

¹ *There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*
² *The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.* ³ *His delight is in the fear of the LORD, and He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, nor decide by the hearing of His ears;* ⁴ *but with righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.* ⁵ *Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His waist.* ⁶ *"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.* ⁷ *The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.* ⁸ *The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.* ⁹ *They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.* ¹⁰ *And in that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious."*

Text: Isaiah 11:1-10 A 12/26/21 Hebrews 1:1-6 Luke 2:22-40 Psalm 116 Resp. Ps.: 67
Hymns: 102, 715, 645, 94

THE FRUIT OF THE BRANCH OF JESSE

- 1. He delights in the fear of the Lord**
- 2. He brings salvation to poor sinners**
- 3. He brings His people peace**

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

When we lived in Florida, I enjoyed seeing an orange tree outside our window in our neighbor's yard, with its dark green leaves and the bright oranges hanging from its branches. One winter we had a bad freeze, and that beautiful tree was reduced to an ugly brown stump. I often thought someone should just cut it down and get rid of the eyesore.

Long ago the prophet Isaiah foretold of a stump that appeared dead, but still had life in it and even produced fruit.

1

"There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." Jesse was the father of King David. The Lord promised that the Messiah would come from the family 'tree' of Jesse and David. When David was king, the nation of Israel was in its glory. After David's death, as the years went by and Israel repeatedly turned away from the Lord, its glory faded. Things looked very bleak, and still the promised Savior hadn't arrived. *"But when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son"* (Gal. 4:4). God kept His Word. Jesus Christ, the great Descendant of Jesse and David, was born. To outward appearances, that little Christ Child, that small "Rod," that "Branch," looked like any other human baby. But in the manger in Bethlehem God had placed His Son, our Savior, our Heavenly King! Isaiah had prophesied that the Branch from the stump of Jesse would "grow" – speaking of all that Christ would do to save us.

“The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. His delight is in the fear of the LORD.” The Holy Spirit would be on Jesus. When Jesus was baptized, remember how the Holy Spirit descended on Him in the form of a dove? It demonstrated the unity between God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. As the almighty Son of God, Jesus perfectly knew and did His Father’s will. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit all work together as One to save us.

The Branch of Jesse would “*delight ... in the fear of the Lord.*” Psalm thirty-three says that to “*fear the Lord*” is to “*stand in awe of Him.*” In loving reverence, Jesus perfectly obeyed His Father’s will in all things.

Already as a twelve-year-old boy, Jesus was discussing the Scriptures with the teachers in the temple. They were amazed at His understanding and answers (Lk. 2:47). As a boy, Jesus continued in subjection to His earthly parents (Lk. 2:51), in obedience to the Word of God. “*And,*” Luke tells us, “*Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men*” (2:52).

When Jesus was baptized, and again later when He shone in His divine glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, His Father said of Him, “*This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased*” (Mt. 3:17). God the Father was perfectly pleased with everything Jesus did. The writer to the Hebrews says that although Jesus was tempted in all the ways we are, because He is God, He remained “*without sin*” (He. 4:15). Jesus lived a perfect life to earn the way to heaven for us.

The fourth chapter of Galatians tells us that Jesus was “*born under the law to redeem those who were under the law*” (v 4). Isaiah had prophesied that the Messiah would have the Spirit of “*wisdom ... understanding ... counsel ... might ... knowledge and ... the fear of the Lord.*” As the Son of God, Jesus perfectly understood and obeyed everything the Bible commands. Isaiah says, “*Righteousness shall be the belt of His [waist], and faithfulness the belt of His [waist].*” Jesus took the sins of the whole world upon Himself and paid for them all with His death on the cross. We sinners are saved by trusting in Jesus and His perfect life of righteousness, and His perfect sacrifice on the cross.

When Christ sacrificed Himself on the cross, the disciples thought that all that was left of His ministry was an ugly stump. They feared for their lives. On the third day, Jesus rose triumphant. Their fear turned to joy. In Jesus’ resurrection, we too rise to Christmas Joy and newness of life. The Shoot of Jesse grafts us into Himself – the Vine. Jesus makes us His living branches. He makes the most unlikely into His branches. We all too often judge by what we see. It is different with Jesus.

2

“*He shall not judge by what His eyes see, or decide disputes by what His ears hear.*” The Bible says, “*Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart*” (1 Sam. 16:7). As God, Jesus sees the sin that’s in our hearts.

“He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He shall kill the wicked.” Isaiah is talking about the Word Jesus speaks and its effect on those who reject it. When Jesus came, He told the people to repent of their sins and believe in Him as the Son of God. Either we believe in Jesus and His Word saves us, or we don’t believe in Jesus and His Word condemns us to hell. Jesus says, *“There is a judge for one who rejects Me and does not accept My words; that very Word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day”* (Jn. 12:48). The Bible says that Jesus Christ alone is the Son of God, and our only hope for salvation (Jn. 14:6; Ac. 4:12). Take His Word to heart and believe it. As Joshua told God’s people, “Choose!” (Josh. 24:15). Will it be eternal life, or eternal damnation?

