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WORDS FOR LIVING MINISTRIES

To Encourage... To Inform... To Teach

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Dear Friends,

Fall 2023

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This is Sally, and I wanted to let you know that Words for Living Ministries is approaching the end of an era. WFLM is going to discontinue its physical office in late January 2024 and will no longer be a 501©3 after this December (which means we can't take any tax-



deductible donations after December 31, 2023). In January we will send out the year-end tax-deductible receipts from 2023; and, after that, we will be closing the physical office in Marion. Any remaining funds in the WFLM account, after all final bills have been paid, will be donated to Cornerstone Foundation, a mission organization which founded and operates a hospital, children's center, and school in Honduras (www.crstone.org). With Daddy (Tom) turning 93 in November and dealing with congestive heart failure, it seems like the time to make this change.

The website (wordsforlivingministries.weebly.com) will probably continue to exist for quite some time, and you can find a number of Daddy's teachings there as well as Food for Thought, Christmas Plays, past newsletters, and other items. Daddy and I will probably continue to send articles/teachings/thoughts to the WFLM email list from time to time. If you are not on the email list and would like to be on it, you can contact me at wordsforliving7@gmail.com or sumacsally@gmail.com. You are also free to call or text me at 270 703 7484 if you have questions about Daddy or the ministry.

We will send out a newsletter in December (and in it we'll repeat this information), and that December newsletter will be the last paper/postal regular newsletter we send out...**EXCEPT that when Daddy's Bible Survey is in its final form and is available, we will send out another newsletter to all of you to let you know it is finished and to tell you how to get a copy.** Daddy can send out such a newsletter at his own expense—it is our plan. After all your years of encouragement and prayers, we very much want you to be able to get his complete *Study Guide to the Entire Bible*.

What about Tom's already existing books? Even after December 2023, you will still be able to request and receive Tom's books (while supplies last)—*Come and Live*, *Live Free*, *Holy Spirit Baptism*, *So You're Going to Haiti*, *Trouble at the Glory Barn*, and *33 Degrees of Deception*, and the booklet *Holidays and Holy Days* (the material in the booklet also appears as a chapter in *Live Free*). To request his books from January 2024 onward, contact WFLM board member John Lambert. You can reach John by email at tlamb316@aol.com or by phone at 731-217-9289.

Now, on to this newsletter's excerpt from Daddy's Study Guide...

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Introduction to Isaiah

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Isaiah may justifiably be thought of as the Prince of the Prophets, in that his book is not only the longest of the books of prophecy, but also, perhaps, the richest. He is quoted in the New Testament more than any other prophet. "Prince" is also a valid title for him in that he was "royal" in the literal sense; according to Jewish tradition he

was the nephew of King Uzziah, and grandson of King Joash, thus a prince in human terms as well as in spiritual terms. He is also thought of as the Messianic Prophet, for the recurring theme of his book is the coming Messiah.

Comparison with the Bible

Many commentators have seen an interesting comparison of the Book of Isaiah with the entire Bible. As there are 66 books of the Bible, there are 66 chapters in Isaiah. The first 39 chapters of Isaiah deal with judgment, corresponding with the 39 books of the Old Testament; and the last 27 chapters of Isaiah, written in a different style, deal with redemption and eternal restoration, corresponding with the 27 books of the New Testament. We will refer to this comparison in considering authorship.

The Isaiah Scroll

Until the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls at Qumran in 1947, the oldest known Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament were written about 900 AD. On these are based what is called the Masoretic Text of the Hebrew Bible; it is also the basis for the Old Testament in most Christian Bibles, both traditional and modern.

But, among the Dead Sea Scrolls, there was found a complete scroll of Isaiah, dated at about 100 BC, taking the Hebrew Scriptures, in one gigantic leap, 1,000 years farther into the past, and closer to the originals. The Isaiah Scroll is virtually identical to the book of Isaiah in the Authorized Version (KJV), thus disappointing many critical scholars, and further verifying the preservation and credibility of Scripture.

Archeological Note: Another Victory for the Bible

In Isaiah 20:1 it is written, "In the year that Tartan came unto Ashdod (when Sargon, the King of Assyria, sent him), and fought against Ashdod and took it." Until the mid-19th Century, this was the only known mention of Sargon in ancient literature. Thus, skeptics proclaimed, this mentioning of a king who was never otherwise known to have existed, was "proof" of the Bible's unreliability.

Then, in 1842, a French diplomat and archeologist named Paul-Emile Botta discovered the ruins of Sargon's palace, with treasures and inscriptions, in what is today northern Iraq. These treasures and inscriptions revealed that Sargon had been one of Assyria's greatest kings; yet his name had disappeared from history, except for this one mention of him in Isaiah 20:1.

Archeology not only confirmed the existence of Sargon, but one of his inscriptions is practically a paraphrase of the verse in Isaiah! Sargon wrote, "Azuri, King of Ashdod, planned in his heart not to pay tribute.

In my anger I marched against Ashdod with my usual bodyguard. I conquered Ashdod, and Gath. I took their treasures and their people...." The Bible wins again!

