

10 It shall be **in that day** that the root of Jesse which will be standing as an ensign for **the nations**, him will the nations seek and his resting place will be glorious.

11 And it shall be **in that day** the Sovereign will again, a second time, [extend] his hand to acquire **the remainder of his people** which shall remain from **Assyria**, from **Cush**, from **Elam**, from **Shinar**, from **Hamath**, and from **the islands of the sea**.

12 And he will raise up a banner for **the nations**, and will gather **the exiles of Israel**; **the scattered of Judah** he will assemble from **the four corners of the earth**.

13 The jealousy of **Ephraim** will go away, and the oppressors of **Judah** will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, and Judah will not oppress Ephraim.

14 And they shall fly on the shoulder of the **Philistines** toward the sea; together they will plunder **the sons of the East**. **Edom** and **Moab** shall be those for whom they stretch their hands, the sons of **Ammon** their obedient band.

15 The Lord will destroy the tongue of the **Sea of Egypt** and wave his hand over **the River** with his scorching wind. He will smite it into seven stream beds and cause one to cross with sandals.

16 It will be a highway for **the remainder of his people**, those who remain from **Assyria**, as there was for **Israel in the day** of his coming from the land of **Egypt**.

The Banner for the Nations

Isaiah 11:10-16

The conservative Evangelical world is characterized in our day by something I have called call "Pop-Eschatology." This form of end-times speculation is extremely exciting because it provides a virtual blueprint for every single event that will happen in the future. Nothing is left open to question. We can know everything down to the tiniest detail with enough study, including even the year that Christ will return! And the result has seen a virtual explosion of books, movies, and talk shows on the subject – all of which are raking in the money faster than a modern combine rakes in wheat. Pop-Eschatology is big, big business!

Pop-eschatology preys on the unsuspecting in a couple of ways. **It generates fear** in a person by its insistence on a so-called "literal" hermeneutic. That is, if you are not taking everything in prophetic literature "literally" (or rather 'woodenly'), then by default you are a liberal (hence the fear factor) who does not believe in *anything* literal such as a literal Adam, a literal Jesus, or a literal atonement. This is a classic example of an either/or fallacy in logic, as if the only two options for reading Scripture are wooden literalism or liberal denial of history. The other way it generates fear is by **charging anyone who disagrees with this so-called 'literal' interpretation as an anti-Semite**. So for example, if you don't take a prophesy like we see this morning about Israel in a nationalistic only sense (literally), then you are by default a Jew-hater to one degree or another and really no better than Hitler. This morning I hope to dispel both of these myths using God's word itself as the interpreter of this passage.

To begin with, it is simply not true that understanding references to Israel or the remnant in a passage like **Isaiah 11** to be narrowly talking about the nation and broadly talking about the NT church (the so called "spiritualistic" or "figurative" matter) means that you think of biblical history as mythology or that you hate Jews or the modern day state of Israel. Otherwise, the NT writers would have to be guilty of the same charge. **However**, not understanding references to Israel and the remnant in its broader NT understanding has **created a great danger in some circles of popular eschatology. This is what I call "Israel-worship."** This is the belief that the nation of Israel is not only fulfilling or soon to fulfill ancient prophesy (which may or may not be true), but it goes a step farther. Israel worship puts political and spiritual blinders on for glasses so that the nation can never make a mistake, ever be in the wrong politically, and any country that ever dares to oppose Israelie policy has the wrath of God to deal with. Israel worship among evangelicals teaches that the nation of Jews is the "other" people of God (Christians being one). In this view God has two peoples (a wife: Israel, a bride: the church) not one. Even worse, some Christians are now to the point where they see the present rejection of Messiah by national Jews as a minor hurdle to get over since Jews still worship the same God as the Christian. This is troubling to say the least.

In order to understand the prophesy in front of us, we need to again figure out when it is talking about, when the fulfillment of these things will take place. **Isaiah 11:10-16** has the same period of time in mind as the rest of the chapter has. It is talking primarily about **the return of Christ in Glory and** the end of the earth as we know it (though this has fulfilled aspects even now because of his first coming). **It has the same central figure: the Root of Jesse.** **11:10-16** is a continuation of the thoughts we have discussed since beginning **chapter 7**. A king will reign. His reign will begin as a little child (his first advent), but it will consummate in a great and glorious reign that extends fully to every part of the earth when the little child returns in glory (second advent) to claim all that rightly belongs to him.

