

Allan MacRae: Isaiah 1-6: Lecture 6

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Now, at the end of last class I got a very thoughtful question: “Dr. MacRae I’ve had a problem with the phrase ‘the last days’ in Isaiah 2:1 and ‘in that day’ in 4:1 and 4:2. Is there any special significance to this?” Now that is a very good question, not so much in relation to this section of Isaiah as it is to the Old Testament in general. And in relation to this question, the first thing I’d like to mention is that almost any phrase, almost any word, can come to be used as a technical term. Take for instance the word “millennium.” What does millennium mean? Millennium means a thousand year period. I used to find that when I was teaching archeology in the seminary and I would say something happened in the second millennium BC, the students would laugh. Now there’s no reason to laugh because you refer to the second thousand year period before the coming of Christ, but the reason they laughed was because they had only heard the term, or generally heard the term, as referring to one specific thousand year period. And so the term “millennium” has come to be used as a technical term among Christians to mean that period of absolute freedom from external danger that the Lord has promised to establish upon this earth at some time in the period that is still the future. It has become a technical term. That doesn’t mean we can’t use it as an ordinary term as is done regularly in such work as archeology where they speak of the second millennium BC, or the fourth millennium BC. "Millennium" is not used so much in history because we’re more apt to go by centuries instead of by thousand year periods. But any phrase like “the last days” or “in that day” may be an ordinary term or may become a technical term. But there is a great error or a rather common error, among a great many students of the Bible if they insist that some word is strictly a technical term. When someone suggests that something is a technical term we must examine it carefully and see if indeed it is used as technical terms. But there are many cases where it is said that words are used as

technical terms where they are not. I remember one man who had a very definite theory of the New Testament. He was a very prominent professor. He had a very definite theory which would do away with any belief in the future millennium - he was very insistent on it. And one of his arguments was based upon the use of the word "end." He said wherever it speaks of the word "end" that refers to the end of the nation and leaves no room for a millennium. Someone pointed out that the word "end" is very often used for the end of the day or the end of the century but if it's something like that he said, "yes, but in those cases it is not used absolutely; it has a phrase after it, such as "my end," "his end," "their end," or something like that." Well then we found a passage where "end" refers to the end of the world as we know it, not the millennium. And he admitted, "Well there's a technical word that's used non-technically." I thought it was a very good illustration of the great danger of jumping to the conclusion that something is a technical term.

Now we want to, in each case, see what is the evidence that something is or is not, a technical term. Let's take the word "Branch of the Lord" as we have to date, the *tsemach* in Hebrew. Now in the context that could easily be interpreted as a non-technical word and refer simply to vegetation. But we find several places later in the Old Testament where it is very obvious that that word is used to refer to the coming Messiah. And therefore, when we find this word later used as a technical term, we have the right to ask in this case, is it simply a non-technical term which later came to be a technical term, or does it already refer to the Messiah in this case. Now the term "last day," English translation *aharit yamim* I had not intended to discuss it because it only occurs once in the section of Isaiah we're dealing with now. But I will say just a word about it, I am quite sure that it is not a technical term for the final end of the age. I believe that it really is "just after a while." Now "after a while" may point to the very end of the age and there are many cases where it does. But there are a number of cases where it definitely does not. And I would simply mention three of them to you. One is Genesis 49:1. If you try to take Genesis 49 and refer it to the last days and you'd find great

difficulty in some parts of it. I believe it simply means that after the Israelites go into Canaan. And Deuteronomy 4:30 and 31:29 refer to how God is going to punish His people for their sins and then he says “In the last days if you turn to God He will again give you mercy”. He is not there saying that you have sinned, you will be punished now, but then if 3000 years later you turn to God He will give you mercy. He’s saying he will punish you for your sins but after you have endured the punishment for a while, if you turn to God, He will give you mercy. Now, if we had more uses of it in this section, I would go into the Hebrew words of it, which I think are a very interesting in this connection.

