. 20; 28. 20. He is, that is, not only God *over* us (as Lord), *for* us, and *in* us, but He is *with* us.

³¹ Isa. 9. 7b.

³² 'As in the days of Midian', Isa. 9. 4 with Judges 6-7.

³³ John 3. 16.

³⁴ Isa. 9. 7.

³⁵ John 18. 37.

³⁶ Luke 2. 10-11.

³⁷ Heb. 2. 16.

³⁸ This graphic picture of the revived tree was developed by later prophets. Although they employed a different Hebrew word (צמח - *tsemach*), its meaning was more or less identical with that used by Isaiah. See Jer. 23. 5; 35. 15; Zech. 3. 8; 6. 12. Hence, 'spoken by the prophets', Matt. 2. 23.

³⁹ Matt. 2. 23.

⁴⁰ Isa. 10. 24-25, 33-34. Assyria, which had been the instrument of an axe in God's hand, v. 15, would be a forest which would itself be felled by the axe of God's instrument of another day, v. 34.

⁴¹ Cf. John 1. 46.

⁴² 'From which word (*net-ser*) it appears that the name Nazareth is probably derived', Alford's Greek Testament on Matthew 2. 23.

⁴³ The 'voice' of the herald, Isa. 40. 3; of the Spirit, v. 6; and of the evangelist, v. 9. Re: Mark 1. 2-3, consider the following from Thomas Constable, 'This quotation is a blend of words taken from the Septuagint version of Exo_23:20, Mal_3:1, and Isa_40:3. Mark shaped this quotation to stress the messianic emphasis in these Old Testament passages. He probably introduced this quotation by referring to Isaiah because the Isaiah part contains the main point he wanted to stress (Mar_1:3) or perhaps because Isaiah was the more prominent of the prophets he quoted', 'Expository Notes' on Mark 1. 2-3..

⁴⁴ John 1. 19-21.

⁴⁵ John 1. 23; quoted from Isa. 40. 3; cf. Luke 1. 76.

⁴⁶ John 1. 27.

⁴⁷ Compare, 'he (John) will go before Him ... to make ready a people prepared for the Lord', Luke 1. 17.

⁴⁸ John 1. 23.

⁴⁹ John 1. 1.

⁵⁰ John 5. 35.

⁵¹ John 1. 7-8; 8. 12.

⁵² Matt. 3. 16-17; Mark 1. 10-11; Luke 3. 22; John 1. 32.

⁵³ Quoted in full in Matt. 12. 18 as the context for our Lord's avoidance of any self-advertisement or ostentation. The quotation there speaks of Him as 'my beloved', giving the other meaning of the Hebrew word, and harmonizing with the declaration of the Father in 3:17.

⁵⁴ The expression 'on Him' (ἐπ' αὐτόν) in the Greek Old Testament translation of Isaiah 42. 1 is exactly the same as that used by Matthew in chapter 3 verse 16.

⁵⁵ Acts 10. 38.

⁵⁶ Cf. Matt. 17. 5; 2 Pet. 1. 17. The two occasions looked back respectively the over private and public periods of the Saviour's life, and serve respectively to distinguish Him from the worst and the best of men.

⁵⁷ Psa. 40. 8.

⁵⁸ Luke 4. 13-19.

⁵⁹ Isa 47. 3; 63. 3-4; John 5. 22, 27.

⁶⁰ John 3. 17; 12. 47.

⁶¹ David Guzik.

⁶² It is likely that this is an allusion to the Year of Jubilee, when, according to the law of Moses, slaves were freed and those forced to sell their property received it back again, Lev. 25. 8-55. (The Hebrew word translated 'liberty' in verse 1 is דָּרוּר (*d^er^oror*), a technical term for the Jubilee release in the Old Testament; cf. Lev. 25. 10; Jer. 34. 8-10; Ezek. 46. 17.)

⁶³ James 2. 13.

⁶⁴ 2 Kings 15. 29.

⁶⁵ Isa. 8. 22.

