

The Nature of Yeshua in the Gospel of John

admonished them to believe in Him while they still had the Light, Himself, so that they would be reckoned as children of light, and not be overtaken by darkness:

“Yeshua said to them, ‘The light will be with you only a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, or the dark will overtake you; he who walks in the dark doesn’t know where he’s going. While you have the light, put your trust in the light, so that you may become people of light.’ Yeshua said these things, then went off and kept himself hidden from them” (John 12:35-36, CJB/CJSB).

John 12:37-43

“Isaiah Saw the Glory of the Messiah”

“But though He had performed so many signs before them, *yet* they were not believing in Him. *This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah the prophet which he spoke: ‘LORD, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF THE LORD BEEN REVEALED? [Isaiah 53:1]’ For this reason they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, ‘HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART, SO THAT THEY WOULD NOT SEE WITH THEIR EYES AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED AND I HEAL THEM’ [Isaiah 6:10]. These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him. Nevertheless many even of the rulers believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they were not confessing Him, for fear that they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the approval of men rather than the approval of God.”*

Having just admonished His audience to believe in Him, while Yeshua was still personally present with them as the light (John 12:35-36), it was sadly to be reported, “Even though he had performed so many miracles in their presence, they still did not put their trust in him” (John 12:37, CJB/CJSB). The Apostle John does not just say this as one who apparently observed this taking place; the prophecies of Isaiah are appealed to. These include famed word of Isaiah 53:1, as Yeshua being the arm of the Lord was not believed (John 12:38). It also included an appeal to the prophetic commissioning of Isaiah, and in how being sent to Ancient Israel, many would not be able to hear the message he declared, because of an inability to receive it. Notwithstanding some of the textual issues present between the Hebrew Masoretic Text, Greek Septuagint, and what is quoted in John 12:40 with adaptations likely made—the rejection of Yeshua’s message is associated to how the Prophet Isaiah was broadly rejected centuries earlier:

“In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, ‘Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.’ And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, ‘Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.’ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. He touched my mouth *with it* and said, ‘Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.’ Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, ‘Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?’ Then I said, ‘Here am I. Send me!’ He said, ‘Go, and tell this people: “Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand.” **Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed**” (Isaiah 6:1-10).

What is really quite intriguing about the Apostle John referring to Isaiah 6, goes beyond Yeshua's ministry being widely rejected or dismissed; it is asserted, "Isaiah said these things because he saw His glory and spoke of Him" (John 12:41, TLV). How is one to approach the possessive pronoun and pronoun? When reviewing the encounter that the Prophet Isaiah had in Isaiah ch. 6 (Isaiah 6:1-8 has been addressed previously), it is witnessed that the only entity who Isaiah could be regarded as seeing or encountering the glory of, is the LORD or YHWH:

- "In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne [*v'ere'eh et-Adonai yosheiv al-kisei*, יָשָׁב עַל־כִּסֵּא וַיֵּאָרָא אֶת־אֲדֹנָי], lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple" (Isaiah 6:1).
- "And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory [*qadosh qadosh qadosh YHWH Tzevaot melo kol-ha'eretz kevodo*, כְּבוֹדוֹ כָּל־הָאָרֶץ מְלֵא מְבֹאֹת יְהוָה קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ קְדוֹשׁ]" (Isaiah 6:3).

So, when it is narrated of the Prophet Isaiah that "he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him" (John 12:41), who is being spoken of, within the wider context of John 12:37-43? John 12:42 notably continues, stating, "Nevertheless many even of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it, lest they should be put out of the synagogue" (John 12:42, RSV). Here, when readers encounter "many even of the rulers believed in Him," the pronoun obviously refers to Yeshua the Messiah. Contextually, when readers see "he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him...many even of the rulers believed in Him," this is all in reference to Yeshua the Messiah. The statements made here certainly need to be catalogued as they concern the nature and origins of Yeshua.

