

Isaiah

Retribution, Restoration,
Righteousness

Introduction

- Name: Isaiah, 'YHWH is salvation' (cf. Isa. 8:18)
- Date: late 8th c. –early 7th B.C. (*Isa. 40-66 disputed*)
- Setting: Royal court of Judah during rise of Assyria, demise of Israel (*northern kingdom*)
- Themes: **(1) Retribution (1-39)**, Isaiah rebukes Judah for covenant violations (*misplaced trust-gifts, goods, glory, groups*), warns of coming judgment on all YHWH's enemies. **(2) Restoration (40-55)**, **(3) Righteousness (56-66)**

*'Comfort, comfort my people,'
says your God.*

*'Speak tenderly to Zion, cry to her
that her term of service has ended
that her iniquity is pardoned,
that she has received from the
LORD's hand double for all her sins'*

(Isaiah 40:1)

Authorship of Isaiah?

- **Multiple:** at least two authors (1-39, 40-66)
 - *Different theological themes*
 - 1-39, sin & judgment; 40-66, restoration & righteousness
 - *Different situation* [8th c. Palestine vs. 6th c. Babylon]
 - Prophecy for contemporaries, value for 8th c. audience?
 - Polemics suggest awareness of Babylon religion (cf. 46:1)
 - Cyrus the Persian named (44:28; 45:1)

Authorship of Isaiah?

- **Single:** Isaiah son of Amoz (8th c. B.C.)
 - **Scholars:** Jewish (pre-12th c.) & Christian (pre-18th c.)
 - **Source:** internal (Isa. 1:1), external (Jn. 12:38-41)
 - **Scrolls:** no evidence of division at Qumran (cf. *1QIsa^a*)
 - **Sequence:** Isa. 38-39, 36-37 (king defeated 703 B.C.)
 - **Subject:** key unifying themes (*Holy One of Israel*, 25x; *ideal Davidic king*, Isa. 9, 11, 42, 49, 52-53, 61)
 - **Superiority:** key argument based on foretelling

Message

- *Retribution (1-39)*: Isaiah rebukes Judah for covenant violations (*misplaced trust- gifts, goods, glory, groups*), warns of coming judgment on all YHWH's enemies- *His people and His world!*
- *Restoration (40-55)*: Speaking to the future exiles, Isaiah proclaims God's **sovereignty** and superiority, shown in His prophecy of **salvation** by His chosen **servants**.
- *Righteousness (56-66)*: Isaiah urges the returning exiles to pursue **right living**.

Outline (40-55)

○ *Restoration* (40-55)

– *Israel's Salvation, God's Sovereignty* (40-48)

- Comfort in Sovereignty (40)
- Case for Sovereignty (41)
- Chosen Servant: Commission to Nations (42:1-9)
- Coming Salvation: Parallel Panels (42:10-44:23)
- Creator Supreme (44:24-45:25)
- Contrasting Sovereigns: Parallel Panels (46:1-48:22)

– *Israel's Servant, Zion's Salvation* (49-55)

Comfort in Sovereignty (40)

- **Change:** 'Comfort my people, says your God'
 - **God's Comfort:** 'Her service (*exile*) is ended' (1-2)
The suffering and exile of God's people is over!
 - **God's Coming:** 'Prepare the way of YHWH' (3-5)
God is ready to lead His people back to His land
 - **God's Certainty:** 'God's Word stands forever' (6-8)
Frail, faithless man vs. faithful, forever God (word)
 - **God's Care:** 'Say to Judah, 'Behold, your God!'' (9-11)
As a soldier, He rules; As a shepherd, He re-gathers
 - **God's Control:** 'To whom will you liken God?' (12-31)
YHWH is sovereign over His creation, strength in Him!

Case for Sovereignty (41)

God's Power: 'I, YHWH am with first and last' (1-7)

Dominance: 'Who stirred up one from the east?' (Cyrus)

God's Promise: 'I am One who helps you' (8-20)

Deliverance: God will strengthen, save, sustain!

