

IMMANUEL:  
HIS RULE AND HIS SERVICE

BY  
C. E. S

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## IMMANUEL, HIS RULE AND HIS SERVICE.

(Isa. i.—xxxix ; xl.-lxvi.)

STANDING on the top of Pisgah, in the field of Zophim, Balaam, gifted with the spirit of prophecy, peered through the long vista of ages not yet ended, and announced to Balak, awaiting the prophet's curse on Israel, that God had blessed them and he could not reverse it. Hopeless was it to expect he could prevail by any incantation against this people; for "the Lord his God" is with him, and the shout of a king is among them. "Surely," he adds, "there is no enchantment against Jacob, neither is there any divination against Israel; according to (or at) this time it shall be said of Jacob and of Israel, What hath God wrought?" (Numb. xxiii. 20-23).

Years, centuries pass away, when another prophet appears, not to use enchantments against Israel, for he warns them against resorting to such iniquitous practices (Isa. viii. 19), but to announce in language clear, forcible and beautiful, that what Balaam had predicted would surely come to pass, God would work for the deliverance of His people, but in a way which should astonish all. So he traces out the path of the Lord Jesus from His birth to His kingdom, as is attempted to be pointed out in the following pages.

God had brought Israel out of Egypt and into Canaan; had given to David, and Solomon after him, the land promised to Abraham and his descendants, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates. He had shown their fathers in the days of Joshua what it was to have the captain of the Lord's host in their midst. He had proved

many times how, when minished and brought low by the incursions of enemies from without, or the uprising of enemies within the land, He could raise up deliverers to set them free.

But as yet the perfect deliverance which He would effect, so that men might say "What hath God wrought," had not been manifested. It is of this Isaiah sings at an eventful period of the history of the kingdom of Judah. Commencing with the year that king Uzziah died, the first prophecy in the book with a date prefixed, and going on to the time when the king of Babylon sent messengers to king Hezekiah after he was recovered of his sickness, the last date given in the book, we get unfolded the condition of the people in the latter days, and the appearance and work of the One by whom their deliverance will be effected.

Some of those by whom the Lord had wrought for His people to rescue them from their enemies were called from a humble sphere. Gideon, the least in his father's house, of a poor family of the tribe of Manasseh, was called from the threshing-floor to subdue the Midianites, "so that they lifted up their heads no more" (Judges viii. 28). Jephthah, the outcast and exile from his family, was recalled from the land of Tob to confront the armies of the Ammonites (Judges xi. 33). David was taken from the sheepfold to do battle with Goliath of Gath. So He by whom God's people shall be finally set free was once in this world in lowliness the reputed son of a carpenter. But how great is the difference in this between Gideon, Jephthah, David, and the Lord! They were of low estate and God exalted them. He had to humble Himself, for He is God over all. Accordingly we have in this prophet the Lord presented as God and as man, filling various offices, and appearing in different characters. He is the mighty God, yet a helpless infant; King, yet servant; Overcomer, yet overcome; Intercessor and

Avenger; the Holy One of Israel, yet the Bearer of His people's iniquities.

Beginning with the moral condition of the people, with which both heaven and earth are made acquainted, the prophet speedily passes on to the day of the Lord, the commencement of the millennium, when the nation of Israel shall enter on the enjoyment of permanent blessing on earth. Much, however, had to take place ere that era could dawn on the people of God. Unfitted by their moral condition for God's presence, judgment must do its work. So the vision of chapter vi. is recorded. Its date is significant, the close of Uzziah's life. During his reign prosperity attended Judah; for "he warred against the Philistines and brake down the wall of Gath . . . for he was marvellously helped till he was strong" (2 Chron. xxvi. 6-15). This prosperity continued under his son Jotham.

But though outwardly prosperous Judah was not obedient to God, and no more morally fit for the presence of God in their midst than Israel, whose condition at this time was one of anarchy, confusion, and lawlessness; for during the fifty-two years of Uzziah's reign he had seen six different monarch's in Israel, three of whom were murdered. At this juncture it was that Isaiah received his commission from Jehovah, seated on a throne, to announce judgment on the whole nation. Yet a remnant should be preserved. He saw Jehovah of hosts, but John xii. tells us it was the Lord Jesus Christ who then gave judgment against His people, a judgment the righteousness of which none could question after the glory of the only begotten of the Father had been displayed, and His own had refused to receive Him (John xii. 37-41; Acts xxviii. 25-27). But this judgment is not final. It carries on "until," etc. (see vers. 11-13).

