

ESCHATOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

PART 33

THE KING, PART 2

Isaiah gave us a glimpse of what the reign of the King will look like.

Isaiah 11:1–10 ¹Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, And a branch from his roots will bear fruit. ²The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom [הַכְּנֵה] and understanding [בִּינָה], The spirit of counsel [עֲצָה] and strength [גְּבוּרָה], The spirit of knowledge [דַּעַת] and the fear [יִרְאָה] of the LORD. ³And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; ⁴But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. ⁵Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, And faithfulness the belt about His waist. ⁶And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little boy will lead them. ⁷Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox. ⁸The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, And the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. ⁹They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious.

Parallelism is a very common feature of Jewish literature and verse 1 is no exception. It is possible that the verse should read “But a shoot will grow out of the stump of Jesse, A twig shall sprout from his stock.” [JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh]. The NET Bible has it, “A shoot will grow out of Jesse’s root stock, a bud will sprout from his roots.” According the NET Bible translators, some ancient versions do read “will sprout.” The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, p. 734 suggests it may be translated, “and a shoot shall ‘branch off’ from his stock.” Keil and Delitzsch also recognize this possibility [*Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 7:182]. Bearing fruit may not be the point of the passage. It is perhaps not quite that expansive in meaning; it may be simply referring to the beginning of the Messiah as a shoot and a bud that sprouts from the root or stump of Jesse without any consideration for the end which is the production of fruit. On the other hand, the rest of this pericope is the reign of the King and the characteristics of His Kingdom so the concept of bearing fruit is plausible. Either could be possible.

“The reduction of the Davidic dynasty to a mere stump is a true metaphor for its condition when Christ was born; for, though still in existence, that dynasty had been without royal power for nearly six hundred years. The reference to Jesse—who was of course never a king—rather than to David—who was—may point to the total absence of royal

dignity in the house of David when the Messiah would come. There was still life in the house though, for God's purpose [in the Davidic Covenant] had not been set aside. The Branch is now fully messianic." [Geoffrey W. Grogan, "Isaiah" in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 87].

The Spirit of the Lord is going to rest on the King. "The presence of the Lord's Spirit denotes the human ruler's access to supernatural resources that will give Him a more-than-human capacity to rule. It also legitimizes His rule as divinely ordained." [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, "Isaiah" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, p. 1026]. One detail concerning the King we must keep in mind, is that He is God as well as man. As God, He already intrinsically possesses all these attributes as part of His essential being. As man, these are attributes that require the power of God in order to effectively deploy them.

He will possess wisdom and understanding. Wisdom, *חָכְמָה*, is the capacity to understand and so have skill in living, implying adherence to a set standard. Understanding, *בִּינָה*, means understanding, insight, and discernment. It is the good sense or wisdom to respond properly to the Lord and to His Torah. This refers to the great intellect and wisdom He will utilize in wisely ruling and judging the people of the world. This wisdom will be exhibited according to the standard set in the Word of God. Solomon is thought to have been the wisest king to ever live (1 Kings 4:29-34, 10:23-24). The people recognized his wisdom was from God (1 Kings 4:34) and for a time he exercised the wisdom "which God had put in his heart" (1 Kings 10:24; 2 Chron. 1:8-12).

1 Kings 4:29–34 ²⁹Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore. ³⁰Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt. ³¹For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations. ³²He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005. ³³He spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall; he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish. ³⁴Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

2 Chronicles 1:8–12 ⁸Solomon said to God, "You have dealt with my father David with great lovingkindness, and have made me king in his place. ⁹"Now, O LORD God, Your promise to my father David is fulfilled, for You have made me king over a people as numerous as the dust of the earth. ¹⁰"Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people, for who can rule this great people of Yours?" ¹¹God said to Solomon, "Because you had this in mind, and did not ask for riches, wealth or honor, or the life of those who hate you, nor have you even asked for long life, but you have asked for yourself wisdom and knowledge that you may rule My people over whom I have made you king, ¹²wisdom and knowledge have been granted to

you. And I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings who were before you has possessed nor those who will come after you.”