Purpose: 'that they may know the hand of YHWH has done this, Holy One of Israel created it' (20)

God's Power: 'Who declared it from beginning' (21-29)

Divination: 'I stirred up one from the north!' (Cyrus)

Chosen Servant (42)

- Servant: 'I have put my Spirit on him' (42:1-9)
 - *Cyrus?* context (shepherd, 'anointed one' 44:28, 45:1); but violent conqueror vs. meek (2-4)
 - *Israel?* context (chooses, 41:8-9; upholds, 41:10; calls, 41:9; grasps the hand, 41:13); servant here is a deliverer of blind, Israel is blind needing deliverance
 - *Ideal David*: Spirit-empowered deliverer (cf. Isa. 11:1f)
 - Universal Justice (1-4) **to all nations/in the earth*
 - Universal Mission (5-9) **a light for the nations*
[purpose: 'My glory I give to no other']

Coming Salvation (42-44)

- Panel #1 (42:10-43:13)
 - *Second Exodus* (10-17)
New Song: Praise to YHWH!
 - *Spiritual Blindness* (18-25)
sin brought exile (cf. 6:9f)
 - *Salvation* (1-7)
YHWH will redeem Israel!
 - *Superiority* (8-13)
proven by YHWH's prediction
- Panel #2 (43:14-44:20)
 - *Second Exodus* (14-21)
New Future: Praise to YHWH!
 - *Spiritual Blindness* (22-28)
sin brought exile (cf. 1:11-15)
 - *Salvation* (1-5)
YHWH will restore Israel!
 - *Superiority* (6-22)
proven by YHWH's prediction
tree: firewood & idol (9f)

Creator Supreme (44-45)

- Sovereign: 'I am YHWH, who ...' (24-28)
 - *Shepherd*: Creator will use Cyrus to restore Israel!
- Self-Glory: 'I am YHWH' (5x, 1-13) *1st person (I, me)
 - *Servant*: Creator will use Cyrus to restore Israel!
- Savior: 'No other god besides me' (14-25)
 - *Salvation*: Creator calls all peoples to come to Him!
(turn in faith now or bow the knee later!)

Contrasting Sovereigns (46-48)

○ Panel #1 (46:1-13)

– *Taunt* (1-7)

*Idols are helpless burdens,
created but carried away;
YHWH has carried Israel,
Creator, can deliver Israel!*

– *Trust* (8-13)

*YHWH calls His people to
trust in Him, for He shows
superiority by foretelling
deliverance through Cyrus.
Will Israel rebel or repent?*

○ Panel #2 (47:1-48:22)

– *Taunt* (47)

*Babylon humiliated by YHWH:
delicate daughter-exposed;
proud mistress-bereaved widow
'none besides/none to save you'*

– *Trust* (48)

*YHWH calls for His people to
remember past, for He shows
superiority by foretelling;
discipline deferred for glory
Now predicts Cyrus, 2nd exodus*

Outline (40-55)

○ *Restoration* (40-55)

– Israel's Salvation, God's Sovereignty (40-48)

– Israel's Servant, Zion's Salvation (49-55)

