

Read: Isaiah 11.10-16.

Verse 9b promises that “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” That, of course, means more than knowing about the Lord, but living according to his revealed will.

True, the prophecy speaks clearly about the return of the scattered remnant to the promised land – note v. 11, “In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people...”

But the Root of Jesse is not just about restoration for the nation of Israel. “In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious” (v. 10).

We are reminded again of God’s promise to Abraham that all peoples on earth would be blessed through him (Gen. 12.2-3) – a point the chosen race so often forgot. Jesus himself said that “People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God” (Lk 13.29).

Reflect

- “The earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” At present we don’t see that happening in a geographical sense. How do we understand these words?
- The Root will be a banner (rallying point) for all nations. In what sense do we see Jesus rallying the peoples of the world to himself? It is great to know that we are included in God’s plan of grace. What about everyone else? What will happen if we begin to see that, like Abraham, we are “blessed to be a blessing”?

Study 4: A Fruitful Vineyard. Reading: Isaiah 26.1-8,12-15;27.1-6



Studies from the book of Isaiah
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3. *The Root of Jesse*
Reading: Isaiah 11

A number of years ago we were travelling south on holidays. When we entered Victoria, we saw evidence of the disastrous “Ash Wednesday” bush-fires that had devastated so much of the state.

Although it was clear that “big fires have been through here,” it was striking to see the regeneration taking place. Gum trees that had been badly burnt had green shoots all over the limbs. It seemed that at each scar in the bark new life had burst through. Seeds that had lain dormant had been cracked open by the fire – young wattle trees and other natives were springing up from the blackened earth.

When we lived at Bulimba, Brisbane, a savage hail storm ripped through Hamilton and Hendra across the river from us. What the media didn’t publicise well was the storm struck our side of the river first. \$14,000 worth of damage was done to our church building. We had twenty-two panes of glass broken in the manse – there was glass from the back of the house which faced the force of the storm right through to the lounge at the front.

A poinciana tree alongside our driveway was stripped of all its leaves and its bark badly scarred. It looked red raw. For weeks we believed it was finished – no sign of life at all. Then some green shoots began to appear. Its limbs would always carry the scars of battle, but it was alive!

Remembering...

- Let’s share our own stories of devastation and regeneration. We see it so often in the natural world. How do we cope when it impacts on us personally?

In Isaiah 6, we were thinking about Isaiah’s commission. When he heard the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?”, he responded, “Here am I. Send me!” The message he was given wasn’t an easy one. Houses would be deserted and the land laid waste as the people were taken away into exile.

But there was a word of hope at the end of the chapter – did you notice? “And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste. But as the terebinth and oak leave stumps when they are cut down, so the holy seed will be in the stump in the land” (v. 13).

This is the beginning of an important theme that develops throughout Isaiah. There will always be a righteous remnant from which the Lord will rebuild his people. And even when that seems to be gone, the life is still in the stump – new life will begin.

In the very next chapter, King Ahaz of Judah was in trouble politically and refused to ask the Lord God for a sign. So Isaiah gave him the Lord’s sign anyway, “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (God with us)” (7.14).

To the people overcome with gloom and despair, there came a message of hope, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this” (9.6-7).

The present disaster isn’t the final word because it isn’t God’s final word. Someone is coming – at God’s right time!

Reflect

- How do we react to “troubled times”? Do we try to pretend and “wish it away”? Are we consumed with despair and give up all hope? Do we feel God may have let us down? or do we keep on trusting no matter what happens? How do we relate faith in God to present realities?
- We live after the promise has been fulfilled. In what ways does faith in Jesus give us the strength to live facing realities?

Read: Isaiah 11.1-9.

The present dark times aren’t the end for the Lord’s people. “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit”

(11.1). The Lord had promised David, “Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever” (2 Sam. 7.16). Is that all this “shoot from the stump of Jesse” is all about, or is there more?

When Jesus, hailed as “the son of David,” came, he insisted that “My kingdom is not of this world” (Jn 18.36). In other words, he was the true fulfilment of the promises to David, but hadn’t come to guarantee the continuance of an earthly Israel.

We notice the emphasis that this “shoot” will have the Spirit on him (Is. 11.2). In the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus read from Isaiah 61, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me...” (Lk. 4.18, quoting from Is. 61.1-2) – and added, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”

This “shoot” will have extraordinary insight – “He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears” (11.3). This will enable him to rule with true righteousness and justice. His reign will be characterised by righteousness and faithfulness (v. 5).

In the righteous kingdom, the curse will be lifted. In Romans, Paul sees the effects of the Fall in the natural world – “the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Rom. 8.20-22).

Isaiah sees peace and harmony restored, not only in human relationships, but in the animal world as well – wild animals will be tame and harmless to domesticated animals and human beings. It is Paradise restored.

Reflect

- It has been said that humanity is on an endless search for a lost Paradise on earth. Do you agree? Why?
- Jesus himself warned us there would be “wars and rumours of wars” (Mt. 24.6). Yet he taught his disciples to pray for the coming of God’s kingdom (6.10). Where do we see the Kingdom? What are the marks of the Kingdom?