But I’m not going to do that in this class because there is only one usage of it in the material we’re going to cover for this semester. Now the other phrase, “In that day” occurred eight times in the section of Isaiah that we have had up to this point including today's assignment. It occurs eight times. And in most of them it means the day we’ve just been talking about. And that is very clear in most of its occurrences. It occurs in verse 2:11, 17; 20; 3:7, 18; 4:1-2, 5:30, and in most of them it clearly means the day we’ve just been talking about. That’s what the phrase in that day would ordinarily mean in English. And so there are seven cases, I believe, of the eight where it is definitely not a technical term, so we would need some pretty good evidence to say that it is a technical term for the others. I believe, I was looking at it in other cases, we find that the term occurs in other parts of Isaiah a great many times. It occurs in Micah quite a few times and occurs a great many times in Zechariah. And looking at them we find that the phrase often means the day we’ve just been talking about. But there are many cases where it means the day we’re going to talk about now “in that day.” We don’t use it that way in English, but that Hebrew phrase is often used introducing something. And I would think that the best way to say it in English would be, “There will be a day when...” “In that day” something would happen.

This is how I think it is used in the section we are going to look at today in the beginning of chapter 4. You have the beginning, "and in that day, 7 women

shall," and so on, that I believe is the same day just spoken of. Israel is speaking of the men falling in war at the depopulation. It is at that particular time but then "in that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and good." Now you have your choice here; you can say the first verse is looking on to the same time mentioned in verses 3:26 and 4:1. Or you can say it refers to the immediate situation of chapter 3 and between verse one and two there is a period of time which might conceivably be a long period. So in either case one of these two must be the day we are now going to speak about. I know some Bible teachers say whenever you see the phrase "in that day" it is pointing to the "day of the Lord." I think that is a guess that is based on insufficient evidence. I have here listed all the cases where the term occurs in the Old Testament and some of them refer to that period, but the great bulk of them do not. So I believe "in that day" can mean the "day we are about to speak of," which may be the day about which we were just speaking, or may be "the day of the Lord," but doesn't have to be.

Anytime there is a question you have that comes into your mind and would like to have clarification of it I wish you would turn it into me. Now for this question I intend to write a letter to the one that handed it in instead of bringing it to class, but then I decided that after all it would be worth the whole class's attention. Because while it is not of great importance to this section of Isaiah, it is of great importance for a number of sections of the Old Testament. I also wanted to point out the difference between technical terms and non-technical terms.

Now we were ready to proceed. At our last class we had already begun to look at chapter 4. So I will put the outline first perhaps right here in front of you. Chapter 4, Roman numeral five: And under that we have "the branch of the Lord". Well I guess we were really at the selection "rebuke the worldly woman," and we have all this long description of the vain habits of the Israelites, of many of the Israelite woman, at the time of Isaiah, and then we have the terrible statements towards the end of chapter 3 about the way God is going to punish them and it is quite obvious, I believe, that verse one of chapter four is simply concluding the

condemnation with the statement that there will be such great depopulations that the number of woman will be far greater than the number of men in the land. The fact that the Arch Bishop made the division here shows that clearly he understood it, as some interpreters have, as meaning the seven women represent seven churches or some group of Christians, and the man of whom they take hold as the Lord Jesus Christ. Now that is an allegorical interpretation of the verse. There are verses in the Scripture that can be taken allegorically, there is much in this that can be taken figuratively and that should be taken figuratively. But in this verse I believe it is quite clear that that is not the case. So we go on to Roman numeral five, the branch of the Lord Isaiah speaks of in 4:2-6, and under that we look first at verse 2. Now I don't know whether most of you would find it easier to look in your Bible or whether it would be easier if I put the Scripture in front of you. Anyway we can put it up here on the board and see if you can read it from where you sit.

These verses 2 through 6 are here before you, and I've entitled them "The Branch of the Lord" because it begins with the words "In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the land shall be excellent and comely for them that have escaped to Israel".

The relation of these verses to the preceding passage is quite obvious. Chapter four verse one is clearly a part of the passage that precedes. Verse two is clearly related to it, but it might conceivably refer to something that will happen after the depopulation or at the time that is after the death of so many in war and after the great impoverishment of these people. However, it can equally well be: there is going to be a later day much different from this day. There is going to be a day when the women of those who should be God's people will find their adornment and their joy not in the bonnets and the ornaments of the legs, and the head bands, and tablets, and the earrings, and all the different things named before; it will not be in these objects that are not, most of them, bad in of themselves, but they are bad when they become the matter of primary interest for the women. But

instead they will find their satisfaction through “the Branch of the Lord which will be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the Earth will be excellent and comely for those who are who have escaped of Israel.” Instead of these women being interested in all these physical adornments and all that sort of thing, they will be interested on growing good crops and having plenty for everybody to eat, and getting back to the necessities of life. Now that is a very natural way to interpret the verse in relation to what precedes. It is not however the only way. It may be that instead of saying that they will turn their head away from these things, superficial things, to the solid things of agriculture, it may be that their love and devotion will be turned away from these vain and worldly things to something higher and finer that the Lord will make available—“the Branch of the Lord.”

