

The Book of ISAIAH – Chapters 1-39

Catholic Scripture Study

Memory Verse: *Isaiah 11:2-3*

*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.
And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.*

The Shoot from Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-16)

I. THE PRINCE OF PEACE (ISAIAH 11:1-9)

A. Overview

Isaiah 11:1-9 has two parts to it. The first part (vv. 1-5) announces that a shoot will spring from the stump of Jesse (the father of King David) at some future date. Thus, the shoot will be of David's house – a son of David.

The second part (vv. 6-9) describes the peace this son of David will bring together with the restoration of creation to its state of original justice, that is, the state of creation before the fall; before original sin.

It speaks of the harmony that reigned at the dawn of creation – ***“the wolf shall dwell with the lamb . . .”*** - only to be broken by sin.

Chapter 10 ends with a prophecy regarding the total destruction of Assyria, depicted as a mighty forest – ***“the forest of her pride is nothing but a field of stumps.”*** But Judah has also been destroyed, except for Jerusalem which was spared by divine intervention.

Both Israel and Assyria had fallen under the judgment of God. But there is a difference. When Assyria was finally cut down in 609 BC by the combined forces of Babylon, Media, and Persia, nothing ever arose from the stumps again.

Not so with Israel. From one of her stumps a small shoot would come to bring about the restoration of that nation and with it the end of the war and the establishment of genuine peace.

What, however, has become of David's house?

What is the similarity between the mighty Assyrian forest and the lowly stump of Jesse? Assyria would perish and come to a complete end, but in the rootstock of Jesse there was yet life.

From that stump, from the roots which furnish the stump with life, a branch would grow, and would derive its life from the roots so that it might be fruitful.

David's dynasty, then, is not completely exterminated; its roots are in the ground, and a stump remains.

Read: Isaiah 11:1-5

[1] There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.

[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.

[3] And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD.

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear;

[4] but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite 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 girdle of his waist,
and faithfulness the girdle of his loins.**

B. The Shoot from Jesse's Stump (11:1)

Out of the devastation of Judah there miraculously appears **“a shoot from the stump of Jesse.”** It was only a stump or rootstock of Jesse, David's father, who had lived in Bethlehem – but it contained life.

The stump was all that remained of a tree which had been cut down. To emphasize its lowly origin and humbled condition, Isaiah refers to it only as the stump of Jesse, not as David's house.

The “stock” is David's dynasty and the new “shoot” or “branch” is a new king or messiah, a son of David, who will come forth and bear fruit in Jerusalem.

C. The New Ruler – the Son of David (11:2)

Isaiah prophesies the coming of a new ruler – a new king of the line of David – humble, because he comes from a tree that has been pruned yet with all the vitality of a strong new shoot.

This new king (the Messiah) will be endowed with exceptional qualities that equip him to rule, thanks to the Holy Spirit who will descend upon him.

- **And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him** and He will possess the gifts of the Spirit.

D. Three Aspects of the Messiah (11:2-3)

Three aspects characterize the Messiah:

1. His divine endowment for ruling (vs. 2 and 3a)
2. The absolute justice of his rule (vs. 3b-5) and
3. The quality of safety which will characterize his rule (vs. 6-9).

The movement is from qualifications to performance to results.

The new descendant of David will rule all the people not in a heavy-handed way like the kings of the time, but with a charismatic dynamism that comes from God.

E. The Gifts of the Holy Spirit

The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him (the Messiah) and he will possess six gifts of the Spirit (seven in the Vulgate and Septuagint).

Note: The Greek translation of the Septuagint and the Vulgate divide the gift of fear into two – **Piety** and **Fear of the Lord**. That is why catechesis and theology speak of **seven** gifts.

In the RSV the six gifts are mentioned in pairs:

- **Wisdom** and **Understanding**, referring to the skill and prudence that ensure that he will judge rightly;
- **Counsel** and **Fortitude**, the characteristics of an astute strategist like David;
- **Knowledge** and **Fear of the Lord** which have to do with the religious realm, for the king must not forget that he is God's representative.

Note: The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) # 1831, following the Septuagint and Vulgate, lists the gifts of the Holy Spirit as **seven** in number consisting of "**wisdom, understanding, council, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.**"

"They belong in their fullness to Christ, son of David. They complete and perfect the virtues of those who receive them. They make the faithful docile in readily obeying divine inspiration."

F. Function or Purpose of the Gifts

Wisdom is the gift of knowing the right choices to make to live a holy life. The gift of wisdom helps you to avoid the things that could lead you away from God.

Understanding is the gift of comprehension, or the ability to grasp the meaning of spiritual truth as embodied in the teachings of the Church. The gift of understanding helps you be tolerant and sympathetic of others. It helps you sense when someone is hurting or in need of compassion.

