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Jerusalem on the other side of judgment. The woman with the issue of blood and Jairus' daughter.

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Transcript

Isaiah chapter 4, And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, We will eat our own bread and wear our own clothes. Only let us be called by your name. Take away our reproach.

In that day the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel. And he who is left in Zion and remains in Jerusalem will be called holy, everyone who has been recorded for life in Jerusalem, when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and cleansed the bloodstains of Jerusalem from its midst by a spirit of judgment and by a spirit of burning. Then the Lord will create over the whole site of Mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud by day, and smoke and the shining of a flaming fire by night.

For over all the glory there will be a canopy, there will be a booth for shade by day from the heat, and for a refuge and a shelter from the storm and rain. The opening verse of Isaiah chapter 4 should probably be taken with the section at the end of chapter 3. There the prophet described the humiliation of the daughters of Zion, the haughty, wealthy and

fashionable women of the city, who epitomized its pride and its indifference to poverty and oppression. This continues the theme of the humbling of Judah's pride that has been running since chapter 2. After the Lord had cut down the lofty of the land, stripping the people of their rulers, judges, counsellors, prophets and artisans, men would search in vain for some figure to act as their leader.

Isaiah chapter 3 verses 6-7 For a man will take hold of his brother in the house of his father, saying, You have a cloak, you shall be our leader, and this heap of ruins shall be under your rule. In that day he will speak out, saying, I will not be a healer, in my house there is neither bread nor cloak. You shall not make me leader of the people.

Chapter 4 verse 1 describes a similar situation for the humbled women of the land, who would engage in a comparably desperate quest for a husband or a man to take ownership of them. Widowed and impoverished, as Zion herself at the end of chapter 3, women who were formerly of high status would reduce themselves to extreme concubinage or near prostitution, simply to be under a man's protection and to be spared the social dishonour of destitute and childless widowhood. In the most sanguinary wars, the male population of a country can be radically diminished.

After the Paraguayan war of the 1860s, for instance, there was likely only about one man for every four women in the country, and considerably less in many regions. Recording horrific events that occurred under a decade after Isaiah's prophecy here, 2 Chronicles chapter 28 describes a situation in which 120,000 men of Judah were slain by their Israelite brethren during the Syro-Ephraimite war during the reign of King Ahaz. One could imagine that with so many young men dead on the battlefield, and so much property destroyed, plundered or captured, in a society where security depended heavily upon male protection and provision, any man of might and means that remained would have destitute women desperately trying to outbid each other for his support.

Isaiah describes women going to the extent of foregoing provision and surrendering themselves to such a man's ownership merely for the security and the minimal social status of belonging to his household. Chapters 2-4 of Isaiah largely present the awful humbling of the pride of Judah and Jerusalem. However, this material is bookended by two prophecies that markedly contrast with the main body of the material that they frame.

Chapter 2 verses 1-4 describes the raising up of the mountain of the Lord over all of the other mountains, and the flowing of the nations up to it in worship, and the flowing out of the law and the word of the Lord to the ends of the earth. Chapter 4 verses 2-6 present a restored and purged Jerusalem in terms of Exodus imagery. In the process it offers us an understanding of how the glorious vision of Jerusalem with which the section began would be achieved.

It would be achieved as the people are purified through judgment. There have been

several uses of the expression in that day in the last few chapters. In chapter 2 verse 11, verse 17 and 20, chapter 3 verse 4 and 18, and in chapter 4 verse 1. At certain points in these previous uses it was apparent that the day would not merely be one of humbling of the pride and judgment of the wicked, but also of exaltation of the Lord and abandonment of idolatry.

Here that aspect of the awaited day becomes more prominent. There are also allusions back to other elements of preceding prophecies such as to the daughters of Jerusalem in verse 4. The expression the branch of the Lord might make us think of the various references in later prophecies and scripture to a messianic figure referred to as the branch. We encountered this figure in places like Jeremiah chapter 23 verse 5 and chapter 33 verse 15.

Also in Zechariah chapter 3 verse 8 and 6 verse 12. Here however it's not entirely clear that this figure is primarily in view. Rather most commentators argue that it ought to be read in parallel with the expression the fruit of the land later in the same verse.

Yet considering the ways that Isaiah employs arboreal imagery elsewhere it does not seem inappropriate to see some sort of indirect reference at the very least to the messianic branch in whom the people would flourish. Just a few chapters later in chapter 11 verse 1 for instance he will write, There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his root shall bear fruit. Brother Charles writes, Once the term branch had become a technical term for the Messiah in later prophetic literature, it is difficult to imagine this earlier non-technical usage not accumulating a richer connotation than perhaps originally intended.

