



"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME"
ISAIAH 61:1

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THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

CHAPTER 11

AND HIS NAME
WILL BE CALLED
WONDERFUL COUNSELOR,
MIGHTY GOD,
EVERLASTING FATHER,
PRINCE OF
PEACE.
ISAIAH 9:6

Isaiah is called "The Book of Salvation." The name *Isaiah* means "the salvation of the Lord" or "the Lord is salvation." Isaiah is the first book containing the writings of the prophets of the Bible. And the author, Isaiah, who is called the Prince of Prophets, shines above all the other writers and prophets of Scripture. His mastery of the language, his rich and vast vocabulary, and his poetic skill have earned him the title, "Shakespeare of the Bible." He was educated, distinguished, and privileged, yet remained a deeply spiritual man. He was committed to obedience over the long haul of his 55-60 year ministry as a prophet of God. He was a true patriot who loved his country and his people. Strong tradition suggests that he died a martyr's death under the reign of King Manasseh by being placed within the hollow of a tree trunk and sawed in two.

Isaiah's calling as a prophet was primarily to the nation of Judah (the southern kingdom) and to Jerusalem, urging the people to repent from their sins and return to God. He also foretold the coming of the Messiah and the salvation of the Lord. Many of his prophecies predicted events that occurred in Isaiah's near future, yet at the same time they foretold the events of the distant future (such as the coming of the Messiah), and even some events still to come in the last days (such as the second coming of Christ).

In summary, the message of Isaiah is that salvation comes from God—not man. God alone is Savior, Ruler and King.

Commentary on the book of Isaiah is by noted theologian Rev. William G. Most (1914-1999). His contributions to theology have been recognized all over the world. He published 12 books and a host of articles on topics ranging from biblical studies to Mariology and Latin grammar.

Book of Isaiah

Summary of Chapter 11

What seemed to be a dead stump of the line of Jesse is going to bring forth a Branch. On him the Spirit of the Lord will rest, a spirit of wisdom, understanding, counsel, power, knowledge, and fear of the Lord.

He will not judge by mere impressions or by flattery, but will give righteous judgment. He will strike the wicked with the rod of his mouth. Righteousness will be his belt, faithfulness his sash.

In this glorious age the wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard with the goat, the calf and lion will live together, while a small child can lead them. For there will be no harm on all the holy mountain of the Lord, the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

The Lord will again reclaim the remnant of His people from all other lands. There will be no more jealousy between Judah and Ephraim. Together they will capture Philistia, Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites.

To bring back His people the Lord will dry up the gulf of Egypt and make the Euphrates easy to walk through. There will be a highway for the remnant to return.

Comments on Chapter 11

The first verses read: "There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. "

<Targum Jonathan sees this line as messianic>: " A king will come from the sons of Jesse, and the Messiah will be anointed from his children's children. "

Some scholars, disinclined to see a real prophecy, want to make this refer to the great reduction in size of the Kingdom of Judah at the time of Isaiah and Achaz - the king then controlled absolutely only Jerusalem (Cf. John H. Hayes and Stuart A. Irvine, <Isaiah, the Eight Century Prophet>, Abingdon, Nashville, 1987, pp. 212-13. They point out that the word which RSV renders "stump" is Hebrew <geza>, a rare word, found only three times in the OT, in this passage and in Job 14, 7 and Isaiah 40. 24. In the latter it means a newly planted tree; in Job it means a felled tree. The Targum renders it by "sons", as we saw. But the Targum also definitely makes it refer to the Messiah, and historically, the line of David had lacked power for about 600 years by that time (from 586 BC to the time of Christ).

So, following the Targum interpretation, we see this passage as a real prophecy that the Messiah would come from the line of Jesse, that is, the line of David. But that line disappeared after the exile. And so the Messiah did come from a shoot from the withered line of the sons of Jesse.

The Spirit of the Lord is to rest upon this Messiah. Several times the Gospels speak of Jesus as being moved or led by the Spirit, e. g., in Mt 4:1, He was led into the desert by the Spirit. In Lk 10. 21, He rejoiced in the Holy Spirit. In Lk 4. 18: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me," (referring to Is 61. 1-2. Similarly, in Mt 12. 18 the Evangelist says that His cures were to fulfill Is 42. 1-4). In view of His divinity, how is it that He would need or want the action of the Holy Spirit? The answer is that He had a complete and perfect humanity, and although His divinity could supply for anything, could even do the functions of a human soul, yet the Father, in His love of good order, willed that His humanity be full and fully provided for as such. This is in

accord with the principle of St. Thomas, Summa I. 19. 5. c in which it is said that God wills that one thing be in place to serve as a title for the second thing, even though that title does not really move Him.