A. Author. The human author was "Isaiah, son of Amoz," who identifies himself in the very first verse. This Amoz (**not** the prophet Amos) was, according to rabbinic tradition, a brother to King Uzziah, making Isaiah a nephew to King Uzziah, and grandson of King Joash, thus of royal blood, and a part of the court of the kings of Judah. He certainly seems to have been a part of the king's court, for he often appears there, moving about freely, especially during the reign of Hezekiah, in which he played a prominent role.

Were There "Two Isaiahs"? Until late in the 18th Century, Isaiah's authorship of the entire book was not questioned; he was accepted as the single author by both Jewish and Christian authorities. Since that time, because of the differences in style of the two portions of Isaiah (see "Comparison with the Bible" above) critical scholars have taught that there were two authors, giving the presumed author of the last 27 chapters a name, "Deuteroisaiiah" (second Isaiah). Some have imagined that there were even more than two. This is the sort of intellectual gymnastics and dissection of Scripture with which critical scholars make their reputations and careers, perhaps pander to their intellectual pride, and unnecessarily confuse the rest of us.

What underlies this kind of skepticism, and all such speculations on the part of such scholars is that they generally deny the possibility of miracles; in this case, what they reject is the possibility that God would inspire a prophet to see into the future, and write of things to come. Thus, they insist, the writer of Chapters 40-66 wrote of events during the Babylonian captivity, so he must have lived at that time, not during the period before the fall of Jerusalem, as stated in 1:1.

***NOTE:** We must keep in mind the paradigm principle underlying all of this rejection of miracles by naturalist, critical scholars: if there is no God with supernatural powers, to whom we are responsible, then man is his own god. Thus, man becomes his own source of truth and is responsible only to himself. This is the heart of humanism; and it ultimately leads to the humanizing of God, and the deification of man.*

The Evidence for Isaiah as the Single Author. But what is the evidence for Isaiah as the single author of the book which bears his name? First, the book itself states that Isaiah wrote it, in the very first verse. Second, at least four of the New Testament writers, and many of the Church Fathers, declared that Isaiah was the human author--of the last 27 chapters, as well as the first 39¹. And, finally, Jesus Himself quoted from Chapter 61 of

¹ Matthew 3:3, 8:17, 12:17-21; Lk 3:4, 4:17-19; Jn 1:23, 12:37-41; Acts 8:27-33; Rom 10:16-21.

"the book of the prophet Esaias," thus identifying Isaiah as the author of the second portion as well as the first².

Josephus wrote of how Cyrus the Great was moved to send the Jews back to Jerusalem by reading the prophecies of Isaiah (not someone else) concerning him; and those prophecies are in the second section of the book (41:1-4; 44:24-28; 45:1-5; and 46:9-11)³.

Note also the fact that the Isaiah Scroll found at Qumran, the oldest and most important manuscript of Isaiah known to exist, is not divided into two parts, attributed to two human authors. No--this very ancient document is one narrative, uninterrupted and undivided, declaring itself to be the work of a single human author, the prophet Isaiah, the son of Amoz.

The Logical Conclusion. All things considered, the logical conclusion is that Isaiah was the human author of the book that bears his name--all of it.

B. Place and Date. The book was completed about 700 BC in Jerusalem. The time of Isaiah's active ministry was approximately 750 to 700 BC. He lived and ministered in the Southern Kingdom (Judah) when Assyria was the super power of the known world; and he died at the time of the destruction of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) by the Assyrians. He states at the beginning of the book that he served under four kings of Judah: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. Three of these were godly kings; the exception was Ahaz, who was extremely wicked⁴.

Although Isaiah doesn't mention Manasseh, his life probably extended also into the early years of the reign of King Manasseh, Hezekiah's evil son; for, according to the Talmud, Isaiah was martyred by being placed between two planks at Manasseh's command and "sawn asunder" for refusing to approve the wickedness of that evil king. The Talmudic account of Isaiah's martyrdom gains additional credibility in that it was believed and accepted by several of the Church Fathers. We cannot know this with any certainty, but Hebrews 11:32 and 37 may be a reference to Isaiah's martyrdom.

C. Theme. The overriding theme of Isaiah's book is the coming of the Messiah. John the beloved apostle, in quoting from Isaiah, wrote of him that, "he saw his [Christ's] glory, and spake of Him⁵."

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More from Tom: Abba

There is a wonderful, but largely unknown, word in the Bible. It is "abba." "Abba" is a Hebrew word, and it is the familiar form of "father." It is often the first word that a little Israeli toddler learns to say, and it is the Hebrew equivalent of our English word "daddy."

"Abba" appears only three times in the entire Bible: Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; and Galatians 4:6. Of these three, my absolute favorite is Mark 14:36 where our Savior is praying in Gethsemane, and in the most desperate moment of his 33-year earthly life. In his full humanity, and knowing that He is about to be seized, tortured and crucified, He cries out from his heart, "Abba Father, if it be thy will, let this cup pass from me...." It is the most revealing expression in the Bible of our Savior's humanity.