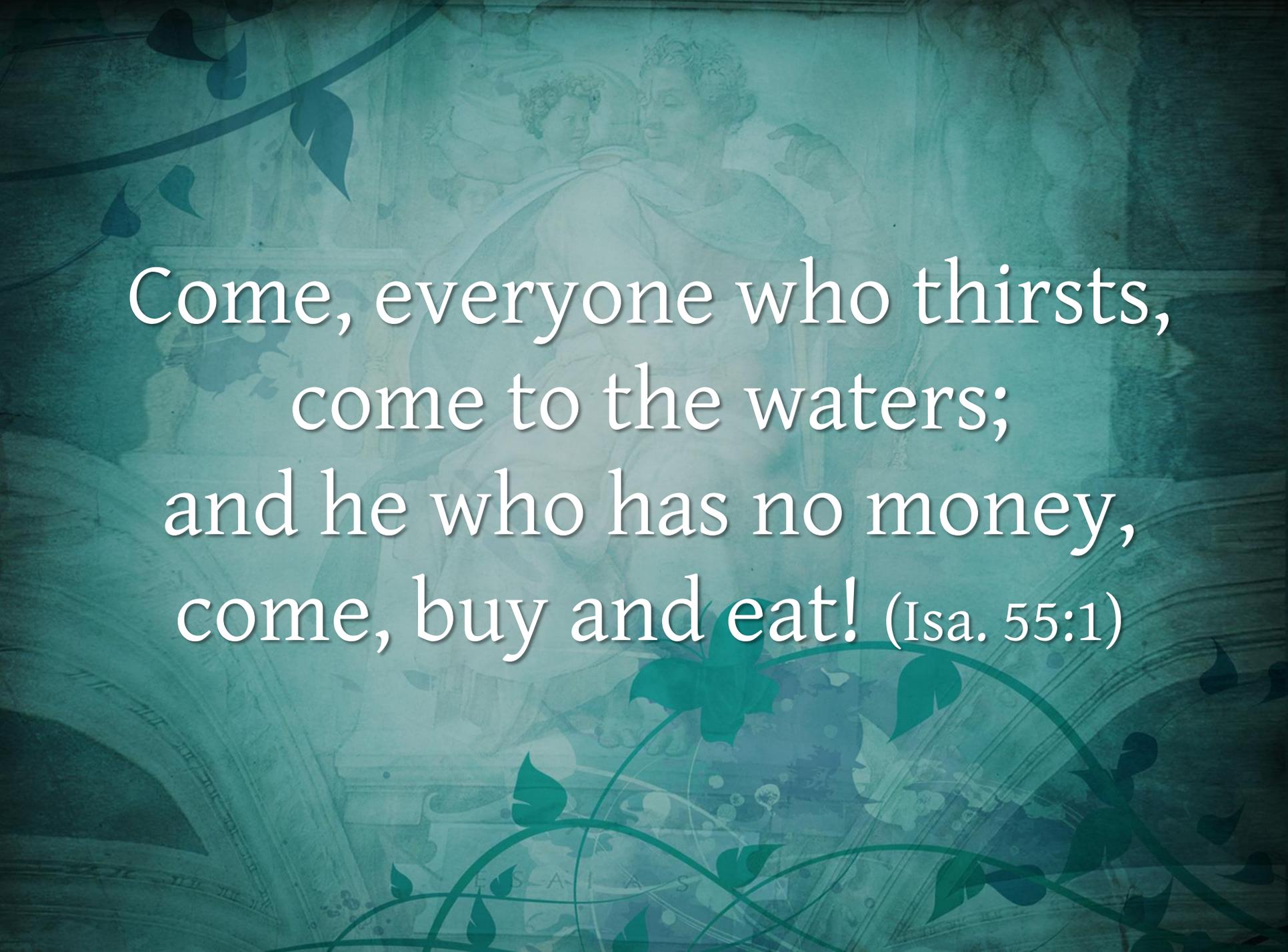
- Chosen Servant: Commission to Nations (49:1-13)
- Coming Salvation (49:14-50:3)
- Chosen Servant: Confidence in God (50:4-9)
- Coming Salvation (50:10-52:12)
- Chosen Servant: Suffering (52:13-53:12)
- Coming Salvation (54)
- Call to Salvation (55)

Chosen Servant (49-50)

- Servant: Commission
'to bring Jacob back' (49)
 - *Calling* (1-7)
Extent: Israel & nations
individual/Israel? link
Nature: conflict, confident
 - *Covenant* (8-13)
Mediator (*keep, give you*)
Means (*land & blessing*)
- Servant: Confidence
'Lord GOD helps me' (50)
 - *Spokesman* (4; cf. 50:10)
'He awakens my ear'
 - *Submits to Suffer* (5-6)
'not rebellious... I gave my back, cheeks, face'
 - *Sustained* (7-9)
'The Lord GOD helps me,
He who vindicates me is
The Lord GOD helps me'