As wise as Solomon was, he had nowhere near the wisdom the Messianic King will exercise in His Kingdom and the Messianic King will never exercise His wisdom in any way contrary to righteousness. Solomon’s judgment was affected by his sin nature, but the Messianic King will have no such impediment. Solomon ultimately failed to exercise this great gift from God throughout his reign and he did not end well. The Messianic King will not exercise wisdom simply for the sake of exhibiting His superior intelligence and His vast knowledge, but His wisdom will allow Him to judge between people and nations always making the right, just decision. He will do this with no partiality or bias. No one will be able to buy Him or influence His decisions in any way. The Word of God is important and the King will rule according to that standard. The spirits of wisdom and of understanding will assist the King in making decisions and in judging people and nations according to the standard of the Word of God.

Counsel refers to His ability to arrive at the correct conclusion about a matter and strength refers to His ability to carry out and enforce His decisions and His plans for administering His Kingdom. Counsel, עֲצָדָה, means advice or counsel. It is the act of telling someone what they should do based on a plan. It can also mean to think about a course of action often including consultation with a counselor or advisor. The King’s counsel will be perfect; no one will make a mistake following His advice in all matters. His counsel will always be in accordance with the Word of God. Strength, גְּבוּרָה, means strength or might. It is the force or power in comparison to others with the focus on the majestic awe ascribed to the one possessing the power. The emphasis of the word is not just on power and strength but often on excellence and superiority and this certainly describes the Messianic King. No one in the Kingdom will have His strength and no one will be able to challenge His authority. Strength can carry military connotations, but it doesn’t seem those skills will be required during the Messianic reign.

The King will have the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. Knowledge, דַּעַת, means understanding or wisdom, but in this context it refers to knowledge with a focus on moral qualities and their application. Fear, יִרְאָה, means reverence or fear and it is a state of piety and respect toward a superior. The King will be in an intimate relationship with the Father as He governs the Messianic Kingdom. “The final pairing of knowledge and the fear of the Lord suggests an intimate relationship of loyalty to God that is rooted in reverence for the Lord. That the King’s delight will be in the fear of the Lord highlights the intensity of the King’s loyalty to and dependence on God.” [Michael Rydelnik and James Spencer, “Isaiah” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, p. 1027]. In a way, these interpretive remarks seem to downplay the fact the King is God and He is one with the Father (John 14:7-11, 17:11, 21). Yet, as man the King relates to God in a relationship marked by intimacy, loyalty, and dependence on God.

The King will be a completely righteous, unbiased leader and judge of His Kingdom. Kings, rulers, leaders, whatever we call them, have always had the responsibility to govern in righteousness and truth, but in the history of the world very few have ever done it and none have ever done it to perfection. Instead, the norm has been corruption, greed, brutality, and evil in varying degrees from bad to worse. The history that characterizes the history of the world's leadership is opposite what God desired it to be. Through history, people wanted justice and they often demanded it, but what they more often than not received was injustice in place of justice. This really shouldn't be a surprise; the god of this world is the embodiment of evil and the nations are his to lead right now to the extent God allows. We know that God raises leaders up and brings them down so these kings rule within the confines of what He allows, but right now His purposes are served by allowing the world to operate in this way. In the future, the King will assume His throne and evil rule will be a thing of the past. It will be replaced by complete, perfect righteousness and justice.

Human beings constantly make judgments based on only what they see or hear. This is superficial and unreliable. We are not omniscient but the King is and He will know the true facts of each case He hears. The Messianic King will righteously judge according to the Word of God. He will do what is right. He has the moral direction of the God of morality and He will rule accordingly. He will not judge based on outward appearances. He will be able to accurately discern the true issues at stake and make a righteous decision based on reality. No one will be able to buy Him or influence Him in any way, for good or for evil. In the past, meaning throughout the history of the world, the poor could not obtain justice. They were marginalized and the rich took advantage of them. Afflicted, marginalized, and powerless people have no ability to seek and receive justice. Justice, as we know it, often requires large amounts of money to hire advocates and, in many places, it takes money to bribe officials. In either case, this money poor people don't have. The righteous King will not accept anything from anyone, rich or poor, as a means of influencing His decision when arbitrating cases. Societal status, wealth, and political position will not influence the King as kings have been influenced throughout history. The United States of America made perhaps the most effective effort to be different than all the other nations that have come before, but we have not come close to the righteous standards that will characterize the King and His administration. That has never been more evident in our history than it is today.

