

History & Prophecy #8

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Let's continue this Bible study which to me is one of the most important prophecies in the Bible. This is the final installment of this series on History and Prophecy.

One of the most important aspects of it is that it has opened my understanding to some of the most fundamental principles of prophecy, which enabled me to understand prophetic literature in a way that I don't think I could have, if it weren't for some of the things that came startlingly to light in the course of the study of this particular prophecy. Now this is not one of those that we commonly turn to, to deal with events in the last days and all the things connected with that. It is a prophecy that I have heard spoken of very little.

There are segments of it that have been quoted from time to time. You will hear some very familiar strains from this prophecy, because Handel adopted some parts of it for his 'Messiah'. Many other aspects of this particular segment has been adopted for music from time to time.

I've never heard anyone else take the time to go through this prophecy as a whole and look at the entire prophecy, rather than looking at little segments. To me, this is one of the great mistakes that is made by students of prophecy. I get the opportunity from time to time of studying a great deal of half baked prophetic papers that people like to submit from time to time where they try to give their explanation of a prophecy. The problem is they take these things out of context. They don't really know where the prophecy begins. They don't know where the prophecy ends. They don't know what it is that the prophecy is all about.

Isaiah 7 through 12

The prophecy I want to go through begins in Isaiah chapter 7 and verse one and it goes all the way through the 12th chapter. This segment is a single piece of prophetic literature, and it is a unitary whole and contains within it some of the most striking illustrations of the way prophetic literature works that you will find anywhere in the pages of your Bible. It lays an understanding for other prophetic literature.

I'm speaking for myself, I would not have grasped it had not been for this particular study.

In Isaiah the seventh chapter and verse one "It came to pass in the days of Ahaz the son of Jotham, the son of Uzziah, king of Judah, that Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah, king of Israel, went up toward Jerusalem to war against it, but could not prevail against it."

The time setting is one that should be familiar to all of you who have been following along in this series of History and Prophecy articles. One of the reasons I've gone through all of this is to get to this point, where we could take a look at this particular Scripture and understand it in a historical perspective and see where we are.

The previous seven articles in this History and Prophecy series go through and lay a great deal of groundwork for the historical context of which this prophecy is made.

Isaiah 7:2 "It was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his (King Ahaz) heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind."

This is in the days of Ahaz and Pekah. We find ourselves, not all that far from the bicentennial celebration of northern Israel, of Ephraim and Manasseh and the rest of the ten northern tribes who separated themselves from Judah, under the leadership of Jeroboam the first.

We are about 200 years down the line from this separation of Israel and Judah.

Judah at War with Israel

We are all familiar by now, by the fact that the history of the ten northern tribes is one of unremitting decay. It has continued for over 200 years and has gotten worse and worse. Judah has had its ups and downs, but we now come to a period of time in history where we find Judah at war with Israel. It sounds peculiar, and many people don't understand the difference between Israel and Judah, and yet the difference is very clearly there and in this case, Ephraim was the leader of the Israelites.

The King was a man named Pekah. I believe he was the next to the last of the king's of the ten northern tribes. Hosea was to follow him in the ten northern tribes and would be the last one, the one who would be taken into captivity by the Assyrians.

Isaiah's Sons

Isaiah 7:3 "Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, you, and Shearjashub your son, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the highway of the fuller's field."

Shearjashub means "the remnant shall return."

Isaiah's sons were all named with names that meant something. They all carried various specific meanings. They were types and images of prophecies that Isaiah had given or was going to give. In this case this boy's name was a promise, in itself, that a remnant of Judah would return to Jerusalem and establish again a kingdom there.

Take your son {4} "And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be fainthearted for the two tails of these smoking firebrands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah."

Bear in mind the difference between Assyria and Syria. Syria had its capital at Damascus and Assyria had its capital at Nineveh. We are dealing with two completely different kingdoms in this situation.

The Assyrians, in this case, are confederate with a ten northern tribes of Israel against Judah.

Isaiah 7:5 "Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah, have taken evil counsel against you, saying, {6} Let us go up against Judah, and vex it, and let us make a breach therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal: {7} Thus saith the Lord GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass. {8} For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin; and within sixty five years Ephraim shall be broken, that it be not a people."

This is a very specific prophecy, and in fact, it was going to be closer to 30 years until Ephraim was broken, and not a people. Samaria fell, Ahaz's house of ivory was destroyed and the entire social structure of the northern tribes was destroyed. They were carried off into captivity, and of course a little later, the Samaritans were brought into this. They were eastern peoples brought in by the Babylonians to populate this land after Israel had been carried out. This took place about 30 years later, even though before Ephraim really got dispersed to where they were not recognized as a people, and it might have taken a few years longer than that.

But bear in mind that when Isaiah was given these prophecies, and Isaiah wrote them down and conveyed them to the people concerned, they were hearing this in a very specific historical context. They were talking about people that they knew something about. It would be like somebody coming to us and giving us a prophecy and saying don't worry about the Russians. Don't worry about the Germans. Don't worry about the Italians and the Europeans and naming off heads of state and saying that these leaders will not be a problem to you.