Counsel or Right Judgment, is the gift of prudence. The gift of right judgment helps you make choices to live as a faithful follower of Jesus.

Courage, or Fortitude, is the gift that helps you stand up for your faith in Christ. The gift of courage helps you overcome any obstacles that would keep you from practicing your faith.

Knowledge is the gift of knowing and enlightenment. The gift of knowledge enables you to choose the right path that will lead you to God. It encourages you to avoid obstacles that will keep you from him.

Piety, or Reverence is the gift of confidence in God. This gift of reverence inspires you to joyfully want to serve God and others.

Fear of the Lord is the gift of wonder and respect that encourages you to be in awe of God. The gift of wonder and awe moves you to so love God that you do not want to offend him by your words or actions.

The Gifts of the Holy Spirit are without question great gifts essential for our sanctification and salvation. Each baptized and confirmed Christian should implore the Holy Spirit to inflame in his soul these gifts.

Our Holy Father, Pope John Paul II said, "With gifts and qualities such as these, we are equal to any task and capable of overcoming any difficulties."

G. A Righteous Ruler (11:4-5)

The new ruler will be unlike the corrupt kings of the past. This king will judge the people with righteousness and the poor with

equity. **Righteousness shall be the girdle of his waist, and faithfulness the girdle of his loins** (11:5).

His reign will be characterized by **wisdom, understanding, counsel, power** (courage, fortitude), **knowledge**, and **the fear of the Lord** – all the characteristics lacking among God's people but found wherever God is truly present.

This ruler will not **judge** on the basis of appearances or of image. He will not **decide** on the basis of what the outcome of the case might mean to him. He will not be biased in favor of the rich and powerful. Instead he will concern himself with what is right, according to the unchanging standards of the One who is Right.

His words will be more powerful than the mightiest **rod** some other king might brandish to try to enforce his will, and the **breath of his lips** will not only pronounce the sentence of the **wicked** but actually kill them.

- Christian Tradition finds the fulfillment of this prophecy in Jesus Christ the long-awaited Messiah.

II. THE COMING PEACE (11:6-9)

Wondrous indeed is this Messiah! In vs. 2-5 we have seen Him completely distinguished from all earthly and temporal rulers. He will be righteous and faithful; humble, yet equipped with marvelous gifts for **the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him**.

In vs. 6-9 we learn that His kingdom is also completely different from all earthly kingdoms.

- His kingdom will be the very opposite of what now is found in human kingdoms.

All enmity will disappear, not only from among men, but even from among beasts, and even between men and beasts all will be in harmony.

Read: Isaiah 11:6-9

***[6] The wolf shall dwell with the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,
and the calf and the lion and the fatling together,
and a little child shall lead them.***

***[7] The cow and the bear shall feed;
their young shall lie down together;
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.***

***[8] The sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp,
and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.***

***[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.***

A. Restoration

His word will be powerful. The rule of this new king is depicted in terms of restoration that results in universal peace.

- True justice leads to peace, and where righteousness reigns there is true peace.

Isaiah speaks about the restoration of creation to its original state of harmony at the dawn of creation. Even among wild beasts violence will disappear - ***the wolf shall dwell with the lamb.***

With this reconciliation a child will be able to play with ferocious beasts without being harmed - ***the sucking child shall play over the hole of the asp . . . they shall not hurt or destroy.***

This may also be a metaphor describing the reconciliation among the nations.

No longer will man in his pride desire to be “like God, knowing good and evil” (Gen 3:5): instead he will be filled with the divine gift of the **“knowledge of the Lord”** (v. 9).

How far will this reversal of nature extend? Will it obliterate that most ancient of enmities, the one between the serpent and man?

- Yes! So great is the Messiah's power that even this fundamental enmity will be wiped out.

Indeed the most helpless of human beings, the child that has just been weaned, will be unharmed by mankind's deadliest enemy. Enmity with the serpent was the first of all the enmities, whereby man's relationship with the entire animal world was really thrown out of joint.

B. When Will this Restoration Occur?

How are we to understand the words of this amazing prophecy?

When will this restoration of man and nature occur?

In answer it should be noted that Isaiah has emphasized the fact that the Messiah is the Prince of Peace. When the messiah has completed his messianic work, peace is introduced into the hearts of men, and insofar as men are true to the principles of peace which they have received from the messiah, so far do the blessings mentioned here apply.

In its fullness, however, this condition will not be realized until the earth is covered with the **knowledge of the Lord**, and that condition will only exist in the new heavens and the new earth where righteousness dwells.

Only where righteousness reigns, is there peace. The picture before us is one in which there is no sin, but in which the fullest manifestation of peace is to be seen.

