

## Lesson 9 Isaiah 9:8-12:6 The Word to Israel

### Introduction

Isaiah 9:8-11:16 parallels the message to the Southern Kingdom in 7:1-9:7 by providing a similarly structured message to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Verse 8 begins, "The Lord sends a word against Jacob, and it falls on Israel." We can sub-divide the section in the same way as the word to Judah: a moment of decision in 9:8-10:4, a judgment in 10:5-15, a remnant in 10:16-34, and a glorious hope in 11:1-16.

This passage can be taken as a message particularly for Israel. But we have to adjust a little bit when we think about who Isaiah's audience was. Isaiah was serving in Judah. And the book of Isaiah was put together by the prophet after the exile of Israel. I assume Isaiah originally received this prophetic word for Israel before their defeat and before their exile. I don't know how the message might have been carried to them, if it ever was. I do know that in this current form as part of the book of Isaiah, the audience for this word to Israel is not Israel, it's Judah.

That may change how we understand the message. Not only is it a word to Israel; it is also another warning to Judah. "See what happened to Israel. That could be true of you, Judah. They were demolished and exiled because they turned away from Yahweh. Do not think you are safe just because you live in the city of God and have the Temple of God. If you turn from Yahweh, you can be removed from the land as well."

Read in that way, the message can also be taken as a warning to us. Judah might think, "If Israel fell, we can also fall." We might think, "If Israel and Judah fell, we can all fall." That is not us thinking in terms of individuals but in terms of communities. My local church, my denomination, my Christian movement can fall away from God.

We do not have to think that. It is not automatic. Judah might think, "Well, Israel fell because they never got rid of the idols in Bethel and Dan. We have Jerusalem. We have the Temple. The Messiah comes from us." Judah may have reasons for not believing the punishment that fell on Israel could fall on them. But then what happened to Judah?

We might say something similar. We have centuries of Christian tradition. We have a history of mission work or of revival. We have the true interpretation of the Bible. As Judah presumed themselves better than Israel, we might presume ourselves better than Judah. They rejected the Messiah and were broken off of the olive tree. We accepted Jesus and were rightly grafted in. Well, that may be true. But now what of the generations that follow? Will your church, your denomination, your movement stand because you started with faith in the Gospel? Was it by your own goodness, and your own wisdom, and your own spirituality that you were included in? Does God favor your ethnic group, your denomination, your history, or your missions organization? Is that how you stand? By some special favor because of who you are?

They were excluded because they became arrogant and presumed upon their position. They forgot that God chose them based on His mercy and that they received His grace based on faith. If your community forgets that, too, your church - your movement, your denomination - will be cut off. There might be a remnant of believers left in any given community, but God will not stay to bless a people that denies His Word and rejects the Gospel of grace. God does not stick with dead institutions. God keeps moving. His people follow Him. They respond to Isaiah's call, "to the Word and to the testimony!" They flock to His banner.

That was the point of Paul's olive tree metaphor in Romans 11:19-25, and it gives us some practical context for how this word to Israel applies to us today,

<sup>19</sup> You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in." <sup>20</sup> Quite right, they were broken off for their unbelief, but you stand by your faith. Do not be conceited, but fear; <sup>21</sup> for if God did not spare the natural branches, He will not spare you, either. <sup>22</sup> Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness,

if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off. <sup>23</sup> And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. <sup>24</sup> For if you were cut off from what is by nature a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural *branches* be grafted into their own olive tree? <sup>23</sup> For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery – so that you will not be wise in your own estimation...”

Just as Judah is not to feel superiority over Israel and so presume on their relationship with God, so, too, we are not to feel superiority over the Jews or over other Christian movements that may have left the Gospel. Just as they were broken off historically, so, too, might we be. My church, my denomination, my movement will go the same way, if we forget mercy, forget grace, forget faith, forget our first love for Jesus.

As we read this prophetic word to Israel, we should keep in mind first how Judah is to hear this. What is Isaiah saying to Judah by speaking to Israel? That’s the original audience, so they are our interpretive lens. Then, having gained some understanding of the text, we ask, “What does this word to Israel mean for me today? What does it mean for me as an individual and for us as communities of faith? How are we to be rebuked, challenged, directed, encouraged?”

I am going to keep us moving through the text in this lesson. We are covering several chapters, so we need to keep going. We will address this word to Israel with the same structure that we addressed the word to Judah: moment of decision, judgment, remnant, and glorious hope.