⁶⁶ Isa. 9. 1-3.

⁶⁷ Luke 4. 28-31.

⁶⁸ Matt. 4. 13-16.

⁶⁹ 'From that time began Jesus to preach ...'. 4. 17. Cf 'From that time' in Matt. 16. 21: 'Matthew's story of Jesus' life and ministry possesses a clearly defined beginning, middle, and end: (1) The Presentation of Jesus (Matt.1. 1 to Matt. 4. 16); (2) The Ministry of Jesus to Israel and Israel's Repudiation of Jesus (Matt. 4. 17 to Matt. 16. 20); and (3) The Journey of Jesus to Jerusalem and His Suffering, Death, and Resurrection (Matt.16. 21 to Matt. 28. 20)'.
⁷⁰ Matt. 9. 1.

⁷¹ Matt. 11. 23-24.

⁷² 1 Cor. 2. 8.

⁷³ Isa. 53. 2.

⁷⁴ See E J Young, 'Isaiah 53' on verse 2; 'The present passage of Isaiah likewise is not intended to present a picture of the physical characteristics of Christ. Rather, its intention is to show that the appearance of the Servant among men was not such as to attract their admiration'.

⁷⁵ Luke 8. 2-3.

⁷⁶ Mark 6. 3.

⁷⁷ Isa. 50. 4.

⁷⁸ Mark 1. 35; John 7. 16, 46; 8. 28; 12. 49; 14. 10. Compare with, 'I shall know how to sustain by a word him that is weary', His gracious invitation, 'Come to me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest', Matt. 11. 28.

⁷⁹ Isa. 50. 5; John 8. 29.

⁸⁰ Isa. 50. 7; Luke 9. 51.

⁸¹ Isa. 35. 4-6. See too Matt. 8. 17: Jesus' healing ministry is itself a function of his substitutionary death. Matthew indicates that there was a fulfilment of Isa. 53. 3 when Jesus went to Peter's house and healed his mother-in-law who lay sick with a fever, along with many others who they brought to him later that evening. He certainly did not become sick or infirm. He did not bear sickness and infirmity in that sense. But the consummated kingdom, in which there is no sickness, is made possible only by Jesus' death. All sickness is caused, directly or indirectly, by sin. And so the healings during Jesus' ministry can be understood not only as the foretaste of the kingdom but also as the fruit of Jesus' suffering. That is, He healed in advance of the cross when He would bear the ultimate cause of sickness – much as He exercised the authority to forgive sins, Mark 2. 10; Rom. 3. 24-26. He could not remove one single twinge of pain without, in due season, bearing the sin that caused the pain.

⁸² Isa. 35. 5-6; 42. 7; 61. 1.

⁸³ Matt. 11. 4-5. Our thoughts inevitably turn back to what has gone before. 'Jesus healed blind men in 9. 27–31. He cured a lame man in 9. 1–8. A leper was cleansed in 8. 1–4. A deaf man regained his hearing in 9. 32–4. 9. 18–26 recounts a resurrection. And 4. 17, 23; 5. 3; 9. 35; and 10. 7 record preaching to the poor'.

⁸⁴ Isa. 42. 1-2.

⁸⁵ Matt. 12. 15-19.

⁸⁶ Isa. 42. 3.

⁸⁷ Isa. 42. 4.

⁸⁸ We hear Him say towards the end of His earthly ministry, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem ... How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house is left to you desolate', Matt. 23. 37-38.

⁸⁹ Our model of faith and patient endurance, Heb. 12. 2. He set the supreme example of living by faith.

⁹⁰ 'I have laboured in vain, I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judgment (vindication) is with the Lord, and my work with my God ... to bring Jacob again to him. Though Israel be not gathered, yet shall I be glorious in the eyes of the Lord', Isa. 49. 4-5. Cf. Matt. 11. 25-26 with verses 16-24.

⁹¹ Isa. 49. 6; Luke 2. 32.