We read these words with grateful hearts for we know that one day we too shall enjoy these blessings in their fullness. And we shall enjoy them only because of the work of Immanuel, that One who was born from Jesse's root, and who in the great battle of Calvary overcame the power of evil as He gave Himself as a ransom for sin.

All praise, honor and glory to His name!

III. THE RETURN OF THE EXILES (11:10-16)

A. Overview (11:10-16)

Just as the folly of Ahaz was responsible for the defeat of Judah and her ultimate dispersion, so the coming of the Messiah will result in a greater restoration of God's people.

From every part of the earth they will come, in a return as dramatic as the Exodus itself.

The Lord will reclaim a remnant of the people from Assyria, Egypt, and other areas of the four corners of the earth where the dispersed of Judah were living.

The envy and hostility of Ephraim toward Judah shall cease, and Judah and Ephraim shall join ranks and plunder the Philistines of the west and the people of the east in the Arabian Desert.

They shall conquer Edom, Moab, and the Ammonites, places and oppressive people their ancestors encountered in the wilderness.

After the times of crisis, the people's infidelities, stern warnings from the prophets, and the fear and destruction sown by the armies of Assyria, a "remnant" will return in triumph and joy to the land that God gave them.

As God previously ran up a "banner" (5:26) to call the enemy nations to come and destroy his people, now the Messiah is a

“banner” calling the nations to himself, with the express purpose of restoring his people to their homeland.

Read: Isaiah 11:10-16

[10] In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious.

[11] In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant which is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

[12] He will raise an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

[13] The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart, and those who harass Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.

[14] But they shall swoop down upon the shoulder of the Philistines in the west, and together they shall plunder the people of the east. They shall put forth their hand against Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites shall obey them.

[15] And the LORD will utterly destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt; and will wave his hand over the River with his scorching wind, and smite it into seven channels that men may cross dryshod.

[16] And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant which is left of his people,

***as there was for Israel
when they came up from the land of Egypt.***

B. In that day . . . an Ensign to the People (11:13)

In that day, that is, at some future time appointed by God, the Messianic ruler will stand as an authority and a beacon or standard around which the nations will gather to seek Him. In that day God will extend his hand to bring together a remnant from the former enemies of Judah.

Division between north (Ephraim/Israel) and south (Judah) will be healed.

The Lord, who had stretched out his hand to punish their infidelities, will extend it once more in order to rescue his people from all the countries where they were dispersed and *reunite all the tribes*.

Isaiah mentions the Lord's hand which reminds us of the Exodus, for then it was that with a strong hand and an out-stretched arm that the Lord brought deliverance to his people.

Now he will stretch out His arm again, but this time it will be to gather his people to Himself. The first time was for chastisement; the second time for deliverance. It is the same hand, but the hand that Pharaoh felt in chastisement, the remnant will feel in deliverance.

This prophecy ends by describing a “new Exodus” that the remnant will experience; however, this Exodus will be world-wide in extent. The reference to the Exodus is symbolic since there was no literal highway through the desert for the people of the Exodus.

Note: In Isaiah's day the dispersion of the Israelites was not as wide as described in this passage (see 11:11). The people had not yet been so widely scattered. Isaiah sees a time when they will return ***from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from***

Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

Parthos refers to Upper Egypt; ***Elam***, to an area in south-eastern Iran; ***Shinar***, to Babylon; ***Hamath***, to a city in Syria; and the ***coastlands*** were islands in the Aegean Sea, mainly.

Here Isaiah speaks as a prophet who reveals the future. The dispersion to come will be world-wide in its extent, and so will the new Exodus.

IV. APPLICATION

In our times we have seen the beginning of the fulfillment of the promises of this chapter as the Jewish people have been gathered into Israel from all over the world.

Furthermore, it is interesting that the kingdom of Jordan, which encompasses ancient Ammon, Moab, and Edom, is at peace with Israel.

To be sure, most modern Israelis give God no credit for their return, which is a dangerous position for them to be in. However, it is obvious that God is not finished with his plans for his people, and we may look forward with excitement to see exactly how he will fulfill his promises.

Preparation for Isaiah Week 13

The Wells of Salvation

1. Read Isaiah, Chapter 12
2. Read Chapter 3, pgs 27-28, in *Come and See Catholic Bible Study – Isaiah*.
3. Answer questions 16-20 in *Come and See* (pgs. 32-33).
4. Read: Catechism of the Catholic Church – CCC 831 and CCC 2561.
5. Read the following paragraphs from the CCC – Article 3 – Sacred Scripture:

Christ - The Unique Word of Sacred Scripture – Paragraphs 101-104