

Hy 11:1,2,3
 Ps 103:4,5
 Ps 89:6,7,8
 Ps 76:1,2,5
 Hy 53:1,2
 Isaiah 10:5-11:16
 Leviticus 26:3-13
 Isaiah 11:1

Yarrow, January 2, 2011

Beloved Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ!

1st Sunday/service of New Year 2011. So we do the inevitable: look ahead, what will new year bring?

- Read together Isaiah 10/11 → strikes us as oriented to far-off future, ie, New Jerusalem....
 - Indeed has this aspect.... But there's more.
 - People of Isaiah's day battling with brokenness of life as we do. Lord would encourage through revelation of *what He is doing*. Activity of *His* hand gives comfort, encouragement....

GOD MAKES JESSE'S STUMP BEAR A FRESH SHOOT.

1. What is happening?
2. Why is it happening?
3. When is it happening?

1. What is happening?

Reference to 'stump of Jesse'

- Stump = what's left when chop down tree. Jesse = father of David, 1st of kings of Judah/Jerusalem, ie, source of Davidic dynasty.
 - Picture: tree of David been chopped down.... But: stump not pulled. Stump in ground can produce new shoot/growth. That's happening here

To catch force of this promise, refresh historical facts.

- Chap 6: King Uzziah died, ∴ his son Ahaz begins to reign in own right. This when Isaiah saw vision of God's glory, and received mandate to preach message of God's holiness/majesty to people – but their hearts would be hardened....
 - In fact, Ahaz an ungodly king, ie, no regard for LORD as God almighty, *his* God-by-covenant
 - ∴ 7:1: Lord sends enemies to put pressure on Judah, ie, Rezin of Aram (Syria) and Pekah of Israel. ∴ fear (7:2). This per covenant promises of Leviticus 26....
 - Lord promises to deliver from these two enemies, but result would be worse, ie, Assyrians, cf 7:16f. Fill land, cf 7:19; terrorize, cf 7:20; result: 7:25.
 - To drive home reality that this would soon happen → billboard of 8:1 and son of 8:3
 - ∴ prophecy of 8:21
 - True: a child to become king, ie, Hezekiah, cf 9:6. But that will take a generation before he adult/mature. Meanwhile, Judah/Jerusalem *now* disregard Maker, and ∴ things not go well with them, ie, today is pressure of Rezin & Pekah, ie, reality of

9:12b, 17b, 21b, 10:4b. Judgment *is* coming, because God too holy to overlook Ahaz's unbelief/hardness. Happy New Year in Jerusalem in that situation?? Surely can't be!!

- Now follows revelation of 10:5-11:16, heart of which is 11:1. How shall faithful in Judah face future?? This is how! God at work!!
 - ∴ Q: what He actually doing??

We read text, and our thoughts go directly to Jesus Christ, ie, 700 years after Isaiah spoke.

- It true that 11:1 asks readers/hearers to think into future, cf 'will'. More, we read 2ff re what Spirit does in this shoot, and we confirmed that this re Jesus Christ. Then read 6ff, and our thoughts go into more distant future, ie, Christ's *return*, Last Day, ie, New Jerusalem, Paradise Restored.
 - ∴ need to tell you that Hebrew *does not separate* 11:1ff from 10:33f. Ie, no chap divisions. More, in Hebrew it one continuous paragraph. And 33f distinctly dated!!
 - ∴ need to consider 33f.
- Pictures LORD almighty (=sovereign covenant God) as lumberjack, lopping off branches and ultimately whole tree, even thick forests. This forest is 'Lebanon', which (in context) stands for Assyria.
 - Assyria = rising world power at time of prophecy, cf 7:20, cause of 8:21.
 - This nation so powerful (and arrogant) that thinks in terms of 10:7ff, 13f – and this how newspapers of day reported attitude/thought process of Assyrian politics. To survive, other nations had to reckon with Assyria, walk in step with Assyrian thinking/demands, ie, kowtow to this political bully. This conventional wisdom.
 - But see 10:5f: Assyria is "rod of My anger", ie, tool in God's hand to punish hardened Judah.
 - Cf vs 6: "I send him..."; vs 12, "When the Lord has finished all His work..."; vs 15: who swings the axe??
 - ∴ 10:24f: Judah not to fear Assyrians...
 - Instead, their focus to be on LORD. He's the lumberjack using Assyria as an axe, through whom LORD chops down tree of David. This 8:13!
 - Though Lord sovereignly uses Assyria for His purposes, Assyria always remains responsible for its conduct.
 - Cf Genesis 1:26ff → to image God includes taking responsibility for decisions made, cf Genesis 2:17.
 - Since Assyria not treat life with respect (let alone God's covenant people), ie, fail to image God, consequences. ∴ 10:12b, 16ff.
 - This the promise of 10:33f. Obviously relief/encouragement for godly disillusioned by circumstances as they see them unfold before them. Something positive in their New Year....
 - But something else positive: felled trees leave stumps. Assyria regrow?? No mention.... Rather, new growth from stump of Jesse → Assyria had chopped down! Happy New Year!! In grand scheme of things, future lies not with Assyrians, but with demoralized, truncated house of David!
 - ∴ 2nd point:

2. Why is this happening?

House of David been a blessing in Israel/Judah (cf David, Solomon, etc), but sinful..., ∴ ultimately disappoint.