⁹² Isa. 50. 6 ('I gave my back to scourges', LXX); Matt. 20. 19; 27. 26, 30; John 19. 1. In the East people always held the beard in great veneration; and to pluck a man's beard is one of the greatest indignities that can be offered. utmost contempt and detestation. Throughout the East it is highly offensive to spit in any one's presence; and if this is such an indignity, how much more spitting in the face?

⁹³ Isa. 52. 14.

⁹⁴ 'Kings shall shut their mouths at Him: for that which had not been told them shall they see', Isa. 50. 15; cf. 1 Kings 10. 5-7.

⁹⁵ Isa. 53. 3. Luke 22. 63; 23. 11, 36. 'This fellow', Matt. 12. 24; 26. 61; Luke 23. 2; 9. 29.

⁹⁶ Isa. 53. 4.

⁹⁷ Gal. 3. 13.

⁹⁸ Luke 23. 41.

⁹⁹ Isa. 53. 6.

¹⁰⁰ Isa. 53. 10a.

¹⁰¹ Isa. 53. 10b. The guilt offering in Israel made reparation, compensation, and satisfaction, Lev. 5. 1-13.

¹⁰² John 19. 17.

¹⁰³ 1 Pet. 2. 24.

¹⁰⁴ Isa. 53. 7; 1 Pet. 2. 23.

¹⁰⁵ John 7. 46.

¹⁰⁶ Mark 14. 61; Matt. 27. 12-14; Luke 23. 9.

¹⁰⁷ Rom. 3. 19.

¹⁰⁸ Isa. 53. 12d; Luke 22. 36-37.

¹⁰⁹ Isa. 53. 12f; Luke 23. 34.

¹¹⁰ 'Under Roman law, the bodies of executed criminals were normally handed over to their next of kin ("Sometimes, especially on occasion of a feast, the bodies of those crucified were given up to relatives. Philo in Flacc., §10"), but not so in the case of those crucified for sedition. They were left to the vultures, the culminating indignity and shame. The Jews never refused to bury any executed criminal ('Jews are so careful about funeral rites that even malefactors who have been sentenced to crucifixion are taken down and buried before sunset' (Josephus, Wars 4.5.2)), but instead of allowing the bodies of such sinners to be placed in family tombs, where they might desecrate those already buried, they provided a burial site for criminals just outside the city (cf. Jos., Ant. v. 44)', D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, on John 19. 38.

'The bodies of those who have been punished are only buried when this has been requested and permission granted; and sometimes it is not permitted, especially where persons have been convicted of high treason' ...

https://www.academia.edu/9929736/Jewish_Burial_Traditions_and_the_Resurrection_of_Jesus.

¹¹¹ Isa. 53. 9.

¹¹² Matt. 27. 57-60; Mark 15. 43-46; Luke 23. 50-53; John 19. 38-42. It has been well said that '... without the commentary supplied by the fulfilment, it would be impossible to understand Isaiah 53. 9 at all', Delitzsch, 2:327. I note the change from plural ('wicked ones') to singular ('rich one'); the Servant was condemned as a criminal, and the natural expectation was that He would be brought to a criminal's grave but, on the contrary, following death He was found 'with a rich man'.

¹¹³ Isa. 53. 10; Rom. 6. 9; Rev. 1. 18. 'A seeming contradiction to the statement (verse 8) that he should be "cut off" out of the land of the living; and the more surprising because his death is made the condition of this long life: "When thou shalt make his soul an offering [or, 'sacrifice'] for sin," then "he shall prolong his days." But the resurrection of Christ, and his entrance upon an immortal life, after offering himself as a Sacrifice upon the cross, exactly meets the difficulty and solves the riddle', G Rawlinson, '*Pulpit Commentary*'.

According to Isa. 50. 8, the Lord knew that, in spite of every accusation both by man and by the spiritual foe, He would be triumphantly vindicated. The Servant could, if He chose to do so, stand up in court and declare His righteousness. No one, such as a prosecuting lawyer, could condemn Him by showing Him to be wicked (cf. John 18. 38). God would stand near Him as His defence lawyer and would vindicate Him.