Forgive me if I over-humanize this, but it means that when you and I most need our Heavenly Daddy's comfort, guidance or help, we can crawl up into his lap and tell Him all about it.

What a marvelous thing!

* * * *

Food for Thought—The Widow of Nain



vicinity of Nain in a 19th century photo
Félix Bonfils, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The story of the widow of Nain (also spelled Nein) is recorded in Luke chapter seven. Luke is the only gospel writer who includes this story, and this is in keeping with the pattern of Luke's writing. He consistently shows interest in, and compassion for, the poor and powerless, including women. Luke joins Mark in including the story of the widow's mites and joins Mark and Matthew in recording Jesus's anger with those who "devour widows' houses." Furthermore, it is only Luke who gives us the spoken and sung words of Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna surrounding the incarnation and nativity. And Luke's is the only gospel to include this story—the story of the widow of Nain.

One thing to ponder in this story is simply the image of the bereft mother. Having lost her husband at some point in the past and now her only son, her grief is great. Her future probably holds lasting loneliness and likely

² Luke 4:18-21.

³ Josephus, Antiquities, 11.1.2.

⁴ II Chronicles 28:1-4.

⁵ John 12:41.

poverty. In addition to these burdens, the widow of Nain—at the moment Jesus meets her—also has another wound: symbolic guilt. In the first century, according to Jewish custom, the widow was to walk at the front of the funeral procession because rabbinic writers had said that "woman, who brought death into the world, ought to lead the way in the funeral procession."

Another thing to ponder is that Jesus appears to have come to Nain specifically (and perhaps only) for this woman. Nain was a relatively unimportant agricultural village in the vicinity of Mount Tabor, and the only thing we are told about Jesus's time there was the miracle he performed for this grieving woman (and her son).

The timing of events in the narrative also suggests that Jesus came just for this woman at this moment in her life. Luke tells us that Jesus arrives in Nain just as the funeral procession is heading out through the town gate. And the journey for him had not been an effortless one. Luke tells us that Jesus comes to Nain after healing the Centurion's servant in Capernaum. The journey from Capernaum to Nain would've been about 25 miles, which is a lot of ground to cover—a long march. Furthermore, the journey represented a rise in elevation of about 1,300 feet, which means Jesus would've been walking uphill on this journey. It was not an easy trip. And, not only does he make this trip, but he also times it in such a way that he had been in Capernaum at the right time to heal the Centurion's servant and yet still arrived in Nain in time to meet the widow at the hour of her need.

Luke tells us in verse 13 that when Jesus saw the widow, he "had compassion on her." More than once I've heard Bible teachers say that the miracles of Jesus occurred *only* to serve as proof of his divinity or to provide a sign that he was the Messiah. I think they say this in an attempt to address the mystery about why miracles sometimes occur and sometimes do not. And it is true that the miracles did point at who Jesus was (Luke 7:20-23), but that cannot be the whole story, for passages in Mathew, Mark, and Luke, including this one, specifically mention Jesus's compassion as a factor in a number of his miracles.

Another thing to notice in this story is the detail Luke gives us when he says that "many of his disciples" and "much people" accompanied Jesus from Capernaum to Nain. Did this large group walking with Jesus wonder what he had on his mind on this non-leisurely journey? I imagine they did. And I am guessing that they felt that staying with him and being with him--for whatever he had in mind--was worth the rigorous journey. Whatever he was going to do next—whether it was teaching or action--they wanted to be there. Are we willing to take on exhausting journeys in order to stay close to the Lord and his work?

Luke includes the detail that as soon as Jesus brought the widow's son back to life, the young man began

talking, What did he say? We aren't told. But I bet that there was MUCH talking in every corner of Nain that night! I am also guessing that some of them that evening remembered and talked about the fact that their region had been blessed in a similar way 800 years before when, in the days of Elisha, the Shunammite woman's son was brought back to life (by the 1st century, Shunem no longer existed, but its site was only a few miles from Nain).

Finally, it is instructive to look at the response of the people of Nain. When Jesus performs the life-giving miracle, they don't start arguing about touching the ceremonially unclean bier and whether it was proper for Jesus to do that or about what day of the week it was or anything else. Instead, they were amazed and gave glory to God saying, "God has visited His people!" They are full of excitement and joy. Their reaction is reminiscent of the grateful joy of the shepherds at Jesus's birth. This is the way it should be.

--Sally

(with thanks to Michael Card, Dalles Jones, Mark Barnes, and others)

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Milestones:

In this newsletter we note the passing of these saints and friends. Please pray for their families.

Paul Walker 7 February 2023

Vickie Thompson 11 March 2023

Judy Belyeu 27 June 2023

We also rejoice at a birth:

Jeremiah Jones Jr. to Jeremiah and Becca (Jarvis) Jones on 30 April 2023 (and this little guy is a great-grandchild of Tom's).

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A FINAL WORD

Treasure and use each day as if it were your last, and never give up hope: God has a limitless supply of new beginnings, and He makes beautiful things out of broken pieces.



Photo by [Mr. Great Heart](#) on [Unsplash](#)