“In that Day”

But don't take my word for it. Let me prove to you that this is the case from the text itself. That recurring phrase “**in that day**” occurs two times in the first two verses (**10,11**). We understand from the NT that the day of the Lord was very near while our Lord Jesus walked on this earth and that it had its dawn in a very special way on the day of Pentecost. **The salvation aspect of the day of the Lord has arrived.** As Peter's quotation of the prophesy of Joel in that very first Christian sermon ever preached makes clear, **God has judged the world but is now putting on hold the sentencing** aspect of this judgment until Christ returns again. And so we live somewhere in the middle of this day. It is no longer the morning, but it is sometime prior to the nighttime hour when God will judge the shady deeds of men and women and expel the enemies of God to outer darkness.

A Literal Banner?

Another way of seeing this same thing (besides the “day” motif) is to understand the meaning of the *banner for the nations* and then compare this with the bringing in of God's people. The banner idea begins the *already* aspect of this prophesy, while the finality of this home coming gets at the *not yet* aspect of it.

Verse 10 says, “**the root of Jesse... will be standing as a banner for the nations.**” Then, **verse 12** adds that the Sovereign God will “**raise up a banner for the nations.**” Let's look at the banner first, and then the nations after that. What exactly is this banner? It is at this very point that we need to be faithful to **interpreting the Scripture according to its most natural sense.** It is the natural sense that is the true *literal* sense of the text. In this case, it is painfully clear that this is not a stilted wooden-literalism that should dominate our interpretation. Are we really to think that God is going to make a giant billboard and put it up somewhere so that every nation in the world can see it? A literalistic reading makes this impossible for in actuality this would mean that David's father Jesse would have to have planted a tree that was then chopped down by someone to become a stump. This stump later grew into a root and this root now stands in such a way that all the nations can see it (how?). It also has to have some sort of message literally written on it because it is a banner or an ensign that draws people to itself.

Rather than such a silly and ridiculous interpretation, it should be obvious that this is *poetry* and we need to be sensitive to that. There is a metaphor being presented here and the metaphor is given to point us to something beyond itself in such a way that it engages our imaginations and yet teaches us real physical historical truth. We have here a picture of a branch arising out of a seemingly lifeless stump. God is miraculously creating a new tree which will stand tall and proud. It will be so glorious and majestic that it will draw people to itself. But this tree is to be understood as a king! It is no literal tree, but a man. This is the man that will restore the broken line of David. He will be the one to sit upon the throne of David to reign forever.

We have seen in **chapter 2** how **this man is likened to a mountain.** He is the chief mountain established by God high above all other mountains (**2:2**). The idea is the same in both

texts. This is really interesting. In chapter 2 the “nations stream to it.” They defy all sense of gravity and become like a stream that is running uphill rather than down, up to the mountain rather than away from it down into a valley. Do you see how this Root of Jesse is the same? He becomes a banner that God holds high for the nations. And the end of verse 10 says, “the nations seek and his resting place will be glorious.” Do you see how it is the very glory of this shoot of Jesse that attracts people to him? The idea of a banner or an ensign is important. As an example, many European families have a crest or a coat of arms. Members of those families take pride in that crest because it signifies that I belong to this clan and not another. Nations have flags. The red and white stripes and 50 stars on the American flag stand for something. And when it is waved, all those who fall under its protection stand and cheer and sing national anthems. So it is when the shoot of Jesse stands as a banner to the nations.

But there is more to it than this, for it is the glory of this king that make the nations seek. He is a light. Whenever you are in a dark place, if there is any light source around, your eyes cannot help but be attracted to it. We are compelled by light to look upon it. So it is with Jesse’s king. The nations cannot help but look upon him and seek him for in him they find rest and peace for their tired and battleweary souls. This is the promise and we will understand better who the “nations” are as we come to it in the proper time.

NT Banner

For now, I want to call your attention to a very interesting couple of passages in the NT regarding our Lord Jesus and this idea of a banner. Do you remember when Jesus predicted his own death in John 12? Jesus said, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified” (John 12:23). Glory is the same idea that we see here in Isaiah (“the resting place is glorious”). Then Jesus goes on to say “the is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (12:31-32). Looking back again to the idea that Christ has presently put Satan under his feet (Isaiah 11:6-9), this is confirmed by what he did here at the cross. This moment in time was the beginning of the end for Satan and all who practice evil and wickedness. This is why it is so essential that people repent of their sins now, before it is to late.