“With righteousness He shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.” *“God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but the world might be saved through Him”* (3:17). The unbelievers make Jesus their condemning Judge. But that’s not what Jesus wants to be. He came into the world to save sinners. We’re told in the second chapter of Philippians, *“Christ Jesus, … being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be held onto, but made Himself nothing.... And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross!”* (vv. 2:6-8). The Branch of Jesse left behind His glory in heaven and came to earth to give His life for the sins of all people. We marvel with the hymn writer:

He left His radiant throne on high, left realms of heavenly bliss,
And came to earth to bleed and die – Was ever love like this? (TLH, #363:3)

Isaiah says that the Savior judges us with “righteousness” and “equity.” When we look at ourselves, we see our sinfulness. But that’s not the way our Heavenly Father sees us. The Scripture says, *“God made [Christ] who had no sin to become sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God”* (2 Cor. 5:21). God took all our sins away from us and placed them on Jesus. Jesus died for them all, so our sins have been completely forgiven and forgotten by God. God took Christ’s righteousness and covered us with it. When God looks at you and me, He doesn’t look at our sins, but at the perfect righteousness of His Son. We are guilty sinners. But because we believe in Jesus, God declares us: “Not guilty;” “righteous.” “Be happy, your sins are forgiven!” (Mt. 9:2).

Isaiah prophesied that when Jesus would come, *“In that day there shall be a Root of Jesse, Who shall stand as a banner to the people; for the Gentiles shall seek Him, and His resting place shall be glorious.”* Although Jesus was born from the Jewish race, He is the Savior of the whole world: *“Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord”* (Lk. 2:10-11, my emphasis).

3

Isaiah told his people that when the Messiah would be born, *“The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra’s hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper’s den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as*

the waters cover the sea." Notice, the Lord speaks of this peaceful scene taking place "*in ... My holy mountain.*" We learn from the second chapter of Isaiah that "*the mountain of the Lord*" (Is. 2:3) is a figurative expression for the New Testament Christian Church – all of us in these New Testament times who believe in Jesus. The twelfth chapter of Hebrews says to us New Testament Christians, "*You have come to Mount Zion,... to the Church*" (vv. 22-23, my emphasis). The Lord says that as soon as we come to faith in Jesus, we "*have come*" to His mountain – His Christian Church. Isaiah describes this as a time and place of peace (the wolf with the lamb, the child with the cobra, and so forth). This isn't some future kingdom Jesus will rule over here on earth. He says, "*My kingdom is not of this world*" (Jn. 18:36, my emphasis). Isaiah says this peace would come when the Branch of Jesse would come – when Jesus was born. Isaiah wasn't predicting a time of political peace between nations, either. Jesus says, "*In this world you will have trouble*" (Jn. 16:33). God says this peace takes place "*in ... My holy mountain.*" The peace of God only comes to those who believe in Jesus. When Isaiah talks about the wolf living with the lamb, and so forth, he's talking about the peace Jesus gives us.

Ephesians 2:14 says, "[*Christ*] *Himself is our peace.*" Sin and a guilty conscience rob us of peace. Jesus takes away our sin and guilt, and gives us peace. When we harbor hard feelings towards God and towards others, we rob ourselves of peace. The Lord helps us to humble ourselves before Him and forgive others, and so restores our peace. Worrying and dwelling on our fears, or wanting things only our way, we rob ourselves of peace. The Lord tells us, "*Be still*" ("Cease striving!" "Let go!") "*and know that I am God*" (Ps. 46:10). "*I will not fail you*" (Dt. 31:6). "*I will give you rest*" (Mt. 11:28). James says, "*Submit ... to God*" (Jms. 4:7). Jesus gives us peace with God, peace with ourselves, peace with one another, and peace in our hearts in the midst of all the chaos in this world.

Several times I wished I could cut down that ugly stump of the orange tree outside our window. It turned out that that stump wasn't dead after all. It took a long, long time, but it branched out and grew back. And guess what?! It even bore oranges again! I never would have believed it.

Just before Jesus was born, the spiritual state of most of the children of Israel was dried up and dead. But out of the stump of Jesse's and David's family tree, God sent forth a shoot – a Branch. And that Branch, Jesus Christ, has borne the most wonderful fruit for all the world!

Behold, a Branch is growing of loveliest form and grace
 As prophets sung, foreknowing; it springs from Jesse's race
 And bears one little Flower in midst of coldest winter, at deepest midnight hour.

This Flower whose fragrance tender with sweetness fills the air,
 Dispels with glorious splendor the darkness everywhere.
 True Man, yet very God; from sin and death He saves us and lightens every load. Amen.
 (TLH #645:1, 4)