- But LORD Almighty promises new tree from same stump/root as produced David, and this tree better.... Cf 2ff:
 - “Spirit of the LORD” rest upon him, ie, Spirit belonging to Yahweh, Holy Spirit. This the Spirit of Genesis 1, who brought God’s command into reality. This the Spirit on Moses & elders (Num 11:25f), enabling him/them to govern people. Ibid on Saul, David.... But Moses, Saul, David not perfectly dominated by Spirit, this shoot will be.
 - Cf reference to spirit of wisdom, understanding.... Ie, this shoot/king will have what it takes to give God’s people God-centred leadership. See vs 3: delights in fear of LORD, ie, big thoughts of God, taken in by the revelation of God in Isaiah 6.
 - Result of this understanding of who God is: vs 3bff. Currently Ahaz not see/hear, cf 6:9f. But here open ears/eyes → result: needy, poor get care, protection they need. Happy New Year indeed!
 - Realize: here’s something of Paradise Restored! Injustice, oppression is result of fall into sin, cf Abel/Cain in Genesis 4.
 - This enmity also in world of animals. Cf Genesis 1:26ff: man to rule over animals, ∴ 2:19: name them all.
 - Diet of animals one of peaceful co-existence, cf Genesis 1:30.
 - This so different in fallen world. See Genesis 37:20. Believable, cf vs 33. Ie, animals eat flesh, even people who meant to rule over them.... We used to this....
 - But see Leviticus 26:6: in covenant God makes with His own He removes terror of wild animals – through removing them from land physically or perhaps changing attitude. Converse in Leviticus 26:22 – note relation to sin!
 - This shoot from Jesse’s stump driven by Holy Spirit, ie, brings forth fruits of Spirit abundantly, perfectly. ∴ covenant blessings, ie, vs 6ff.
 - See any of this later in Bible? Sure, cf Mark 1:13b. Also Mark 4:39, 5:8, 41.... We not really surprised, *for this Jesus has Spirit of LORD upon Him in perfect measure per Isaiah 11:2ff.*
 - He also promised Mark 16:17f, Luke 10:19 → Colossians 2:15* Result: Ephesians 1:20ff ∴ Acts 16:16ff; 28:3ff, ie, word came to pass → Happy New Year!
- This the dispensation in which we live, ie, stump of Jesse has sprouted shoot who became huge tree filling earth (cf Daniel 4:10b). Here we find peace, safety, so that none make child of God afraid.
 - This is vs 10f: nations rally to Him, even *we rally to Him!* From every nation and people → come to this shoot/tree, cf 12ff. Safety!! This the good news of Scripture, proclaimed in church, as source of peace/encouragement for oppressed, discouraged....
 - Leaves 3rd point:

3. When is this happening?

As said, our thoughts go to future. ∴ wonder how this help today....

- Back to people of Jerusalem. Assyria rising power, Pekah & Rezin current menace. How prophecy of shoot from Jesse help now??
 - Point: *Lord God is at work*. Critical question is *not*: when will He *complete* His work, or: when will *we see* His work. Critical question is: *is* He at work?
 - Answer is Yes. Even *rise* of Assyria is His work! His work continues when Assyria lopped David's tree down. Continues too when Assyria felled, *and* when new shoot arises from David's stump. Continues when that shoot filled/guided by Holy Spirit, when He rules in such a way as reflects Paradise ∴ attitudes amongst animals of 6ff.
 - His work not without human responsibility; as Assyria punished because of transgressions, so those who fear Lord blessed because of faith/obedience – including the peace in land as by 11:2ff.
 - This work continues since day of Isaiah's prophecy, came into its own with coming of Jesus Christ and triumph on cross – possible because the LORD is sovereign, able to make it happen. This work continues today, even in culture of much ungodliness. Will be completed on last day...
 - Is Lord telling us here, then, that in New Jerusalem infants will play near hole of cobra...? Will there be infants? Will lion eat straw, ie, *be* lions? I don't know answers; Scripture not explicit, clear on these points. Wait and see. *This not point of this passage!*
 - Point is: covenant blessings poured out on undeserving people – because of God's goodness. *He* gives His own a future!
- Where this leave us?
 - New Year: ∴ look forward to what year will bring. Unknown.
 - Faith clings to promise of God: He at work, also in 2011.
 - Already see evidence. Ie, fruit of Spirit in our lives/hearts. In church beginning of righteousness & justice. Much more to come, but wild animals of sinful human nature curbed through Spirit.
 - As to evil in world: it will perish. 10:33f true for this evil too.
 - Meanwhile, forces of evil nothing more than tools in God's hands.
 - In 2011 Lord's church gathering work will continue..., drawing own from any tribe/race. Hunger for Word is real....
 - All of this gives so very much encouragement....