

## **Allan MacRae: Isaiah 1-6: Lecture 8**

### **Biblical Theological Seminary, 1976**

Now, we were still discussing Roman numeral seven, which was Isaiah's call to service, which I did not go into in detail in the outline. And we had come to the point where we were speaking about the seraph coming to Isaiah and touching his lips with the coal from off the altar – a very interesting point. What would it mean to someone in those days? We don't know how much they knew.

Remember when Jesus Christ called the men on the road to Emmaus, "fools and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken, ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?" In other words these disciples of Jesus should have understood from the Old Testament what Jesus, as Messiah, was supposed to go through.

Now, how much Isaiah understood, we don't know. Peter says, "the prophets were searching, trying to find out what and what manner of time the spirit of Christ that was in them signified when he told of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow." But the fact is that in Isaiah's vision, it was the coal from off the altar that touched his lips and when that happened he was then made fit for service. It certainly is a representation of the fact that the sacrifices were necessary in order that man could be cleansed from his sin and made fit to serve the Lord, and as Scripture says, "the blood of bulls and goats can't take away sin." The sacrifices represented the death of Christ on the cross. And it was only through that that anyone, whoever, has been saved or ever can be saved. And this is very clearly suggested in this vision of Isaiah.

And after Isaiah was cleansed by this seraph bringing the coal from off the altar and touching his lips, then he heard the Lord saying, "Who shall we send, and

who will go for us?” And Isaiah said, “Here am I; send me.” He was ready for service now. Today, we are not ready for service until we have been cleansed through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then, what a disappointment it must have been to Isaiah to hear the Lord’s words. The Lord said, “Go and tell this people: hear, but don’t understand. See, but don’t perceive. Make their heart fat and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes.” What a terrible thing to tell a man who thinks he’s just going to go out and lead the world into a great successful movement for God. Tell them: go and harden their heart, close their eyes. Of course, there is a background of the people turning away from the Lord before this. Isaiah has given much rebuke to the people in previous chapters for the way they have turned from the Lord. The mass of the people have reached the point where they have already gone so far in that direction that the presentation of the truth will simply harden them.

Now that does not mean that Isaiah’s work had no effects in helping people. It doesn’t mean that at all. It means that this was an important part of his work and that the Lord was giving him and showing him that worst feature of it so that he wouldn’t feel too bad when he found that though he had many loyal followers they were only a minority in the nation.

It’s interesting how the Lord in giving the call to someone, sometimes emphasized the side that you might say was less prominent but perhaps psychologically needed. You’ll find in Jeremiah 1 where God tells Jeremiah he’s going to send him over the nations to plant, to tear down, to build up. He talks as if Jeremiah’s going to have a tremendously important function, as indeed he did. But Jeremiah served in a much worse time than Isaiah and saw the nation go off into exile and into misery. But the Lord gave Jeremiah a wonderful, happy command, to plant and to build up whereas in Isaiah’s case here the Lord gives him these sad words as he begins his ministry.

And so God told Isaiah to say all this, and Isaiah said in verse 11, “How long? Lord, how long?” Isaiah is hoping it won't be more than a day or two like this or at least no more than two or three years at most. But the Lord said “Until the city be wasted without inhabitants and the houses without men and the land be utterly desolate and the Lord has removed men far away and there's a great forsaking in the midst of the land.” The people had reached the point in their apostasy where God was going to bring a calamity and going to send them off into exile.

