Robert Vannoy, Major Prophets, Lecture 9 Isaiah 11:11-12:6; Isaiah 28

Isiah 11:11-16

Alright, the rest of chapter 11, that's verses 11-16, is a passage I referred to last quarter – I don't know if you would remember that. It's a passage that's not easy to interpret. I would be inclined to conclude that these verses describe events that are to take place either just prior to the beginning of the Millennium or in the early part of the Millennium. In other words, I find it closely related to the first part of the chapter. The details of it are difficult, however. Let's read the passage, then I'll make some comments. "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 who shall be left from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. 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. 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. But 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. 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. And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people, who shall be left from Assyria, as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt."

Nature of Prophetic Discourse – Returnees from the Entire World Regather

Now, I think I mentioned this prophecy earlier in connection with our discussion of the nature of prophetic discourse, that it was not, as far as its character is concerned, history written beforehand. You don't have all the details, and there is a certain enigmatic element in there, and when you read a prophecy like this, I think you see that

you wonder exactly how all the details are to be fulfilled. If you look at pages 14 and 15 under Oswalt, here are his comments, the next to the last paragraph on page 14, which begins, "While the general sense of these verses is clear," that comes from page 296, that paragraph in Oswalt he says, "while the general sense of these verses is clear, the specifics are not so clear. Is the prophet speaking of the return from Babylon in 539 B.C.? You see, in 11 it says, 'It should come to pass the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover his remnant of his people' – is that return from Babylon in 539? If so, the Messiah has not yet been revealed and could hardly be the ensign around which the people rally; see 12 says, 'He shall set up an ensign for the nations.' If you go back to verse 10 that clearly seems to be the Messiah. Is Isaiah in fact speaking of the New Israel, the Church? As the Reformers maintained, for example Calvin? Certainly believers were gathered to the Messiah from every part of the world in verse 10 in a fashion reminiscent of 2:2-4 that seems to begin the section with reference to the nations at large. Nevertheless, the primary focus of the passage seems to be upon the historical nation of Israel, so that one is led to believe the point is of some great final ingathering of the Jewish people, such as that referred to by Paul in Romans 11."

I'd be inclined to agree with him on that; if that has begun in the contemporary Zionist movement, as many believe, we may look forward with anticipation to its ultimate completion, and a turning to God in Christ by the Jewish nation yet in the future – which certainly hasn't happened yet. Of verse 11, where it says that "He will recover a remnant of his people who shall be led from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros," and so forth, Oswalt says the idea there is completeness; in other words, from all parts of the earth people are going to return – the Lord will bring them back to his land--so this last paragraph on page 14. Oswalt believes the purpose is more figurative, attempting to say that God is able to restore his people from everywhere. He takes that as the main idea. Top of page 15, speaking of verse 12, this verse seems to say, in poetic form, what the preceding verses say in prose: returnees will come from the entire earth, that's on page 288, and the next paragraph is on verses 13-14, also on page 288.

George Adam Smith denigrated this picture of enforced submission as being

unworthy of the great "Prophet of Peace," you see that is where on 14-15 "They will fly," these people of return, "will fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines towards the west; they will spoil them to the east, they will lay their hand on Edom and Moab," and so forth... George Adam Smith denigrated this picture of enforced submission as being unworthy of the great Prophet of Peace; however, one should not impose 19th century AD ideas of a "mutually agreed upon cessation of war" on the 8th century BC prophet – in fact, the idea of peace as a result of a mutual agreement of nations is not a biblical one. The biblical one, the Isaianic one, is of a peace that results from mutual submission to an overwhelming sovereign. Only when God has defeated his enemies and they have submitted to him is the vision of peace that should be as we read in 11:6-9.

The difficulty which the Hebrews had, was in admitting that they too were the enemies of God, and needed to submit to him, they, as we, wished to see themselves as darlings of God, that they could use God to accomplish their own political purposes. So this is not the picture that Isaiah is projecting here; rather, he is saying once again that Israel's sin cannot destroy the promises of God to Israel. In a figurative way, he points to a coming time of internal and external safety and security similar to that which they knew unto David, but to be secured by one greater than David. So Oswalt is suggesting what you have here is conditions that will come to pass when the Lord brings his people Israel back to the land either prior to or early on the millennial period.

