

A Highway Will Be There

Isaiah 11:11-16

September 20, 2009

A. Introduction

1. 'Route 66'
2. Scripture reading Isaiah 11

B. What should we expect this return to look like?

1. From Deuteronomy 28 and 30<sup>A</sup>
2. it is only a small, faithful remnant<sup>B</sup>
3. this remnant are believers<sup>C</sup>
4. it will be into a land at peace<sup>D</sup>
5. it will be into a land of restored boundaries<sup>E</sup>

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<sup>A</sup> Deuteronomy 28:64-65, 30:1-4

<sup>B</sup> Isaiah 11:16, Romans 11:5

<sup>C</sup> Isaiah 11:12, 10

<sup>D</sup> Isaiah 11:6-9, 13

<sup>E</sup> Isaiah 11:14

6. it will be the manifest work of God<sup>F</sup>

C. What are the various interpretations of this return?

1. first return was from Egypt, the second from Babylon<sup>G</sup>
2. first return was from Babylon, second was gathering at Pentecost<sup>H</sup>
3. first return was from Babylon, second the re-establishment of Israel
4. second return is yet to take place and will be wondrous!

D. Spiritual Application

1. The highways that God has provided
2. Canon Haslam: 'An Highway Shall Be There'<sup>I</sup>

E. Conclusion: taking the God-provided Way

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<sup>F</sup> Isaiah 11:15

<sup>G</sup> Psalm 107:2-3, 2 Chronicles 36:22-23, Ezra 1:1-3

<sup>H</sup> Acts 2:9-11

<sup>I</sup> Isaiah 35:8-9, John 14:5-6, Hebrews 10:19-22

A. Introduction

1. Route 66

- a. you may have heard about this in song; it was certainly a popular one in the 1960's
- b. it was also known as the Will Rogers Highway
- c. this was one of the original US highways, being built in the mid-1920's and retired from the system in the mid-1980's
- d. it ran just under 2,500 miles (about 4,000 km) from Chicago to Los Angeles
- e. in the 1930's it was followed through the surrounding farm lands by migrant workers of the depression years
- f. in the years of WW II, others followed it to work in the war related industries in California
- g. and in the 1950's it was followed by people heading out into the golden west for vacation and to live; dotted along its way were all sorts of tourist sites and amenities
- h. but the Interstate Highway Act spelled the beginning of the end for Route 66, as better planned highways were built
- i. now only a few sections are in active use as historic sites, but these remain as a reminder of the thousands of people who travelled that highway seeking joy and fulfilment.

2. today I want us to look at another highway

- a. not one with all the popular cultural overtones of Route 66
- b. but one of a far more lasting significance than 60 years
- c. it is found in this 11th chapter of Isaiah, which we will now read, as well as later in this book « – read Isaiah 11 through »

3. this passage speaks of a return

- a. we shall look at the criteria, conditions & circumstances of that return
- b. then we shall summarize various interpretations of this return
- c. and finally, I would like to make a spiritual application of the thought that 'A Highway Will Be There'.

B. What should we expect this return to look like?

1. that is, what are its criteria, conditions and circumstances?

2. The book of Deuteronomy tells us one criteria: repentance

a. chapter 28 lays out the blessings if Israel obeys, and the curses if Israel forsakes, God, ending with this warning: <sup>64</sup> Moreover, the Lord will scatter you among all peoples, from one end of the earth to the other end of the earth; .... <sup>65</sup> Among those nations you shall find no rest, and there will be no resting place for the sole of your foot; but there the Lord will give you a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and despair of soul. – Israel forsook God, the captivity and exile resulted

b. chapter 30 states the condition for Israel's re-gathering: <sup>1</sup> So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the Lord your God has banished you, <sup>2</sup> and you return to the Lord your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, <sup>3</sup> then the Lord your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you. <sup>4</sup> If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. The condition: return to and obey God; repent.