#### **The moment of decision (9:8-10:4)**

The moment of decision described in 9:8-10:4 sounds more like a pronouncement of judgment. It is. But at each stage of the judgment there is the implicit understanding that, were Israel to recognize the calamity befalling them as God’s discipline, then they could repent and call out to Him. They never do. They ignore God. At this moment of decision Israel turns to belief in their own abilities to overcome and rebuild. Starting in 9:8,

<sup>8</sup> The Lord sends a word against Jacob,	And it falls on Israel.
<sup>9</sup> And all the people know <i>it</i> ,	<i>That is</i> , Ephraim and the inhabitants of Samaria,

Asserting in pride and in arrogance of heart:

What do they say in the arrogance of heart?

<sup>10</sup> “The bricks have fallen down, but we will rebuild with smooth stones;	The sycamores have been cut down, but we will replace <i>them</i> with cedars.”
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

What sounds like this positive, optimistic attitude, you know, “We can rebuild,” is really obstinance. They do not respond to discipline. They plan to rebuild and carry on in their idolatry and immorality.

<sup>11</sup> Therefore the LORD raises against them adversaries from Rezin	And spurs their enemies on,
<sup>12</sup> The Arameans on the east and the Philistines on the west;	And they devour Israel with gaping jaws.

In *spite of* all this, His anger does not turn away      And His hand is still stretched out.

God has removed protection from the nation. Because of their stubborn pride, the smaller nations to their east and west defeat them.

God is not done. As long as Israel refuses repentance, God will carry His chastening on to the end. “His anger does not turn away and His hand is still stretched out.” That phrase serves as a refrain in this section, being repeated at the end of each of the four stanzas that make up this moment of decision. The phrase also recalls the image in chapter 5 where the same phrase depicted God as a King of Kings on the field of battle commanding His troops forward. “His anger is not spent, his hand is still stretched out,” as He points a foreign nation towards Judah. That imagery applies here against Israel.

Following national disaster in the first stanza that comes by the hands of regional neighbors, Isaiah next describes political collapse. The leadership of Israel is undermined. Society suffers. Notice the reference to the elder, the so-called honorable man, and the prophet.

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><sup>13</sup> Yet the people do not turn back to Him<br/>    who struck them,<br/><sup>14</sup> So the LORD cuts off head and tail from Israel,<br/><sup>15</sup> The head is the elder and honorable man,<br/><sup>16</sup> For those who guide this people are leading<br/>    <i>them</i> astray;<br/><sup>17</sup> Therefore the Lord does not take pleasure<br/>    in their young men<br/>    For every one of them is godless and an evildoer,<br/>    In <i>spite of</i> all this, His anger does not turn away</p> | <p>Nor do they seek the LORD of hosts.<br/><br/><i>Both</i> palm branch and bulrush in a single day.<br/>And the prophet who teaches falsehood is the tail.<br/>And those who are guided by them are brought<br/>    to confusion.<br/>Nor does He have pity on their orphans or<br/>    or their widows;<br/>And every mouth is speaking foolishness.<br/>And His hand is still stretched out.</p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

The collapse, begun at the top with elders and prophets, infects the whole of society. Every one of them is godless and an evildoer. Every mouth speaks foolishness. In spite of this political collapse, God is not done. His hand is still stretched out. Next, society will turn in on itself: brother against brother, tribe against tribe.

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                     |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><sup>18</sup> For wickedness burns like a fire;<br/>    It even sets the thickets of the forest aflame<br/><sup>19</sup> By the fury of the LORD of hosts the land<br/>    is burned up,</p> | <p>It consumes briars and thorns;<br/>And they roll upward in a column of smoke.<br/>And the people are like fuel for the fire;</p> |
| <p>No man spares his brother.</p>                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                     |
| <p><sup>20</sup> They slice off <i>what is</i> on the right hand<br/>    but <i>still</i> are hungry,</p>                                                                                       | <p>And they eat <i>what is</i> on the left hand<br/>    but they are not satisfied;</p>                                             |
| <p>Each of them eats the flesh of his own arm.</p>                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                     |
| <p><sup>21</sup> Manasseh <i>devours</i> Ephraim,</p>                                                                                                                                           | <p>and Ephraim Manasseh,</p>                                                                                                        |
| <p><i>And together they are against Judah.</i></p>                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                     |

In *spite of* all this, His anger does not turn away      And His hand is still stretched out.