But look at verse 13, which is not very well translated in the King James Version. I think that most of you looking at verse 13 at first sight would not get much sense out of it. “Yet there shall be in it a tenth and it shall return and it shall be eaten.” The New American Standard expresses that much better and I think the King James probably would be clear to someone in that time. But we use our words differently now which is why I don't think this verse makes much sense to most of us. But the New American Standard says, “Yet there will be a tenth portion in it.” Notice that the King James said “But yet in it shall be a tenth.” But then the NASV says “And it will be again be subject to burning.” The NIV, “And will again be destroyed.” This cleansing the Lord is going to give, this punishment, will have to be repeated. There will be a remnant which will follow Isaiah and stand through. And yet in this remnant there will be those who will turn away. There will be a tenth that will remain true, but yet out of them there will be those who will again bring judgment upon this group. And yet it is not to be a complete destruction. The King James says “As a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof.” The word “substance” doesn't carry meaning to us. In modern English, “stump” would be much better and most recent translations render it “stump.” The NASV says, “It will be like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump.” In other words, there will be these constant, these repeated purges and

cleansing among God's people. But there will still always be a remnant of good. The holy seed is the stump which still remains no matter how often the tree may be cut down, may be destroyed, and may be purged.

And so Isaiah is given this general vision to encourage him to go on and to find that though things are bad, they are not nearly as bad as he feared after God's call because God's call stressed mostly one side--destruction. And yet he did give him his final word that there would be a remnant of grace after all.

Now I thought when I started this course that I was going to divide it into two parts. I'm going to speak first of Isaiah one to six and then go onto part two which would be the last ten chapters of the book. But I think that it is better to touch on certain matters in between because in looking at one to six we've already referred to chapters nine and eleven, and in going into the latter chapters we need something of background. So I'm not going to make two parts but make it all one part, and simply have Roman numerals labeling the parts, so the next will be number eight, "A glance at the predictions in Isaiah nine to eleven." Under that, capital A will be "Isaiah 9" and if you will look in your Bible at Isaiah 9, to which we have already made reference in connection with chapter 4, you find that the relation to what precedes is very interesting.

Chapter 8 ends with a picture of calamity, the people are being punished for their sin. Verse 22: "They look into the earth and are bold, trouble and darkness, dimness and anguish and they shall be driven to darkness." And in the context Isaiah is predicting the attack by the Assyrian army, which came during Isaiah's time of ministry. And these Assyrian armies came marching in from the northeast and as they marched there and attacked the land, they brought terrible darkness and misery to the people there.

Now the first verse of chapter 9 in the King James begins, "Nevertheless, the dimness shall be not such as was in her vexation when at first he lightly

afflicted the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali and afterward will more grievously afflict her by way of the sea beyond Jordan in Galilee of the nations. The people have walked in darkness have seen a great light.” That’s a strange connection. That is the Jewish copies of the Scripture, when they took over the chapter division from the Latin Bible they did not put it where the archbishop had put it here, but put it one verse later. And just looking casually at it, it looks as if you have a brand new start in verse 2, as if the break should be where you find it in the Hebrew Bible and in the Jewish copies of the scripture. But Matthew quotes the 2 verses together and it is clear as you examine them together, particularly in the light of Matthew, it is clear that what Isaiah is saying is there is going to be this terrible darkness as the Assyrian armies come marching in to the northeastern corner, through the land of Zebulon and the land of Naphtali, Galilee of the nations. But that this very region in which the darkness first comes as these hoards of enemies come rolling over the land, this very area is to be where the great light will first come; in other words where Jesus Christ will begin His preaching, a definite prediction of the coming of Christ. Now if we only had verse 2 we might hesitate about thinking that it is specifically looking forward to Christ but in verse 6 it makes it very clear. The reason for the light “unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given and the government shall be upon his shoulders.” It is a prediction of the coming of Christ.

So then we have number 2: the quotation in Matthew 4: 14-16. And there in the gospel of Matthew, Matthew quotes this passage after telling how Jesus went and began his preaching up in that region of Zebulon and Naphtali he says that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying “The land of Zebulon, the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea beyond Jordan, Galilee and the Gentiles," this is the region where the great darkness first came from the Assyrian invasion. There the people who sat in darkness saw a great light. And to them which sat in the region and shadow of death, light just sprung up and from

that time, when Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

So we have the quotation from this section of Isaiah in Mathew, and in verse 5 of chapter 9, we have the promised end of war. Verse 5 is not always immediately understandable to us, but as you look at it closely, it is quite clear what it means. "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood. But this shall be for burning and fuel of fire, for unto us a child is born, unto us a child is given." The implements of war are to be destroyed. War is to come to an end because the prince of peace is coming.

