



1 | ISAIAH 11:1-11

THE LORD'S BRANCH

It's important to study Christ's family tree because you belong to it!

Outline

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A Kingdom of a Great People

Songs

O Come, O Come Emmanuel / O Come Let Us Adore Him
Joy Has Dawned
Lo How a Rose E'er Blooming
King of Kings
Joy to the World

Call to Worship:

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
Those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
Come, let us worship the God
Whose light brings hope to a weary world.
(based on Isaiah 9:2).

Introduction

Our message today is from Isaiah on page 575 of your pew Bible. The title of our message today is "The Lord's Branch".

The 11th chapter of Isaiah is a word of hope we need. It's like Isaiah was reading from our modern news. There's almost no good news in the world today.

Our country and our world has lost its foundation. It is spinning out of control. But we are to stand as salt of the earth and light of the world.

Isaiah is prophesying to Judah about 700 years before Jesus, but it's so powerful, he might as well be prophesying today. This prophecy is written during the years of King Ahaz, when both northern and southern Israel are very dark. It is during this time that northern Israel is wiped out by the Assyrians (seen in Isa 10).

In such grave times as today, the human heart reaches out for something that transcends the limits of the moment - an escape, a deliverance, a way out. Our longings often turn to cries of the heart: "Is there Anybody out there who cares? Will Someone come to the rescue, turn the tables, take up our cause?" That was the mood on the street at this time in Judah, and in increasing measure, in our time as well. Is there any hope?

In Isaiah 11, the prophet holds up snapshots of what it will be when his will is done on earth as it is in heaven.

Why does the Holy Spirit, who gave Isaiah these visions of the future, want you and me to see this? Because we need to understand what kind of king we find in the manger of Bethlehem. In this Christmas season, whether you will come and worship with the shepherds and Magi or oppose the Messiah like Herod and his religious advisers, you need to know what you can expect from this infant King named Jesus.

Here's the main point: It's important to study Christ's family tree because you belong to it!

Outline

1. Messiah's Unique Birth
2. Messiah's Righteous Judgment
3. Messiah's Glorious Kingdom

1. MESSIAH'S UNIQUE BIRTH (11:1)

His birth is unique: it shows his love. He's willing to leave his glorious throne to come to such a sin-laden place like earth. Christ understands what you're going through because he became human. Yes, he existed before the world began. But he was born into the human race.

HIS BIRTH SHOWS HIS INFINITE LOVE

Isaiah's opening sentence tells us Jesus' earthly roots.

11:1 | There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

What great love that Jesus has that he would come from a place so exalted and be born so low: not with the dignity of David or Solomon, but just father of David, humble Jesse.

Jesus is called a shoot and a branch from the tree stump of Jesse, the father of King David. This obviously a Messianic prophecy. A stump is all that is left of a tree that has been cut down. But God will be faithful to his promises to send the Messiah to the world.

Christ is born as a king. The magi come and worship him. But he has no riches like an earthly king. When the divine king is born, he is born into the family of **Jesse, father of King David**. But by the time Christ was born, Jesse's family was just a stump. Those in the line of David for the most part were terribly poor. Here was Mary and Joseph, both legally in the line of David. **No longer did they own the gold of Solomon or enjoy the renown of King David.**

When Jesus is born, the ruling class of Israel has been defunct for many generations. Mary and Joseph are poor people living under the power of Rome as an occupied nation. Being born in the line of Jesse means the Messiah will not be born into the royal family as a crowned prince and grow up in the ruling class. He does not at all look like royalty. He is so humble in his birth, born in a feeding trough. **What love is this!**

Royalty runs through the veins of Joseph and Mary, who are of the lineage of David. **Joseph is not a king, but a carpenter!** Here are just two descendants of King David preparing for a private life, not a throne or presidential palace. Nathanael sarcastically asked Philip, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (Jn 1:46). Was he expecting the Messiah to come from Jerusalem? Salvation did not come from the pomp and splendor of the elite royal family of Herod, but from the small forgotten places like Bethlehem and Nazareth. If Christ would dwell in such a humble place out of love, then he would dwell in your heart!

Let us be encouraged by the words of Spurgeon here. He said,

"If Jesus Christ was born in a manger in a rocky cave of sorts, why should he not come and live in our rocky hearts? If he was born in a stable, why should not the stable of our souls be made into a habitation for him? If he was born in poverty, may not the poor in spirit expect that he will be their Friend?" – Charles Haddon Spurgeon

HIS BIRTH SHOWS HIS DIVINE PERSON

He's not only a shoot from the stump of Jesse, referring to his humanity, but Christ is the one who is the "**roots**" that hold up the whole tree. This isn't just anyone being born. He's the branch that comes from the tree he himself created. He's not only the branch, but he is the roots.

11:1b | a branch from his **roots** shall bear fruit.

