

II. QUOTABLE QUOTES AND SUMMARY NOTES

“The entire unit makes the point that although Israel’s (and Judah’s) lack of trust in the Lord will have meant nearly total destruction at the hands of Assyria, that destruction is not God’s final word. Assyria, too, will come under judgment and out of that judgment a remnant of Jacob’s descendants will return to God’s land. However, as . . . 9:1-6 suggested, so 11:1-9 confirms that such a return will be under the aegis of an anointed descendant of David. In fact, the root of Jesse will himself be the banner which will signal safe return. Prominent in that return is the sovereign activity of God.” (Oswalt.)

“As always, the people of God must decide what reading of their circumstances they will live by. Are they to look at the darkness, the hopelessness, the dreams shattered, and conclude that God has forgotten them? Or are they to recall his past mercies, to remember his present promises, and to make great affirmations of faith?” (Motyer, 99.)

“Here is the Old Testament messianic enigma: how can a veritable son of David be mighty God and Father of eternity? This was precisely the tension in Old Testament truth which the Lord Jesus tried to make the blinkered Pharisees face in Matthew 22:41–46.” (Motyer, 103.)

“The dependence upon our own resources and perspectives for guidance can only lead further into the darkness. That had been the way of Ahaz, refusing instructions and testimonies of God. But into the helplessness of that darkness God would, through the coming king, yet shine the light of his own delivering power . . . So here there is light for these people because their sin and rebellion are not enough to keep God from manifesting himself to them.” (Oswalt, 242.)

“The rightly governed world will indeed be detoxified, no more a threat to the poor the meek, the children, the lamb, the kid. The new world will indeed be safe for the vulnerable . . . We have yet to relearn what the Bible knew— that adversarial human transactions foul the nest for all creatures.” (Brueggemann.)

1. Summary of 9:1-7

“The oracle is structured to build up a high level of suspense by first announcing the dramatic shift from darkness to light for the people suffering oppression. Then, the reasons for the change are outlined in three clauses (vv. 3, 4, 5) each introduced by . . . ‘because’ or ‘for’: the yoke of slavery has been broken, the weapons of battle removed, and a miraculous child has been born to rule.” (Childs, 80.)

“In this segment [9:1-6] Isaiah reaches the climax of the section begun at 7:1. In place of an unfaithful monarch whose short-sighted defensive policies will actually plunge the nation into more desperate straits, there is lifted up the ideal monarch who, though a child, will bring an end to all wars and establish an eternal Kingdom based upon justice and righteousness. As a child, he is the culmination of Isaiah’s use of children to indicate God’s providential mastery of history. Here, however, the names no longer express some future event or situation as do Shear-jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz. Neither do they directly express the relationship between God and his people as does Immanuel. Rather, they express the remarkable nature of this individual and thus, indirectly, the saving character of his reign. In this respect, he is the ultimate expression of the truth of God that is indeed with us (Immanuel), not for our destruction, but for our redemption” (Oswalt, *Isaiah*, NICOT, 241)

2. The Names for the Child of Promise in 9:6

“Each name brings out some extraordinary quality for the divinely selected ruler, a counselor of unique wisdom and abundant power endowed with enduring life, and the bringer of eternal peace. The description of his reign makes it absolutely clear that his role is messianic. There is no end to his rule upon the throne of David and he will reign with justice and righteousness forever. Moreover, it is the

ardor of the Lord of hosts who will bring this eschatological purpose to fulfillment. The language is not just of a wishful thinking for a better time, but the confession of Israel's belief in a divine ruler who will replace once and for all the unfaithful reign of kings like Ahaz." (Childs, 81, emphasis mine.)

"The force of the titles is cumulative. All of them together assure a new, well-ordered, properly functioning, reliable, life-giving public domain. There is nothing privatistic or personalistic about this vision. It concerns a new deployment of positive public power and embodies the 'Kingdom of God.'" (Brueggemann, *Isaiah 1-39*, p. 84.)

1. **Wonderful Counsellor** (*pele' yô'ēš*, literally "wonder of a counsellor")

Pele': The word comes from the root *pl'* meaning 'be surpassing, extraordinary' (BDB). The adjective *pil'î* is used fifteen times of human actions, where it means "out of the ordinary." The meaning that emerges from fifty-four uses of the word to describe God's actions is "supernatural." The noun form *pele'* (used here in 9:6) "occurs thirteen times. Its only secular occurrence means 'extraordinary' (La. 1:9). It is used of God's acts (Ps. 88), the exodus complex of events (Ex. 15:11; Ps. 77:11) and the Davidic promises (Ps. 89:5). Isaiah links it with the Lord's 'counsels' (25:1) and his work of changing the human heart (29:14). In 25:1 and Psalm 88:10,12, it is associated with divine attributes. To designate the child as *pele'* makes him 'out of the ordinary', one who is something of a 'miracle'. Isaiah's use of the noun in 25:1 and the verb in 28:29 of the Lord's 'counsel' suggest that he would not resist the notion of deity in 9:6, specially when it is contextually linked with 'Mighty God' (Motyer, *Isaiah*, 104). Knowing it is helpful to hear different renditions, I suggest "out-of-this-world advice giver."