Within 65 years, we could count that off and know precisely what period of time you're talking about, Germany would be broken and not be a people anymore. We would have a fairly clear concept of what this all meant, wouldn't we? That is what the Israelites did. That is, Ahaz did, for he was the one to whom this prophecy was given. It was a definite historical event taking place in a definite time context without a lot of equivocation.

House of David

Isaiah 7:9 Now God says "The head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If you will not believe, surely you shall not be established. {10} "Moreover the LORD spoke again unto Ahaz, saying, {11} Ask for a sign of the LORD your God; ask it

either in the depth, or in the height above. {12} But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD. {13} And he said, Hear you now, O house of David."

Now remember, the expression 'house of David', is just another way of addressing the person who sat on David's throne and who is a part of David's dynasty or His kingdom.

A Virgin Shall Conceive

Isaiah 7:13 "And he said, Hear you now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? {14} Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."

Did you ever hear that before? That's a fairly familiar scripture, isn't it? Here we are right in the middle of something totally unrelated, it seems to us from a Christian perspective, a totally unrelated event.

Here some old ancient kings are fighting and warring, and he says I'm going to give you, Ahaz, a sign. What is the sign that Ahaz was to receive? A virgin was to conceive and bear a son and his name was to be called Immanuel.

How could the birth of Jesus be a sign to a man long dead? It couldn't. Utterly impossible. So what's is this scripture doing in the middle of all this? For indeed this very scripture is cited in Matthew one and verse 23 as being fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ. Immanuel, we all know, means 'God is with us'.

Verse 15 "Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good." What does that mean? In the first place the word 'that' is incorrect, it should be "Butter and honey shall he eat when he knows to refuse the evil and choose the good."

Verse 16 "For before the child." Which child? The one that would be the one that was conceived of a virgin and named Immanuel.

"For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings"

This was a much shorter event. This was not something that was 65 years away. This was a very near event. A child is going to be born, in short order, and before that child gets old enough to choose between good and evil, both of those kings will be gone. If you stop and think about that for a moment, you have to realize that in Isaiah's mind and in the mind of Ahaz, they weren't thinking in terms of the Messiah, or certainly not of an event 700 years in the future. They were dealing with an event that was to take place within the lifetime of these kings. For before this child got to a certain age, both of these kings would be destroyed and they would be gone. So we're dealing with a definite historical context when we read this prophecy.

Well, how in the world, could Matthew reach back and pull this prophecy out and say that this has something to do with the Messiah?

We're going to see as we go along, because there's a very clear reason why it is so. What does the butter and honey have to do with anything? We will have to come back to that in a moment and see if we put that together.

Isaiah 7:17 "The LORD shall bring upon you (Ahaz), and upon your people, and upon your father's house, days that have not come from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah; even the king of Assyria."

Now we are not just dealing with the king of Syria, but with the king of Assyria.

The Lord will Shave with a Razor

Isaiah 7:18 "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria. {19} And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes. {20} In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard."

What is all of this talking about? Keep in mind, that prophecy has a very strong dreamlike quality about it, it's not well to approach prophecy to literally because it is like trying to make literal explanations of your own dreams. You know how dreams are, you can shift time. You can shift places, all physical laws are suspended. You can run with every fiber of your being and you find yourself only being able to just barely move along. Physical laws, physical things and literal things do not mean much in dreams. Dreams are highly symbolic events. The same is true with prophecy in very strong ways.

So we all understand that when he says He is going to call the fly out of Egypt and the bee from Assyria, basically He's talking about swarms of men coming into the land and covering everything and everywhere with armies and completely besieging Jerusalem and He says. "I'm going to shave with a razor that's hired."

I remember a Bible salesman that came to our house when I was just a kid and he said, "Do you know that the Bible says the Lord shaved and that He was clean-shaven? We said "No, we didn't know that?" He said "In that same day shall the Lord shave with a razor" and he slapped his Bible shut.

That's not what God was talking about. God was not going to shave himself. He is saying "Likening Israel to a man, the Lord is going to come in with a razor and strap him down and shave off all the hair on his head, his whiskers and his mustache, the hair on his arms or legs and hair on his chest and he will be standing there with no hair left. What does that mean? It

means basically that when those people come in here and descend on your land, and when they leave everything is going to be clean. They are going to pick you right down to the bare ground.

Butter and Honey

Isaiah 7:21 "It shall come to pass in that day, that a man shall nourish a young cow, and two sheep."

All that they had left were the animals that they were able to get inside the city. That's all, because the Assyrians would've butchered and eaten or carried off everything that was outside the city.

So a man shall nourish a young cow and two sheep and he is going to take real good care of them, because that's all he's got.

Verse 22: "And it shall come to pass, for the abundance of milk that they shall give, he shall eat butter: for butter and honey shall every one eat that is left in the land."

Why butter and honey? This is the produce of their animals and the bees that happen to be left in the land. The things that are there that's wild in nature, and the things that they're able to produce from their animals is all that they've got.