The second half of verse 4 confuses people so they either don't interact with it or they misinterpret it.

Some theologians symbolize it. "The means of judgment will be the mouth of the Davidic ruler (the 'rod/scepter of his mouth' and the 'breath of his lips'), meaning royal decrees. Although the phrasing is peculiar, since lips do not literally slay people, it is clear that the authority of the word of this ruler is fully identified with the execution of his will." [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: Isaiah 1-39*, p. 273]. This commentator is mistaken. The Word of God can, in fact, slay people simply by virtue of being

spoken. The Word of God can instantly remove the life God has granted in the first place.

Revelation 19:15 ¹⁵From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

Unger interprets Isaiah 11:4 to be about the Second Coming and he relates it to Revelation 19:15. "He will govern forcefully, smiting (striking) the earth (the wicked upon the earth at His second coming) with the rod of his mouth to usher in His glorious millennial reign against the opposition of wicked rebels. With the breath of his lips He will slay the wicked, notably that 'wicked [lawless] one', the Antichrist." [Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Commentary on the Old Testament*, p. 1174].

Neither of these interpretations are satisfactory. Symbolizing the fact that the Lord is capable of speaking death to those in rebellion against Him denies the literal truth of the Scriptures. The same God who could speak the κόσμος into existence can certainly remove life from any part of it simply by speaking the word to do so.

Unger's interpretation of Revelation 19:15 is accurate but reading the Second Coming back into Isaiah 11:4 doesn't do justice to the context of Isaiah because it is dealing with the reign of the King and not the return of the King. The situation is the same in terms of the Lord's ability to remove a life anytime He chooses to do so, but the timing is different between Revelation 19 and Isaiah 11. I'm open to correction on that, but the context of each pericope is different.

Contrast Smith's view of Scripture with Joseph A. Seiss who takes a literal view of Christ's ability to slay people with the breath of His lips. "*Out of his mouth proceedeth a sharp sword, that with it he may smite the nations.* Some take this as 'the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God;' but that is an instrument of mercy and salvation; this is an instrument of wrath and destruction. It is 'sharp' like the sickle, and fulfils the same office. It is the word of almighty justice. It proceeds out of his mouth. So Isaiah (11:4) said, 'He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.' This shows the ease with which he accomplishes his purpose. He speaks, and it is done. He commands, and it is accomplished. Something of this was preintended when the armed mob came forth against him in Gethsemane. 'When Jesus spake to them, I am he, they went backward, and fell to the ground.' (Jno. 18:5). If so mild an utterance prostrated his enemies then, what will it be when he girds and crowns himself for the 'battle of the great day of God Almighty'—when he comes with all the cavalcade of heaven to tread the winepress of the fierceness of Jehovah's anger? 'The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow' (Heb. 4:12); and when that Word goes forth in execution of Almighty wrath upon those in arms against his throne, what a flow of blood, and wilting of life, and tornado of

deadly disaster must it work!" [J. A. Seiss, *The Apocalypse: Lectures on the Book of Revelation*, p. 437].

The concept of the animals coexisting in peace with other animals and with man is so foreign to our experience that many theologians simply cannot grasp the fact this is literal Kingdom truth. But why not? Since Adam's Fall introduced death into the world, it is not unreasonable to believe that animals, now carnivorous, were herbivores prior to the Fall. Nothing could be killed before the Fall because there was no death. This is the position taken by Answers in Genesis. "The world will one day be restored (Acts 3:21) to a state in which, once again, there will be no violence and death involving animals. Whether Isaiah 11:6-9 is taken to refer to a millennial kingdom or a new earth [I would say it is the Millennial Kingdom], the point is the same. Lambs, wolves, leopards, children, bears, calves, and snakes will all dwell together peacefully. Lions will once again be plant-eaters. Clearly, this vision of future bliss reflects the former paradise lost through sin." [Don Batten, ed., *The Revised & Expanded Answers Book*, p. 104].