Since Israel became a nation, God has raised up instru-

ments to deliver His people, or lead them to victory. Moses, Joshua, the Judges, David, are instances of this. In the days yet to dawn on that afflicted nation we learn He will act in a similar way. But, "by whom," one may ask in the words of Amos, "shall Jacob arise? for he is small" (vii. 2). We get the answer in our prophet, chaps. viii.-xii., accompanied with an account of the inroad and success of the Assyrian of the prophet's day, typical of the king of the north in a future day. The virgin's Son, Immanuel, is the man of God's choice, and the time selected for the prophetic announcement of the manner of His birth was during the reign of Ahaz, when Judah had been brought low, and Ahaz was dispirited, threatened with a confederacy organised against him and his kingdom of Israel and Assyria. "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel." To Him the land shall belong. The Assyrian might invade Judah, and overspread the country, as he did subsequently in the reign of Hezekiah; he might reach to the neck, but should never overwhelm it. The stretching out of his wings might fill the breadth of the land, but there he must stop; for the land belongs to Immanuel, which is "God with us." The waters may burst their banks, but they cannot rise above the permitted level, for no counsel, no might, can withstand God.

This prophecy, partially fulfilled in the reign of Hezekiah, awaits its complete accomplishment in the latter day (see x. 12, 24, 25). The land being Immanuel's (viii. 8), the people need not fear the threatened attack, nor need the faithful join with the others in desiring a confederacy to ward off the impending calamity; for Immanuel (as we learn from Hebrews ii. 13) speaks words of encouragement: "I will wait upon the Lord that hideth His face from the house of Israel, and I will look for him;" and the remnant, who

obey God's voice, He owns as children given Him for signs and wonders in Israel from the "Lord of hosts which dwelleth in Mount Zion."

Nor can the faithful be disappointed. For He, who owns them as the children given Him, owns the land, and will sit on David's throne. The great ones of the earth have titles and dignities suited to their high positions. He likewise has His. Immanuel speaks of God's presence with His people. His names in ix. 6 show how fitted is this child to get the victory, and to fill that throne vacant for ages, but just previous to all this seized on by the usurper Antichrist. "His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the everlasting Father, the Prince of peace." A new era must then dawn on this world for the stability and duration of His rule is next declared. "Of the increase of His government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon His kingdom, to order it and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

In chap. xi. we get something more about the kingdom, viz., that which characterises His rule. His title is indisputable, for He is the rod out of the stem of Jesse, a branch that grows out of his roots. His perfect fitness for the duties which, as King, He must perform, is secured, for "the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make Him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord." Faithfulness and righteousness will characterise Him, for "He shall not judge after the sight of His eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of His ears; but with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." He will be armed with

almighty power, or “ will smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips will He slay the wicked, righteousness being the girdle of His loins, and faithfulness the girdle of His reins.”

The enmity between Judah and Ephraim removed, their land shall again receive them, and the adversaries of Judah and Israel be cut off. From Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, and the isles of the sea, shall His people be brought back to God’s land. Borne “ on the shoulders of the Philistines towards the west, spoiling them of the east together, they shall lay their hands on Edom and Moab, and the children of Ammon shall obey them.” To Him, the hope and head of Israel, shall the Gentiles seek. Once were the Jews the object of scorn, when Pilate said, “ Shall I crucify your King?” Now to that King, first crucified, the Gentiles come.

Nor will the beneficial effect of His reign end there. The enmity between Judah and Ephraim removed, the scorn of the Gentiles for the Jew made to cease, there will cease likewise the enmity between man and beast. For He who then shall reign is Prince of peace, as well as the mighty God. As the latter He has power over creation; as the former all parts of the universe shall share in the blessing of peace, “ for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.”

Seated on the throne as Jehovah in chap. vi., decreeing judicial blindness on the nation, till a certain epoch should arrive—now that epoch has come, He is seen seated on David’s throne as man and conqueror (ix.); rightly there because He is David’s heir (xi.), and the only one who can wield supreme power in righteousness over Israel and the earth, because He is the Holy One of Israel (xii. 6); and the descendants of those who heard and read Isaiah’s

prophecies in the land before the Babylonish captivity, will, when enjoying peace under His righteous rule, see how literally all has come to pass. Ruling in righteousness (xxxii); all enemies cut off, Babylon (xxi), Antichrist (xxx. 33), the nations who besiege Jerusalem (xxix. 7), the Assyrian (x), the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth (xxiv), Leviathan, the piercing crooked serpent, punished (xxvii.); fear which kept the remnant in their stronghold will be dispelled, and they, beholding the land that is very far off, shall also see the King in His beauty. Such is the manner in which the Lord Jesus is brought before us in the first thirty-nine chapters of this prophecy.

A cursory glance at the book discloses a marked difference between the preceding chapters and those that follow. The former tell us of the circumstances in which the people then were, and will be in the latter days; whereas chapters xl. to lxvi. treat more especially of their moral condition; so the prophecies of the Lord in the latter part of the book present Him, not so much in His official character as King, but in His servant character, not effecting the deliverance of an oppressed people so much as calling out a faithful remnant from the midst of an apostate nation, a preparation for that time when the widowed condition of Jerusalem should cease for ever.

