

Sunday evening August 27th 2017 at CBC
Sermon outline: Isaiah 11 and 12

Through the ministry of Isaiah the prophet the Lord has warned his people that because they are listening to God's word and yet not listening, to see what God's word requires of them and yet not see, He will use the most drastic surgery on them. The vineyard, chapter 5, will be razed to the ground. The palm-branch and reed (9.14) will be cut off, and only a remnant will be left, rather like the stump of tree which alone remains after every branch has been cut away.

[1] THE CHALLENGING REALITY OF THE REMNANT

This was bad news indeed, but there was also some good news mixed in with it which we can find in chapter 10:

See Isaiah 10:20-23

You can see the bad news in 20 (struck down) and 22 and 23 (destruction decreed). But there is also good news.

There is a remnant, survivors (20) who will truly rely on the Lord, the Holy One of Israel. A remnant will return to the mighty God (21).

And there is no more obvious place where we find the bad news and good news together than in verse 22:

22 Though your people, O Israel, be like the sand by the sea, only a remnant will return.

The good news is that a remnant will return.

The bad news is precisely that it is only a remnant out of a very large number.

The question properly arises for each of us as it did for those who listened to Isaiah – am I in the remnant or not? That should have made Isaiah's hearers sit up and take notice.

[2] THE GLORIOUS ORIGIN OF THE REMNANT

So we need to know about this remnant. How does it arise? And the answer in (what we know as) chapter 11 is that Isaiah is given to see that it will arise through the appearance of a 'Branch', a ruler, a leader who will come from what is left of the house of David, referred to here by the name of David's father Jesse [11.1].

[a] The nature of his character

The most obvious 'stand-out' thing about this leader is that the Spirit of God is active in him in a special way.

Surely we are looking at the figure already mentioned in chapter 6, 6-7. Isaiah's hearers would have had to look to the future for this figure – those of us reading these words in the light of the coming of the Lord Jesus can surely see Him here, and it is even more obvious when we add the details in verse 5 where he is wearing the clothes of righteousness and faithfulness.

[b] The nature of his authority

Isaiah was also given to see the scope of the authority of this person. Note that he is a judge [11.3] who will judge absolutely righteously and he will have the right to judge *the earth*. The

implication is surely that he will judge by the standards of heaven, not by human standards.

[c] The nature of his ministry

This is seen in two ways which we might describe as

[i] qualitative

In verses 6-9 we have a vision of harmony, presented in universally understandable language.

[ii] quantitative

The nature of the ministry of the 'Branch' is also seen in terms of what we would call today *world evangelisation*.

Isaiah sees a recovery of the Lord's people who have been scattered to various regions (presumably as a result of the coming Assyrian and later Babylonian exiles) but the vision is bigger than that, reaching out to the nations who will rally to the banner, we might say the banner of truth[!] who is the "Branch".

Today, not all that passes for Christian is necessarily Christian. We have seen this in our studies in John's gospel. We have noted that not all who are apparently disciples turn out actually to be disciples.

So how can we know where we are, or where we need to be? The answer is in chapter 12.

[3] THE RIGHTFUL RESPONSE OF THE REMNANT

And the answer is that the remnant consists of those who recognise and respond to the ministry of the 'Branch', whom we know as the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice two things that mark out the remnant people:

[a] They recognise and respond to God's salvation

The verbs underline the fact that this happens both personally and collectively.

The verbs 'you will say' in verse 1 and 'I will praise you' in verse 2 are singular and in verse 1 it is specifically male.

The verbs in verses 3 to 5 are plural.

The verb in verse 6 (Shout aloud and sing for joy) is specifically feminine singular.

Thus the totality of male, female, singular and plural response, is brought out. The true remnant people are those who rejoice in God's salvation (for us now, in Christ) individually and collectively.

Is that us at CBC?

[b] They make the Lord's name known among the nations

The remnant people of God are evangelistically minded. Having received the good news, they want to proclaim it among the nations, verse 4, and let it be known to all the world, verse 5. It will always be from the remnant that true and lasting missionary endeavour arises.

We live in the light of the coming of the Messiah and if we have put our trust in him we may safely look forward to seeing him. Let us reflect the realities of the remnant people of God and seek to do what we can to make his name known among the nations, and to God shall be all the praise and glory!