Most theologians who adhere to literal hermeneutics understand this passage in its literal sense. *The New American Commentary* is a good example. "The future kingdom is described as something similar to a paradise with peace and security, even the removal of the original curse on the relationship between man and animals. Natural enemies in the animal kingdom will live together, feed together, and play together, but the strong or poisonous beasts will not harm anyone. Fear and danger will disappear and they will be replaced with harmony and peaceful relationships. Former dangerous animals (like the wolf, lion, or cobra) will not even harm the most vulnerable children. This fundamental change in the nature of animals omits mention of the change in the nature of mankind, but the emphasis on righteousness and the end of evil requires a radical change in man's behavior too. This rather idyllic picture points to a future kingdom when there will be no evil, conflict, or death on God's holy mountain." [Gary V. Smith, *The New American Commentary: Isaiah 1-39*, p. 273.

"Many Bible students interpret these verses nonliterally, because they suppose such changes in the animal world are not possible. However, because the Messiah is "God [is] with us" (Is. 7:14) and He will be dwelling with His people, it need not be difficult to envision these changes in nature. Though the curse of sin will be removed to some extent it will not be totally removed until the end of the millennial kingdom when finally death will be abolished (Rev. 20:14). The reason such tranquility is possible is that all the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord (Isa. 11:9). This means more than people knowing intellectually about the Lord. The idea is that people everywhere will live according to God's principles and Word. Animals will be affected, as well. This will occur in the Millennium when the Messiah will be reigning (Isa.9:6-7), Jerusalem will have prominence in the world (2:2), and Judah and Israel will be regathered to the land in belief and will be living according to the New Covenant. The Millennium can hardly be in existence now since these factors do not characterize the present age." [John A. Martin, "Isaiah" in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, p. 1057].

The only dispensationalist I found who believes this to be figurative or symbolic was, surprisingly, Thomas Constable, and he may have been uncomfortable with that stance because he hedges his position in how he words his commentary. "Whereas the conditions described may occur literally in the Millennium, [that's his hedge] Isaiah probably used them to represent those conditions figuratively." [Thomas L. Constable, *Constable's Notes on the Bible: Isaiah-Daniel*, p. 4:49; underlining added for emphasis].

Gerstner represents the nonliteral understanding of this situation. "If we say, for example, that the vision of the lamb and the wolf lying down together has a reference to ferocious and docile people dwelling together under the influence of Christ, we consider that a literal thing or a real thing to which the prophecy refers." [John H. Gerstner, *Wrongly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Critique of Dispensationalism*, p. 95]. Gerstner was criticizing the fact that literal hermeneutics recognizes figurative speech; therefore, literalists should have no problem recognizing his figurative interpretation. The problem for Gerstner is literal hermeneutics understands figurative language to be pointing to truth and not to something made up in order to support theological presuppositions.

In summary, Isaiah presented the portrait of a righteous King, the God-man, ruling over a Kingdom of justice and peace. He will not turn a blind eye to sin and injustice and He will uphold the rights of those who throughout history had been downtrodden, persecuted, and marginalized in society.

Daniel presented a prophecy that looked far into the future when the King was presented His Kingdom prior to going forth and defeating God's enemies. The important point to note here is between the reception of the Kingdom and the assumption of the throne on earth the Tribulation Period occurs.

Daniel 7:13–14, 27 ¹³"I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. ¹⁴"And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.... [Tribulation Period] ... ²⁷'Then the sovereignty, the dominion and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.'

This is related to Psalm 2:8.

Psalm 2:8 ⁸'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.

The King's dominion is global. The stone that struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:34-35). Daniel observed the One like a Son of Man receiving a Kingdom that encompasses all the peoples, nations, and men of every language. Every nation, political subdivision, and person will serve Him and obey Him. The reign of the King is an everlasting or eternal reign. He is King without end in contrast with all the other kings of the earth that preceded Him. "While the vision could portray the Son of man receiving authority, the purpose of this act would have to be revealed: that His domain would be over all people, and that His kingdom would be everlasting and not subject to destruction. At every point the kingdom from heaven is in contrast, superior, and a final answer to the preceding kingdoms of the four great world empires." [John F. Walvoord, *Daniel: The Key to Prophetic Revelation*, p. 168].

