

Holy Trinity Bible Study - Isaiah Lesson #5

Leader Notes

Primary Sources:

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer

The New Jerusalem (4:2-6)

Chapter 4

² In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel. ³ And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, ⁴ when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. ⁵ Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy. ⁶ There will be a booth for shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain.

Introduction

"Here is a double vision (2–4, 5–6) of Zion with new people, cleansed personally and socially ... and with a religious life over which the Lord presides and within which he is intimately at one with his people."

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 64

Questions

1. What is the day of the branch of the Lord?

"In some later Old Testament books 'the Branch of the LORD' or simply 'the Branch' is used as a technical term for the Messiah... Here, however, it seems best to take the full-grown plant, in conjunction with what follows, as a general image of the LORD's saving purposes come to fruition and on display for all to see on the last day."

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 51

"In itself 'branch' is a 'family tree' metaphor. In Jeremiah, 'the branch' is 'for David' or (better) 'of David's'. Only here do we have 'the LORD's branch'. The Messiah springs from a dual ancestry as he belongs in the 'family tree' of both David and the Lord. The human side of his ancestry is taken over here by the metaphor the fruit of the land/'earth' pointing to the Messiah as arising out of this created order"

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 65

- a. Additional Notes on interpretation of “branch of the Lord” from Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 66
 - i. Vegetation – Sin diminished and constricted the natural world. The removal of sin allows it to flourish. “Against this is the consideration that the four nouns, ‘adornment’, ‘glory’, ‘pride’ and ‘beauty’ seem somewhat excessive as descriptions of (mere) vegetation.”
 - ii. Remnant and Vegetation – The branch refers to the faithful remnant. The fruit to the Messianic abundance. “There is an awkwardness about this, however. The single verb in the sentence requires that both Branch and fruit are ‘for’ the survivors. How can the remnant be for the remnant?”
 - iii. Salvation and Vegetation – The branch is the Messianic salvation and fertile vegetation an accompanying sign. “Why, in the light of the ‘Branch’ references in Jeremiah and Zechariah, should only Isaiah be allowed as vague a notion as ‘the Messianic salvation?’”
 - iv. Messiah and Vegetation – The branch is the Messiah and the fruit is the plenty that he brings.
 - v. Messiah – Allow both phrases to refer to the Messiah. “The idea of the Messianic plenty, rich though its overtones are, falls short of the dimensions of the verse, whereas on the wholly Messianic view the wording of the verse is given full rein and the imagery is true to wider biblical usage. The Messiah’s double ancestry is thoroughly Isaianic.”

2. What are Isaiah’s three visions for the new Jerusalem?

- a. (*Isaiah 4:2B*) The restoration of the land’s fruitfulness. We have seen how the land was desolated and ravaged by Judah’s enemies.

“The fruitful land of Canaan had been God’s gift to the Israelites in the days of Joshua in fulfilment of the promises made to their ancestors. The land therefore had religious significance for them. It was a visible sign or sacrament of the grace that the LORD had shown in choosing them to be his people... Isaiah was confident that the ancient promises would not fail.”

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 53

- b. (*Isaiah 4:3-4*) The people of Jerusalem that survived the siege were hauled away into slavery.

“A remnant would survive and enjoy in full measure what had been promised to their fathers long ago. The fruit of the land would be their pride and glory.”

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 53

Looking ahead to Isaiah chapter 38 Motyer says, “To have survived the calamity is no accident but arises from an elective decision of the Lord, a divine purpose expressed in the inscribing of the name in the book of life. Behind personal

experience lies the predestinating mind of God.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 65

- c. “God, the Holy One of Israel, had chosen it as the place where David (his chosen king) and his descendants would rule over his people forever, and where God’s people would assemble to meet with him in his temple.”

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 53

“The Zion of Isaiah’s day had become a corrupt, harlot city... In these two verses he sees the Zion of the future inhabited by an elect remnant, living in a city which has been purged of its moral corruption by divine judgment.”

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 53

- d. (*Isaiah 4:5-6*) “The final image is of journey’s end, of the pilgrim people of God at last secure in God’s presence forever. There are many allusions here to the period of the exodus. At that time Israel was protected and guided on its journey through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, the manifested presence of the LORD.”

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 53

“The ideal which they hoped for, rest in the land, had never been perfectly achieved, even in the time of David. Now, in Isaiah’s time, it seemed further off than ever. So, metaphorically at least, their pilgrimage continued.”

“Isaiah believed that the final encampment of God’s people would be in the new Zion. There, at last, their journey would end.”

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 54

- 3. In verse 4 is Isaiah referring to the “Holy Spirit” or a “blast of wind” when he says, “... cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning.”?**

“Isaiah does have a rich awareness of the Spirit of the Lord (30:1–2; 31:3; 63:10–14), specially in Messianic passages (11:2; 42:1; 59:21; 61:1), and this is the best understanding here: the divine Spirit, throughout the Bible the executive Godhead.”

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 66

- 4. What is Isaiah referring to when in verse 5 he says, “Then the LORD will create over the whole site of Mount Zion and over her assemblies a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night; for over all the glory there will be a canopy.”?**
He will create a new indwelling of the Lord.

What do you think he is referring to?

5. What is the significance of “for over all the glory there will be a canopy”?

“The glory here is either the Messiah (see verse 2) lovingly joined to his bride-people or the whole glorious Zion with its holy people (3) joined in the consummation of love with the Lord under the overshadowing tokens of his presence.

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 66

6. How does our vision of the millennial Kingdom differ from Isaiah’s vision of the New Zion?

“There will no longer be any need for the tabernacle or temple, for the glory of the LORD will be directly accessible to all. And those with whom God is present in this way will be perfectly secure forever. This is no out - of - date dream, but one which Jesus prayed to be realized, and which the apostle John sets before us again at the climax of the Bible as the vision of our own future in God which should still inspire us and draw us on. We, too, are pilgrims.”

Webb - The Message of Isaiah, Barry G. Webb, page 54

Digging Deeper. What are the links between Isaiah’s vision of the new Zion with his vision of of Judah’s destruction?

- a. The ‘daughters of Zion’ were the embodiment of the degenerate spirit of their mother (3:16–23); they are now the focus of divine cleansing (4).
- b. The nadir of their fortunes was a travesty of marriage (1); the glory will be the (bridal) canopy of verse 5.
- c. Their frenzied pursuit of beauty (3:16, 18) will find satisfaction in a true beauty (2).
- d. The unveiling of the Lord’s glory caused the city’s overthrow (2:10, 19, 21) but now that glory resides within it (2, 5).
- e. Failure of leadership marked the doomed city (3:2–7); the new city is overshadowed by the exodus symbols of divine leadership (5)

Motyer – The Prophecy of ISAIAH, J. Alec Motyer, page 64