There's no bread, because bread depends upon wheat, and the wheat was destroyed. The land was shaved by the Assyrians when they were there. They took everything. They stripped it down. There was plenty of grass, because there was not enough animals to eat all of the grass. So there's plenty of rich luscious green grass for the animals to eat so everybody will have butter, and lots of milk, and you should be able to find some honey here and there. And that's what everybody was going to eat that were left in the land.

Isaiah 7:23 "It shall come to pass in that day, that every place shall be, where there were a thousand vines at a thousand shekels of silver, it shall even be for briers and thorns. {24} With arrows and with bows shall men come there; because all the land shall become briers and thorns. {25} And on all hills that shall be dug with the mattock, there shall not come there the fear of briers and thorns: but it shall be for the sending forth of oxen, and for the treading of lesser cattle."

They got down to the place where they had cows and grass and that is just about the whole story apart from briers and thorns.

Now let's look back of verse 14 again: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. {15} Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good."

This is just another way of saying what is in the following verse.

Verse 16 "For before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that you abhor shall be forsaken of both her kings."

Assyria Destroys Israel

You see, when the Assyrians came in, what you have taking place is, Syria and Ephraim get together and they say "Let's go down and fight against Judah", and they have their armies altogether and roaring off down to besiege Jerusalem and all of a sudden out of the East and out of the North comes the Assyrians right down their tracks. They are destroyed. Samaria is besieged. Samaria is finally raised right down to the ground. Israel, including Ephraim and Manasseh, Zebulun, Naphtali and all the ten northern tribes, they all are carried completely away.

Then the Assyrians besiege Jerusalem. And basically leaves everything there and so before this child is old enough to know good from evil, he's left with this butter and honey situation, because the whole area around Jerusalem has been destroyed and the two northern kingdoms have been forsaken of both their kings and destroyed and they are not a people. All this was to take place in the lifetime of the people who heard this prophecy.

Now what about this Messianic prophecy? Well, we don't have a clue so far. We can guess. I could advance an idea or two. We can toss around speculation. But you can't tell.

Now let's go on in chapter 8, and see if somewhere along the line in this entire prophecy that we do get a clue.

Mahershalalhashbaz

Isaiah 8:1 "Moreover the LORD said to me, Take you a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Mahershalalhashbaz. {2} And I took to me faithful witnesses to record, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah."

This boy's name means essentially "in making speed to spoil he hastens to the prey" or "pray quick, spoil soon." This boy's name means that this spoiling that has been foretold in this previous chapter is going to be quick. That's the whole story about Mahershalalhashbaz and why he was named what he was named.

Let's continue in verse 3: "I went unto the prophetess; and she conceived, and bare a son. Then said the LORD to me, Call his name Mahershalalhashbaz."

Now this is kind of interesting when you think about it because as we develop this chapter, we see clearly that Mahershalalhashbaz was the boy that was prophesied in the preceding chapter.

Let's look at verse 4 "For before the child shall have knowledge to cry, My father, and my mother, the riches of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the king of Assyria."

Obviously, at least in the intent, this is the boy. The problem is, the boy was not named Immanuel. He was named something quite different. Why? Well let's see if we can try to begin to understand. Secondly, there's no special reason to believe that Isaiah's, wife was a virgin. Why?. She's already had a boy, in the first chapter of Isaiah. There is no indication that he had another wife. There's no indication of any change, and no reason to assume otherwise.

Why a Virgin?

Now why is this one called a virgin? The Revised Standard Version translates it as maiden, but the effect is basically the same thing. Now you could use the expression, 'a virgin shall conceive' for a young woman, who is newly married and was a virgin when she got married, and her husband comes in to her on that night and they conceive a child, you could say a virgin has conceived. She was a virgin before, but not one now.

The idea of the virgin birth of Christ is maintained by Matthew and also by other Christian literature and right on down through the generations everyone has maintained that based upon this prophecy, and yet it would seem that the prophecy is really directed at Isaiah's wife, not at a virgin at all, because here's the way it follows through.

Let's continue in Isaiah 8:5 "The LORD spoke also unto me again, saying, {6} Forasmuch as this people refused the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin and Remaliah's son."

Who's he talking about? The Lord is talking about the ten northern tribes for they are not happy about Me and they refuse the waters of Shiloh and Jerusalem. They would rather follow these two men.

O Immanuel

Isaiah 8:7 "Now therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up and over his channels, and go over all his banks: {8} And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck; and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel."

There it is again. Why is it repeated again, this term 'O Immanuel'. It is a bit strange, but keep in mind the dreamlike quality of prophecy. This is prophetic literature and it is written with a certain meter to it, it is poetic in nature, it is highly symbolic and the prophet

deliberately introduces these little obscure sayings to some extent obscure the meaning to those who are not to have it.

Let's continue in verse nine, "Associate yourselves, O you people, and you shall be broken in pieces; and give ear, all you of far countries: gird yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and you shall be broken in pieces."

Again, the poetic nature is coming through and makes you wonder if this was not set to music with the repetition of these ideas here.

Verse 10 "Take counsel together, and it shall come to nothing; speak the word, and it shall not stand: for God is with us."