Some commentators simply offer a number of different interpretive options for these statements,²⁰⁴ whereas some do not conclude that the glory being referred to in John 12:41-42 is that of Yeshua the Messiah.²⁰⁵ However, it cannot go unnoticed that there are indeed examiners, who forthrightly conclude, that the glory of God witnessed by the Prophet Isaiah is intended to be the actual glory of a pre-existent Yeshua the Messiah in Heaven:

- George R. Beasley-Murray: "The glory of God that Isaiah saw in his vision (Is 6:1-4) is identified with the glory of the Logos-Son, in accordance with 1:18 and 17:5."²⁰⁶
- Colin G. Kruse: "The evangelist implies that what Isaiah saw in the temple was in fact 'Jesus' glory', *i.e.* the glory of the pre-existent Christ. There are other NT...writings which imply the pre-incarnate Christ appeared in OT times. Paul speaks of the rock in the wilderness from which the water gushed as Christ (1 Cor. 10:4)."²⁰⁷
- Bruce Milne: "John may be thinking of the pre-incarnate Christ (*cf.* so Paul in 1 Cor. 10:4), either as part of the divine glory in Isaiah 6:1f., or as foreshadowed in the sacrifice on the altar by which the prophet was cleansed (Is. 6:6-7). This Sent One cannot be confined to the period of his earthly mission. He is eternal, and the glory he reveals is the glory of 'the One and Only, who is at the Father's side' (1:18), which he shared with the Father 'before the world began' (17:5)."²⁰⁸

With the Tanach background of Isaiah 6:1, 3 in view, it is significant if John 12:41-42 is representative of the Prophet Isaiah witnessing Yeshua the Messiah's glory. Not only does this

²⁰⁴ Carson, *John*, pp 449-450.

²⁰⁵ Köstenberger, pp 391-392.

²⁰⁶ Beasley-Murray, 217.

²⁰⁷ Kruse, *John*, 275.

²⁰⁸ Milne, 194; also Michaels, 711.

The Nature of Yeshua in the Gospel of John

serve as strong evidence of a pre-existent Messiah, present in the dimension of Heaven—but it would also serve as strong proof of Yeshua being integrated into the Divine Identity. The NIV/TNIV/2011 NIV is notably reflective of this: “Isaiah said this because he saw Jesus’ glory and spoke about him.”²⁰⁹ The Phillips New Testament similarly has, “Isaiah said these things because he saw the glory of Christ, and spoke about him.”

John 12:44-50

“Yeshua Does Not Act On His Own”

“And Yeshua cried out and said, ‘He who believes in Me, does not believe in Me but in Him who sent Me. He who sees Me sees the One who sent Me. I have come *as* Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness. If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day. For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to* what to say and what to speak. I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me.’”

The mission of Yeshua the Messiah was profoundly different than many of the expectations of those who encountered Him. When readers encounter His declarations, particularly in a passage like John 12:44-50, they see how Yeshua the Son will frequently deflect the attention from Himself, and onto His Heavenly Father. The most significant reason for Yeshua doing this, was to decisively neutralize any claim that He was a self-aggrandizing independent actor—who had especially committed crimes of self-deification. Yeshua is instead the Son of God sent to Earth by the Father in Heaven. The obedience, of the Son to His Heavenly Father, is to be a model for His followers to emulate, in not only their commitments to the God of Israel, but also their service to one another and their fellow human beings.

A reader can be a bit taken aback by Yeshua’s statement, “Whoever puts trust in Me believes not in Me but in the One who sent Me!” (John 12:44, TLV). Is it not true that in order to receive salvation, we must each believe or put our trust in Yeshua? This word obviously includes some hyperbole, as it is not Yeshua alone in whom people must believe, but also the Heavenly Father who sent Yeshua to the Earth: “And he who beholds Me beholds the One who sent Me” (John 12:45, NASB). This is to emphasize, once again, that Yeshua is not acting alone and all on His own. That belief in Yeshua is required—although belief in Yeshua is not exclusive to belief in the Heavenly Father who sent Him—is seen in His further direction, “I have come *as* light into the world, that whoever believes in Me [*ho pisteuōn eis eme, ó pisteuōn eis émè*] would not abide in the darkness” (John 12:46, PME).

Yeshua further teaches, as His mission is to see people removed from the evil influence of darkness, that “As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it” (John 12:47, NIV). Yeshua’s explicit purpose was not to judge or condemn the world, but rather see people brought into the light of redemption. Yeshua specifies how He personally will not be the One judging people in the end, but rather how people reacted to His teachings will be what will judge people: “Those who reject me and don’t accept what I say have a judge—the word which I have spoken will judge them on the Last Day” (John 12:48, CJB/CJSB). And as it is seen, the word issued by Yeshua is not something that He spoke of Himself, but the authority He demonstrated in all of His activities is something which found its ultimate source in the Heavenly Father:

²⁰⁹ Also the Common English Bible: “Isaiah said these things because he saw Jesus’ glory; he spoke about Jesus.”