Particularly does this move seem likely when one recalls that the passage has been linked intertextually with its larger Isaianic context. Had not Isaiah chapter 11 verse 1 spoken of a shoot from the stump of Jesse which initiated the prophetic theme of the return of paradisaic peace and harmony? Moreover the use of the verb create raises the level of the imagery to that of a new divine creation which starts over as it were after the cleansing of Jerusalem. In sum in the present literary context within the book of Isaiah the terms resonate with messianic reference both in terms of the messianic bringer of salvation, the branch, and the return of paradise, the fruit of the land.

Indeed the very expansive overlaid style of the unit is a further sign that this passage has acquired multi-layered connotations when construed in the light of the larger corpus of scripture. Israel is the people of the Lord's planting and after his pruning of her she will flourish and the remnant of her would be seen in their true splendour. After the Lord judged the wicked and the evil doers among his people, those who survived the purging of Jerusalem as its remnant would manifest a new holiness.

Elsewhere in scripture we read of the Lord's book of life and verse 3 seems to refer to such a document in speaking of those who were recorded for life in Jerusalem. This

group would be revealed through the purgation of the Lord as through judgment and burning he revealed the faithful among the people. Along with the imagery that we have already seen of paradise, in verses 5 and 6 imagery is taken from the exodus to refer to the intimate presence of the Lord among his people, protecting them, providing for them, and rendering them holy.

The most powerful historical instance of this of course was the Lord's dwelling among his people and leading them by the pillar of cloud and fire in the wilderness. That pillar of cloud and fire had become associated with the tabernacle, then later the temple, filled with the glory of the Lord. But now the glorious presence of the Lord among his people is no longer seen to be contained within the single building and the single room within the building of the holy of holies in the temple, rather it has expanded to overshadow the entire city of Zion.

The Lord is dwelling among his people as the great bridegroom with his bride. The canopy and the booth for shade are perhaps the imagery of a bridal chamber. This intimacy of the Lord's relationship with his people, taking imagery of paradise and also of exodus, is a concrete image of the fulfilment of the covenant formula, I will be their God and they will be my people.

A question to consider, how might we see in these final verses of chapter 4 connections with the feast of tabernacles? What insights might follow from those connections? Mark chapter 5 verses 21 to 43 And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet and implored him earnestly, saying, My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live.

And he went with him. And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better, but rather grew worse.

She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. For she said, If I touch even his garments I will be made well. And immediately the flow of blood dried up and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease.

And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, Who touched my garments? And his disciples said to him, You see the crowds pressing around you, and yet you say, Who touched me? And he looked around to see who had done it. But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling, and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. And he said to her, Daughter, your faith has made you well.

Go in peace and be healed of your disease. While he was still speaking there came from the ruler's house some who said, Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the teacher any further? But overhearing what they said, Jesus said to the ruler of the synagogue, Do not fear, only believe.

And he allowed no one to follow him except Peter and James and John, the brother of James. They came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and Jesus saw a commotion, people weeping and wailing loudly. And when he had entered he said to them, Why are you making a commotion and weeping? The child is not dead, but sleeping.

And they laughed at him. But he put them all outside and took the child's father and mother and those who were with him and went in where the child was. Taking her by the hand, he said to her, Talathakumi, which means, Little girl, I say to you, arise.

And immediately the girl got up and began walking, for she was twelve years of age. And they were immediately overcome with amazement. And he strictly charged them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat.

The end of Mark 5 relates two entangled events of healing. Both of the people being healed are women, and both of them are connected with twelve years. The woman with the discharge of blood had suffered from it for twelve years, and the daughter of Jairus was twelve years of age.

The passage begins with Jesus crossing back to the other side of the Sea of Galilee after the events in the lands of the Gerasenes. Jairus was one of the rulers of the synagogue, who would have led services. That Jairus was the ruler of a synagogue also illumines the fact that opposition to Jesus among the religious leaders of Israel was far from total.

There were some among them who did look to Jesus as a great teacher and one who was speaking the truth. Jairus' name is given to us, unlike the name of most people for whom Christ performed miracles or exorcisms. Perhaps he was a figure who was known in the early church, or perhaps his name itself is important.

Joel Marcus suggests that it might have been the Greek transliteration of names meaning either he enlightens or he awakens. Either of those would be significant in the context. We also see a number of people in the Old Testament that might be a background here.

A man called Jair the Manassite captured some of the area of Gilead in Numbers 32.41 and Deuteronomy 3.14. Another Jair was one of the judges in Judges 10.3-4. He operated in the same region and Jairus seems to be in that same sort of region too. Jesus is requested to lay his hands on Jairus' daughter and heal her and he goes with Jairus to his house. But on the way he is thronged by the crowd and there's a woman with a discharge of blood, presumably vaginal.