Here the human 'family tree' of the Messiah is seen. Isaiah takes seriously his prediction in 6:13—the time will come when all signs of life in the Davidic monarchy will have disappeared, like a tree cut to the *stump*, but there remains a secret vitality.¹ A branch from the one whose roots hold up the whole tree arrives.

¹ J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 20, Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 116.

Isaiah had already alluded to this with very clear words of this child's divinity.

Isaiah 9:6-7, "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."

This is the one Paul describes in Colossians:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. ¹⁶ For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. ¹⁷ And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together (Col 1:15-17).

HIS BIRTH SHOWS HIS AMAZING PLAN

11:1 | ...a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

The high King of kings will come so low, like a seed that goes into the ground, so that he might become a mighty oak tree and bear fruit! He said, "I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it." **You are the fruit** he shall bear.

The parallel idea to the "shoot" or twig is the "branch" bearing fruit. A *netzer* (נֶצֶר) is a fresh green shoot from to shine or blossom. Jesus himself is called a Nazarene – this is a play on words. *Netzerene* – he's the only viable surviving branch from David's family tree to rule the world.

He won't just be the offspring of David. He's not just another king in the Davidic dynasty. Here is the divine king promised from the beginning. This is the Seed promised to Eve, the One who would crush the serpent's head. This is the Seed of Abraham that would bless all nations. Amazing fruit will abound from this stump. This great King who is born is going to bring the "knowledge of the LORD" to "cover the earth... as the waters cover the sea" (11:9). He will build his church: that means you and me!

This baby born in Bethlehem will rise to do what no one has ever done. His fruit was to come from all those who are under the law. He would redeem the human race.

When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (Gal 4:4-5).

The fruit he brings is salvation to the human race. He will save many out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation. All the families of the earth will be blessed.

Transition: Isn't it amazing how unique Christ's birth was? What infinite love! Christ the divine Son of God is born! What an amazing plan!

Now we see not only his unique birth, but his righteous judgment. There's no one more worthy of your submission than Jesus. He is righteous in his judgment.

2. MESSIAH'S RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT (11:2-5)

HIS JUDGMENT IS SPIRIT-ANOINTED

Israel's kings were anointed with oil. Remember Samuel pouring the oil upon young David? It's a sign of a greater anointing: the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The Messiah will have God's Spirit in unlimited measure because he is God. His judgment and wisdom is incomparable because it is infinite. This descendant of Jesse will rule with a completely different spirit than that which characterized so many of Israel's previous kings. It will be the Spirit of the Lord.²

11:2 | And 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 the fear of the LORD.

Christ from his birth is anointed with the Holy Spirit. He had the Spirit of God without measure. **This anointing was revealed at his baptism, when the Spirit of God hovered over Christ like a dove.** Oh, the gentle Spirit of God! Christ was meek and gentle and welcoming to all sinners because he was anointed with the Spirit. He had all the wisdom and knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

We have never known a president or leader or king like this. The people in Isaiah's day hadn't either. This tender shoot from Jesse's family tree will have the breath of God upon him. He will not attempt to accomplish his goals by human means but will be controlled by the Spirit of God.

HE COULD DESTROY US!

He could destroy us, but instead he comes with the gentleness of the Spirit to do us good. He wants the knowledge of the Lord to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

This is the Gospel message as we see in John 3.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him (Jn 3:16-17).

OUR MINISTRY OF SPIRIT ANOINTED LOVE

Our ministry as Christians is not to condemn the world. The world is condemned already. We have a ministry of Spirit-anointed love. We are to gently but boldly show the world the danger they are in and the cure for their disease is Christ.

All of this is ours in the Spirit. Christ came to be born and to live "that we should walk in his steps" (1 Pet 2:21). Would you describe yourself as gentle, meek, and filled with the Holy Spirit? Are you proclaiming to your loved ones in gentle boldness the love of Christ for all of us as sinners?

HIS JUDGMENT IS RIGHTEOUS

Jesus' reign will bring people face-to-face with the King. He is the perfect person, yes, and he is the perfect one to bring us to know the Lord because he delights in the fear of

² John N. Oswalt, *Isaiah*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2003), 187.

the Lord. For the shoot of Jesse, his greatest joy, his most central happiness is found in being in awe and in fear of God. He introduces us to that when we know him.

11:3-4a | And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth...

It's plain from this passage that the benchmark by which God's final King will rule is not derived from the people over whom He will reign. He is not elected to this office by a vote; there will be no vote. He reigns by the authority of God and rules by the standards of the will of God.

And notice that He means to exercise His rule down to the lowest level. The tone of these verses tells us that He is not legislating for the masses, but in each of our lives. He will render His rule on an individual basis!

He will judge you according to reality rather than perception. He will not be swayed by emotion or fooled by ignorance of the truth. He will see you for who you really are.

HIS JUDGMENT IS UNIVERSAL

11:4b-5 | ... and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.