Incidentally this same reasoning can account for many other things: the role of the Mass and of Our Lady and the other Saints. Even though Jesus paid for all forgiveness and grace in dying once for all (Heb 10:12 & 18) there are still two reasons for the Mass and His command, "Do this in memory of me: 1) It is one thing for Him to earn forgiveness, another for us to receive it. For that we need to be like Him, esp. cf. Rom 8:17: "We are heirs of God, fellow heirs with Christ, provided that we suffer with Him so we may also be glorified with Him." 2) God in His love of holiness and good order loves to have one thing in place to serve as a title for the second, as we said above on the basis of I. 19. 5. c. Similarly the cooperation of Our Lady in Calvary was not needed, and her entire ability to do that came from Him, so that her role did not ADD to His. Yet the Father is pleased to have it to make the title for forgiveness and grace more rich. It is similar for her role in the subjective redemption, and for that of the other Saints.

The Spirit rests upon Him, does not merely come for a time, as it is reported to have done on various persons in the Old Testament. The qualities it gives Him are the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

There are two great categories of graces: sanctifying, and charismatic. The sanctifying are all those that lead to final salvation. These are offered without limit to all, since the Father has accepted the infinite price of redemption. These gifts mentioned here are in the sanctifying category, not in the category of tongues etc. Some today make the mistake of saying all Catholics have the Gifts. This is true, in the sanctifying category: they come with sanctifying grace. But then they add all Catholics must be charismatics, speaking in tongues etc, as if things in one category, charismatic, could be the actualization of things in a different category, sanctifying things.

The gifts in the Sanctifying category have many functions: e.g., they bring, in advanced souls, infused contemplation. They bring also guidance in which the soul does not need to reason from step to step to reach a conclusion: the conclusion is dropped ready made, as it were, into the mind. Of course, there is room for self-deception here. But we must remember that the clear manifestations of graces of this sort are found only in souls well advanced. Further, this sort of guidance usually leaves a soul somewhat less than certain of the course to be followed, as a sign that it should seek guidance from authority or a director. St. Teresa of Avila, who had so many extraordinary gifts, and had been told in a revelation to found a reformed branch of the Carmelites, would not go ahead without consulting four directors.

Kings and other powerful people are exposed to flattery, which may turn their heads. But the Messiah will judge righteously, and not by appearances. He knows what is in man: cf. John 2:25.

He will protect the weak and the poor. Remarkably ancient kings often were expected to do that, and many did. The Pharaohs of Egypt, especially in the Middle Kingdom did at least some of that. Hence one of the chief insignia of the Pharaoh was a shepherd's crook. So did the kings of the ancient Near East (cf. W. von Soden, <The Ancient Orient>, tr. D. Schley, Eerdmans, 1994, p. 63. . The Messiah of course was to be far greater than they in this respect. He is to use the rod of his mouth - not military force - to overcome the wicked (cf. 2 Th. 2:8 and Psalm 2:9).

The idyllic picture of the peace in the animal world seems to mean a return to the conditions of paradise, before sin: cf. Romans 8:19-23.

The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord (11:9). Knowledge here is <de`a> (cf. Is 53:11. <with same word>: in his knowledge he shall make righteous (hiphil=make righteous, not: make to be accounted righteous). Same word is found in Hosea 6:6 "and knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings". The verb <de`ath> is the Qal infinitive of <yada>, which means not only know, but love also. <So here: the earth is full of love of the Lord, that is, giving love to the Lord>.

This root of Jesse which, one thought was of no account (cf. chapter 523) will be exalted like a banner. His place of rest will be glorious: does this hint ahead to His rest in chapter 53?

Now another image: the return from exile. It had begun with deportation in 734, then more when Samaria fell in 722, and finally to come under Nebuchadnezzar in 597 and 587. The old jealousy of Ephraim and Judah will be gone. Together they will take the Philistines, Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites. This return from exile is then pictures in extremely idealistic terms: God will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea, make the Euphrates shallow, there will be a highway from Assyria. Literally Ephraim did not come back - this is idealized.

Further we may compare the idealized vision of a future temple in Ezekiel 40-48 -- which will not really have animal sacrifices. Just as in the old law material images were used which were later understood to stand for spiritual things, so also here (Augustine, City of God 4. 33). The real fulfillment comes in Christianity, which as Romans 11 shows is the continuation of the old Israel. Cf. Augustine <City of God> 17. 3 on the three kinds of prophecies.