Now, the concept of the Immanuel is translated for us completely. The idea of the presence of God keeps being introduced into this prophecy. And yet there is still not a hint that we are dealing with anything outside of seventh century B.C. This is interesting!

Isaiah 8:11 "For the LORD spoke thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying, {12} Say you not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; don't fear their fear, nor be afraid. {13} Sanctify the LORD of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. {14} And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel."

Now he's recognizing and acknowledging here something that we've seen in our study of prophecy that there are two houses in Israel. There is a house of Israel and the house of Judah, two separate distinct dynasties of kings reigning during that time.

The Canon of the Old Testament

Let's continue in Isaiah 8:14 "For a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. {15} And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken. {16} Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples. {17} And I will wait upon the LORD, that hides his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him."

This seems to be a reference to some particular point in time when the law is sealed up, when the testimony is bound up, and basically is either sealed and bound and put away from the man's vision or understanding or it means that it is essentially finished.

Many people look at this and say that this prophecy is a prophecy of the completion of the canon of the Bible, that it looks forward to the time when the law is sealed up, that is the Old Testament is finished, sealed, done, over and the testimony, which they see as the New Testament is finished as well, meaning that the Bible will not continue to be written indefinitely on and on down through all generations. Of course there was a period of time between the Testaments, when the Old Testament. that is the Law was finished and there

was nothing being added to it. There was a time when the testimony of the prophets was finished and was all bound up and sealed and there was nothing being added to that either. There was a time when there is no open vision from God. God had not been heard from in Israel for a long time, for generations at that point in time.

Then Isaiah says {17} "I will wait upon the LORD, that hides his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him. {18} Behold, I (Isaiah is speaking) and the children whom the LORD has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the LORD of hosts, which dwells in mount Zion."

Isaiah's Prophecies are about Types

In the Septuagint, the word for 'signs' is essentially from the word from which we get the word 'type'. Isaiah steps up at this point in time and says in the clearest possible terms, what basically many of us has tried to arrive from other parts of his writings before, that the prophecies that he has written are deliberately orchestrated types, images and models. They are not about the very thing that they seem to be about. This is what Isaiah is trying to tell us in the 41st chapter and verse 22 he will say "Let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them."

Isaiah clearly knew that what he was writing, what he was doing, and what he was going through, was a type.

He says simply Mahershalalhashbaz is a type of something else, and the switch of the name is highly significant in that context, once you understand that, the movement in the name from Mahershalalhashbaz to Immanuel makes it very plain that we're dealing with not one child that was to be born, but two.

One is the type. The other, in prophetic parlance, the anti-type, that is the object of the type. Type is just a model or an image.

If you wanted to build an airplane, you would put your design together, get some plywood and build yourself a model of the airplane that you're eventually going to build, to see if the size is right, to see if you can get the seats in it, if the instrument panel will fit, if there's enough room for everybody's legs to fit. So you build up this plywood prototype model on the ground. This is exactly the sort of thing that goes on in prophecy. There is the model and then there's the real thing.

Mahershalalhashbaz was the model and Immanuel was the real thing.

Completion of the Canon

Isaiah 8:19, Then, Isaiah says "When they shall say unto you, Seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards that peep, and that mutter: should not a people seek unto

their God? Should the living seek the dead? {20} To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them."

Now you take that verse and you tie it in with verse 16 "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples." This adds a certain strength in my mind to the idea of the completion of the canon.

Adding a Book to the Bible

There may come a time when someone may come along and say "The Lord has given me a new vision. I got new words to add to the Bible. I'm going to put another book in the Bible." You look in the book and if it says things somewhat different from what the Bible says, if it adds some new interpretation of which the Bible does not allow or leave room for, if it is not speaking according to this word. What word? The law and the testimony, that is what has been bound up and sealed up. It is there as part of the canon. The word 'canon' means 'measure', it is like a Bureau of Standards that determines how long a foot is. The Bureau of Standards has long be in on their judgment for what is the Bible and what is Holy Writ.

We've got it. We have it in our hands. We know that nothing is being added to it.

Someone will come along, some person or visionary and will say "I have had a vision from the Lord and God has given me a message". The Bible says, "Look to the law, look to the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, it is because there's no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20).

I have thought about that a lot. I thought about how easy it would be as a minister, once you have gained people's respect, once they look to you and you have told the truth enough times, to come along and say "Thou shalt not ... " and give some new practice or some other practice that you think they shouldn't do. You would go back and use some obscure scripture that perhaps indicates there was something related to it somewhere along the way, and I begin to try to tell you that you ought to obey what I'm saying to you based upon my authority that God has given to me as his minister. Now this Scripture makes it very clear that you are fully authorized and completely within your rights as a man of God or a woman of God, to look into the pages of the Bible and to say "Is this man speaking according to the law and the testimony?" If he is not, what does it proved to you? If I were not speaking according to the law and the testimony that there is no light in me.

The fact of the matter is, there really isn't, when you get right down to it. If there is any light in me, it is reflected light from this book, it is not any light originating from me. I haven't got any. The only light that I can convey is what God grants me from this book, the Bible.

