

DAY TWENTYTWO



Isaiah 7

13 Then Isaiah said: "Hear then, O house of David!
Is it too little for you to weary mortals, that you weary your my God also?"

14 Therefore, the Lord himself will give you a sign.
Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son,
and shall name him Immanuel.

Brueggemann (1) p 70:

'...the crucial element of the sign concerns the child whose name is "Immanuel" that is, *God is with us*. ... this child's freighted name is positive and reassuring, for it asserts the entire affirmation of Davidic theology rooted in the ancient oracle of 2Samuel 7. The child is to be a visible, physical, concrete reassertion of the core conviction of royal Israel that God is present in and with and for Israel as defender, guardian, and protector, so that Israel need not be afraid.

DAY TWENTYTHREE



Isaiah 57

14 It shall be said: "Build up, build up, prepare the way, remove every obstruction from my people's way."

15 For thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the heart of the contrite.

16 For I will not continually accuse, nor will I always be angry; for then the spirits would grow faint before me, even the souls that I have made.

Brueggemann (2):

p 181 verse 15 '...asserts the character and identity of Yahweh in a peculiarly nuanced way. Here speaks the one who is *high and holy*, who is elevated in regal splendor beyond circumstance. The imagery recalls the vision of 6:1-8, a vision of massive, unapproachable sovereignty. The wonder of this proclamation, pertinent to the larger horizon of biblical faith, is that this one *high and holy* is the one who "dwells" with the *lowly and crushed*. These latter terms do not refer to guilt, penitence, or remorse over sin or "theological" humility. They refer, rather, to those abused and exploited, who are endlessly taken advantage of and rendered powerless. In the context, the phrasing surely refers to the marginalized Jews for whom and from whom the poet speaks.

The juxtaposition of *high-holy* and *lowly-crushed* is at the core of Yahweh's self-disclosure, the mystery of God who is the subject of biblical faith.'

DAY TWENTYFOUR



THOMAS, Apostle and Martyr

Habakkuk 2

1 I will stand at my watchpost, and station myself on the rampart;
I will keep watch to see what he will answer concerning my complaint.

2 Then the Lord answered me, and said:
Write the vision; make it plain on tablets, so that a runner may read it.

3 For there is still a vision for the appointed time;
it speaks of the end and does not lie.

from Times and Seasons p104

'Saint John records three occasions in which this member of the Twelve played a part. (11:16; 14:5; and 20:25-28). One tradition says that he preached the gospel to the Parthians, and the Syrian Christians of Malabar, South India, call themselves "Christians of St Thomas". They believe that their forefathers were evangelized by Saint Thomas, and that he was martyred and buried at Myalpore, near Madras.'

DAY TWENTYFIVE



Isaiah 58

5 Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself?
Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?
Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the Lord?

6 Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

7 Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless into your house;
when you see them naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

8 Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

9 They you shall call and the Lord will answer,
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.

Brueggemann (2): p 189

'The "fast" concerns *injustice*, that is, socioeconomic practices that deny some members of the community access to resources necessary for life. The lead term "injustice," echoing the theme of 56:1-2, refers to all distorted social relations and is developed in more detail in verses 6b-7.

...

The double use of the term "yoke" likely refers to disproportionate indebtedness that placed some members of the community "in hock" to others. To "undo" and "let go free" means to cancel paralyzing debts, thus anticipating the allusion to the practice of Jubilee in 61:1-4.'

DAY TWENTYSIX



Isaiah 58

9b If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,

10 if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

11 The Lord will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water whose waters never fail.

Brueggemann (2) p 191

These verses have an "if-then" form.

'the first "if" consists of three elements. The first is the removal of the yoke, which probably refers to heavy economic requirements ... The basis of genuine communion and well-being is in the practice of a just, compassionate economics that is to be contrasted to the "yoke" of exploitation.'

verse 10 has a *condition* '...that the ones addressed shall attend to the "afflicted," those humiliated, exploited, and demeaned by social practice. The offer of food is likely a broad-based offer of social resources in order to make a viable life possible. The two "ifs" here envision a social practice that is built upon genuine sharing of social power and social goods.'

'...The tight structure of these verses is important. The promise of verses 10b-12 looks to complete restoration of a devastated community. But the *promise* derives from the *condition*. Restored community is not rooted primarily in bureaucracy or technology or high finance or ingenuity. It begins, rather, in noticing the neighbor in public ways — from which arises a public future.'

DAY TWENTYSEVEN



Isaiah 28

16 therefore, thus says the Lord God,
See, I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone,
a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation:
"One who trusts will not panic."

17 And I will make justice the line, and righteousness the plummet;

Brueggemann (1) p 226

'...the poem offers an assurance that is most characteristic of the Isaiah tradition. Yahweh provides a reliable alternative to the madness of the leaders. The rhetoric is exaggerate: foundation stone, tested stone, precious, sure. ...
Yahweh offers a safe haven from the coming scourge, a sure place of refuge in which to be safe. Most plausibly, this is an invitation to *trust in Yahweh*, given in the imagery of Zion. The summons to faith is the only "safe place" in a world severely under assault.'

This imagery is taken up as testimony to Jesus in the early church ... In New Testament faith, it is Jesus who is the sure place of well-being. To be sure, the christological appropriation of the imagery is a daring one. Given that, however, the usage is congruent with that of Isaiah. In both cases, the gift of God is an offer of protection from an unlikely source in a season of acute danger.

In verse 17 the offer of refuge is marked by the characteristic terms "justice and righteousness" that link well-being to covenantal requirements...'

CHRISTMAS DAY



Isaiah 9

2 The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness---
on them has light shined.

6 For a child has been born for us, a son given to us;
authority rests on his shoulders, and he is named
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

7 His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it with justice and righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!

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