

*Various OT & NT Passages***PREFACE**

No living thing looks quite so dead as a deciduous tree in January. Every winter not just the oak and hickory and walnut trees surrounding our home appear utterly devoid of life, but the fruit trees in the orchard, as well. The skeletal remains of summer look dead. Utterly dead.

But something seemingly miraculous occurs every spring: from the blackened sticks of wood spring fresh, green buds, signaling new life. And a few months later we will be enjoying the fruit from the branches that emerged from those tiny green buds.

In this session we are going to, at first, revisit the birth of the Christ (or youth)—which, for us, is history 2,021 years back from today. But then we will soon move into the Messiah's kingship (and priesthood), ending up at the as yet-unknown future date of His return, and the establishment of His Millennial Kingdom. All found in the OT.

**ISAIAH 53**

We will find most (but not all) of our passages in the prophecies of Isaiah. Let's start in Isaiah 53. Well-known for its imagery of the "Suffering Servant," Isaiah 53 begins with Christ's birth, but quickly offers an extended treatise on His sufferings, ending at the cross:

He poured out Himself to death,  
And was numbered with the transgressors;  
Yet He Himself bore the sin of many,  
And interceded for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:12b)

But our focus today is on the beginning of the story.

**Read Isaiah 53:1-2.**

I don't know about you, but when reading this passage I've often wondered just what was meant by "dry [or parched] ground." "A root out of dry ground" could refer to

- Messiah coming not as royalty, but as the son of a carpenter;
- His being, as Matthew Henry puts it, "born of a mean and despicable family, in the north, in Galilee, of a family out of which, like a dry and desert ground, nothing green, nothing great, was expected, in a country of such small repute that it was thought no good thing could come out of it";
- His being born of a virgin;
- the spiritual condition of Israel: a dry and legalistic culture ruled by fastidious hypocrites.

**ISAIAH 11**

But let's develop this more fully from a similar passage found in Isaiah 11. [Turn to Chapter Eleven](#). The similarities are not obvious at first, but lie beneath the surface.

**Read Isaiah 11:1 (not NIV)**

*Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse,*

Once again we have a Scripture passage that contains more than just what we read on its surface. But the NIV and ESV do help us some—and their translation offers us a clue to the language of both Isaiah 11 and 53.

**ESV: There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. (emphasis added)**

**rod, shoot** = *hoter* (kho'-ter) = a slender and flexible (i.e., new) twig or shoot.

**stem, stump** = *geza* (getz'-ah) = from an unused root meaning **to cut down (trees)**; **the trunk or stump of a tree** (as felled or as planted) :- stem, stock.

Adding the “stump” of Isaiah 11, to the dry or parched ground of Isaiah 53, we begin to understand that what Isaiah is really portraying is the *kingship* of the Messiah. Here's how; think of the time frame in big chunks:

- Saul becomes the first king of Israel, followed by the true man of God's choice—the man after God's own heart, to whom God promised his dynasty would never end: King David, son of Jesse.
- After David's son, Solomon, the kingdom is divided into Israel and Judah, and so begins a death spiral for the nation, culminating in exile to Assyria and Babylon.
- The people of Israel and Judah are scattered; the “kingship” of either has become a joke, and anyone left in the Davidic line is now nothing more than a commoner in a foreign land.
- When the Persian king, Cyrus, gives permission for a group of exiles to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple (Ezra 1), one of the leaders is Zerubbabel. He is in the Davidic line, but he returns not as a king, but as a *governor* of Judah, in service to the king of Persia.
- Jerusalem is a wasteland of burned-out rubble, with only a handful of peasants scattered about. The land has not been cultivated, crops not sown, vines not tended, the city uninhabited. There is no king, no priesthood, and several generations have forgotten the written Law, given them by Yahweh as His guiding principles for their lives.

The kingship of Israel is little more than a seemingly dead tree stump, or, in the imagery of Isaiah 53, “dry [or parched] ground.” By all appearances it is over; the Davidic family tree has been cut down, down to the ground, with no expectation that it will ever revive.

But Isaiah says, *Hold on. Not yet. Look closely. There is the beginnings of a tiny twig coming from that “dead” stump.* Which brings us to the second part of v1.