3. another condition is that the return will only be a remnant

a. verse 16: it is 'for the remnant of His people who will be left'

b. not the mass and majority but the few remaining

c. the Bible also makes it clear that the remnant consists of those who are faithful, the people of God, 'Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace.' (Romans 11:5 AV)

4. another circumstance is that this remnant believes in Messiah, in the Christ; in a word, they are believing Christians

a. And He will lift up a standard for the nations And assemble the banished ones of Israel, And will gather

- the dispersed of Judah From the four corners of the earth. (Isaiah 11:12)
- b. God will use a NIS=standard, banner or signal; as the way of gathering His people: this NIS, has just been identified
  - c. Then in that day The nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal {NIS} for the peoples; And His resting place will be glorious. (Isaiah 11:10) – the standard is Messiah; He is the Christ; He is Jesus of Nazareth
  - d. note too that the remnant will have Gentiles added to it
  - e. and that the 'knowledge of God will cover the earth'
5. it says that this will take place in that day just described
- a. a day as we saw when perfect peace exists in the land
  - b. we looked at that picture of peace last week
  - c. and here we read 'Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, And those who harass Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, And Judah will not harass Ephraim. (Isaiah 11:13) – the strife has ceased in that perfect peace
6. it seems that this return will be to the land with its boundaries fully restored – 'They will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west; Together they will plunder the sons of the east; They will possess Edom and Moab, And the sons of Ammon will be subject to them.' (Isaiah 11:14)
- a. this is a verse which gives most of the expositors trouble
  - b. how can there be this conflict when there is perfect peace?
  - c. but this verse can quite correctly be understood to have its action in the future perfect tense: 'they will have swooped ... plundered ... possessed Edom and Moab'
  - d. and so the promised boundaries have been restored from the great sea to the trans-Jordan area to the east, which is consistent with promises elsewhere
7. finally, this will be a manifest work of God rather than of man
- a. the gulf of Suez – the tongue of the Sea of Egypt – closed
  - b. the great Euphrates river reduced to seven shallow brooks

c. so that no impediment impedes the return of God's people

C. What are the various interpretations of this return?

1. first return was from Egypt, the second was from Babylon

a. the following words of Psalm 107:2-3 were written after the return from exile, depicting that return as a fulfilment: <sup>2</sup> Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, Whom He has redeemed from the hand of the adversary <sup>3</sup> And gathered from the lands, From the east and from the west, From the north and from the south.

b. the way God raised Cyrus to perform this work made it a manifest work of God, 2 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-3

c. certainly it was a small remnant that returned, but ...

d. that return failed to meet many conditions; the land was only partly restored, and as we read in Ezra, Nehemiah, and the later prophets, the people did not fully repent

2. that the first return was that from Babylon, not from Egypt

a. and the second was the gathering at Pentecost

(A) now it is true that at that time there were in Jerusalem Jews from the various areas listed here in Isaiah

(B) those who responded were the repentant

(C) and these received a perfect peace with God

(D) it also was but a small remnant

(E) and was attested by signs and wonders from God

(F) yet the land was not fully restored

(G) and this interpretation seems to need spiritualization of the text far beyond what its plain language will allow

b. the second was the re-establishment of Israel and Zionism

(A) one look at the Israeli state

(B) at its secular nature, even in its formation

(C) at the absence of return by the nation to God

- (D) at its suppression of Christian witness
- (E) at the very limited size of its territory
- (F) should lead to the conclusion that this is at best only a preparatory work of God, not what is foretold here

- c. it seems all these are but foreshadowing of what will occur
- d. that God will gather His people a second time at some future date which only He know, his people under Jesus Christ, in the wondrous fashion as described in Isaiah 11

D. What is the lesson – spiritual application – of these verses for us?

1. God has provided His highways

- a. there was a highway out of Egypt into the land of promise
  - (A) there was a direct route which led there that the people might enter by faith
  - (B) but the people chose the 40-year route
- b. there was a highway out of the exile and captivity
  - (A) Cyrus' declaration
  - (B) but only 42,000 Israelites + 7,000 of their servants took the path that He had provided
  - (C) for the rest, as my Hebrew professor used to put it, business was too good where they were
- c. but there is another highway that God has provided
  - (A) it is the most important highway of all
  - (B) at my graduation, the principal of Toronto Bible College gave me a book
  - (C) written 60 years ago by Canon R. H. A. Haslam, former principal of Emmanuel College, Saskatoon
  - (D) I want share with you this morning from the title chapter of the book, which takes its theme from Isaiah 11:11-16, and is entitled,

2. 'An Highway Shall Be There'<sup>{2}</sup>.

- a. this theme is picked up later in Isaiah 35:8, 9 – <sup>8a</sup> And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called The way of holiness ... <sup>9b</sup> ... the redeemed shall walk there.
- b. "The Lord has always prepared a highway for His people from the land of exile to the land of freedom; from the city of destruction to the city of God. His greatest difficulty has ever been to persuade His

people to walk in the way He has prepared. Their refusal means their tragic loss, but this they are slow to learn.”