God is not done. Next, the morality of the nation will become corrupted.

- |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p><sup>1</sup> Woe to those who enact evil statutes<br/><sup>2</sup> So as to deprive the needy of justice<br/>    So that widows may be their spoil<br/><sup>3</sup> Now what will you do in the day of punishment,<br/>    To whom will you flee for help?<br/><sup>4</sup> Nothing <i>remains</i> but to crouch among the captives</p> | <p>And to those who constantly record unjust decisions,<br/>And rob the poor of My people of <i>their</i> rights,<br/>And that they may plunder the orphans.<br/>And in the devastation which will come from afar?<br/>And where will you leave your wealth?<br/>Or fall among the slain.</p> |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Those are your options. You crouch as a slave to be carried in exile, or you fall with the dead.

In *spite of* all this, His anger does not turn away      And His hand is still stretched out.

National disaster, political collapse, social anarchy, and moral perversion<sup>1</sup> all together communicate to Israel, “God has given you over because of your sin.” The calamity fallen upon Israel creates a moment of decision. If they would repent, they could find refreshment in God. But they will not. Twenty kings have ruled in Israel. Not one turned away from the idols set up by the first king in the towns of Dan and Bethel. The whole society continues headlong towards final destruction. God does not relent in His anger. His hand remains stretched out.

### **The judgment (10:5-15)**

Final judgment will come in the form of Assyria. Israel will be sent into exile. The judgment section begins this way in 10:5-6.

---

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Motyer. *The Prophecy of Isaiah* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996) 106.

<p><sup>5</sup> Woe to Assyria, the rod of My anger  <sup>6</sup> I send it against a godless nation          To capture booty and to seize plunder,</p>	<p>And the staff in whose hands is My indignation,          And commission it against the people of My fury          And to trample them down like mud in the streets.</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Much more is said elsewhere of the suffering Israel experiences in the invasion by Assyria. The rest of this judgment section does not, however, focus on Israel. It focuses on the wickedness of Assyria. God may use human beings to execute His will, but if those human beings also prove to be proud and unresponsive to God, they will still be held accountable for their actions even if their actions bring about God’s plan. The Assyrians were meant tool to function as a tool in the hands of God, to fight under His banner. They did not see it that way.

<p><sup>7</sup> Yet [Assyria] does not so intend,          But rather it is its purpose to destroy  <sup>8</sup> For it says,  <sup>9</sup> “Is not Calno like Carchemish,</p>	<p>Nor does it plan so in its heart,          And to cut off many nations.          “Are not my princes all kings?          Or Hamath like Arpad,          Or Samaria like Damascus?”</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Those six towns are in a line moving from north to south. The first, Carchemish, is furthest north, sitting on the Euphrates. The king of Assyria reasons, “I have taken Carchemish, can I not move south to take Calno? And after Calno to Arpad? And so on, city by city marching down to Israel’s capital Samaria? What’s to stop me?”

<p><sup>10</sup> “As my hand has reached to the kingdoms          of the idols,  <sup>11</sup> Shall I not do to Jerusalem and her images</p>	<p>Whose graven images <i>were</i> greater than those          of Jerusalem and Samaria,          Just as I have done to Samaria and her idols?”</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The King understands that every victory is a victory over the god of the defeated people. He has defeated greater peoples which, he reasons, means he has defeated greater gods. The god of Israel will be no problem. And he will not stop there but continue to take Jerusalem and defeat its god.

<p><sup>12</sup> So it will be that when the Lord has completed          all His work  <i>He will say, “I will punish the fruit of the arrogant          heart of the king of Assyria</i></p>	<p>on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem          and the pomp of his haughtiness.”</p>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The King of Assyria has not understood that He is but a servant at the feet of Yahweh.