Now there are seventeen words in the Old Testament that the King James version translates “branch,” and the word used here makes it obvious it is not necessarily, specifically, and technically a branch of a tree. It is a larger term than that; it means the produce, that which is produced by something that grows out of the ground. Here it is called the “Branch of the Lord.” It does not mean a “piece of the Lord” like we say a branch of the railroad. It doesn’t mean that. It means that which is produced which comes from the Lord. Well of course when you go through a period of a famine and starvation the slightest food looks good in 1927 I took a walking trip through Germany and there I talked to a man who told me how after the First World War ended, in the section of Germany in which he was living, everything had broken down; there was no transportation; he said there was just no food available. He said turnips were the only things they could get to eat and for six weeks they had nothing to eat but turnips. And then, he said, after six weeks an American Red Cross car came through the area and distributed little cans of lard. And he said when they ate some of that lard it just tasted like some of the finest ice cream ever tasted in their lives because they had nothing but turnips for the previous six weeks, and they had been half starved during half of World War I anyway. And my landlady there in Berlin told me that she lost fifty pounds during

the course of that war. Well this man said when they just swallowed up the lard it seemed so good but, he said their stomachs where so closed up from having so little to eat that when they put this in they all felt cramped and miserable.

And I know one evening, how I never saw such joy in eating, whipped cream and things like that, anywhere in my life as I did in Berlin, by these people who've had already 5 or 6 years experience with the war. Some of us in America felt it terrible when we couldn't get real butter during the war and thought we were suffering greatly. But we have never experienced what so many nations have experienced during times of war and famine. And so, it would be quite natural that if you say when the ground began to produce and the trees began to give fruit, "The Lord has provided. Isn't this wonderful?"

And so that it's not an impossible interpretation of this verse, but the fact is that this particular word for branch, *tsemach*, is used in Jeremiah 23:5, Jeremiah 33:15, and Zechariah 3:18 and 6:12; I'll put those up on the board a little later for those who are taking references. But the fact is that it is used there as a term for the Lord, for the Messiah. The expression "the Lord provides" would suggest strongly that those writers understood this passage in Isaiah as referring to the one whom the Lord would provide, the great Messiah, who has come to deliver from war and trouble, rather than simply to the fact that famine would be at an end and they would have plenty to eat.

So the first point we discussed was relation to the preceding passages, but number two, number two is: note the descriptive terms that is, "The branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious." You don't ordinarily speak of a tree as beautiful and glorious. "And the fruit of the earth will be excellent and comely." Now these four Hebrew words that are used here: I looked up a couple of days ago to see how they are used elsewhere in the Scripture to see whether the King James translators had given them special grandeur. You might say that these are simple words, but I found that they are uniformly used to mean "that which is glorious," "that which is beautiful," "that which is excellent," or "that which is

absolutely transcendent.” Now you would hardly use such a term ordinarily simply for food or for agriculture. And so these descriptive terms being so very strong in this second verse suggests very strongly that God led Isaiah to predict not the end of famine, not the women turning their attention away from worldly adornment and turning it to agriculture, but the sending of something that would have direct relation to the cause of the famine and the depopulation of the war, direct relation to the sin of the people, that God would send the one who would bring relief from all of this, the one who would work out God’s own purposes and that he is the Branch of the Lord.

Well, I asked before whether number three here refers to vegetation or something greater. That is the question, number three. “Is this vegetation or is it something greater?” And I’ve put that on the board so you can write down those references, though I am not asking you to memorize them. But the fact that this very same word for “branch,” out of 17 words for “branch” used in the Old Testament, that this very same one is used in all four of those passages, suggests very strongly that they understood that the branch of the Lord was the Messiah.