And this is in perfect harmony with God's ways in times of old; He sent deliverers to His people to rescue them out of the hand of their enemies, as Othniel, Ehud, Gideon, Jephthah, David. He also sent prophets to recall them to their allegiance, and to awake in their hearts a sense of contrition for their grievous declension from the right way; so He by whom the final deliverance of Israel shall be effected first appeared as a prophet or teacher. For what

duty is there which any of the sons of men have been fitted by God to discharge towards His rebellious people, which He in His goodness and condescension will not Himself stoop to perform.

Turning to the prophet we find chap. xl. opening with a proclamation of comfort to God's people and to God's city, "Her warfare is accomplished, her iniquity is pardoned, for she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins." Jeremiah predicted that God would recompense their iniquity and their sin double (xvi. 18). Isaiah speaks of it as accomplished, and so the time of Jerusalem's consolation approaches. Closely following this announcement we have the commencement of those events stated which will end in that happy consummation. The voice of John the Baptist is heard crying in the wilderness, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." Jehovah, the God of Israel, is coming to His people. And as the Lord appeared on the throne as Jehovah before the announcement of His incarnation and descent from David after the flesh was made known, so here, before the character of His service is set forth, His divinity is proclaimed.

Isaiah was charged with a message from God of governmental dealing for a time; John is found in the wilderness of Judea speaking to his countrymen of grace as he preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Ages have passed away since John's voice was heard, but the word must surely be made good; for, though "all flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field," the grass may wither and the flower thereof may fade, "but the word of our God shall stand for ever"—so "the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him;" and to the cities of Judah it shall yet be said,

“Behold your God.” Now, then, there begins to be unfolded the character of the service He must perform ere Jerusalem can rejoice.

He takes the place of Jehovah’s servant. “Behold My servant, whom I uphold, Mine elect in whom My soul delighteth: I have put My spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles” (xlii. 1). God’s servant, God’s chosen one, He takes the place of man, of Israel, on earth; endures the contradiction of sinners against Himself without taking vengeance on them (xlii. 3, 4; Matth. xii. 14-21); is dependent on God for everything, though by Himself the worlds were made, and He upholds all things by the word of His power; and all this that He might “open the blind eyes, bring out the prisoners from the prisons, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house;” for Jew and Gentile shall receive blessing through His humiliation.

Surely such grace, it might have been supposed, would have won all hearts. Chap. xlix. tells us how the Jews as a nation were effected by it. Fitted for His work by God Himself, He here calls (xlix.) to the isles and peoples afar off to hear, but what?—the submission of Israel to their God incarnate? Something very different,—the present failure of His mission to Israel. Yet blessed be God we stop not here. Because of that failure, grace now flows out to Gentiles (xlix. 8, compared with 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2), and by and bye a faithful remnant shall be gathered to Zion. What a place has He consented to fill! What treatment has He stooped to receive! Laboured in vain, His strength spent for nought and in vain, despised of men, abhorred of the nation, a servant of rulers, such was His condition when on earth, by whom alone Israel, the Gentiles, the world can be fully blessed.

“To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved of Israel” is nevertheless, great as such a work will be and important as regards Israel, too small a sphere for Him to be restricted to. “I will also,” says the Word of God, “give Thee for a light to the Gentiles, that Thou mayest be My salvation to the ends of the earth.” As far then as the confines of earth may reach, so far will the benefits of His work extend. Israel’s King “shall be great to the ends of the earth” (Micah v. 4). Thus prepared beforehand for the coming of their Messiah, if that substratum of good really exists in man, which so many fondly imagine, His advent would have been gladly hailed, and His rule cordially welcomed. Such, however, we know was not the case. His appearance in the midst of the people gave occasion for the display of what man really is, and how utterly corrupt and alienated is his heart from God. Nothing which under ordinary circumstances would have acted as a deterrent stopped the Jews in their headlong course of bitter enmity against the Lord.

Men are wont sometimes to be lenient in their judgment of the one who can be of use to them, or has added glory to their nation. But though apprised of His future greatness, and reaping benefits from His presence among them when on earth, witnessing “the powers of the world to come,” they yet openly rejected Him, and heaped indignities upon Him. This, too, was predicted. Chapter I. speaks of it. Able to deliver, acting with divine power in creation, able to dry up the sea by His rebuke, to make rivers a wilderness, to clothe the heavens with blackness, and to make sackcloth their covering, He yet learnt how to speak a word in season to him that is weary. What service was this! He suffered, too, for His creatures because obedient to God. “I gave my back to the smiters,

and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." With full power as God to crush His enemies, He yet kept the place of dependence, and waited for God to justify Him.