2. **Mighty God** (*'ēl gibbōr*, literally "God champion").

At stake here is whether the first term could mean less than "god." (For example, some suggest that the description of Nineveh in the book of Jonah as a 'big city to God' means a spectacularly big city. As well, a plural form of a phrase closely akin, namely "gods of mighty ones" occurs in Ezek. 32:21 where it is taken in that context (in which it refers to those who have died in battle and now live in Sheol) to mean "god-like heroes." However, after a lengthy discussion by Motyer, in which he notes *the use of the same phrase with reference to Yahweh in Isaiah 10:21* concludes, "'ēl is to be understood as God but the context but the context decides what sort of god. It is unlikely that Isaiah thought of the Messiah on the analogy of pagan gods and there is no ground for reducing the full meaning of his words. In the light of the thrust of the evidence and particularly in the light of Isaiah's own mind as seen in his use of the identical words in 10:21, it is hard to accept that a remote version of uncertain meaning in Ezekiel should be given a determinative voice." (*Isaiah*, 105.) In other words, to render the term other than "Mighty God" or the like is to resort to special pleading, to grasp at a straw as it were."

3. **Eternal Father.**

"*Father* is not current in the Old Testament as the title of the kings. Used of the Lord, it points to his concern for the helpless (Ps. 68:5), care or discipline of his people (Ps. 103:13; Pr. 3:12; Is. 63:16; 64:8) and their loyal reverential response to him. For similar ideas used regarding the Davidic king see Psalm 72:4, 12-14, Isaiah 11:4. Probably the leading idea in the name *Father* here is that his rule follows the pattern of divine fatherhood. As *eternal*/'of eternity', he receives 'such an epithet [as] could, of course, be applied to Yahweh alone.' Isaiah uses 'eternity' . . . more than any other author, sometimes in a general sense (e.g., 26:4, 30:8) but also in its unmistakable sense (e.g., 57:15; 64:9; 65:18)." (Motyer, *Isaiah*, 102.)

4. *Prince of Peace*

“With Prince of Peace the Gideon and the Solomon motifs reappear and the negative ‘no more war’ of verse five is supplemented by a corresponding positive guarantee. On the personal level, peace means fulfillment; to ‘die in peace’ is to have lived a fulfilled life, to have achieved all God planned (e.g., Gn. 15:15; 2 Ki. 22:20). Peace is well-being (e.g., Gn. 29:6) and freedom from anxiety. In relationships, it is goodwill and harmony (Ex. 4:18), the opposite of war (Lv. 26:6). Towards God, it is the full realization of his favor (Nu. 6:26). . . . All this is related to the basic meaning of *všālēm*, ‘to be whole, complete.’ The *Prince of Peace* is himself the whole man, the perfectly integrated, rounded personality, at one with God and humankind, but also as a Prince, these are the benefits he administers to his people.” (Motyer, *Isaiah*, 103.)

3. Summary of Isaiah 11:1-9

“In 11-1 to six the messianic hope which began to be expressed in 7:14 and which was amplified in . . . 9:1-6 comes to full flower. The Messiah is not merely promised or announced but is depicted as ruling in place of the craven and petty House of David, or the arrogant and oppressive empire of Assyria. Here is the king in whose hands the concerns of the weakest will be safe. He will usher in a reign of safety and security to which the weary exiles may come streaming in return.”

The entire unit makes the point that although Israel’s (and Judah’s) lack of trust in the Lord will have meant nearly total destruction at the hands of Assyria, that destruction is not God’s final word. Assyria, too, will come under judgment and out of that judgment a remnant of Jacob’s descendants will return to God’s land. However, as . . . 9:1-6 suggested, so 11:1-9 confirms that such a return will be under the aegis of an anointed descendant of David. In fact, the root of Jesse will himself be the banner which will signal safe return. Prominent in that return is the sovereign activity of God. So, the subdivision which began with words of judgment by means of Assyria (7:18-25) has now been turned to deliverance from Assyria (11:16), all of it in expression of the sovereign grace of a just and faithful God.” (Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 277-78.)