A-Mil Young Sees It as Figurative of the Spread of the Gospel

Now compare that with E. J. Young, page 19 and 20 of your citations. E.J. Young takes this entire passage as a figurative description of the spread of the Gospel in the present time. The second paragraph there, middle of page 19, is from 396 of Young, and he is speaking of verse 12. He says, "The Messiah will be a drawing point for the heathen, and through the work of Christian preaching, Christian missionaries, he will draw them unto himself. How important, particularly in this day and age therefore, that the church send forth to the four corners of the earth missionaries who are to proclaim the truth that apart from the true Messiah, Jesus, there is no salvation."

You see that verse 12 is, "He will set up an ensign for the nations," that's the Messiah, "and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth." That is figurative of the spread of the Gospel. Of verse 13, on page 398, the next paragraph, 13 is, "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." That tension between the two kingdoms from the historic period is going to be removed. What does Young say of that? "In Christ all national, sectional, and regional distinctions will be abolished, and through the figure employed in this verse we learn that in Christ there is true unity, and a place for all men of whatever race or color, and Christ alone can make them one" – that's page 398. Of verse 14, "They shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines toward the west; spoil them of the east together: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them." He says, "Here is the true unity of the faith and opposition to the hostility of the world. This true unity does not hide itself, infringe itself, but defends itself, expecting attack. It takes the offensive; the enemies of the Messiah must be destroyed, and in the strength of the unity that the Messiah gives the people fly upon the Philistines, namely representative of the enemies of God and his church" – that's page 398. Then he says, "What Isaiah is here describing cannot, of course, be understood in a literal sense. Rather, here is a beautiful picture of the unity that is the possession of the saints of God obtained for them not through their own works, but through the blood of Christ and the vigorous act of participation in the work of conquering the enemy world – a conquering which is brought about through the sending of missionaries and the constant act of the vigorous, faithful proclamation of the counsel of God to every creature" – page 20.

"The glorious hope, here held out for God's people, does not consist in a literal despoliation of nomad Arabs of the desert. It rather consists in the blessed task of making the saving power of God known to those who, like the apostle Paul, had once been persecutors of the church. Our constant prayer should be that the sons of the east will be despoiled so that, being deprived of false riches and possessions, they may instead

have the Christ of God. This picture is of complete reversal of conditions, not to take place in Palestine, even though it says, 'He will gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth, he will set his hand a second time to recover the remnant of his people from these places.'" He says this is not to take place in Palestine, but in the greater field of the world – a reversal which would consist in the people of God reaching out to bring all men and make them captive to Christ. Isaiah is not here speaking, this is verse 16, primarily of a return from Babylonian exile, though it may be that the thought of such return lies at the foundation of this prophecy.

Oswalt Sees 1948 Founding of Israel as a Possible Partial Fulfillment

Now, I think that Oswalt would say that that may be some initial harbinger of what is to take place here, but much of this remains yet to be featured. In other words, that is, what happened in 1948 and the rebirth of the nation Israel may be connected with what we find here, and an indication of what we find here is going to come to pass in a more complete way as yet, certainly those that have returned have not turned to Christ. I think Oswalt says that. What page is that? Well, he says, "The primary focus seems to be on the historical nation of Israel so that one likely points to the same great final ingathering of Jewish people such as is referred to by Paul in Romans chapter 11." Then he says, "If that has begun in the Zionist movement," so he says, "if it's begun in the Zionist's movement, as many believe, we may look forward with anticipation to an ultimate completion and a returning to God in Christ by the Jewish nation." You'll have a more full realization of it, but so he doesn't exclude the possibility that 1948 is some possible initial stage at least. With Young you are out of those categories all together; you are into a spiritual fulfillment in the spread of the Gospel.

No, Oswalt doesn't use the term "figurative," he wouldn't. Well, he does use the term figurative in this sense: when it says, for example, in verse 11, "That the Lord will recover this remnant of his people," and then it mentions names, "From Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath," what he is saying is, "You need not conclude that people will return only

from those specific places, and push the literal sense there." He is saying these places indicate the four corners of the earth; they are figurative of saying, "God is going to bring His people back from everywhere," but it's a real bringing back, and it's a coming of Jewish people back to a certain geographic place in Palestine, so it's not figurative in that sense. Whereas you see Young is saying, this isn't geographical at all; it's simply a figurative way of speaking of the spread of the Gospel and the opposition, then, of the people of God to wickedness and evil wherever it is.