But for our purposes this morning we see just how it is that Jesus was thinking of Isaiah when he spoke here. For you see, it was the lifting up of the Jesus on top of that old rugged cross that makes him the God’s banner that attracts nations to himself, bringing the beginning of the fulfillment of Isaiah’s text! This is the meaning of Jesus’ words. Let’s think of another passage. We are all familiar with John 3:16. But how many of us know what comes immediately prior to this? It says, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life” (John 3:14-15). God had the Israelites look upon the snake pole so that their faith might be directed to that future promise which it pictured: Christ’s death on the cross.

It is fascinating to me how Paul talks about this as you and I hear about it through the means of preaching. He tells the Galatians, “Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed (lit: Placarded) as crucified” (Gal 3:1). So we learn that preaching is so important and powerful because it is a public demonstration, a billboard, a banner for all to see of Christ’s death on the cross. So the death of Christ stands as a permanently unmovable banner and the Gentiles will turn to him.¹

All of this is an explanation of verse 10. Verse 10 may be looked at as the thesis statement and the rest of our verses are the body of the paper. Verses 11-16 explain the meaning of

¹ Young, *Isaiah*, p. 393.

verse 10. We have two things we want to look at. One is the many references to nations. The other is the theme of the Exodus. Let's look at the Exodus theme first in order to explain the idea of the nations.

EXODUS

In order to have an Exodus in the biblical sense, you have to have bondage to an enemy of God. The picture given in **verses 11-16** is of "God's people... Israel" that have become "exiles" who are "scattered" among the nations (all **verse 12**). God's people are in captivity once again. This had happened to them once before in Egypt. Pharaoh had enslaved the children of Jacob for many years. The time came when God wanted to show forth his **mighty hand** by freeing his people in the most miraculous way ever to occur. Romans even tells us that God **hardened Pharaoh's heart so that God might display His power and that His name might be proclaimed throughout the earth (Rom 9:17)**. We should never lose site of the fact that both the captivity and the Exodus were means that God would use in order to achieve this ultimate end: the spreading of his own name throughout the universe. And we should likewise not forget that this is the chief end of God. If God does not do this, then he is guilty of committing idolatry as he puts some other's fame over and above his own.

Nations

There are a dozen nations mentioned specifically by Isaiah (**Assyria, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, Islands, Philistines, sons of the East, Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Egypt**). A quick review of these people's will make it quite evident that these are the worst of Israel's enemies both past and present. These are the nations who enslaved her or tried to enslave her. So in mentioning these peoples, we are to understand even more directly that we have the idea of bondage firmly in place.

This then helps us to understand that there is another Exodus that God is going to miraculously perform for his people in the future. Returning again to **verse 11** it says that "in that day the Sovereign will again, a second time, extend his hand to acquire the remainder of his people." This is clearly Exodus language. "Then the LORD said to Moses, "Now you will see what I will do to Pharaoh: Because of my **mighty hand** he will let them go; because of my **mighty hand** he will drive them out of his country" (**Ex 6:1**). Israel was to commemorate Passover because "The LORD brought you out of [Egypt] with a **mighty hand**" (**Ex 13:3**).

This will be the *second time* (more evidence of exodus language) that God's hand is going to acquire his people that are in bondage and scattered. But this time, it is not limited to one place. This second exodus will far surpass the first in power and glory and might. Instead, the people will come from the entire world. From the deep south in Egypt and Ethiopia to the far east in Babylon to the remote north into Turkey and even to the mysterious west in the Islands of the Mediterannian Sea God will assemble his people. This is all summed up in **verse 12**: "he will *assemble from the four corners of the earth.*"

Now, the four corners of the earth is an important phrase. Again, a strictly literalistic interpretation of this passage is to be avoided. We all know full well from numerous geography lessons that these places are not the four corners of the earth (indeed, the earth is not even a square). They were the known world of Israel's day and they represented the outer regions of the world. So the idea presented here is not that God is only going to bring the people back from these 12 countries (a greater but still rather limited new exodus). Rather, he is going to have a great ingathering of people from *everywhere*. **God's people are coming from all over the world!** That tells us where the people are coming from, but it does not tell us who the people are. And we cannot take for granted that God's people here are *only* national Jews for many reasons.