No one will be overlooked. He will deal with you with precise justice, evaluating your life in accordance with the holiness of God. And when he pronounces his judgment, it is final. All who are made righteous by faith in Christ will be exalted. And all others, called the wicked, he will wipe from the face of the earth.

Jesus was born to die to bring salvation to all who believe. And when he comes again, he will not be some regional king or territorial president, but the World's Ruler in the power and the Spirit of God. And he will rid this sin-weary world of the curse, and by his own Word will return all creation to its God-designed purposes.

In that day, God will wipe away all tears from our eyes. There will be no more pain or death or loss, for the former things have passed away. And all our heart's longings will be satisfied in him forever.

MERCY TO THE BELIEVER

Jesus is the Branch of the Lord. When Israel's family tree was cut down, Jesus restarted the family tree. He came to earth first humbly, born of a virgin, born under the law. His first coming was marked by humility, for he so loved us that, though completely innocent, perfect, and righteous, he willingly took the guilt of our sin and the wrath of God on the cross for our sakes. But three days later, he rose from the dead by the power of God, and later ascended to heaven where the Bible says he patiently waits for to come again one day in power and glory and honor for those who love him.

NO MERCY TO THE UNBELIEVER

But for those who do not love him, he will come again to this earth, only it will not be in gentleness and humility. At the sight of him, **every knee will bow and every**

tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. He will bring judgment upon those who deny him.

3. MESSIAH'S GLORIOUS KINGDOM (11:6-11)

Why is the Christ-child born? He is born to rule a glorious kingdom. There is no peace on earth for the wicked. The worldly person will chase after the world the flesh and the devil and still be unsatisfied. The world cannot satisfy. Our King is the King of kings and Lord of lords. He will bring a glorious kingdom to earth.

HIS KINGDOM WILL BE BETTER THAN EDEN

11:6-8 | The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

The world is looking for peace on earth. When the politicians promise it, don't you believe it. Ultimate peace on earth will only come when Christ brings it. Until then, there will be "wars and rumors of wars", widespread unrest, and great tribulation for the saints. How we long for Christ's kingdom to come!

In one of the most beautiful descriptions in all the Bible of what life will be life under this King's rule, we see the very nature of the world changed. Predators and prey are no longer natural enemies. **Isaiah 11:6 says, beasts lose their beastliness.**

Carnivores will see their very nature altered. Verse 7 says that the cow and the bear will graze, their young ones will lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

Where mortal danger once dominated, there is a stunning sense of comfort and ease, as 11:8 points out: An infant will play beside a cobra's pit, and the toddler will put his hand into a snake's den.

The future world under God's Perfect Son is a picture of the peace that returns everything to its divinely intended purpose. The curse that sunk the world into competitive darkness, fear, and death is vanquished. It is the day that Romans 8 says the whole creation has been groaning together in labor pains for (v. 22). I can't wait for that day!

HIS KINGDOM HAVE PEOPLE FROM ALL NATIONS

A Kingdom of a Great Peace

11:9 | They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

Now we read about the utopian peace that characterizes Christ's kingdom. That's wonderful isn't it? But what makes it even more wonderful is that you are a part of it.

None will harm or destroy anyone on all my holy mountain. Harm refers to all that is evil, all that is bad, all that causes pain. Destroy means decay or ruin. Isaiah tells us that on that day, **all crime will cease**. All pain will be gone. As he says later in Revelation: God will wipe away all tears. Nothing will wear out or spoil or ruin.

Why? For the land will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the sea is filled with water. Everybody on earth will know God perfectly when Christ comes again in his eternal kingdom.

A Kingdom of a Great People

11:10-11 | In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a **signal** for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious. ¹¹In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

On that day the root of Jesse (that's Jesus) will stand as a banner (a flag and rallying point) for the peoples. The nations will seek him, and his resting place will be glorious. This is the verse that Paul quotes in Romans.

And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope" (Rom 15:12).

Do you know who is born of a virgin in Bethlehem? Do you realize who you're dealing with this Christmas? The world is divided over this child, for at His birth, God drew a line in the sand. You cannot be neutral about this baby who is God with us, for He will not be neutral about you in the day of reckoning.

Jesus is the very center of all Israel, and he is also the rallying point of the Gentiles, for he has made both Jew and Gentile to be one, having "broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Eph 2:14). And now, around the one glorious banner of his glorious name, all the believing armies of his people, Jew and Gentile, gather with glad unity and accord. He is the King of the Jews, but he is also our King; and with Paul, we cry, "Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim 1:17).

Conclusion

I love family trees, but if we are honest, all of our families are messed up. There is only one who has a family tree that can heal us and bring us back to God. It's the branch.

Perhaps your life has been cut down. Let Jesus, the sprig of new life, grow in you. Let him dwell in your heart by faith.

Jesus is the Branch that grows into a mighty oak tree. He will bear fruit. **He will build his church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.**