<p><sup>13</sup> For he has said,          And I removed the boundaries of the peoples          And like a mighty man I brought down <i>their</i> inhabitants,  <sup>14</sup> And my hand reached, like a nest,          And as one gathers abandoned eggs,          And there was not one that flapped its wing</p>	<p>“By the power of my hand I did this          And by my wisdom, for I have understanding;          And plundered their treasures,          to the riches of the peoples          I gathered all the earth;          or opened <i>its</i> beak or chirped.”</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

That’s the mind of the Assyrian king: I, I, I, I, I, I have done all this. But God says,

<p><sup>15</sup> Is the axe to boast itself over the one who chops          with it?  <i>That would be</i> like a club wielding those who lift it,</p>	<p>Is the saw to exalt itself over the one who          wields it?  <i>Or</i> like a rod lifting <i>him</i> who is not wood.</p>
----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

The king of Assyria is going to get put in his place. He is going to realize who is God. And as with the judgment proclaimed over Israel, this judgment over Assyria is intended for Judah to hear. Assyria will, indeed, defeat and exile Israel. But God wants Judah to know that He is in charge, and He has not given them over to Assyria. Their time is not yet. They will get another chance.

**The remnant (10:16-34)**

We next come the remnant section in 10:16-34. The remnant section is marked off by four uses of a three-word reference to God: Adonai Yahweh Sabaoth, which my Bible translates as “Lord, the God

of hosts.” The section has two sub-sections with that name, “Lord, the God of hosts,” repeated at the beginning and end of both sub-sections. The whole section directs our perspective toward who is truly sovereign over the affairs of men. A superpower like Assyria naturally believes in its own ability to control the course of events. If you had lived in a superpower, or experienced the might of a superpower, then you know that. America believes it can do what it wants. Russia believes it can do what it wants. China believes it can do what it wants. And these mighty powers can control their own destinies. And exiled or overrun peoples, like Israel or Judah, feel inclined to agree. Who can stop the host of Assyria? Adonai Yahweh Sabaoth.

- <sup>16</sup> Therefore the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will send a wasting disease among his stout warriors;  
And under his glory a fire will be kindled like a burning flame.
- <sup>17</sup> And the light of Israel will become a fire and his Holy One a flame,  
And it will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in a single day.
- <sup>18</sup> And the glory of his forest and of his fruitful garden both soul and body will be destroyed  
And it will be as when a sick man wastes away.
- <sup>19</sup> And the rest of the trees of his forest will be That a child could write them down.  
so small in number

That’s a few lines worth reflecting on if you have time, that’s chapter 10:16-17. Isaiah expertly mixes the metaphors of a man wasting away with disease and a garden burning up by consuming anger. This is divine trash-talking at its best. When we get to chapter 37, we may realize that the prophecy of disease thinning out the ranks of the Assyrian army is not metaphor but reality. That’s what is really going to happen to the army of Assyria. Sickness here is followed by the image of flame, which is followed again by sickness.

We have seen reference before to a light in Israel: a light that will rise up though the people walk in great darkness. The light of Israel in this text is the Holy One of Israel. And here that light burns with consuming anger. Now it’s burning through the forest of Assyria. That forest is Assyria’s army, and it will be so decimated that a child could count them and write down their number.

But what of Israel?

- <sup>20</sup> Now in that day the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped, will never again rely on the one who struck them (that is, Assyria), on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. <sup>21</sup> A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty God. <sup>22</sup> For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, *Only* a remnant within them will return; A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness. <sup>23</sup> For a complete destruction, one that is decreed, the Lord GOD of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land.

It is the Holy One of Israel who, in his burning anger, exiled Israel and punished Assyria. He is the one who caused destruction, the Lord God of hosts, Adonai Yahweh of Sabaoth. This second use of the three-word name ends the first sub-section. God is sovereign over the affairs of men. The Holy One of Israel will exile his people, and then He will bring back a remnant. There is a seed of hope in the calamity. Tragically, the vast majority of Israelites turned away from God. They were like sand on the seashore. That was God’s promise to Abraham, “I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore (Genesis 22:17).” Out of this great number only a remnant will return.

And even more sadly, the physical return of Israel from exile will not coincide with the spiritual return. We do not see this from the vantage point of Judah looking ahead. We do see this tragic truth from the vantage point of Paul. He quotes Isaiah 10:22 to explain Jewish rejection of the Gospel of Jesus Christ changing Isaiah’s wording of a remnant returning to a remnant being saved. This is Romans 9:27 quoting Isaiah 10:22,

- <sup>27</sup> Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved;

In the prophecy of Isaiah, the future sometimes gets conflated. We do not see some gaps in time when we're looking so far away into the future. We do not yet distinguish clearly between a deliverance from exile and a deliverance from sin. Isaiah will make that distinction later.