So the promise is to end the war, verse 5, and then verse 4 the one who will do this is the two natured redeemer. We looked at this connection with chapter 4 where he was called the "branch of the Lord" and "the fruit of the earth." Here he is called "a child is born, and a son is given." God gave his only begotten son. God caused that Jesus Christ be born there, of the Virgin Mary. And so we have here the two natured redeemer, and we have those tremendous names given to him, showing his deity; "he is the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace." Now in the course I gave last year, we looked at chapter 9 at length. Here I merely want to point to its relation to chapter 4 and go on to Isaiah 11.

In Isaiah 11, again we note the relation to what precedes. The end of chapter 10 shows the downfall of the Assyrian empire. The great Assyrian empire that attacked Israel as God's instrument for punishment. The Assyrians did not do it in order to please God. God used these wicked men for his purposes and then he punished them for their wickedness. And so we read a description of their downfall in verses 33 and 34 of chapter 10. And it's given under the figure of a forest. "He shall cut down the thickets of a forest with an iron; Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one." But in contrast to that, the stem of Jesse, which seems also to have been cut down, "a rod will come out of the stem of Jesse and a branch will

grow out of his roots.” So here, as in chapter 9, it is closely related to what precedes.

Now number 2 of the outline, here is “the branch.” We must always distinguish between Assyria and Syria. Actually they’re utterly distinct. Assyria was really Arab, but it was conquered by the Assyrians and became a part of the Assyrian Empire, and later the Greeks called it Syria as from the name Assyria. But the Assyrian empire was the great empire with its headquarters in Ninevah, which conquered the northern kingdom of Israel and over ran most of the southern kingdom of Judah. Now this word, “the branch,” we had in chapter 4, then there the Hebrew was *tsemach*. There are 17 Hebrew words that are translated as “branch” in the KJV. Now at that time in discussing chapter 4, I gave you a connection with the Hebrew word *tsemach* in two or three references where it is clearly used on the messianic sense later on. That was the word *tsemach*. Now in this particular case, that word is not used, but a different word is used. The word *Natzer*. And *Natzer* is another word for branch, which is not used so much in the messianic sense as the word *tsemach* is. Yet *Natzer* has an important connection to the New Testament. Because there is a reference to this passage, I am quite convinced, in Matthew 2:23. I say I am quite convinced because there are some who advance a different interpretation of Matthew 2:23, but one which does not have much to be said in its favor. But this I am quite convinced: Matthew has in mind this passage in Isaiah when he says in Matthew 2:23 “that he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth,” which is derived from this root *Natzer*, and it means the place of this type of vegetation. “He came and dwelt in a town called Nazareth that it might be fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet, that he shall be called a ‘Nazarene’.”

Now we must never confuse a Nazarene with a Nazarite. The Old Testament tells about the particular arrangements that can be made for a Nazarite. A Nazarite was one who never cut his hair, never touched anything that came from

grapes, even raisins, never touched wine or strong drink, or even raisins, anything from the vine. Remember Samson. He was one of the men in the book of judges who was a Nazarite from birth through his life ordinarily to be a Nazarite was a vow taken by an individual.

And so it is from this root *Natzer* that the word Nazarene comes, not the word Nazarite. And Matthew connects that up with Jesus' living in Nazareth, "He will be called a Nazarene." He is the branch of the Lord referred to just once under this title at this point in Isaiah 11.