So if there's reflected light from it or if I can use a lens and I can focus this light, then I might be able to start a fire somewhere, but without the light, me and my lens can not accomplish much of anything.

Look to the law and the testimony, if they speak not according to this word, I don't care who they are, there is no light in them.

Isaiah's Prophecy is Messianic

Isaiah 8:21 "They shall pass through the land, hard pressed and hungry: and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and look upward. {22} And they shall look unto the earth; and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven into darkness."

Isaiah 9:1 "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. {2} The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them has the light shined."

Have you ever heard that before? If you have listened to Handel's 'Messiah', then you have heard it before. It came out of this passage. That is not the only place that you have heard it before. It is cited specifically, in Matthew four verse 15 as being a prophecy of the ministry of Jesus Christ. And yet we have not been given a hint in this passage of anything other than the lifetime of Isaiah.

And yet these prophets, these New Testament prophets, and I think Matthew was a prophet, have applied it directly to the ministry of Jesus Christ. Why? Well, we are going to have keep going because so far, we don't really have much of a clue in Isaiah, except for his allegation that he and his sons are types and the awareness of Mahershalalhashbaz Immanuel thing had to be talking about two boys and two separate events.

Isaiah 9:3 "You have multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before you according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil. {4} For you have broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian. {5} For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire. {6} For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."

Now, up until this point, there really hasn't been much to let you know that you've been dealing with anything outside of Isaiah's own time. As far as he was concerned, he might've been justified, assuming that the prophecy about Immanuel really was a prophecy of his own son. But by the time he got this prophecy he began to realize that this son, this child, who was to be born would be called wonderful Counselor, mighty God, everlasting father, and the Prince of peace, by this time Isaiah knew something else was afoot. The most obtuse

student of prophecy would've known that there is something more in this than simply one of the boys of Isaiah.

Isaiah 9:7 "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

This is one the earliest and clear expositions of a prophecy of the Messiah in the Bible. It is rather fascinating when you look through your little Cruden's Concordance and you will find that the word 'Messiah' is only used twice in the Old Testament, both in the book of Daniel, chapter 9:25-26, in the same general passage, and yet what concept is there that has more dominated the history of Judeo-Christian world than the concept of the Messiah.

In the New Testament the word 'Messiah' is used twice also in the book of John Chapter 1:41 and 4:25.

It is fascinating to think about because when Jesus Christ walked the earth and came with His ministry, the Jews were expecting the Messiah. It was a dominant consideration in all other thoughts and all their lives. It was their hope from two words in the book of Daniel, for they themselves also understood that this child, who was to be born was to be the Savior, The Messiah. They saw him in quite a different light from what you and I have come to see Him, but nevertheless, it was the Messiah.

So now you see that, somehow or other, in this prophecy without us being given any warning, we have encompassed a time that includes Isaiah's own day as a type, but actually projects ahead to the birth of the Messiah, to the beginning of Jesus Christ and His work and His message and to the casual reader, of His kingdom. But of course there is much more than that.

The Punishment of Samaria

Isaiah 9:8 "The Lord sent a word into Jacob, and it lighted upon Israel. {9} And all the people shall know, even Ephraim and the inhabitant of Samaria, that say in the pride and stoutness of heart, {10} The bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn stones: the sycamores are cut down, but we will change them into cedars. {11} Therefore the LORD shall set up the adversaries of Rezin against him, and join his enemies together; {12} The Syrians before, and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with open mouth. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

Now, beginning in verse eight, that we just read, through verse 12 is a stanza of a five stanza poem, song, cantata, aria, chorus. I don't know exactly what form that this prophecy was cast in. There are five stanzas here, each of them ends with the phrase "for all this his anger is not

turned away, but his hand is stretched out still." Listen to it as he develops it and listen to the power and the rhythm of this.

Isaiah 9:13 "For the people turn not to him that smites them, neither do they seek the LORD of hosts. {14} Therefore the LORD will cut off from Israel head and tail, branch and rush, in one day. {15} The ancient and honorable, he is the head; and the prophet that teaches lies, he is the tail. {16} For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed. {17} Therefore the Lord shall have no joy in their young men, neither shall have mercy on their fatherless and widows: for every one is an hypocrite and an evildoer, and every mouth speaks folly. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

This is the powerful word of what has become in modern times, a Jeremiah, that is they take the name of Jeremiah who was a prophet of dire things to come, but here's Isaiah long before Jeremiah pronouncing just this type of prophecy upon Israel.

Verse 16 of this stanza is I think of particular interest. "For the leaders of this people cause them to err."

The Leaders Cause Them to Err

Wouldn't you think that the leaders would be the ones you would want to punish? Wouldn't you think that since God gave them their leaders, and since these leaders have lied to the people or misled the people that we would punish the leaders, and we let the people off? It goes on to say: "For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led by them are destroyed."

