

Some thoughts for Advent 2 – Prophets of the Old Testament:-

The words of our Lord Jesus should encourage us to look to the future with confidence in Him. Even as we look for and pray for his coming in glory we hear again his words *“you will hear of wars and rumours of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. . . .”* Read Matthew chapter 24, verses 4 – 8.

In the books of the prophets, from Isaiah through to Malachi, the theme of the final triumph of the Lord God and the establishment of the New Jerusalem are often interwoven with the events contemporary with the time of authorship. For example the familiar words of the reading from Micah 5, verses 2 – 4 speaking of the coming ruler to be born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2, verse 6) is set in the context of the Assyrian invasion, Micah 5, verses 1 and 5.

In reading the texts from the books of the prophets in the Old Testament we need to have in mind the context in which they were written.

1) - What did these words mean there and then?

2) - What do these words mean for us here and now?

With this in mind please read Isaiah chapter 11, verses 1 – 10. This is one of the great prophetic readings used during Advent, a message of hope as we look for the coming of the Kingdom of Peace.

The context:- The prophet Isaiah’s ministry lasted from the year of the death of King Uzziah in 740 B.C. (Isaiah 6, verse 1) through to the year that King Manasseh ascended the throne in 698 B.C. some 42 years. If we read through verses 28 – 32 of chapter 10 we get a picture of the threat of the Assyrian army as it conquers its way through the towns and villages on its approach to Jerusalem from the north. In verses 33 – 34 of chapter 10 we read of the judgement of the Lord on Assyria. So this prophecy would be given as part of the historical context of the time.

Isaiah chapter 11 – What did these words mean for the people at that time? The second half of chapter 11 (verses 11 - 16) can be read as a promise to bring back a remnant of the people of Israel after the Assyrian has been defeated and the kingdom restored. There would be *“a highway from Assyria for the remnant which is left of his people . . .”*. This can be seen as being fulfilled in the restoration of Jerusalem under Nehemiah and Ezra after the Exile in Babylon. It was then a message of hope for the people in the face of ultimate destruction.

However!

2) – What do these words mean for us here and now? There is much in the prophecy given in Isaiah 11, verses 1 – 10 that cannot have been fulfilled in the temporal (and temporary!) restoration of the kingdom of Israel after the Exile. The restoration of nature to its primal innocence has not yet occurred - (verses 6 – 9). If this is so and the Word of the Lord is true then *“we wait for a new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells”* (2 Peter chapter 3, verse 13). Romans chapter 8, verses 18 – 25 can be read as a commentary on this vision from the Book of Isaiah.

The Ruler who shall come is described in verses 1 – 5 of chapter 11. Again, it is worth reading other scriptures referring to this *“branch”* which was to sprout from the hacked down family tree of the house of David. The *“stump”* refers to the remnant of the Jewish people as they went into exile. Read Isaiah 4, verses 2 – 6; Isaiah 9, verses 6 – 7; Acts 13, verses 22 – 23 and Romans 15, verses 9 – 12.

The foundation of the new world order has been laid in the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ as a babe to Bethlehem. His ministry and teaching, passed on to his apostles and to his church, is building on that foundation (see 1 Corinthians 3, verses 11 - 15). The ultimate fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah chapter 11 is yet to come! At this present time with all its uncertainty and vain political promises we, as Christian believers, continue to look for and pray for the coming of the Kingdom of Righteousness. Looking for that time when *“death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.”* (Revelation 21 verse 4).

So we pray **Thy Kingdom come! Amen, come Lord Jesus!**

Terry Brighton 4 / 12 / 2025