*And a branch from his roots will bear fruit.*

All of our common translations use the word “branch,” but as Pastor Daniel pointed out when he preached on Zechariah 6, the Hebrew means something somewhat different from our typical mental image of a branch. The word branch, for most of us, means a substantial projection from a tree. Earlier this year during a storm, a branch from a large oak tree fell partially into our pond. I cut off what I could, but the bulk of that “branch” has been left in the pond for the turtles, because it was so heavy that when I tried to haul it out using our Jeep, the rope broke. That is not the sort of branch meant by this Hebrew word.

**branch** = *neser* (nay'-tser) = from <H5341> (natsar) **in the sense of greenness as a striking color**; a **bud**, a shoot; **figuratively, a descendant** :- branch.

Here's the idea: Before you lies the blackish-gray stump of a large, hewn oak tree. It has looked this way for a very long time. One morning you look at it and, miraculously, coming out of that "dead" stump is a tiny, but vibrantly green bud. Against the background of the blackened stump, the green bud fairly *glows* in the morning sunlight. New life! From somewhere deep below ground, deep in the roots of that fallen oak, life has been preserved, and has finally worked its way up through the roots, through the dense wood of the stump, to emerge fresh and new into the light of day. Over the coming days, that tiny green bud will grow higher and higher, becoming a strong branch of the original tree, and will eventually bear new fruit: an acorn, that will drop from the branch to take root of its own and a *new* tree, which will grow and bear fruit, and on and on and...

That is the prophetic, poetic, earthy imagery. Now we look at what it means.

By the time Jesus the Messiah was born, the Davidic dynasty, though still in existence, had been without power for almost *six hundred years* (Grogan)—more than twice the length of time the United States has been in existence. Any reasonably intelligent person would have logically concluded that that was it; over and done with. Dead as a doornail. God must have made a mistake.

But Isaiah tells the people of Israel that one day a tiny green bud—a newborn babe in a Bethlehem stable—would emerge from that line to reclaim the throne of David. And look at what this little sprout-King will accomplish.

### **Read Isaiah 11:10.**

*K&D*: The new David is *shoresh Yishai* (the root-sprout of Jesse), and therefore in a certain sense the root itself, because the latter would long ago have perished if it had not borne within itself from the very commencement Him who was now about to issue from it. But when He who had been concealed in the root of Jesse as its sap and strength should have become the rejuvenated root of Jesse itself (cf., Rev 22:16), He would be exalted from this lowly beginning l'nēs ammin, into a banner summoning the nations to assemble, and uniting them around itself.

**Sidebar**: You might be wondering why these verses say stump and root "of Jesse"—who was never king—rather than of David. According to Geoffrey Grogan, this may be the prophet's way of emphasizing "the total absence of royal dignity in the house of David when the Messiah would come."

### **Jeremiah 23**

The prophet Jeremiah mentions "the Branch" in Chapters Twenty-three and Thirty-three. Let's look at the one in Jeremiah 23 first.

Some commentators have tried to keep this in the time frame of the exiles returning to Judah. For example, the key verses are set up by a reference to the shepherds of a scattered flock. He denounces the previous shepherds that had let them be driven away, then *Yahweh elohim* declares that He Himself will gather what is left of the flock.

### **Read vv3-4.**

Some think the new shepherds raised up refers to the leaders of the return from Assyria and Babylon, such as Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah. But note that v3 speaks of a *world-wide* return of Yahweh's people: "all the countries." Likewise, the security and inclusiveness mentioned in v4 do not describe—as we well know, after our study of Ezra-Nehemiah—the condition of the returned exiles. After the return to Judah, they were indeed afraid, even terrified, and there were some still missing.

### **Read Jeremiah 23:5-6.**

There is Messiah, the king reigning by the name "*Yahweh*, our righteousness." For more evidence that this text is a messianic prophecy, and not referring to the exiles return to Judah in the sixth century BC, Charles Feinberg points out that

- the adjective modifying Branch in v5 ("*righteous* Branch") is a quality of persons—not plants;
- the verb "saved" in v6 denotes spiritual, not physical deliverance.

Verse 6 especially does not accurately describe the period of the exiles return in the sixth century, nor does it describe the period when Jesus the Messiah walked the earth the first time. Clearly it refers to the end times; as Feinberg puts it, "the fulfillment awaits eschatological times."

So now we have traced the messianic imagery of the "Branch" (again, literally a green bud or sprout) from the birth or youth of Jesus the Messiah to the culmination of all things, when He rules in majesty during the end times.