But wait a minute. I want you to understand something. **You do well to read this text as being a prediction of return from exile for the nation of Jews.** This is in fact about national Jews, at least in the short term. God will gather his exiles of **Israel** and the scattered of **Judah** and will assemble them (**vs. 12**) again at his holy mountain. In the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, the people were again restored to a national unity of sorts. Northern and Southern kingdoms were no longer the separate nations that they were before. And so in a sense **vs. 13** is true of this time. **"The jealousy of Ephraim will go away, and the oppressors of Judah will be cut off. Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, and Judah will not oppress Ephraim."** The exiles returned from the lands that they were scattered to (**vs. 16**). It was this restoration after the exile that gave the Jews such hope and allowed them to maintain their nation identity (even to this day) when all people's of the other nations around them were lost to history. This displays God's power and providence over history and over his promises given to the physical people of Israel. God is not a liar.

But we have to understand that because these people are coming from all over the *entire world* that we have a signal of **double fulfillment going on**. This is something that goes far, far beyond anything that took place with this one little nation. Like the other verses in this chapter, these point to the future immediately after Christ's death when Gentiles will be gathered to him. This is why Paul quotes **Isaiah 11:10** in **Romans 15**. Any time you see the NT explicitly quoting the Old, you need to take the time to look at its interpretation. This helps you do two things. It helps you see how the particular text before you is to be read by the Church. And it helps confirm to you that God has given his church a hermeneutic for reading the OT. God has not left his Church to autonomously figure out how to interpret the Scripture.

We need to read parts of Romans 15. **"Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written:... 'The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him'" (Rom 15:8-9, 12).**

The focus of Isaiah is upon the nations being God's people. Israel is one of those nations. Christ coming to national Jews confirms God's promise to Abraham to make him the father of many nations, not to make him the father of one nation: Israel. This means that the church is the fulfillment of what the nation of Israel pointed toward. Or to put it differently, many nations have become God's one people as per the promise given to Abraham. History is doing exactly what was foretold. God is orchestrating everything to bring about his purposes. This is the exact opposite understanding of many contemporary people who think that Isaiah is focusing on national Israel coming home from being scattered among the pagan nations.

It is very interesting how Judah and Israel are mentioned in this passage as if they were part of the many nations that are being drawn to Christ, as if there is no longer a great distinction between any of them. There is still a distinction in the sense that it is through the means of Christ coming to the nation of Israel that the same blessings will ultimately extend to the Gentiles. But you may not be seeing this when you study this passage on your own. You might not get this impression from reading **verse 15** for example where God destroys the tongue of the Sea of Egypt and dries up the Euphrates River with his scorching wind and smites the seven stream beds so that God's people may return. **You might be tempted to be thinking only in nationalisticly again (even in terms of double fulfillment),** rather than promise/fulfillment – Israel/church – NT interpreting OT terms. Do not be like the Pharisees. Do not fall prey to thinking that God's kingdom is a political rather than a spiritual kingdom. You are not to think that God is destroying the nations around Israel merely so that he can restore the Jews to the promised land. That is not the point here.

I will not touch much on this delicate subject much here at all. If you want a detailed explanation of my own view of these things, I suggest you check out a copy of our [Romans 11](#) series on Israel and the church. Many Reformed Christians take a view of national Israel as still having a place in the future. I do not at the present time think this is warranted from the NT explanation of things. But I open to correction if I can be convinced by the Scripture. There are some Reformed Christians who do think that God will miraculously restore the nation and save nearly if not every single individual Jew living in the last days. This is not something to split churches over.

Given this, however, I feel a caution on these matters is in order. When you find yourself wanting to study these things, wanting to know about the church/Israel similarities and differences or wanting to know if the nation of Israel has a place in future plans for God or not, beware of a subtle temptation! It is all too easy to take modern events and read them into the Scripture. Christians have been doing it for 2000 years. In our modern era, this has become a particularly nefarious temptation of Christians ever since (especially) 1948. And this is extremely poor hermeneutics and exegesis. When the Denver Broncos have a bad offensive season, we do not *rightly* go to the bible to figure out why. We do not for example understand that Paul is talking about the Broncos when he says in [Philippians 1:10](#), "[they shall be without offense until the day of the Lord.](#)"

But people do this same exact thing all the time with end times prophesies and contemporary political events. Do a check of recent history. Go back just a hundred years or so. In times of political and cultural prosperity, Post-millennialism (or what I call "optimistic-millennialism") dominates in the church. In times of political and cultural disaster and war that pre-millennialism (or "pessimistic-millennialism") dominates in the church. Has God's word changed? Or is something else going on here?

I believe this is a perfect example of using the times to explain the text rather than vice-versa. Just look at the history books. The Gilded Age of the late 1800's saw a rise in post-mill. WWI and events there after saw a rise in pre-mill Dispensationalism. The boom years of the 1920s saw a rise in post-mill while WWII and Vietnam saw a rise in pre-mill theology again. Currently, both streams are fighting it out because people in our nation (strangely) can't figure out if we are at war or not, they can't figure out if things are getting better or worse, and they can't figure out why God hasn't returned within 40 years of the restoration of the nation of Israel like he was "supposed to."