Vannoy's Caution on Present Day Israel in Unbelief

There are two sides there, and I think you have to be very careful about concluding just because Israel returned to the land--you know, like some said--the time of the Gentiles now is over. Other people said that at the Six Day War and other people said it in connection with other events. But we don't know what's going to happen to the state of Israel – it doesn't seem likely at the moment, but, you know, there's those Arabs that could push Israel into the sea. You know theoretically that could have happened. So on the one hand I think you have to be careful about saying things that happened in 1948 or in 1967, or whenever, are specifically fulfillments of some specific prophecy. On the other hand, the more positive, I think you can say it's a remarkable thing that in 1948 this nation was reconstituted. Here is a people that over centuries of time have been dispersed, and attempts have been made to obliterate them, or crush them and wipe them out, and in spite of all of that they still exist. They come back and they establish the state, they reconstitute the Hebrew language, rebuilding their culture, keeping their identity as a people.

Now, go back to the Old Testament period; where are, historically, the Babylonians and the Assyrians, the Moabites, the Philistines, the Ammonites? They're gone – they've disappeared. There is no trace of them left, and yet the Bible has told us that Israel will be dispersed from the land and sometime in the future God will bring them back to the land, and we see through the course of history the way these people have kept their identity, and, in fact, have reconstituted the state of Israel. I don't think you can

minimize the significance of that. You know, a lot of the a-millennial interpretation of scripture was developed during the time when it looked like Israel was all but gone and disappeared – they weren't reestablished as a state.

Now, there are other passages to consider. I think you have to put with this other verses that say that when Israel is in exile, they will cry out to the Lord and turn to the Lord and then he will bring them back, and we haven't seen that. It seems like there have been those that have gone back to the land of Israel, but they haven't turned to the Lord. See, if you go to--see if I can find it--Deuteronomy 32 is it; no it's 30, "It shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, to which the LORD hath driven thee, and thou shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul; that then the LORD will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee. Bring thee into the land," verse 5, "And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart," verse 6 "and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live. And the LORD will put all these curses upon thine enemies."

Well, you see there is reference there about not only return to the land, but return to the Lord, and we certainly haven't seen that part of it, at least not in any great measure. And in fact, from what I've heard of Jewish evangelism, there is a greater response among Jewish people to the Gospel among the Diaspora Jew then there is among the returned Jew, so, you know, I think we have to wait further. Maybe there will be a great revival and turning to the Lord among Jewish people in the Western World, but then we will anticipate a greater return to Israel. I don't know how all those things will work out, I don't think everything is in place yet – that's my own impression.

Question: Is God going back to working with Jewish people after working with the Church?

Well, yeah there is something of that, and some truth in that. It seems to me if we go to Romans 11, there's this sequence where God worked in the Old Testament period with the Jewish people, and then when they rejected the Messiah, he turned to the Gentiles; but then the Jews will be provoked to jealousy and come back to the one whom they rejected, and there seems like in that sequence all Israel will be saved. As Paul says here, it seems like a massive turning of the Jewish people, which I don't think we've seen yet.

Isaiah 12 – Song of Praise

Alright, Chapter 12 is a song of praise, and in view of all these things, these great things that are going to come to pass – it's a great chapter; a brief one: "And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD, even the Lord, is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee."

See, at the end of this section it speaks of these wondrous things that the Lord will accomplish. There's that brief song of praise in chapter 12, a very beautiful passage.

Okay, that's the end of the book of Immanuel, Chapters 7-12.

Isaiah 13-23 Judgment on Foreign Nations

Go back now to the structure of the book: remember chapters 1-6 is that section of judgment-blessing, judgment-blessing, judgment-blessing, three sections; 7-12 the Book of Immanuel, with specific historical background that is clear in the early parts that it's the Syro-Ephraimitic war; the next section, 13-23, I'm not going to deal with, but if you remember when we discussed that structure, 13-23 is prophecies of judgment against

foreign nations. You notice 13 begins right immediately with that: "The burden of Babylon, which Isaiah the son of Amos did see," and you have a prophecy of judgment to come on Babylon, and that goes right through to chapter 23 – you have Babylon, in chapter 15 you have Moab, in 17 the burden of Damascus, in 18 Ethiopia, in 19 Egypt, so forth... Prophecies of judgment against foreign nations.

24-27, that's a little section called "Isaiah's Little Apocalypse," a very interesting section that depicts a coming judgment on the ungodly that seems to be global in scope, and then the establishment of God's kingdom and blessing for those who are his. I'm not going to deal with that section either, Isaiah 24-27.