Here, Isaiah assures us that the northern people of Israel, though utterly defeated and driven into exile, will not be completely wiped out by the Assyrian menace. There will be a remnant. He next explains what Judah can expect from the threatening superpower. This is the second sub-section of the remnant passage. Like the first sub-section, it also begins and ends with the three-word name of God.

<sup>24</sup> Therefore thus says the Lord GOD of hosts, "O My people who dwell in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian who strikes you with the rod and lifts up his staff against you, the way Egypt *did*." <sup>25</sup> "For in a very little while My indignation *against you* will be spent and My anger *will be directed* to their destruction." <sup>26</sup> The LORD of hosts will arouse a scourge against him like the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb; and His staff will be over the sea and He will lift it up the way *He did* in Egypt.

Remember that striking image from 8:7-8 where Assyria is likened to the river Euphrates overflowing its banks and flooding Judah and reaching even up to the neck. Because of Ahaz' faithlessness, Assyria will be allowed to invade Judah. Pain is coming.

Assyria will be like Egypt and like Midian succeeding to some extent in oppressing Judah. This is the imagery used in chapter 9 in reference to the light that will raise in Galilee of the Gentiles. In 9:4 the words "slavery," and "yoke," and "burden" reminded us both of Egypt in the book of Exodus and Midian in the book of Judges. In chapter 9 we looked ahead to the greater deliverance when the son of David sets us free from bondage. Here we look at an important but lesser deliverance. This is the deliverance of Judah from the invading host of Assyria. The language of deliverance from oppression continues.

<sup>27</sup> So it will be in that day, that  
his burden will be removed from your shoulders and his yoke from your neck,  
and the yoke will be broken because of fatness.

Then Isaiah mentions a succession of Jewish towns that depicts the Assyrian juggernaut marching from Israel into Judah, beginning at Ai - or Aith - which is just north of the border. I will not go into the geography. The pass mentioned in verse 29 takes us into Judah. Notice how close we get to Jerusalem.

<sup>28</sup> He has come against Aiath, He has passed through Migron;  
At Michmash he deposited his baggage.  
<sup>29</sup> They have gone through the pass, *saying*, "Geba will be our lodging place."  
Ramah is terrified, and Gibeah of Saul has fled away.  
<sup>30</sup> Cry aloud with your voice, O daughter of Gallim! Pay attention, Laishah *and* wretched Anathoth!  
<sup>31</sup> Madmenah has fled. The inhabitants of Gebim have sought refuge.  
<sup>32</sup> Yet today he will halt at Nob; He shakes his fist at the mountain of the daughter  
of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem.

Apparently, Nob is just outside of Jerusalem. He is at Jerusalem, shaking his fist. We will take up this story in more detail in chapters 36-37. Spoiler alert! Our verses here, 33 and 34, are going to give away how that goes for Assyria.

<sup>33</sup> Behold, the Lord, the GOD of hosts, will lop off the boughs with a terrible crash;  
Those also who are tall in stature will be cut down And those who are lofty will be abased.  
<sup>34</sup> He will cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, And Lebanon will fall by the Mighty One.

Here, the great forest of Lebanon is a picture of the army of Assyria. Isaiah twists around his image of Assyria as an axe that was boasting over the one who wields it. Now Assyria is the forest felled by God's mighty cuts as He lops off branches that fall with a terrible crash. Who is sovereign over the affairs of men? Adonai Yahweh Sabaoth, Lord God of Hosts.

### The glorious hope (11:1-16)

We move now into our fourth section of the word to Israel. Isaiah sets before us a glorious hope. Hebrew parallelism rarely simply restates something that has been said earlier. Parallelism provides an opportunity to develop an idea or move forward a narrative. For example, consider the first verse of chapter 11.

<sup>1</sup> Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,      And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.

If we read that over quickly, we might think both verses say the same thing. It's identical. But when we look closer, we see that no, there is some movement here. The first verse, "Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse," recalls the image from 6:13 of a holy seed growing out of the cut down stump. That imagery has been used in a similar way to describe the felling of the trees of Assyria. But here, the tree is Jesse, the father of King David, and he has fallen or decayed, but a fresh shoot will spring out. Imagine a little green twig springing up out of the old stump. The next verse moves us forward, "And a branch from his roots will bear fruit." This is not the same as the shoot. It's grown! Branch comes from the verb "to grow green" and implies a stronger state than the original shoot. We see that, because it's bearing fruit. "From his roots" still points back to the human heritage of David. But that bearing fruit shows that he has become strong enough and mature enough to begin to succeed.