I can't help but think of a church and a pattern that it could follow, which involves an idea, essentially, that the people in the church are not responsible for this type of thing, that it is the leaders who are responsible. 'It is not for you to reason why, but to do or die' as an old saying goes. You don't ask a lot of questions, you just do as you're told. The implication in all of this is, that if the leadership of the church, tell me when we come to a fork in the road, to take the right fork in the road and I do what I was told, and it turns out to be wrong, God will not hold me accountable, He will hold the leaders accountable. Now that makes a lot of sense, carnally speaking, but the problem is, the Bible doesn't back it up. The Bible says quite clearly that if you come up to a fork in the road and if your leaders tell you to go right and it is a wrong way, you are going to be held accountable!

"For the leaders of this people cause them to err; and they that are led by them are destroyed." That sounds to me like you're going to be held accountable. Does it to you? If a leader tells you to turn right, and you turn right and it is the wrong way, you get destroyed, can't we agree you were after all accountable? Then if you come to the fork in the road and the leader says "We are all going to go to the right" and you look in the Bible and you say to yourself, "No that's not right, that's wrong. I will be held accountable before God if I make

this wrong turn, no matter what my leader says." I have to say that based upon this one little verse, and if you take it all by itself, you would have to conclude that you are fully accountable for your actions and the things that you do, regardless of the quality of your leadership.

That's sobering. It's really a relief to me as a leader. It is a profound relief to me, for I have to realize that I'm going to be held accountable if we come up to a fork in the road and I say, look, fellows, I think this is the way that we need to go and here's a way I'm going to go and let's all go and I go wandering off down that road, I have to realize, and I'm much more comfortable and feel a lot better about realizing that every single one of you are individually held distinctly accountable for your own decisions as you come to the fork in the road. You are supposed ask the question, why are we going to go right? If I can give you a good reason for going right. Should you? Maybe, if you don't have the faintest idea in your mind one way or the other and you have weighed the whole thing up and you still don't know, then, you're probably better off going with the leadership. After all, if you're involving yourself with odds it is far better to go with the odds than against the odds. The odds might be a little bit better that way.

But when that little voice down inside of you says "No, that's not right." That little voice could be wrong too, but you had better listen to it and you better evaluate what's being said and you better evaluate what you're being called upon to do because you are not going to be saved collectively. You are saved individually and personally by Jesus Christ and you are going to be held accountable for every decision you make, for after all, if a man is going to be held accountable for every idle word that he speaks (Matthew 12:36) and the Bible says we shall be, then why not for those major decisions in our lives.

Are we going to get off because we say, "I thought it was the thing to do because my minister said it was." And God is going to say to you "Now wait a minute, didn't I say that you are not to look to human beings and trust in men? Didn't I say that you were to look to the law and the testimony and didn't I say if they didn't speak according to this word, that there was no light in them."

You would have to answer "Yes, You did say that."

You are going to be held personally accountable for those things. This is a very serious matter. And it's going to affect a lot of people's lives, and there are thousands of people running around right now who believe that they have no responsibility at all for many of the things they're doing because it is a decision of church government.

All I have to say about it is that if I don't have anything better to offer you for the reason for why you ought to or not to do something than for church government then there something wrong somewhere.

Jesus Christ is the head of the church, not me, nor any other human leader. I have no intention or desire to become the head of His church or His vicar or His personal representative on earth.

I would rather if you have a problem for you to talk to Him about it because I think you can depend on Him a lot better than me.

The Pattern Continues

And so the pattern continues in prophecy. Isaiah 9:18 "For wickedness burns like a fire: it shall devour the briars and thorns, and shall kindle in the thickets of the forest, and they shall mount up like the lifting up of smoke. {19} Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother. {20} And he shall snatch on the right hand, and be hungry; and he shall eat on the left hand, and they shall not be satisfied: they shall eat every man the flesh of his own arm: {21} Manasseh, Ephraim; and Ephraim, Manasseh: and they together shall be against Judah. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

That was stanza four.

Now stanza five: Isaiah 10:1 "Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; {2} To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless! {3} And what will you do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will you flee for help? and where will you leave your glory? {4} Without me they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still."

Now all of this is going to take place at the hands of the Assyrians when they come rolling down in the land, and wreaks absolute and utter desolation.

Arrogant Assyrian is also Judged

Now let's continue with verse five and God speaks to the Assyrians: "O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is my indignation. {6} I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. {7} Howbeit he does not mean that, nor does his heart think so; but it is in his heart to destroy and cut off nations not a few. {8} For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings? {9} Is not Calno as Carchemish? is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria as Damascus?"

In other words, He's citing conquest after conquest and He's looking to these cities saying, that city is like the one I destroyed over here. This is like the city that I destroyed down

there, None of these cities are any better than the ones that I have already wiped out. They're all going to go the same way.

Verse 11 "Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols? {12} Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord has performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks."

So the Assyrians turn will come to be punished. Historically, the Assyrians were punished by the Babylonians. The Babylonians finally destroyed Assyria and eventually took Jerusalem into captivity, but history is written and it is all clear.

The Assyrians boasts of itself, so, God says in verse 15 "Shall the ax boast itself against him that cuts with it? or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shakes it?"

What the Assyrians came in here to do they did for Me. Now why are they standing up and boasting of themselves and then He says in Isaiah 10:16 "Therefore shall the Lord, the Lord of hosts, send among his fat ones (Assyria) leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire. {17} And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day."