¹¹⁴ Isa. 53. 6.

¹¹⁵ 1 Pet. 2. 25.

¹¹⁶ Isa. 52. 13. Cf. Phil. 2. 9; Acts 2. 33; Eph. 1. 20-23.

¹¹⁷ 'It is impossible not to be reminded of the resurrection, ascension and heavenly exaltedness of the Lord Jesus', J Alec Motyer, '*The Prophecy of Isaiah*'.

¹¹⁸ 'The head that once was crowned with thorns', Thomas Kelly.

¹¹⁹ 1 Pet. 1. 21.

¹²⁰ Isa. 57. 19; Eph. 2. 17.

¹²¹ Eph. 2. 14.

¹²² Isa. 28. 16; 1 Pet. 2. 6-7.

¹²³ Isa. 8. 14b-15; 1 Pet. 2. 8.

¹²⁴ Rom. 9. 32-33.

¹²⁵ Isa. 8. 13.

¹²⁶ Isa. 8. 14a.

¹²⁷ Time forbids even a passing reference to such passages as Isa. 8. 18 (Heb. 2. 13-14) or Isaiah 49. 6 (Luke 2. 32; Acts 1. 8).

¹²⁸ Isa. 62. 11.

¹²⁹ Matt. 21. 5, 10.

¹³⁰ Cf. 1 Chron. 11. 5.

¹³¹ Isa. 63. 1-2.

¹³² Luke 4. 18-19 with Isa. 61. 1-2.

¹³³ Isa. 63. 4.

¹³⁴ Isa. 63. 5.

¹³⁵ Heb. 1. 3 KJV.

¹³⁶ Rev. 19. 15.

¹³⁷ Rev. 14. 20.

¹³⁸ John 19. 17, 20; Heb. 13. 12.

¹³⁹ Luke 22. 22.

¹⁴⁰ Isa. 63. 3.

¹⁴¹ Isa. 66. 15-16; cf. 2 Thess. 1. 7-8.

¹⁴² Isaiah 11. 10-12; 25. 9 (Matt. 24. 30-31; Luke 2. 38).

¹⁴³ Isaiah 53. 3-6 (Zech. 12. 10; Rev. 1. 7).

¹⁴⁴ Isaiah 59. 19-20 (Rom. 11. 25-26).

¹⁴⁵ Isaiah 2. 3-4; 9. 6-7; 11. 1-10; 32. 1; 42. 4.

¹⁴⁶ Isaiah 2. 4; 9. 6-7. There is 'an extraordinary work of art, commissioned jointly by the British Museum and Christian Aid, and created by artists in Mozambique after the end of that country's long and bitter civil war. The work is a sculpture of the tree of life. It stands nine or ten feet tall, with branches spreading nine or ten feet in all directions. In it and under its shade are birds and animals. And the whole thing – tree, creatures, and all – is made entirely from decommissioned weapons: bits and pieces of old AK-47s, bullets and machetes and all the horrible paraphernalia of war, most of them made in peaceful Western countries and exported to Mozambique so that the government aid given by the West to that poor country would flow back to our own industries. The point – and it is a stunningly beautiful object at several levels – is that this particular "Tree of Life" reflects *the Isaianic promise that swords will be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks*. The tree stands as a reminder both of the horror of the world, with its multiple human follies and tragedies, and of the hope of new creation', N. T. Wright, <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/faith/discipleship/beneath-the-tree-of-life..>

¹⁴⁷ Isaiah 11. 6-9; 35. 5-6 (Rom. 8. 21-22).

¹⁴⁸ Isaiah 25. 8 (1 Cor. 15. 25).

¹⁴⁹ Isaiah 25. 8 (Rev. 7. 17; 21. 4).

¹⁵⁰ Isaiah 33. 17.

¹⁵¹ For example, Isa. 45. 23 with Phil. 2. 10.