Isaiah 28 Parallel to the Book of Immanuel (Isa. 7-12)

I want to move to 28-35, which, if you recall, I mentioned that it seems in many ways to be similar to the Book of Immanuel, the section we've just been discussing. The historical background is not as explicit, but it seems to be generally the same time frame as 7-12. So let's turn to chapter 28. As I mentioned, there are similarities to the Book of Immanuel, in the book of Emmanuel the historical background is clearly presented in chapter 7; when you get to chapter 28, there isn't a clear statement of historical context for the prophecy. We're not told where the message was spoken, but the message seems to be addressed to the nobles, or leaders, of the land. Isaiah 7, on the other hand was addressed to the king. Here we're talking about the nobles, the leaders of the land, rather than specifically the king, and when you read down through the chapter, the context suggests, along with some of the statements, that the message may have been delivered at a banquet of the nobles, perhaps, and we'll go into the chapter and see why this is said. Perhaps they celebrated their decision to seek help from Assyria. Remember in that Syro-Ephraim threat they turned to Assyria and concluded an alliance with Assyria that seems to possibly be the background for this chapter. Now, when you come to the early part of the chapter, I think you see something of the way in which Isaiah presents his message to get a hearing. He doesn't begin with the condemnation of that alliance with Assyria. He begins with attacking the leaders of the Northern Kingdom, of Ephraim,

much like Amos, you remember. When Amos wanted to focus his prophecy on the Northern Kingdom, he started with foreign nations; he came to the cousin nations, and then he came to Judah, and then he finally--after he's gotten the hearing--he comes to the focus of his message with the condemnation of the Northern Kingdom.

Isaiah 28:1ff Denunciation of the Drunkards of Ephraim

Well, Isaiah here doesn't start with Judah, but it becomes clear that that is the focus of his message. Notice the first verse: he says, "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower, which are on the head of the fat valleys of those who are overcome with wine! Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, who like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, like a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trampled under feet: And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley, shall be a fading flower, and like the early fruit before the summer; which when he that looketh upon it seeth, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up."

He begins with this denunciation of the drunkards of Ephraim, and using figurative language, he speaks of the destruction of Samaria, the capital city of the Northern Kingdom. He refers to Samaria as "this crown of pride whose glorious beauty is a fading flower on the head of the fat valleys." That capital, Samaria, the crown and pride of the people of the Northern Kingdom, is going to become like a fading flower — that's what he's saying. So evidently, Samaria had not yet fallen — we're prior to 721 B.C. The nobles of Judah, to whom Isaiah was speaking, would undoubtedly rejoice in that kind of a prophecy, to hear Samaria is going to be destroyed. And as long as Isaiah attacks the Northern Kingdom, they are ready to listen to him. So he says in verse 2, "The Lord hath a mighty and strong one, who like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, like a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down [the Northern Kingdom]. The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, shall be trampled under feet: And the glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley" see that's against

Samaria, "shall be a fading flower, and like the early fruit before the summer, which when he that looketh upon it seeth it, while it is yet in his hand he eateth it up." So he starts with that figurative description of the coming destruction of Samaria.

Isaiah 28:5-6 Lord as Glory for a Remnant of His People

And then verses 5 and 6: a contrast is drawn to some future time when the Lord will be the crown of glory, not the city of Samaria, but the Lord will be the crown of glory for a remnant of his people. See he says in verse 5, "In that day shall the LORD of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people, and for a spirit of justice to him that sitteth in judgment, and for strength to those that turn the battle to the gate." Not a city, but the Lord himself, who will give victory and judgment to those of his own, will be the grown of glory at some future time. So Samaria is going to be destroyed, and then attention is drawn to some future time when not a city, but the Lord will be the crown of glory for the remnant of his people.

Isaiah 28:7-8 Judah Drunkards as Bad as Ephraim

When you get to verses 7 and 8, there is a sharp transition of thought with verse 7. The King James has a bad translation there; it says, "But they also have erred through wine, and through strong drink." "But they also," the Hebrew there is *wegam elleh*, "and also these," and that's the way it should be read, "and these also." As the NIV says, "Stagger from wine and reel from beer." The New English Bible has: "These too are addicted to wine." The Hebrew is clear, it is "these." The implication is Isaiah has been talking about the north, but he is talking to the nobles of the south, and here he turns to them. He said in verse 1, "Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim," but now he says, "But these also stagger from wine and reel from beer"--in other words, the people sitting right in front of him. He points to these banqueting nobles before him and says, "You're as bad as the drunkards of Ephraim" – "But these also have erred through wine and through strong drink and are out of the way; the priest and the prophet have erred through strong drink; they are swallowed up of wine; they are out of the way

through strong drink; they err in vision, they stumble in judgment. For all the tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean." Strong language, particularly if he is at some sort of a banquet with these leaders: "Your tables are full of vomit, you're drunkards of Judah."