Chosen Servant

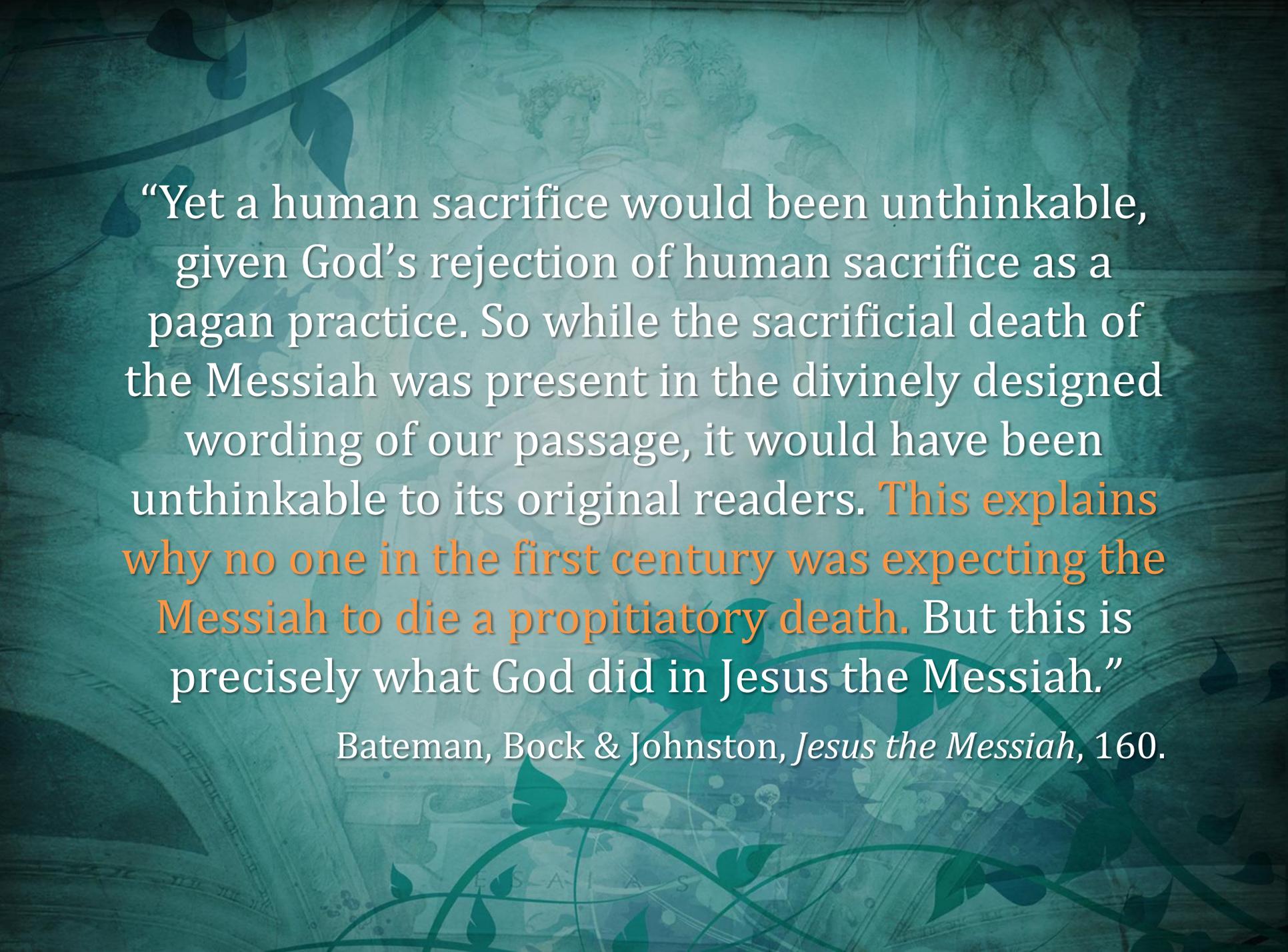
- Servant: Exalted through suffering (52:13-53:12)



Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat! (Isa. 55:1)