The Assyrians are going to have some trouble.

Verse 18: "It is going to consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standard-bearer faints. {19} And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be so few, that a child may write them."

The Returning Remnant of Israel

Isaiah 10:20 "It shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no more lean again upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. {21} The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. {22} For though your people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness. {23} For the Lord GOD of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined, in the midst of all the land."

Later the Babylonians came in and destroyed the land and took everybody captive. Within the process of time Israel was released and the Jews and a few of the northern tribes, a scattering of them, were finally allowed to come back and resettle in Jerusalem and in the land of Judah.

He goes on a little bit more about Assyria, and he says in Isaiah 10:24 "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD of hosts, O my people that dwells in Zion, don't be afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite you with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against you, after the manner of Egypt.

{25} For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and my anger in their destruction. {26} And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt. {27} And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off your shoulder, and his yoke from off your neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing."

Interesting. I assume that this is referring to the anointed one, Jesus Christ.

Verse 28: "Assyria is come to Aiath, he is passed to Migron; at Michmash he hath laid up his carriages: {29} They are gone over the passage: they have taken up their lodging at Geba; Ramah is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled. {30} Lift up thy voice, O daughter of Gallim: cause it to be heard unto Laish, O poor Anathoth. {31} Madmenah is removed; the inhabitants of Gebim gather themselves to flee. {32} As yet he shall remain at Nob (which is in sight of Jerusalem to the north) that day: he shall shake his hand against the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem."

Now this is interesting. What you see here is the line of march of the Assyrian armies as they make their way from the North, systematically, down to the South, and all these people are fleeing like a covey of quail as they come down and the people are scattering all over the place, ahead of the Assyrians, trying to get out of their way. They are coming, interestingly enough, from the general direction of Armageddon, which again, of itself, is a rather interesting sidelight.

How many of you know what the next subject, developed in book of Isaiah, is in the very next chapter? You know what is in it, but it is blocked out right now and you end up with a mental block. Now if I ask you this way, how many of you know what is in the 11th chapter of Isaiah? You know that, if I hadn't created a little mental block for you.

The Reign of Jesse's Offspring

Listen now the Chapter 11 of Isaiah verse one. Bear in mind, there has not been any shift in time at all.

"There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: {2} And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD; {3} And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the LORD: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: {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."

By the way, the word wicked is singular and not plural. It means He shall slay the wicked one, and it appears to be a reference to the Antichrist.

Verse five: "Righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. {6} The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them."

Where are we? We are in the millennium. How in the world did we get from the seventh century B.C. to the millennium?

Duality of Prophecy

Right here, this is the reason this whole segment is so fascinating to me. This is one of the best illustrations of the principle of duality of prophetic literature that you will ever find. For the prophets, they got a vision, and they wrote it down. They didn't fully understand everything that they got, but often times prophecy is layered and layers out with past events, and a set of future events. They sort of interlock, so that you would wind up having a few of them that would overlap so that some of them happened twice and some happened once in history. Some of them happened once in the future, and a great many of them happened in the past and also in the future, so that you have this interesting little interlocking of past events.

What you find here as you read through this passage is a prophecy that is fundamentally directed at the end time. It is a prophecy of the Messiah. It is a prophecy of His birth and His ministry. It is a prophecy of His kingdom, which is to be established and will never have an end. It is a prophecy of the way the world is going to be when Christ does return and establish His kingdom.

When you understand the events that took place to Isaiah, to his children, to Ahaz, to Peka, to Remaliah, to the Assyrians, to the Babylonians, that these are all types or models.

These are all historical events. These things happened. They were fulfilled. Most of them were fulfilled right down to the letter, but not all, for the prophecies here have not yet come to pass.

Animals Nature to be Changed

Isaiah 11:7 "The cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. {8} And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. {9} They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea."

You know as I read these things, and I say to myself, what is the real value of changing a lion's nature so that he eats grass and straw like the ox, and he goes out grazing in the field rather than eating meat? Really it is kind of marginal, when you think about it, because they're relatively few lions in our society, and even a society in parts of the world where lions are fairly plentiful, they are no real threat to people. What is this all about?

Frankly, it's not so much the question of the importance of a lion eating straw like an ox, as it is the realization that nations and peoples and kingdoms whose historic customs have been barbaric, the very meaning of their existence has been to devour and destroy other peaceful peoples around them. They will eat straw like the ox. A nation that had the personality like a snake will be absolutely and totally peaceful.

You can deal with those people. The nature of those people will be changed. I am saying that God is not going to change the nature of animals just in that regard. What I'm saying is that this is a model or a type. It has something to do with something far more important than whether a snake is dangerous or whether or not lions will eat straw like the ox, or whether a bear goes out in the field and feed with cattle. It is talking about the kind of nations which hither to fore wanted nothing more than to destroy, and devour one another, who will now lie down together, just like a little bear cub rolling around in the grass and laying down with his head on the flank of young calf and the mother bear being somewhere around and no danger to anybody at all. It's a beautiful picture.

