



Isaiah 11:1-5

A Shoot from the Stem of Jesse

The message of messianic hope and comfort runs through out the book of Isaiah. The Hebrew prophet Isaiah reminds his readers in numerous ways that the Lord God reigns! He is sovereign and He is in charge of the affairs of the nations of the world. In chapter eleven Isaiah presents a dynamic contrast to the events in chapter ten. The nation of Assyria (chapter 10), which God used to punish the Northern Kingdom of Israel, will suddenly collapse. Assyria is only a tool in God's hands to accomplish His sovereign purpose with Israel. In contrast to the death of the nation of Assyria, God will raise up a king who will sit on the throne of David throughout eternity.

At the time Isaiah is writing (eighth century B.C.) there were only stumps of dead trees that have been mowed down by the invaders from Assyria. The ax of divine judgment had chopped among the trees, and nothing but stumps was left standing. By the time the Messiah will arrive, seven hundred years later, the house of David will be nothing but an insignificant stump in Israel. It will have fallen upon evil days.

THE EPIPHANY OF THE MESSIAH (11:1)

We have been carefully observing the progression of the messianic hope in Isaiah 2:1-4; 4:1-6; 7:14; 8:24; 9:1-6, and now it comes to full bloom in chapter eleven. In verse one, a descendent of David will reign in righteousness. He will fulfill all these promises and many more in His character and mission.

The Manifestation of the Divine being

"Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1). The prophet, no doubt, has in mind 2 Samuel 7:16. The "stem" or "stump," is all that is left of a once mighty tree after it had been cut down. Israel is just a field of burned out stumps on the landscape of world history. Judah and Assyria will fall under the heavy hand of God's judgment. When Assyria fell in 609 B.C. she never budded again. She will always be a lifeless dead stump. God will destroy the destroyer. Assyria is only a tool in the hands of the God of Israel. However, there is a stump with just a twig of life in it. It is the smallest of shoots, but it has a green sprout that will bud and bring forth a righteous ruler in Israel. From this barren, helpless shoot will come the redeemer of Israel (53:1-2). In contrast to the burned out stumps of Assyria, God has brought forth a green "shoot." The lineage of David is not completely dead. God is sovereign. The Messianic branch, David, the eternal King will reign over His people.

There is only one Jesse in the Scriptures and he is King David's father. Although the power of David's lineage will be reduced to its most humble descendents God will raise up a tender branch out of that humility.

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The beginnings of the Messiah are exceedingly small. He comes at a time when the descendants of David have reached the deepest humiliation and obscurity. However, this lowly shoot will "bear fruit" which presupposes its growth. Calvin observed: "The Prophet does not mention David; but rather Jesse. For so much was the dignity of that family diminished, that it seemed to be a rustic, ignoble family rather than a royal one." The house of David had become so insignificant and unimportant that it is called "Jesse." The name of David has fallen to the level at which it stood when his father Jesse bore the honor of the family name before David's glory as king. Nothing is left of the family tree, but a root.

The tree of lowly beginnings is Christ.

Herod the Great is anything but a descendent of David. He was a political joke, a murderous monster and puppet of Rome. He purchased his political power from the Romans. There is no royal blood of King David in his veins. He is an Idumaeian impostor.

The parallel idea to the "shoot" or twig is the "branch" bearing fruit. A *netzer* is a fresh green shoot from to shine or blossom. The poor despised Nazarene will spring forth and shine. There is fresh new growth in the lineage of David. He is a growing thing. What lay dormant and thought to be dead is alive and full of fruit. (Cf. Luke 3:23-38, v. 32; Matthew 1:1-25; Revelation 5:5; 22:16).

If you were the prophet Isaiah, would not your heart be filled with a fresh new hope for your people?

The Lineage of the Messiah

Royalty runs through the veins of Joseph and Mary, who are of the lineage of David. Why 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?" (John 1:46). Was he expecting the Messiah to come from Jerusalem? Isaiah picks up on those humble origins again in chapter fifty-three. He refers to the Suffering Servant of the LORD, "like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him" (53:2). He was so despised the religious leaders estimated Him a zero, a nothing. Salvation did not come from the pomp and splendor of the elite royal family of Herod, but from Nazareth.

God will prove Himself faithful and create a royal house from a peasant family in David's lineage. No wonder Herod was so upset when the wise men came telling him that the King of the Jews had been born in Bethlehem (Matthew 2:1-12).

Hengstenberg in his excellent *Christology of the Old Testament* writes: "The figure of a shoot or sprout has become so common as a designation of the Messiah, that the name 'Sprout' has almost become a proper name of the Messiah." The "branch" is clearly a reference to the Messiah (Isaiah 4:2; Zechariah 3:8; 6:12; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15).