“This segment 11:1–9 is specifically related to the messianic promise. It emphasizes three aspects of this figure: (1) his divine endowment for ruling (vv. 2 and 3a [I would say rather, v. 2 alone]); (2) the absolute justice of his rule (vv. 3b-5 [I would say vv. 3-5]); and (3) the quality of safety which will characterize his rule (vv. 6-9). The movement is from qualifications to performance to true results. What the passage envisions is a time when the ruler will no longer see himself as privileged but rather as responsible, when he will become one for whom his people’s welfare is uppermost. In a word, the ruler will be the servant, not because he is too weak to dominate, but because he is strong enough not to need to crush. The picture cannot be applied to any merely human king. It is either an unattainable ideal or the future envisioned is somehow superhuman. That it is the latter is supported by the visions of the return which is linked to the Messiah’s reign (verses 10-16). That return is not merely an ideal, nor is the Messiah. He is a reality but a superhuman one.” (Oswalt, 278.)

4. Oswalt on righteousness and faithfulness in 11:5

“The Messiah will bring justice and equity upon the earth because fundamental to his own character will be two essential qualities: uprightness and dependability born of integrity or faithfulness. Fundamentally, these are two characteristics of God upon which the whole biblical understanding of life is built (Isaiah 5:16; 65:16; Psalm 40:10; 119:75, 142; Zech. 8:8). Because he is as he is, the whole universe can be understood in a coherent and consistent way. If in fact the first principle of existence operated on the basis of arbitrary chance, then nothing could be known and, even more, there would be nothing to which commitment could be reasonably given. The two concepts are intimately connected, so

much so that they are at times synonymous (1:26; 48:1). Although their meanings overlap, each contributes a distinctive element. *Righteousness* is that capacity for doing the right thing in all circumstances and frequently involves keeping one's promises, so that there are times when it may be translated by 'deliverance' (51:8) or 'vindication' (54:17). *Faithfulness* comes from the root which means to be dependable or true. So, fundamental to both words is the idea of an integrity or consistency which results from incomplete dependability. These were the characteristics that the Israelite people saw in their God and longed for in their king. What Isaiah was depicting in the Messiah was someone who would combine divine traits with a human presence." (Oswalt, 281-82.)

III. ISSUES

A. When and in what sense does the idyllic picture in 11:6-9 (and similar places) find fulfilment?

Many see these passages fulfilled in a spiritual sense with the coming of Christ and the gospel message of the kingdom. Others see them fulfilled in a more literal sense in a future reign of Christ on earth (as in the thousand-year reign of Christ in Rev. 20 or in the new heaven and new earth in Rev 21). Fulfilment need not be limited to one of these occasions.

"There are three ways of interpreting such statements. The first is literalistic, looking for a literal fulfillment of the words. While this interpretation is possible, the fact that the lion's carnivorousness is fundamental to what a lion is . . . suggest that another interpretation is intended. . . . A second means of interpretation is spiritualistic. The animals represent various spiritual conditions and states within human beings (cf. Calvin). While this avoids the problem of literal fulfillment, it introduces a host of other problems, chief of which is the absence in the text of any controls upon the process Thus, it depends solely upon the exegete's ingenuity to find the correspondences. The third way of interpreting this passage, and others like it, is the figurative. In this approach one concludes that an extended figure of speech is being used to make a single, overarching point, namely, that in the Messiah's reign the fears associated with insecurity, danger, and evil will be removed, not only for the individual but for the world as well (Romans 8:19-21). Precisely how God may choose to do this in his infinite creativity is his to decide. But that he will do so we may confidently believe." (Oswalt, *Isaiah*, 283.)

Theological reflection is offered by Brueggemann: "I suggest that the new scenario for 'nature' is made possible by the rendering of human relationships in verses 1-5. *The distortion of human relationships* is at the root of all *distortions in creation*. So in the narrative of Genesis 3, surely a backdrop for this lyrical vision, it is a *human* violation of God's order that produces the enemies of *nature*. . . . Peacefulness in the created order requires, first, the enactment in the human community of a conciliation that is fundamentally economic. We have yet to relearn what the Bible knew—that adversarial human transactions foul the nest for all creatures.

[T]he Davidic king is imaginatively linked to the 'First Earthling' (Adam) in Genesis 1–3. Surely the coming king is not to be understood simply as a functionary of the Jerusalem establishment. In an appeal to larger biblical imagery, that Davidic king to come is a cosmic player. Thus, David is in some sense the 'Adam' of Genesis 1, given dominion over the earth and all its creatures; of Genesis 2, summoned to 'till and keep' the earth; of Genesis 3 as the agent of primal disorder. It is the Davidic king in Psalm 8:6–8. . . ." (Brueggemann, *Isaiah* 1-39, 102.)

The transformation is vastly public and intimately personal. It is a gift and then a vocation. It is of course not possible—except that the sprout comes from the stump by the spirit!" (*Ibid.*, 104.)