That's an example of parallel development on a micro scale moving in the same verse from one verse to the next verse. Isaiah also develops ideas on a macro scale. Consider the two words he has given us in chapters 7-11. We have two distinct messages to two different nations. And yet, when we set the word to Judah beside the word to Israel, we see a parallel structure. The word to Israel does not restate exactly what has already been said to Judah. It develops further similar themes.

In the word to Judah, the moment of decision is with Ahaz, an individual king who must decide whether to trust God or to seek political help from a stronger nation. He seeks aid from Assyria. In the word to Israel, the moment of decision concerns the whole of society, not just the individual person at the head of the society. But like the individual Ahaz, the nation Israel continues to trust in their own wisdom, refusing to turn to God.

In the judgment section of the word to Judah, Isaiah focused on the punishment of both Israel and Judah: the great Euphrates that comes down through them both. In the word to Israel, the judgment of Israel has already been established, so Isaiah develops the idea of God's sovereignty over the Assyrians, who will also experience His judgment even after they are used to carry out His will against Israel.

Moving to the remnant section, the end of chapter 8 focused on a faithful remnant that chose to trust God during days of calamity. That's where we got "To the Law and to the testimony!" They trusted God and experienced Him as their sanctuary. That was a present remnant. In chapter 10 Isaiah speaks about a future remnant that will return to the land after exile.

We do see a major difference between Israel and Judah. Israel's time is up. This is the final curtain call. Judah, however, remains on the stage a little while longer. With these differences Isaiah raises several themes in the first word, and then comes back, using a parallel structure to further develop those themes. It helps to recognize Isaiah's use of restatement to push ideas forward. If we do not, if we move too quickly, then our brains simply see repetition, and get bored and just want to move on. When we hold both words up to one another and we see the parallelism, we can ask, "What's the movement here? What is being added?"

We can do that now with this final section of the glorious hope. How is the Messianic vision of chapter 9 different from the Messianic vision of chapter 11? What does 11 add to the picture?

Early, in chapter 2, Isaiah envisioned a new Jerusalem where a remnant of Jews and an infusion of Gentiles would live with God in peace. That vision cannot come true through the leadership of sinful human beings. The vision of a new community with God requires a new kind of king. Chapter 9

announced a coming king who would be born a human child and yet somehow bear the divine name, “Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace”. He would break the yoke that presses down on the shoulders of humanity. He would establish a reign of ever-increasing justice and righteousness.

The glorious hope in this word to Israel is a further development of hope for a righteous king. We’ve already considered 11:1. The king will rise up out of the fallen line of David. What kind of king is He? 11:1-5.

- |                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                         |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <sup>1</sup> Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,                                                             | And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.                                                                            |
| <sup>2</sup> The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him,<br>The spirit of counsel and strength,                              | The spirit of wisdom and understanding,<br>The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.                            |
| <sup>3</sup> And He will delight in the fear of the LORD,                                                                 |                                                                                                                         |
| And He will not judge by what His eyes see,                                                                               | Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;                                                                              |
| <sup>4</sup> But with righteousness He will judge the poor,<br>And He will strike the earth with the rod<br>of His mouth, | And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;<br>And with the breath of His lips He will slay<br>the wicked. |
| <sup>5</sup> Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,                                                         | And faithfulness the belt about His waist.                                                                              |

The Spirit of the Lord rests on this son of David. That does not necessarily mean he is divine. That could be the anointing of kingship. David was anointed by the Holy Spirit. But as we go on, we see that this anointing is combined with wisdom and with spiritual insight. This king delights in the fear of Yahweh. He does not make decisions as most human beings make decisions, based solely on what he sees and on what he hears. The implication is that he sees the hidden things in the soul of man. He understands spiritual reality because he relies on God for wisdom.

The actions of his reign follow from his right relationship with God. He judges with righteousness the poor and the afflicted because he fears the Lord and delights in the fear of the Lord. He will strike the earth and slay the wicked. That will somehow be accomplished with the rod of his mouth and the breath of his lips. His wrath is connected to his mouth and his word.

Verses 6-9 describe a radically new kind of community that he will establish by his reign.