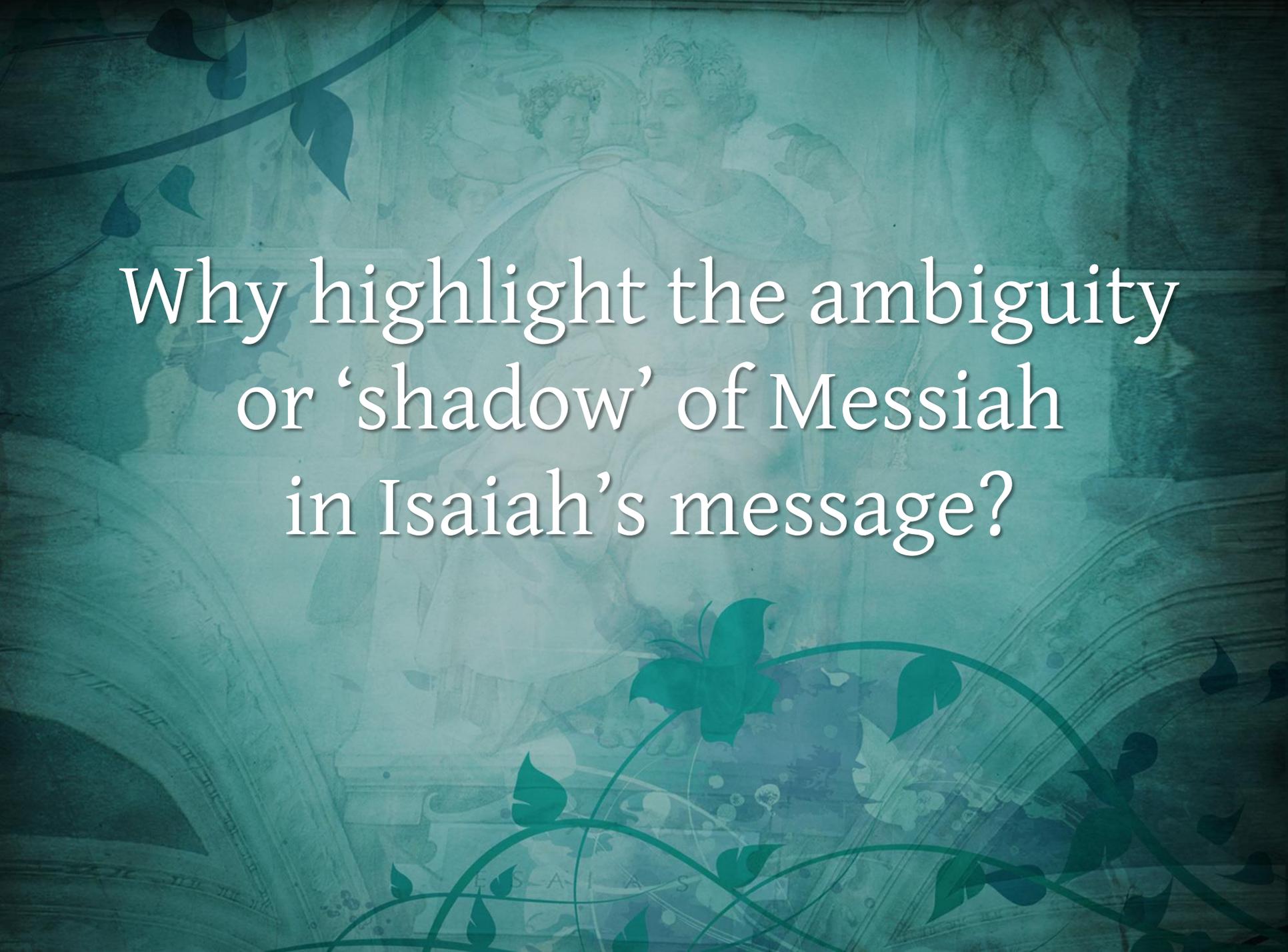
Chosen Servant

- Servant: Exalted through suffering“ (52:13-53:12)
 - *Above* (13; cf. Isa. 2:2, 6:1) ‘high, lofty,’ human/divine?
 - *Astonished* (52:14-53:3) no beauty, rejected like sick (*God’s deliverance through the servant’s humiliation!*)
 - *Agonizing* (4-6; cf. 1:5-6) vicarious: ‘for’ (5, 8); ‘bear’ (4, 11-2; Lev 10:17; Eze 4:4f) unjust: ‘because’ (Lam 4:13), *effects* (Lam 5:7, Eze 18:19)
 - *Afflicted* (7-9) forfeit: ‘cut off’ (8, Gen. 9:11) ‘grave, poured out’ (9, 12) jeopardy: *threat* (Lam 3:54, Ps 88:6; Job 17:1; Ps. 141:8)
 - *Alive* (10-12) sacrifice: subject? (he/you), *intercede or atone* (human?) restored: *see [his] seed, prolong [his] days, see light* long life or resurrection?
Loaded with ambiguity!