THE EQUIPMENT OF THE MESSIAH (11:2)

He will not accomplish God's will by human means. This ruler will have the very breath of God upon Him. He will be under the control of "the Spirit of the LORD" (v. 2a). He will not be spiritually barren like the King Ahaz and the Jewish leaders before Him. Unless He is endowed with the Spirit of Yahweh, He will be like the other political leaders. The Old Testament taught the Messiah would be under the control of the Holy Spirit. Perhaps the baptism of Jesus coincided with the anointing of Jewish kings. The Father's officiating at the coronation affirms His divine rule (Luke 4:1, 14, 18; Psalm 2:6-9). It is not the human spirit that Isaiah is referring to in verse two, but the Spirit of God producing divine character.

The Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him,
The spirit of wisdom and understanding,
The spirit of counsel and strength,
The spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord.

With this description, our minds hearken back to the child with the four names in 9:6. Wisdom, counsel, omnipotence, fatherly security, giver of peace characterizes this king.

Alexander Maclaren observed: "There has never been but one manhood capable of receiving and retaining the whole fullness of the Spirit of God." The Spirit of Yahweh brings all these gifts upon Jesus of Nazareth. Christ came not empty-handed. He came with the fullness of God upon Him. "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily" (Colossians 2:9). The complete control of the Holy Spirit is who produces the wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge and fear of the LORD in His life. Here is one man who was completely at the disposal of God the Spirit every moment of His life on this earth. There was neither taint nor restraint of carnality upon Him. The Lord Jesus Christ possessed the Holy Spirit without measure. In Him is the perfect indwelling of our humanity by the Spirit of God.

He is divinely equipped

All of the equipment comes through the Spirit of Yahweh, perennially and in superlative measure. How did Jesus accomplish the Father's will? He did it like the prophets of old. "'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' says the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). The gospel writer Luke describes how Jesus began His public ministry in his hometown of Nazareth. Jesus entered the synagogue one Sabbath day, as it was His custom. He stood up to read from the scroll that was handed to Him and He read Himself into His sacred office. The passage for the day was taken from Isaiah 61:1-2. (cf. Luke 4:18-19). It begins, "The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of the sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the LORD." Luke tells us Jesus closed the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, sat down, and began to teach them in the synagogue. Jesus said, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).

The writer John made this observation of Jesus at the beginning of His public ministry. He quotes John the Baptizer, "I have beheld the Spirit descending as [in the manner of] a dove out of heaven; and He remained upon Him. And I did not recognize Him, but he who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom

upon Him. And I did not recognize Him, but he who sent me to baptize in water said to me, 'He upon whom you see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, this is the one who baptizes in the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God" (John 1:33-34).

THE EXCELLENT REIGN OF THE MESSIAH (11:3-5)

And He will delight in the fear of the Lord,
And He will not judge by what His eyes see,
Nor make a decision by what His ears hear;
But with righteousness He will judge the poor,
And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth;
And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth,
And with the breath of His lips he will slay the wicked.
Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins,
And faithfulness the belt about His waist.

What characterizes this reign?

He will "delight in the fear of the LORD" (v. 3). This king will rule with integrity. He will be radically different from all presidents and kings the world has known. The "fear of the LORD" will not be lip service, and political talk with Him. He will be a superhuman righteous king who is faithful to the humble.

He will not conduct His government by popularity polls, personal biases in decision making and enrichment of elite lawyers. He will allow the "fear of the LORD" and "righteousness" to guide Him. He will not lie at every turn of His mouth, but will speak with absolute integrity. His lifestyle and character will be full of integrity.

The one administering absolute justice must be in possession of absolute knowledge. He must be absolutely fair in His judgments. Our Lord has infinite knowledge of all things. The word that goes forth from His mouth accomplishes His eternal purposes.

Note the instrument the eternal King will use. He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and order the wicked to be executed (NET). Literally, by the breadth of his lips he will kill the wicked. Nothing will keep the King from accomplishing His work. He will rule supremely. The very breath of His mouth is a rod meaning He has the power to rule with authority. It is His Word that brings judgment. The breath of God's word is powerful judging and effectual. God spoke the world into existence. The Word of the Messiah accomplishes the purpose for which it was designed. The wrath of the Lamb will judge the wicked.

With a flash of his pen, in the middle of verse four, the prophet leaps in time, across the centuries to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. The prophets bring together the two comings of Jesus as though they were one. Both mountain peaks line up so as to prevent us from seeing the valley between them. The apostle Peter explained this when he wrote of the Holy Spirit "predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1 Peter 1:11). These sufferings of the Suffering Servant came at the end of one era in history, and the "glories to follow" will still come at a time in the future. We shall look more at that future in Isaiah 11:6-16.

Righteous and fair judgment will characterize His reign. "At the great last day of judgment, the voice of God will speak and the wicked will perish everlastingly."

Do you long for a president or sovereign king who will rule with righteousness, integrity and fairness? Even so, come Lord Jesus, come!

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The day in which we live is the age of grace. Now is the time to put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Today is the day of salvation. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved.

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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