Worry About Nuclear War

You know, there may be something wrong with me, and I sometimes wonder because I don't spend much time worrying about nuclear war. It is something that very rarely crosses my mind. But, you know, if I did not know prophecy, if I did not have a Bible, if I didn't understand about God, what do I have to make me feel secure that sometime tonight or tomorrow, I might not see a mushroom cloud. I might not have the experience or perfect vision with a big flash of light and wonder what it was and another one over in this direction and begin to realize that's a long way off, and then begin to realize what's going on. And then all of a sudden, the radio stations go silent and television is off the air, and I realize that World War III has started. What assurance do I have that that is not going to happen tonight or tomorrow? None!

The only reason I guess that I don't worry about it is that I have a feeling for world events that I have derived from the Bible, which tells me that's not going to happen tonight or tomorrow. There are some things that has to happen, and so I don't find myself worrying about that, but I think a lot of people do. I think it's a thing that makes people sick to their stomach when they consider it because they do not have the hope or the confidence that we have. They do not have the revelation that we have. They do not understand what we understand and they do worry, and they fear.

The World Tomorrow

This world, revealed in this prophecy, is a world where there isn't any such fear, no fear of nuclear weapons. No fear of terrorist going around exploding bombs under taxicabs or throwing them into restaurants of innocent people. None of that. I think that is far more to the point of what this prophecy is talking about than merely animals getting along with other animals.

Remnant of His People Recovered

Isaiah 11:10 "In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an banner to the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. { 11 } And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people."

When was the first time? Well, it was when Ezra and Nehemiah came back out of Babylon to Jerusalem and rebuilt the Temple, that was the first time. This tells us there's to be a second time when God sets His hand to redeem them, which tells us that there is to be a second time of captivity for those people. That is a sobering thought.

But when you begin to realize that all these things that we have been reading up to here, is actually directed at the end time and it is held out for us only in a model in Isaiah's day. The captivity is all there and the reason for it is all there, if we just have the wisdom to see it.

Let's continue in verse 11: "He will recover them 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. { 12 } And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. { 13 } The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim."

Now that Scripture, that statement, that segment is fascinating when you think about it. What does it tell you? It tells you that at the very end time, at the end of the age of man's misgovernment upon the earth, Judah and Ephraim will be distinct, identifiable, entities.

I don't have any trouble identifying who Judah is as a distinct identifiable entity in the world today. Simple, they are right down there in Jerusalem. They have their Knesset and their parliament in Jerusalem. For a while. their capital was in Tel Aviv, but now their capital is Jerusalem. It's there, it is clear, it is identifiable. There's Judah and Jerusalem in the prophecies in the end time. No problem.

But Ephraim is said also to be a distinct identifiable entity in the end time. Where is Ephraim?

I've always felt in a way that the old 'U.S. in Prophecy' booklet grabbed a hold of the wrong end of the stick. It started out by going with all of the historical things about Ephraim (as the British Commonwealth) and Manasseh (as the United States) and Israel of which are all true and correct. But these prophecies, here in Isaiah, seems to me to be the place to start, which are definite, clear cut, end time prophecies which show a distinction between Israel and Judah, between Ephraim and Judah, and even between Ephraim and Manasseh as distinct identifiable entities in the end time. If they are to be distinct and identifiable entities in the end time, where are you going to look and find out who they are?

Will you look where J.H. Alan looked, when he tried to look back in the pages of the Bible and said, "Here are these prophecies. There is Israel, there is a house of Israel, which is distinct from Judah in the end time. There is a stick of Israel and the stick of Judah, and they are to be bound back together again, in the end time, not before."

Where is Israel? I know where Judah is. But where is Israel? Well, I think we've answered that question. I think it is a very important part of our understanding.

He goes on to say in verse 14 "They shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; they shall spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them. {15} And the LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and shall smite it in the seven streams, and make men go over dryshod. {16} And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt."

Notice. Not back from Babylon, but from Assyria. Assyria is a distinct identifiable entity at the end time. Fascinating.

All of these old nations, Assyria, Babylon, Ephraim and Manasseh, Judah, all of them have end time equivalents. Whether it's genetically, historically, precisely the same people with the same genes in their blood, that's a question that we can discuss, but at least in representation, they are here. Where are they?

Who is modern Babylon? Where is modern Assyria? Where is modern Ephraim? Where is modern Manasseh? These are important questions for prophecy.

A Hymn of Praise

Isaiah Chapter 12 is a millennial hymn, a short beautiful hymn, a song of thanksgiving to God.

Isaiah 12:1 "And in that day you shall say, O LORD, I will praise You: though You were angry with me, your anger is turned away, and you comforted me. {2} Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my

song; he also is become my salvation. {3} Therefore with joy shall you draw water out of the wells of salvation. {4} And in that day you shall say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. {5} Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. {6} Cry out and shout, you inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of you."

This is a beautiful passage of prophecy, and as I said, a very important one, because there isn't any way of grappling with this prophecy, other than realizing that it is dual, that it has a historical fulfillment and it has an end time fulfillment and if you are ever really going to understand the future, you have to somewhere begin to start understanding the past.

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