Isaiah 28:9-10 The Nobles Respond: Who Do You Think You Are?

Now, you can imagine that that kind of language might arouse indignation in those that are listening to it, and a response. And verses 9-10 give you the response, and I think what you have in 9-10 is what these nobles either said or at least what they were thinking, "Whom shall he teach knowledge? Whom shall he make to understand doctrine? Those that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little." I think the idea is quite clear these nobles say, "Who do you think you are? Who are you that you think you can teach us something? Whom shall he teach knowledge? Whom shall he make to understand doctrine?" And then the implication is that he is treating them like little children, lecturing them with his ethical "line upon a line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept," and here's where you have to read this in the Hebrew to really understand the sarcasm of what is being said here. Verse 10 in the Hebrew reads like this: *ki sav lesav, sav lesav, kav lekav, kav lekav*, etc.

Listen to the way the Jerusalem Bible translates this, which is somewhat of a paraphrase, but I think it gets the essence of what's going on here particularly from the Hebrew. The Jerusalem Bible says, "Whom does he think he's lecturing? Whom does he think his message is for? Babies just weaned? Babies just taken from the breast? With his," and then the Jerusalem Bible doesn't even translate it it's like gibberish of a baby, "ki sav lesav, sav lesav, kav lekav, kav lekav." It's as if they are sarcastically saying "Who do you think you are treating us like infants with your baby talk?" There's a note in the Jerusalem Bible which says this, "Mimicking Isaiah's preaching, which they consider unintelligible, with words chosen for their sound value, and recalling the babbling of a child. If the words are to be translated at all, they will read, 'Order on order,

order on order; rule on rule; rule one rule; a little here; a little there." The New Bible Commentary says, "The Hebrew of verse 10 is a jingle, almost the equivalent of our derisive 'blah, blah,' [people talking], but not quite as meaningless." You see, there is meaning it is "rule upon rule, rule upon rule, line upon line."

J.B. Phillips says, "Are we just weaned? Do we have to learn that the law is the law is the law? The rule is the rule is the rule is the rule?" Yes, "with stuttering lips and foreign tongue will the Lord speak to this people," – that is, make nonsense of God's sense, and you will get your fill of it from Assyria.

Isaiah 28:11 God Will Address Them With Foreign Lips

Now you see that's what goes on in verse 11: you make nonsense of God's sense and you mock this and speak sarcastically about Isaiah's preaching, what does the Lord say in verse 11: "For with stammering lips," that's a bad translation of the King James, "but with strange lips and another tongue will he speak to this people." The NIV translates it well. The NIV says, "Very well then," you're going to make fun of this message, "Very well then with foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people." In other words, God has been speaking to them clearly, precept upon precept, line upon line. They make fun of that; they refuse to listen; they mock him; and they make the clear teaching like babble. Therefore, what's going to happen? Verse 11, God will give them what sounds like babble in the form of an attack by the Assyrian army whose speech will be unintelligible to them, so with "foreign lips and strange tongues God will speak to this people."

Isaiah 28:12-13 God Rebukes Judah

In verses 12 and 13, the rebuke is continued, "To whom he said, This is the rest by which ye may cause the weary to rest; and this is the refreshing: yet they would not hear. But the word of the LORD"--the King James says "was," but it should be "will be," it's a vav consecutive with the perfect--"But the word of the Lord will be unto them," and then you get a repetition of that *sav lesav*, *sav lesav*. "The word of the Lord will be to them

precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little; that they may go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken." The rebuke is continued, God has given them the opportunity to secure rest and refreshment in following him, trusting in him rather than in Assyria, but they didn't want to listen. So what Isaiah says, or God says through Isaiah, is, "They will hear him speak in another way through the Assyrian invaders who are going to speak a tongue they are not going to understand," and then the Lord imitates their mockery to represent the untellable language of the conqueror. The word of the Lord will be unto them *sav lesav*, *kav lekav*, etc.

So I see our time is up; we'll have to pick up here next time.

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