- |                                                                                                                     |                                                                                        |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <sup>6</sup> And the wolf will dwell with the lamb,<br>And the calf and the young lion and<br>the fatling together; | And the leopard will lie down with the young goat,<br>And a little boy will lead them. |
| <sup>7</sup> Also the cow and the bear will graze,<br>And the lion will eat straw like an ox.                       | Their young will lie down together,                                                    |
| <sup>8</sup> The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra,                                                  | And the weaned child will put his hand on the<br>viper’s den.                          |
| <sup>9</sup> They will not hurt or destroy<br>For the earth will be full of the knowledge<br>of the LORD            | in all My holy mountain,<br>As the waters cover the sea.                               |

I don’t think Isaiah is describing here a literal reordering of nature. I believe this is a metaphorical picture of radical peace among human beings that parallels the earlier vision in 2:4,

- |                                                   |                                      |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| And they will hammer their swords into plowshares | And their spears into pruning hooks. |
| Nation will not lift up sword against nation,     | And never again will they learn war. |

This is the hope Isaiah looks forward to in the day of the Messiah’s kingdom – a new kind of human society. He goes on.

- |                                                                               |                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <sup>10</sup> Then in that day<br>Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; | The nations will resort to the root of Jesse,<br>And His resting place will be glorious. |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Three things here in verse 10. First, the reference to the root of Jesse forms an inclusio with verse 1 that divides the glorious hope into two sub-sections, verses 1-10 and verses 11-14. Second, the word for “signal” in my translation is the same Hebrew word translated in verse 12 and elsewhere as



“standard” or “banner.” The Messiah will stand as a standard for the peoples. We have seen this image before, but here the context creates a different effect. In 5:25 we were introduced to the language of God stretching out His hand directing a chastising army against Israel. The image of a standard was connected to that image of the stretched-out hand in 5:26.

<sup>26</sup> He will also lift up a standard to the distant nation, And will whistle for it from the ends of the earth;  
And behold, it will come with speed swiftly.

In that case, the avenging army of Assyria rallied from the ends of the earth to God’s banner to serve as an instrument of God’s justice. Here, the Messiah himself is the standard, the banner. Third, He is a standard for the nations. The “root of Jesse” sounds like a very Jewish king. This Jewish king will be God’s standard under which Gentiles rally to form a new kind of kingdom. In 9:1 the Messiah was depicted as a glorious light rising up in Galilee of the Gentiles. Here, the Gentiles seek out that light and find peace.

The second half of the glorious vision describes the new people of God made up of a Jewish remnant and responsive Gentiles from many nations. The Messiah will establish His reign over all the peoples of the earth, willing and unwilling. 11:11-16.

<sup>11</sup> Then it will happen on that day that the Lord Will again recover the second time with His hand  
The remnant of His people, who will remain, From Assyria and from Egypt,  
And from Pathros and from Cush and from Elam, And from Shinar and from Hamath,  
And from the islands of the sea.

The remnant of Jews will return from the far away lands of Assyria to the north and Egypt to the south. Pathros and Cush are even further south below Egypt. Elam and Shinar are further East from Assyria. Hamath is in the far north. The “islands of the sea” speak of distant Mediterranean coastlands. I am reminded of Acts 2 which provides a similar list of scattered Jews gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of Pentecost. Like with Acts 2, this gathering of dispersed Jews also points to God’s desire for all peoples to know Him.

<sup>12</sup> And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel,  
And will gather the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth.  
<sup>13</sup> Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, And those who harass Judah will be cut off;  
Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, And Judah will not harass Ephraim.

The image of the standard changes just slightly here. Now, the Messiah is not the standard, but He raises up the standard under which believing Gentiles and Jews gather. There is healing among the Jews as the north and south, Ephraim and Judah, come together again under the Messiah’s banner as one.

<sup>14</sup> They will swoop down on the slopes Together they will plunder the sons of the east;  
of the Philistines on the west;  
They will possess Edom and Moab, And the sons of Ammon will be subject to them.  
<sup>15</sup> And the LORD will utterly destroy The tongue of the Sea of Egypt;  
And He will wave His hand over the River With His scorching wind;  
And He will strike it into seven streams And make *men* walk over dry-shod.  
<sup>16</sup> And there will be a highway from For the remnant of His people who will be left,  
Just as there was for Israel In the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt.