- c. we will look no further at the historical context of these verses nor of the questions of the fulfilment of prophecy involved, but rather consider the matter of the highway of God that He has prepared for those who would seek Him.
- d. “Perhaps the first thing we are obliged to note is that the highway of God, which He has ‘cast up’ for His people at such tremendous cost, is by no means acceptable to man’s way of thinking. ... it is so foreign to human conception that natural man cannot comprehend it. Take, for example, the case of our Lord’s disciples. It was only with the utmost difficulty that He made known to them the way of redemption.
- e. “When our Lord spoke of going to the Father, saying, ‘Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know,’ Thomas, impatiently, replied: ‘Lord ... how can we know the way?’ To which question Jesus gave answer: ‘I am the way, the truth and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.’ These words are so familiar that there is grave danger of our failing to grasp both the depth and significance of their meaning. Had He said: ‘I will shew you the way, I will expound the truth, I will explain the life,’ all would be simple. But to incarnate the Way and Truth and Life in himself ... proves a real difficulty even to the earnest seeker after God.
- f. “And yet, it is so. The way of redemption is the Redeemer himself. There is no salvation apart from the Saviour, ... {it is only} by what He was and did. By these only was and is redemption. He is the Highway to God for man.”
- g. Let us read from Hebrews 10:19-22 on this subject: <sup>19</sup> ¶ Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup> by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, <sup>21</sup> and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup> let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (NAS)
- h. This passage is built on the OT ritual, and particularly on the day of atonement, which the Jews will be remembering in a few weeks, when the high priest went into the holy of holies to seek atonement for God’s people for their sin. In Hebrews we find that Jesus Christ carried out what that ritual foreshadowed, when He as the Messianic High Priest entered the Holy of Holies to atone once for all for sin.

- i. In this Hebrews passage, the writer "... asserts that the believer has right of access into the holy place of the presence of God by the way Christ dedicated for him. That way was by His blood, His out-poured life. Through His cross alone, access into God's presence has been made possible, for by that cross the barrier of sin has been removed for the believer. The writer calls that way 'a new and living way.' The words are very significant. 'A new way.' The original meaning of the word is 'recently killed.' It is used only this once in the NT. This is impressive, especially when it is remembered that," in the OT "economy, the high priest, as representative of the people, could come into the presence of God in the Holy of Holies only with the blood of the sacrificial victim. The believer now enters only through the blood of the Lamb of God." To add the word 'living' to the 'recently killed' "way is strange. But all becomes clear when it is remembered that the 'new and living way' is a Person, Who, through His flesh, His humanity and His sacrificial death and resurrection opened up the way. In Him, only, we draw near."
- j. so the application of the message of the Gospel, this 'new' religion of Jesus Christ as it were, came to be known not as Christianity or as the 'Jesus movement' or some such term, but simply as the Way. To be a Christian is to be one who by faith walks in the Way – who is in Christ – whose life is bound up with the life of Christ.

## E. Conclusion

1. how small the remnant is! how few are the true!
  - a. the Jews by their unbelief refused God's highway into the land of promised but chose the 40-year wandering through the wilderness until that generation passed away
  - b. God prepared a highway out of Assyria at the decree of the emperor Cyrus himself; how few returned to Jerusalem
  - c. God made known the Way on the day of Pentecost to the descendants of those who had and who had not returned from the captivity and the exile; how few chose it
2. that highway is standing there free and opened today:
  - a. will you not look "at the blessedness of this life which has been provided for the redeemed in Christ? A way of holiness, for without holiness and purity no man shall see Him. A way open to the simple believer and to the weary and heavy laden. A way hid with Christ in God, consequently a way safe through all

attacks of the evil one.

- b. thousands upon thousands used to follow Route 66 every year; the sad thing, how few people follow God's highway, a marvellous highway filled with His blessing
- c. that high Way is the Lord, Jesus the Christ, and none has ever entered it and been disappointed; no, not one!

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2. The quoted excerpts shown are from *An Highway Shall Be There*, by Canon R. H. A. Haslam, M.A., D.D., published 1948 by Evangelical Publishers, Toronto, Canada. Bible quotations in these excerpts are from the Authorized Version.