Number 3 of the outline then, the quotation Matthew 2:23, Number 4 is, "His character," which we find here in chapter 11 of Isaiah. We very briefly glance at it because it is not the section we are really dealing with in this course but we want to see the relation of this passage to the other material we looked at in chapter 4. His character is discussed in verse 2 to 3 and again in verse 5. "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 of the fear of the Lord, and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes neither reprove after the hearing of his ears." And you remember that it says of Christ that he knew what was in man, nobody needed to tell him, he understood people as nobody else ever had. And when he met Nathaniel he said "behold an Israelite in whom is there is no guile" and Nathaniel said "how do you come to know me." Jesus knew all things; he was quick in understanding and had thorough comprehension. And verse 5 of Isaiah 11 says, "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loin and faithfulness the girdle of his reign." I put these three verses together in order to mention verse four separately.

Number 5 of the outline, "His victory over Antichrist." That is verse 4 chapter 11: "But with Righteousness shall he judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." Look at the phrase: "With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."

Now I have called that his victory over Antichrist. That word Antichrist has come to be used for the great enemy of God's people at the end of the age. The New Testament says that there are many antichrists, so it really would be better if we used a different word for that one particular Antichrist. But since it has become rather widespread to refer to that one great opponent of God as "The Antichrist" or to refer to him as Antichrist with a capital "A," I am using that designation here referring to that one great individual at the end of the age. Here I'll read the last part of verse 4 again. "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." We now compare 2 Thessalonians 2:8 and Revelation 19:15 and 21. Let us look at 2 Thessalonians 2:8 and see how the apostle Paul interprets this passage. 2 Thessalonians 2:8 we find that Paul said, "Then shall that wicked one be revealed whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming." That wicked one; what wicked one? The one referred to in Isaiah 11:4. There is nothing else in the Old Testament to which to connect it. He will be destroyed by the Lord with the spirit of his mouth, and this word translated spirit could also be translated breath. The same word could be translated either way, both in Greek and in the Hebrew. And so Paul says this which was predicted about Christ. This was not something that Christ did at his first coming, but something that is yet to come because the wicked one whom he will destroy in that way, Paul says has not yet been revealed. He will be revealed at the end of the age, and the Lord will destroy him with the breath of his mouth and with the brightness of his coming.

Then in Revelation 19 verses 15 and 21 we find what is doubtless another reference to this. In verse 15, after it describes the coming of one on a white horse who's name is called the word of God, we read in verse 15 that "Out of his mouth goes a sharp sword that with it he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron." Out of his mouth goes a sharp sword. "And he has on his vesture and on his thigh a name written 'King of kings,' and 'Lord of lords.'" And there's another reference to the same thing in verse 21 of Revelation 19 where it

says, “The remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth.” Now there’s a figure of speech here and exactly what it represents may be hard to say, but it represents a destruction. It represents an overthrow of the Antichrist and his force and his hope, just as described here in Isaiah. Paul says it is still to come at the end of the age. Revelation 19 uses this figure twice. One commentary on Revelation says that this reference to the sword coming out of the mouth refers to the preaching of the gospel and when it says it will destroy a whole host of people what it means is that everyone on earth is to be converted by the gospel. Now, that is taking it in a very figurative way and if you had only Revelation alone, a considerable argument might be made for interpreting it that way but I don’t think one can in light of the other passages we read and in light of the passage in Isaiah.

Reader and Editor: Perry Phillips

Class Editor: Ken Hallenbeck; Outliner: Frank Hannigan, Transcribers: Jordan Tymann, Laura Bothwell, Alyssa Ferris, Emily Latvis, Robert Harkins, Tom Wholley

## Alan MacRae: Isaiah 1-6, Lecture 8

## 7. Isaiah's call to Service (Isa. 6)

- A. Seraph touching Isaiah's lips with a coal from off the altar
  - 1. Emmaus Road --Luke 24--Jesus after the resurrection tells some disciples  
"Fools and slow of heart to believe all the prophets have spoken, ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory?"
  - 2. Peter says (1 Pet. 1) "the prophets were searching, trying to find out what and what manner of time the spirit of Christ that was in them signified when he told of the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."
  - 3. Sacrifices represented the death of Christ on the cross...suggested here in Isaiah
- B. Lord asks: "Who shall we send, and who will go for us? And Isaiah said "Here am I; send me" He was ready for service
  - 1. What a disappointing response: "Go and tell this people: hear but don't understand. See, but don't perceive. Make their heart fat and their ears heavy, and shut their eyes."
  - 2. Doesn't mean Isaiah's work will have no effect--worse case
  - 3. God's call--highlights things psychologically needed
    - a. Jeremiah in a worse time yet given a much more happy commission --to plant and build up (he needed that)
- C. Isaiah's lament response: "How long? Lord, how long?"