And wherefore this? That others may know how to act, and learn how to trust; that when walking in darkness and having no light, they might trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon their God. Then follow three appeals to the faithful remnant to hearken to Him (li. 1-8). They need not be discouraged if few in number; they need not fear if men are against them. He who addressed them shall judge nations, the isles shall wait on Him, and on His arm shall they trust. How beautiful the alternation of complete dependence and supreme power! For He is the arm of the Lord, and so the remnant now call on Him to awake and act as of old.

Further on we get something more about the arm of the Lord. He is the One by whom God's purposes on earth shall yet be carried out (li. 16). Next we get what the great ones will think of Him when they see Him delivering Israel. His last appearance to the world was on the cross, and when taken down from it to be laid in the grave; now they behold Him in glory arrayed with strength (lii. 13-15). Chap. liii. is wholly occupied with the arm of the Lord, but as filling a different position to that spoken of at the end of the previous chapter, and occupied with a very different work. It speaks of what He was, and what He suffered for Israel, for men, the foundation of all blessing, the source of all hope,—His death on the cross and His portion in resurrection. Jehovah of hosts, the Son of God, the arm of the Lord, He was also the sinner's substitute. He died, cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of God's people. It pleased the Lord to bruise Him, and on

Him our sins were laid. And now, atonement effected, "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand."

What a passage from the throne to the cross, from the manifested glory of Jehovah to the insults and rejection of sinners! And as lii. states what effect His future appearance will have on the kings when they see Him, this chapter tells us what was thought of Him by the remnant when on earth before. "He is despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted." He died: but death, to man the extinction of all hopes for this world, death, which separates him from all that concerns the things of earth, was the appointed path for Him to tread that He should take His kingdom and reign; for us having died and risen He will sit on David's throne, see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied, when surrounded by the countless myriads of the heavenly saints, and make secure to Israel then on earth the sure mercies of David (lv. 3 compared with Acts xiii. 34).

A sketch of His life on earth as the servant of God would be incomplete without a summary of what He taught. This we get in lxi. in a passage He quoted, applying it to Himself as the fulfiller of it, when He sat down with the eyes of all on Him in the synagogue at Nazareth. But then He stopped in the middle of the second verse. He preached the acceptable year of the Lord, but not then the day of vengeance of our God. Yet that He was to speak of. The prophets have predicted it; the Revelation is full of it; and this last be it remembered, is the "Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His

servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John." There we get described the day of vengeance which will come, and the signs which shall precede it, with the judgments to be poured out previously, and the messengers to be sent (Rev. vi.-viii, xi. 3, xiv. 6). Then shall be comforted all that mourn, the signs of sorrow be removed, and Israel take her place as the head of the nations, and everlasting joy be her portion (lxi. 2-7).

His birth, His lowliness, the treatment He received, His devoted service, the good news He declared, His rejection and death having been brought forward, and His resurrection intimated (liii. 11, 12), what remains, it might be thought, but to take vengeance on His enemies. He will surely in God's own time; but first He has another work to perform, which He is now carrying on, He intercedes for Jerusalem. Absent from earth where He was crucified, He does not forget the place where God dwelt, and where He will dwell for ever. He intercedes for Zion. "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof shall go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth" (lxii. 1). Nor does He rest with this. He raises up intercessors on earth to pray for this (vers. 6, 7). How He intercedes above is not revealed, but what they say is (see lxiii. 7; lxiv. 12). He is asked to return from heaven (lxiv. 1). He will. And in lxiii. 1-6, we have a description of Him having returned and having executed judgment on Edom.

From the throne to the manger, from the manger to the cross, from the cross to heaven, from heaven to earth as conqueror and vindicator of God, and deliverer of His people, such is the path of the Lord as set before us in Isaiah. "What hath God wrought," we may well exclaim. Many

have been the instruments God has used to carry out His purposes on earth, feeble oftentimes have they been, that the power of God should be more fully displayed in them. But here we see something else. We see an instrument, a mighty instrument in the Lord's hand accomplishing His purposes, filling every position His servants could fill, and some they never could—Jehovah's throne and the cross on Calvary; and that instrument is Jehovah Himself.

God has often wrought by others. Here He works by His Son. He has accomplished redemption from everlasting death for all who will accept it; He will effect the final deliverance of His people Israel on earth. He stooped to death and Satan appeared to have gained the victory. He rose from the dead and went to heaven, where He intercedes for Jerusalem. Satan's conqueror, the sinners Saviour, the faithful witness, the suffering servant, these are the characters which He appears in, these are the works He performs. He does them all Himself, for by Him and Him alone can all these be effectually accomplished.

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