This history lesson should serve as a lesson to you about reading the Scripture through the lenses of the daily news paper or Pat Robertson's 700 Club. While I do not rule out the possibility that God may deal with national Jews again in the future, that is certainly not the NT's emphasis on these things and it is not Isaiah's either. For you see, the point even in Isaiah is everywhere evident as to what is meant by Israel, Judah, or Ephraim. God is talking here about returning people from all over the world to his Holy Mountain, which is not some literal mountain in Israel, but which is His own Son Jesus Christ.

I want to conclude the study of our passage by trying to help us understand why the people of God here are [Gentiles and Jews together: what we today call the Church](#). [Do you see how Jesus is the banner for the nations](#) and *they* will seek his resting place ([vs. 10](#))? Typical of Hebrew poetry, the next verse acts as a parallel not a new thought. There will be a second Exodus of *God's people*. It will be like the first only much broader in application. This time, it will not be merely one nation that God delivers, but people from all the nations that God delivers. "[His hand will acquire the remainder of his people which shall remain from Assyria, from Cush, from Elam](#)" and so forth. [Do you see then that his people from these nations are not Jews in this telescopic fulfillment, but the his elect chosen people that are Assyrians, Cushites, and Elamites?](#) Understand again, God will raise a banner for the

nations, not just for Israel. **But he will also gather the exiles of Israel; the scatter of Judah and will assemble from all over the earth.** God has a remnant and it consists of people from every tribe and nation and language in the world: Jews and Gentiles. On the day that his remnant is *fully* returned (this is second coming language) to him like lost sheep wandering around in the field, they will together plunder the sons of the East. It is not that Jews will destroy all the nations, but that God's elect from all the nations will plunder once and for all the wicked rebellious people that are not God's called out ones from among those nations. On this day, God will finally end the battle between his people and Satan's people, between the line of Seth and the line of Cain. And Seth's children will come out victorious. The banner for the *nations*.

The Greek word *synago* (LLX translation of qabhats meaning to "assemble") is used in a very similar way in the NT as it is here in Isaiah. This assembly happens now: "After they prayed, the place where they were meeting (*synago*) was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly." But it also happens in the future: "All the nations will be gathered (*synago*) before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left."

We ought not fear understanding the word in this way. There is no slippery slope to liberalism anti-semitism that we have here. No. We are constrained by and compelled by the NT itself (and even Isaiah as we have seen!) to understand the text in this way. It is not anti-Jewish because we understand God used these people to save Gentiles. The church is composed of Gentiles and *Jews*! Indeed, it is even *possible* to understand that He might restore many national Jews in the end. And this is just like the fact that God is still today saving Jews and bringing many of them to a knowledge of his Son Jesus.

Likewise, we have seen no reason to think that redemptive history is an allegory or a myth. That's just plain old straw men that are being erected by others to keep you in fear from reading Isaiah 11 the way the Apostles did. Rather, God is the sovereign Lord of history. And He has used redemptive history in such a way as to point its many actual and real events to these last days truths by means of double prophesy. The fact of the matter is, you and I live in the beginning of the fulfillment of these things. If we forget this, we miss out on many blessings that are even now before us. And yet, we also look forward to the Great Day, the return of Christ, when these many prophesies will be fulfilled in totality.

There are no warnings in our text this morning. But there are warnings that we can apply easily enough. We are to **beware of popular fads** that sell a lot of books by making newspapers find their meaning and fulfillment in texts like this. We are to **carefully guard our own theology** on these matters by constantly taking all of our thinking captive to the obedience of Christ. We are to **understand that his death and resurrection** is essential to our understanding of these things and to their fulfillment of them. Finally, we are left with the **constant warning** that looms in the background of all the bible for those who persistently deny the truths of these matters. You need to ask yourself again today if you have repented of your sins and trusted in Christ. **If these things have begun, then you had better be aware that they will be carried out in full.** The warning remains. God's people will plunder all those who are enemies of God. God's enemies will go into everlasting darkness while his own people will dwell in light and hope and peace. May we all again be reminded of the importance of these matters. And may you spurred on by these things to place all of your hope and trust in Jesus Christ: the Branch of Jesse who is a Banner for the nations, whose place is of rest and who resides in perfect wonderful glory and light.