1. Lord's answer: "Until the city be wasted without inhabitants..."
  2. The people's apostasy was going to bring calamity of exile
  3. Verse 6:13: KJV: "Yet there shall be in it a tenth and it shall return and it shall be eaten"  
NASB clearer: "Yet there will be a tenth portion in it"  
Cleansing punishment is going to leave a remnant, thus the destruction will not be total
  4. Substance to stump:  
KJV: As a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, so the holy seed shall be substance thereof."  
  
NASV better: "like an oak whose stump remains when it is felled."--the holy seed will be a stump that remains
  5. So Isaiah is given this vision to encourage him--remnant of grace after all
2. Background to part two: the last ten chapter
    - A. Chapter 8 ends with a picture of calamity as people are punished for their sin.  
Verse 22: "They look into the earth and are bold, trouble and darkness, dimness and anguish and they shall be driven to darkness"  
Predicting the Assyrian attack during Isaiah's day
    - B. Chapter 9:1 "Nevertheless the dimness shall be not such as was in her vexation when at first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun..."
      1. Jewish scriptures put a break between 9:1 and 9:2.
      2. Matthew quotes the two verses together (Mat. 4:14-16)

3. As darkness or Assyrian armies hit that region first so the light would come there first
4. Matthew 4:14ff notes Jesus began his preaching in Zebulun ....

B. Chapter 9:5f

1. Promised end of war. Instruments of war burned up
2. Coming of the Prince of Peace
3. Two natured redeemer: as ch. 4 the "branch of the Lord" and "fruit of the earth" so here "a child is born, and a son is given" but he is called "Mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace"

C. Isaiah 11

1. Chapter 10 shows the downfall of Assyrians using the figure of the forest. Tree of Assyria cut down.. yet a "rod will come out of Jesse and a branch will grow out of his roots".

2. "The Branch"

- A. Distinction between Syria (Damascus just north of Israel and Assyria (Nineveh on the Tigris)
- B. 17 Hebrew words translated "branch" in ch. 4 tsemach is used
  1. Several times tsemach (branch) has messianic sense

3. Natzer: another word for branch

- A. New Testament connection with Mat. 2:23 concerning Jesus
 

"that he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth that it might be fulfilled that which was spoken by the prophet, that he shall be called a 'Nazarene'."

- B. Never confuse Nazarene with the Nazarite who took a vow not to cut his hair, touch any grape products (Samson).
- C. This reference points back to Isa. 11 "the natzer" branch

#### 4. "His character"

- A. Found in Isaiah 11

"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 of the fear of the Lord, and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge after the sight of his eyes neither reprove after the hearing of his ears."

1. Remember it said of Jesus he knew what was in a man and nobody had to tell him
2. Jesus meeting Nathaniel--behold an Israelite in whom there is no guile.
3. Isaiah 11:5: "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loin and faithfulness the girdle of his reign."

#### 5. "His victory over Antichrist"

- A. Isaiah 11:4: "But with righteousness shall he judge the poor and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."

1. NT says there are many antichrists
2. Compare this to 2 Thess. 2:8 and Rev 19:15 and 21

Paul says: "Then shall that wicked one be revealed whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming."

3. Wicked one referred to in Isa. 11:4

4. Rev 19:15, 21:  
"Out of his mouth goes a sharp sword that with it he should smite the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron."  
"And he has on his vesture and on his thigh a name written 'King of kings,' and 'Lord of lords.'" ...  
"The remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth."
5. Figure of speech representing the overthrow of the Antichrist