The language of the past Exodus is taken up to describe a new Exodus. Alter says the image of the tongue of the Sea of Egypt fits the Red Sea, which looks like a tongue. That is looking back to the historical exodus out of Egypt. Men walking over dry-shod fits into that theme as well. The River is, of course, the Euphrates. That is looking ahead to the place of the new exile. Dividing the Euphrates into seven streams probably implies a future perfect re-creation. God will bring His people back from the Assyrian exile just as He once brought them up out of Egypt. And He will form for Himself a new kind of people.

We are going to end with the six verses of chapter 12. It is an exhortation to praise.

### **Epilogue: Salvation, Joy and Proclamation 12**

This short chapter provides a fitting epilogue to our present major section of Isaiah. I have been using Motyer's title "The Triumph of Grace" for chapters 6-12. The prologue of chapter 6 announced the triumph of grace in the life of Isaiah as an individual. He saw a glorious vision of God, he feared his own destruction, by grace God atoned for his sin, symbolized by a burning coal placed on his lips. Chapters 7-11 gave us first a word to Judah and then a word to Israel. On both accounts judgment followed a failed moment of decision. Grace seemed to falter. But destruction will not be absolute. A remnant will respond to God and be saved, a remnant made up of Jew and Gentiles. This will come about through the agency of an ideal King, who is both of the line of David and also Mighty God. We do not know yet how He is going to break the yoke of sin. But we know. But we do know that by gathering to His banner, we can enter into true relationship with God and experience His peace.

We end with an epilogue of praise to God. Isaiah begins by addressing an individual. The "you" in 12:1 is singular.

- |   |                                                                            |                                                                                                                               |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Then you will say on that day,                                             | "I will give thanks to You, O LORD; For although<br>You were angry with me,<br>Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. |
| 2 | "Behold, God is my salvation,<br>For the LORD GOD is my strength and song, | I will trust and not be afraid;<br>And He has become my salvation."                                                           |

This is the first use of the word "salvation" in Isaiah. We are not yet asking the "how" of salvation. We are praising the "who" of salvation. Yahweh is my strength and song. Yahweh is my salvation!

Isaiah next addresses the community. The "you" in verse 3 is plural, like "y'all."

- |   |                                                                          |                                                                                                     |
|---|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 3 | Therefore you will joyously draw water                                   | From the springs of salvation.                                                                      |
| 4 | And in that day you will say,<br>Make known His deeds among the peoples; | "Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name.<br>Make <i>them</i> remember that His name is exalted." |
| 5 | Praise the LORD in song, for He has done<br>excellent things;            | Let this be known throughout the earth.                                                             |
| 6 | Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,                       | For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.                                                  |

This could be Isaiah's personal response to his experience with God in chapter 6. The vision of God overwhelmed him, he knew he must die. Yet, God atoned for his sin and gave him a mission. Imagine Isaiah singing out, "You will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation...for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel. The Holy One of Israel is in our midst. We do not cower in the fear of His holiness. We delight in the fear of the Lord because he provides streams of salvation. He is living water. We praise him for all He has done!"

Just as this could be Isaiah's own personal song, this could be your personal response to the grace and mercy of God in your life. We recognize that His justice and His wrath against sin is righteous. And we also recognize that it always includes a call to repentance: if you will just turn around! This song is the song of every true believer, which makes it our song: the song of the community of the faithful.

How does the community of faithful stay connected to God from one generation to the next? How do we heed the warning of these words to Israel and Judah that prideful presumption causes a drift from God? How do we stay connected? We stay connected to God by keeping the vision of His holiness and grace fresh in our hearts and minds. By holding on to our first love for Jesus. And by singing this song. We continually speak of the greatness of God and the goodness of Jesus. And we pray that the next generation will come to sing this song, not as tradition. We don't want to hear the same songs sung out of sentimentality or tradition. We want to hear it sung out of the heart. Let them change the music, as long as they sing the same song! As long as they have their own personal experience with the Holy One of Israel.

- <sup>4</sup> And in that day you will say,  
Make known His deeds among the peoples;
- <sup>5</sup> Praise the LORD in song, for He has done  
excellent things;
- <sup>6</sup> Cry aloud and shout for joy, O inhabitant of Zion,
- “Give thanks to the LORD, call on His name.  
Make *them* remember that His name is exalted.”  
Let this be known throughout the earth.  
For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.