## ***Zechariah 6***

Now to Zechariah, where we will add one more dimension to the Branch. In Chapter Six we have another messianic prophecy that includes contemporary application. That is, the passage details Yahweh's instructions to Zechariah regarding the high priest, Joshua—right then, in real-time.

### **Read Zechariah 6:11-13.**

There is a lot going on here, and we could easily fill an entire session with this passage. But let's just address a few things pertinent to our study. But first,

**Question/Discussion: Does you notice something strange going on in v11?**

Joshua is the high priest, yet the Lord tells Zechariah to fashion a kingly, royal crown and set it on the priest's head. But the word translated crown is not the Hebrew word for the *priestly* crown [*nezer* (*neh'-zer*)], but *atara*, which refers to an ornate crown with many diadems—that is, many extensions. [\[more on this in a moment\]](#) This is a royal crown, a kingly crown—*not* the crown of a high priest.

Here we have Yahweh setting up a type of the Messiah to come, who would be both king and priest—a priest who would “build the temple of the Lord” and “sit and rule on His throne.” In the NASB and NKJV all the pronouns in these verses are capitalized—that is, referring to the Christ. Kenneth Barker tells us, referring to v14, which says the crown would then be placed as a reminder in the temple,

It was, in part, to keep [hope alive for the Messiah] that this crown was made for Joshua’s symbolic crowning and then placed in the temple as a reminder of this hope.

Note, as well, that the name Joshua and Jesus are essentially the same: Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew Joshua, or *yehoshua* [*yeh-ho-shoo’-ah*], which means “Jehovah-saved.”

### ***Jeremiah 33***

Let’s nip back to Jeremiah just for a moment—Jeremiah 33 this time—where Yahweh repeats much of what He declared in Chapter Twenty-three, but adds more about the Branch, who will be both King and Priest.

#### **Read Jeremiah 33:14-18.**

The reason both offices—king and priest—will never lack a man, is because both are fulfilled for eternity in Christ Jesus.

### **CONCLUSION**

In this study we began with the Messiah as a tiny green bud emerging from the seemingly lifeless Davidic, kingly line. We end with Him as the reigning King/Priest for all time.

Let’s close with the incredible scene from Revelation 19—no longer just a type, but now the actual “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” Remember, a moment ago I said the crown placed on Joshua’s head in Zechariah’s prophecy was “an ornate crown with many diadems.” Listen to how Christ’s crown in Revelation is described.

#### **Read Revelation 19:11-16.**

**Isaiah 53:1-2**

1 Who has believed our message?  
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?  
2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,  
And 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.

**Jeremiah 23:5-6**

5 “Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord,  
“When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch;  
And He will reign as king and act wisely  
And do justice and righteousness in the land.  
6 “In His days Judah will be saved,  
And Israel will dwell securely;  
And this is His name by which He will be called,  
“The Lord our righteousness.”

**Zechariah 6:11-13**

11 “Take silver and gold, make an ornate crown and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.  
12 “Then say to him, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, “Behold, a man whose name is Branch, for He will branch out from where He is; and He will build the temple of the Lord.  
13 “Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.””

**Jeremiah 33:15, 17-18**

15 ‘In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth.  
17 “For thus says the Lord, ‘David shall never lack a man to sit on the throne of the house of Israel;  
18 and the Levitical priests shall never lack a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, to burn grain offerings and to prepare sacrifices continually.”

*The Branch*

*branch = a strikingly green bud or sprout*

*NASB “ornate crown” = “many diadems”—that is, “King of Kings”*

**Ezekiel 17:22-24**

22 Thus says the Lord God, “I will also take a sprig from the lofty top of the cedar and set it out; I will pluck from the topmost of its young twigs a tender one and I will plant it on a high and lofty mountain.  
23 “On the high mountain of Israel I will plant it, that it may bring forth boughs and bear fruit and become a stately cedar. And birds of every kind will nest under it; they will nest in the shade of its branches.  
24 “All the trees of the field will know that I am the Lord; I bring down the high tree, exalt the low tree, dry up the green tree and make the dry tree flourish. I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will perform it.”

**Matthew 19:28**

And Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

**Revelation 19:11-16**

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.  
12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.  
13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.  
14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.  
15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.  
16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.”