It seems to be a chronic hemorrhaging of blood rather than just abnormally severe menstruation and the effect of this would be to render her permanently unclean. It's probably one of the reasons why she approaches Jesus in the way that she did. Had she been more open in her approach she would probably not have been able to approach him at all.

Many doctors had tried to help her but had just increased her suffering and also consumed all her resources. So Jesus' healing contrasts with the failure of all the experts. She had heard about Jesus and perhaps we should consider the fact that she was probably confined to the margins of society by her condition.

She was in many respects someone from an utterly different station in life from Jairus. She believes that if she were just to touch Jesus' garments she would be healed. We see similar beliefs in chapter 6 verse 56 and then also in Acts 5.15 where people wanted to be beneath the shadow of Peter as he walked by and in Acts 19 verse 12 where people would take handkerchiefs or aprons that had touched the skin of Paul and bring them to the sick so that they might be healed by them.

The touch of the woman in this position would have been defiling but not as defiling as touching someone's flesh. A defiled person had to wash themselves and wash their clothes so it was both themselves, their body and their clothes that were defiled by the touch. But here there is a life that overcomes impurity and that is transmitted to the woman rather than the woman transmitting her impurity to Christ.

This passage is also an illustration of the way in which clothes can function as an extension of a person. A way in which the clothes carry something of the significance and the power of the person. Jesus inquires who touched him to his disciples amazement because there's a crowd around but Jesus recognises what has happened.

In calling for the woman who had touched him to make herself known the stage is set for an act of recognition, blessing and inclusion that completes the healing. She will no longer be an isolated and marginalised individual hiding herself in the crowd but she will be one who is seen and addressed as daughter by her saviour. When the woman reveals herself she comes in fear and trembling and falls down before him.

This is a response reminiscent of the way that people respond to appearances of God in scripture. She tells him everything and Jesus blesses her, addresses her as daughter and tells her that her faith has made her well. Faith here is not intellectual belief in some concepts or doctrines, it's a confident and a daring trust to come near to Christ.

The prominence of faith in this story, as in that of Jairus and his daughter that follows, should be seen as related to the language of salvation that occurs in both. The salvation in these stories seems to refer to physical healing and raising of the dead in the case of Jairus's daughter and the language of faith could be interpreted narrowly too. However

Jesus routinely connects physical and spiritual senses of these things.

Faith is a practical confidence to look to Jesus for deliverance, not just in spiritual matters and when it's exercised in physical matters it is seen to have a spiritual connotation and significance too. Our tidy divisions between physical and spiritual can obstruct our understanding at such points. Faith looks to Christ in whatever situation it finds itself in, even if it's physical difficulty.

As in the story of Jairus's daughter that follows this, early Christian readers of this story probably figured themselves into the position of the woman with the discharge of blood, recognising her experience as a model for Christian experience more generally. We should do this too. Her being addressed as daughter at the end might also make the reader think of the new family that Jesus is forming around himself.

However all of this creates a delay and by the time that Jesus reaches the house of Jairus his daughter is dead. The feared crisis has hit and there might seem to be nothing more to be done. Jesus calls Jairus however to keep his confidence in his sufficiency for the situation.

There are many similarities to the story of Lazarus here, meeting the mourners, saying that the dead person is sleeping, delaying until the person is dead etc. Jesus performs this miracle with only Peter, James and John of his disciples present. They are privileged witnesses to his power and saying that the daughter was sleeping would make people think of the final resurrection where those sleeping in their graves would be awakened.

This is the language that we find in scripture and elsewhere, the dead sleeping and being awakened at the resurrection. However the final resurrection was a long distant hope for the end of all things. It wasn't something that could really address the immediacy of the grief that people felt or at least so they thought.

However Jesus can refer to death this way because in him the resurrection and the life had entered into Jairus's house. Jesus takes the girl by the hand and addresses her telling her to arise. The use of Aramaic here, the fact that the original statement is preserved in its original language, gives the reader some sense of the immediacy of this powerful speech act.

These were not regular words but words with a mysterious might and they seem to be preserved for us in their original form for this reason. We see a similar thing in Mark chapter 7 verse 34 where the words spoken to the man whose eyes were opened is also retained for us. The reference to a rising naturally and I think appropriately makes us think of the resurrection and maybe giving her something to eat is also in part to make us think of later proofs of Jesus's own resurrection given in taking food and not merely a reference to the girl's recovery of strength.

Jesus once again strictly instructs those present to keep the raising of the girl a secret although his taking Peter, James and John with him makes clear that he wanted the event to be witnessed and later spoken of openly. However to tell it at that point in time before Jesus's own resurrection had disclosed his true power over death would be premature. That had to wait until after his own resurrection had taken place.

A question to consider, the woman with the issue of blood suffered with that condition for 12 years and the daughter of Jairus was 12 years old. Why does Mark record these details? What deeper significance to these healings might be suggested by them?