

Exegetical Notes – Isaiah 11:1-9
“The Prophecy Fulfilled: The Stump of Jesse”

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(During Advent 2024, we will leave our study of 2 Samuel and do an exegetical study entitled, **The Prophecy Fulfilled**. We will look at four passages from the book of Isaiah which Christians believe prophesy the birth of the Messiah. It is important for those joining this study to remember several things as we begin this study.

The first of these things is that this is a Christian view of these passages. The Jewish community does not believe that these passages speak to the birth of THE Messiah. They believe that these passages speak to specific times in the history of Israel and to particular events in Israel’s history.

The second of these things is that the Jews do not believe in the coming of THE Messiah but in the coming of messiahs. In Hebrew, the word “messiah” is plural. The word means “anointed ones.” The Jews believe that God raises up a messiah, or anointed one, to lead them through the current crisis that they face. These messiahs are many throughout their ancient and modern history. The Jews believe that there have been many messiahs.

Christians believe that the Hebrew word refers to Jesus. They explain the plural nature of the word as an “honorific plural.” The use of the plural to impart honor to the one who bears it is common in our history. (The king of England, for instance, is referred to as “we,” even though he is only one person.) This use of the plural has fallen into disfavor in our time. None-the-less, Christians believe that this is why the Hebrew plural is used in passages in the Old Testament which refer to THE Messiah.

The third of these things is that the Old Testament gives a very specific test for determining if a prophet is a “TRUE” prophet. Deuteronomy 18:22 says, *“If what a prophet proclaims in the name of YHWH does not take place or come true, that is a message YHWH has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do*

not be afraid of him.” The prophet whose words do not come true is to be put to death (see Deuteronomy 13:2). This would be an ineffective test of the prophet’s veracity if the words the prophet spoke were about events far in the future. How could this test be applied to Isaiah if Isaiah was speaking about events which would not happen for a thousand years after his death?

Christians believe that the prophecy of Isaiah is a dual prophecy. It talks about two things. One of these things happens during the life of Isaiah and affects the immediate future and the other speaks of the coming of THE MESSIAH, Jesus.

These problems prevented the Jews from understanding who Jesus was in the first century, too. Jesus and Paul spoke of Jesus as THE Messiah, the savior of the world. But the Jews of their day were looking for A messiah; one who would come to free them from Roman rule.)

The Historical Meaning:

The worst had happened. Israel, the northern kingdom, had fallen to Assyria. This happened in 582 BC. Ahaz, Isaiah’s cousin and the king of Judah, had placed his hopes for saving Israel in an alliance with Assyria which Isaiah did not trust. Isaiah believed that the only hope for Israel was YHWH, but Ahaz was not a man who trusted YHWH at all. He was a non-believer. Now the kingdom has fallen. Jerusalem lies in ruin. Ahaz has been taken captive. The kingdom of Judah is “cut down” and only “the stump of Jesse” remains.

Jesse was King David’s father. Isaiah predicted that a “shoot will grow from that stump which will deliver Israel (see 2 Samuel 7:12-16). In this chapter, Isaiah describes that “shoot.” It is Isaiah’s belief that a man will come forth. This man will be a messiah, an anointed one, who will deliver Judah from her political enemy. This expected person did not come in Isaiah’s lifetime. Assyria fell to Babylon. Israel remained captive until the restoration which came 70 years later. Judah was allowed to return to her territory and Jerusalem was rebuilt, but Judah never regained the glory it had in the time of David.)

The Greater Meaning

Verses 1-3a

**¹ A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.**

**²The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of might,
the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—**

³and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

- At a time when all hope was lost in the nation of Judah, YHWH promised to send an anointed one, a Messiah.
- This anointed person would come from the line of King David. “Jesse” is the father of King David.
- The Holy Spirit of God would rest upon this person so that he would have “wisdom” and “understanding.” He would understand the ways of YHWH and YHWH’s plans. He would be able to give counsel to others, and he would have the power to work the purposes of YHWH. This person would respect and love YHWH. YHWH would look on him with pleasure.
- Jesus is this anointed one (see Romans 15:8-13).

Verses 3b-5

**He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes,
or decide by what he hears with his ears;**

**⁴but with righteousness he will judge the needy,
with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth.**

**He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth;
with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.**

**⁵Righteousness will be his belt
and faithfulness the sash around his waist.**

- This anointed one will not be misled by what his eyes see or his ears hear. He will not be misled by circumstances but will see clearly to the heart of all things. He will judge all things rightly.
- When he opens his mouth, he will speak truth, and that truth will destroy those who rebel against YHWH and who refuse to follow His ways.
- This anointed one will be clothed in Righteousness and Faithfulness.

Verses 6-9

**⁶The wolf will live with the lamb,
the leopard will lie down with the goat,
the calf and the lion and the yearling together;
and a little child will lead them.**

**⁷The cow will feed with the bear,
their young will lie down together,
and the lion will eat straw like the ox.**

**⁸The infant will play near the cobra's den,
and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest.**

**⁹They will neither harm nor destroy
on all my holy mountain,**

**for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD
as the waters cover the sea.**

- When the anointed one, the Messiah, Jesus, restores the Kingdom of God to its order as YHWH intended at creation, all things will be at peace. The wild animals which today prey on other animals will no longer do so. Helpless children will not need to fear. Nothing will hurt or destroy anything or anyone else, for the God-intended order of the universe will be restored.
- In the Messiah's kingdom, the earth will be at peace with YHWH (see Revelation 22:16). Everyone there will know the Lord. "The creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed" (see Romans 8:18-28).

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