Hundreds of years later, the Lord's use of the information in Daniel directly led to the final decision to crucify Him. The Lord also used the imagery of Daniel to describe His Second Coming.

Matthew 26:62-66 ⁶²The high priest stood up and said to Him, "Do You not answer? What is it that these men are testifying against You?" ⁶³But Jesus kept silent. And the high priest said to Him, "I adjure You by the living God, that You tell us whether You are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you will see THE SON OF MAN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER, and COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF HEAVEN." ⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy; ⁶⁶what do you think?" They answered, "He deserves death!"

Matthew 24:30 ³⁰"And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory.

Caiaphas knew the identity of the Son of Man, the one receiving the Kingdom in Daniel, was God and when Jesus gave His answer to the High Priest's question, He was, in fact, claiming to be God. That's the moment the Jewish leaders decided they had enough evidence against Christ for blasphemy to crucify Him. The connection between Christ's declaration to be the Son of Man, to be sitting at the right hand of Power, and to be coming on the clouds of heaven is unmistakable.

Some cults claim Jesus never said He was God. He certainly and unmistakably did claim to be God and that is what He did before Caiaphas. Another particularly specific time He claimed to be God was every time He made an I AM statement. The most specific one being, "I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am" (John 8:58). John 8:58 relates to Exodus 3:13-15 and no one would argue that Moses isn't referring to God. That's why the Jews sought to kill Him when He first said that (John 8:59), but it wasn't yet His time to die.

In Matthew 25:31, Jesus again referred to Himself as the Son of Man which also relates back to the reception of the Kingdom Daniel wrote about, and He said would be sitting on a glorious throne when He returns.

Matthew 25:31 ³¹“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne.

Before Christ was born, Mary was told that He was going to be the King.

Luke 1:32–33 ³²“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; ³³and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end.”

Many people recognized Him as the predicted King but they followed their leaders in rejecting Him anyway.

John 12:13–15 ¹³took the branches of the palm trees and went out to meet Him, and began to shout, “Hosanna! BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD, even the King of Israel.” ¹⁴Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, ¹⁵“FEAR NOT, DAUGHTER OF ZION; BEHOLD, YOUR KING IS COMING, SEATED ON A DONKEY'S COLT.”

Before Pilate, Jesus did, in fact, claim to be the King of the Jews.

Matthew 27:11 ¹¹Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And Jesus said to him, “It is as you say.”

One of the great prophecies in the Bible identifying Christ Jesus as King was presented by John in Revelation.

Revelation 19:11–16 ¹¹And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. ¹²His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. ¹³He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ¹⁴And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. ¹⁵From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. ¹⁶And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”

This revelation of the Second Coming is perfectly compatible with Daniel's vision of the Son of Man. The Lord has been in heaven receiving His Kingdom and He is now returning to assume His throne. This is also described in the parable of money usage in Luke 19. In Daniel's vision, the Son of Man receives the Kingdom from the Ancient of Days.

The Tribulation then takes place and the Son of Man conquers His enemies. The return is being described in Revelation 19:11-16. The Lord is returning and vanquishing His enemies. After that, He will commence the judgments that precede the Kingdom including the cleansing, almost certainly the destruction, of the Tribulation Temple, a Temple not authorized by God. Once the Kingdom begins, He will reign from the Davidic Throne in Jerusalem for 1,000 years.

The King was predicted in the Old Testament and the King arrived in the New Testament. The problem was the Jews rejected their King when He came on the scene. Now we are in the period of Kingdom postponement. One day the King will return and establish His Kingdom; the Kingdom predicted by the Old Testament prophets, confirmed by the Lord, and proved by the Revelation. The King is sitting at the right hand of God at this time on His Father's throne; He is not sitting on and ruling from the Davidic throne. He has the authority to rule but His assumption of the throne to begin ruling the Messianic Kingdom does not begin until He returns, destroys His enemies, saves Israel who turns to Him in national repentance, and inaugurates the Kingdom with the Wedding Supper of the Lamb.

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