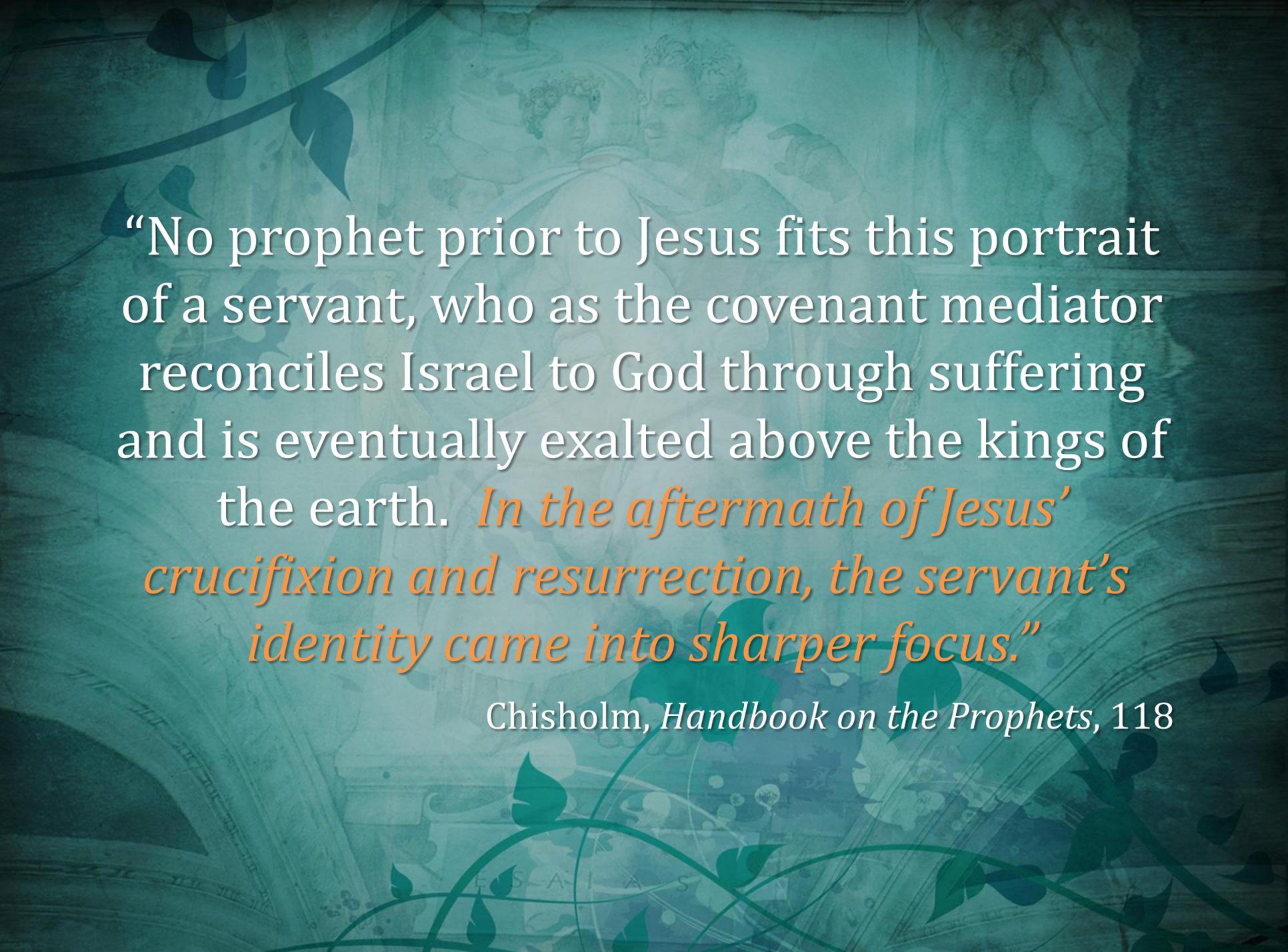


“Yet a human sacrifice would be unthinkable, given God’s rejection of human sacrifice as a pagan practice. So while the sacrificial death of the Messiah was present in the divinely designed wording of our passage, it would have been unthinkable to its original readers. **This explains why no one in the first century was expecting the Messiah to die a propitiatory death.** But this is precisely what God did in Jesus the Messiah.”

Bateman, Bock & Johnston, *Jesus the Messiah*, 160.



Why highlight the ambiguity
or 'shadow' of Messiah
in Isaiah's message?



“No prophet prior to Jesus fits this portrait of a servant, who as the covenant mediator reconciles Israel to God through suffering and is eventually exalted above the kings of the earth. *In the aftermath of Jesus’ crucifixion and resurrection, the servant’s identity came into sharper focus.*”

Chisholm, *Handbook on the Prophets*, 118

Summary

- *Retribution (1-39)*: Isaiah rebukes Judah for covenant violations (*misplaced trust- gifts, good, glory, groups*), warns of coming judgment on all YHWH's enemies – *His people, His world!*
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