Well, so much then for number three, the question as to whether it is agriculture--the Branch of the Lord--or whether it is the Messiah. Somebody in Isaiah’s day might have had difficulty. But Peter said, as you recall, Peter said that the prophets “searched and inquired,” tried to figure out “what or what manner of time the spirit of Christ, which was in them, signified, when he prophesized of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.” And so we have it clearly taught in the New Testament that God gave the prophets understanding of, or at least words, that could be understood as describing important matters about Christ, even if the prophets themselves didn’t fully understand the words. And therefore we certainly are justified in saying that the branch of the Lord is the Messiah here.

But now the verse goes on: “the branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the tree will be excellent and comely”. So here are these women, who formerly gave all their attention to their personal adornment and

vanity, who now are finding their joy in the coming of the Messiah and the fruits that grow out of the earth. They are uniting, they're looking forward to Christ, with the agriculture which has yet to be established. Well, it seems rather incongruous in one verse in that way, to combine the two in that way. You can take them both as referring to agriculture, but the adjectives used seem to go far beyond what reasonably can apply to agriculture. If you take the first one as the Messiah, is it reasonable to take the second one as also referring to the Messiah? The "branch of the Lord" and "the fruit of the earth" are the same. Now this word "fruit" is not fruit in the narrow sense that we use it for apples and pears, and so forth. The word "fruit" is used for a man when he speaks of the fruit of his body; they speak of the fruit as that which is produced. As used in the scripture, often it stands for ordinary food of any kind.

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MacRae, Isaiah 1-6: Lecutre 6

1. Introductory Question:

- A. What is the significance of the phrase "last days" in Isaiah 2:1 and "in that day" in 4:1, 2?
1. Words being used as technical terms.
 - a. Example: millennium, used in archaeology--second millennium BC
 - b. Student only think of "the" millennium as the millennial rule of Christ a period free from external danger and peace on earth
 - c. Problem with technical terms they can be used in a normal context too
 - d. NT professor taking the word "end" as a technical term for the end of the nation (with no millennium). But the word end could be the end of the day, his end, their end...etc.
 - e. Don't jump to conclusion that something is a technical term
 - f. "Branch of the Lord" (tsemach)--are we to understand it as a technical term for the Messiah or a non-technical term?
 - g. "Last day" (aharit yamim) only occurs once in Isaiah meaning "after a while" not a technical term
 - h. Gen. 49:1; Deut 4:30 and 31:29... last days not technical term
 - i. "In that day" occurs 8 times in our section of Isaiah (2:11, 17, 20; 3:7, 18, 4:1-2, 5:30); 7 of the 8 not technical term for sure.

- j. Perhaps best to translate it: "There will be a day when"
- k. Is depopulation referring to 3:26 the same as 4:1. Probably so.
- l. Some say "in that day" always = "the Day of the Lord" the evidence doesn't support that

5. The Branch of the LORD

A. 4:1

- 1. "Rebuke of worldly woman" -- 4:1 simply concludes what was happening at the end of chapter 3.
- 2. Seven women not = seven churches. Not allegorical, Bible does have figures of speech but not here

B. 4:2-6 "The Branch of the LORD"

- 1. "in that day shall the Branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the land shall be excellent and comely for them that have escaped to Israel."
- 2. 4:2 relates to 4:1 and 4:1 back to the end of chapter 3
Women in that day will not find joy in ornaments as their primary interest
- 3. KJV translates the Hebrew word for "branch" 17 different ways
 - a. Story of Germany and starvation resulting joy when little food supplied
- 4. Other places "branch" is used: Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 3:18; 6:12.
- 5. "The Lord provides" suggests provision of the Messiah come to deliver from war and famine

C. "The branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious"

- 1. Not usual terms to describe a tree:

2. Not just to end famine, or to turn women from worldly adornment but getting at the root cause --sin and the working out of God's purpose.
 3. Is this vegetation or is it something greater?
 - a. 4 uses suggests identification of "branch" with the Messiah
 - b. 1 Peter 1:11 God gave prophets words about Christ
- D. "The branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the tree will be excellent and comely."
1. Women will not pay attention to adornment but find joy in the Messiah
 2. Terms go beyond agriculture
 3. Parallel terms: branch of the Lord // fruit of the earth
fruit of the body can refer to man