

# The Rod out of The Stem of Jesse

In Isaiah chapter 11, we are given a prophecy concerning Jesus, the Messiah:

“... there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Isa. 11:1).

The word translated “*the stem*” in this place, literally means: “*to cut down, i.e. a stump*”. The sense is that the various branches of the Household of Jesse had been cut off, the tree being cut down - and that out of the stump that was left, a new Branch would emerge, growing out of the same rootstock.

The Jesse Family Tree was cut down in the days of Zedekiah, when the wicked prince, as the last reigning member of the household was deposed:

“Thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity shall have an end, Thus saith *adonai Yahweh*, remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this shall not be the same: exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high. I will overturn, overturn, overturn it: and it shall be no more until he come whose right it is: and I will give it him” (Eze. 21:25-27),

So it was that Zedekiah would be cut down. Moreover, the family tree of Jesse was no longer to experience a blessed state of prosperity; rather it would be cut down simultaneously, so that only a stump remained. Thus, it would remain dormant until He whose right the diadem is shall return to take up his inheritance.

There are many principles given for our instruction in these things. The natural branches were cut off, so that only a stump remained. Similarly, the inspired Apostle used the analogy of an olive tree having its branches removed:

“for if the firstfruit be holy, the lump is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in amongst them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree: Boast not against the branches. But if thou boast, thou bearest not the root, but the root thee. Thou wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, that I might be grafted in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear” (Rom. 11:16-20).

The people of Israel, as natural branches, were broken off as they did not bear any fruit in the sight of the most High God. But we Gentiles were grafted into the remaining stump – the Israelitish rootstock, by grace. We therefore ought not vaunt ourselves against those who fell, but rather we ought to fear, lest we fall after their example.

Speaking at the individual level, John described the coming judgment in these terms:

“And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire” (Mat. 3:10).

Here again, men are likened to fruit trees. A fruit tree that does not bear fruit encumbers the ground with its presence, and is suitable only to be dug up and cast away. Even so, those men and women who refuse to bring forth the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) will be consumed in the fire of coming judgments. Moreover, notice that in this analogy, the axe is laid into “the root” of the trees, meaning that in this case there was no stump remaining, to be allowed to grow again (cp Job 14:7). The entire tree was destroyed in the fire, roots and all. There was no hope of the Tree’s survival, just as for those who are forgetful hearers of the Truth, there is no hope of the life of the *Aion*, when Messiah shall judge every man according to his deeds.

The Jesse-tree had hope, that though it was cut down yet it would sprout again, for from its roots would proceed the BRANCH (Is. 11:1). The branch is spoken of elsewhere in the prophetic writings, most notably in Zechariah 6:12, Jeremiah 23:5, and Jeremiah 33:15). In all of these places, the picture presented forms a vision of hope to the remnant that still held fast to the things of the Spirit. Jeremiah 23:5 particularly associates with the passage in question:

“Behold, the days come saith Yahweh, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a king shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called: *Yahweh tsidkenu*”, or, Yahweh Our Righteousness (Jer. 23:5,6).

The prophecy of a Branch once again growing from the Jesse-root then, was intended to uplift the spirits of those who suffered under the Babylonian oppression, for it spoke of a time of peace and prosperity, when Judah would be saved, and Israel dwell in safety. It taught that there would come One who would redeem them out of the hand of their enemies – including the greatest enemy of all, even their own sinfulness. So it is written: “there shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and will turn away ungodliness from Jacob: for this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins” (Rom. 11:26, 27). Notice these two aspects; Christ is a deliverer to rebuke the Gogian hordes – but also to deliver Israel from their own sins. He will establish his throne at Jerusalem, as the ancient Davidic seat of power restored. He truly will be a “branch” bearing fruit in abundance to the Glory of the Great Husbandman, even Yahweh himself.

Concerning this Man whose name is the BRANCH, Isaiah tells us that: “the spirit of Yahweh shall rest upon him” (Isa. 11:2). This can be seen in the days of his mortality, when the Holy Spirit descended in dove-form, settling upon the Son of Man. At Messiah’s baptism, we read that:

“Jesus, when he was baptised, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the

Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from Heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat. 3:16-17).

Notice here, the allusions to the Creative Work of the Father as described in the early chapters of Genesis. There, we are told that “the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2) in order to bring about the events that followed. The word for “moved” here also carries the sense of “brooded”, a word particularly relevant to the actions of a bird. Also, each creative day ended with the pronouncement “and *Elohim* saw that it was good”, signifying the Father’s approval of the Holy-Spirit activity.

In Matthew 3, instead of the water being symptomatic of the earth being without form and void, it contained the Son of Man, and John the baptiser. Upon Christ did the Spirit descend in bird-like form, with the voice signifying that what was being accomplished was “well pleasing” to the Father. A baptism brings a “newness of life”; it marks a new beginning after the Old Man of the flesh has been put to death. Even so, Messiah’s baptism was an act which was prophetic of his own death and resurrection, an example to all to follow. Christ is the beginning of the New Creation, being the firstborn from the dead (Col. 1:18), and all that is in him is Good, that is to say, all that is in him is his Father’s goodness, revealed to man in an arm of salvation to pluck those who would take hold of it out of the mire.

But though the Spirit dwelt in Christ during the days of His mortal existence, the passage in Isaiah 11 is really speaking of how it will remain with him in the future Age, in order that he might perform righteous judgment in the earth. Verses 2 and 3 describe the seven attributes that come as a consequence of the spirit of Yahweh resting upon him, and verse 4 reads:

“But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove 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 shall he slay the wicked”.

The consequence of Yahweh’s Spirit resting upon Messiah then, is that righteous judgments shall be exercised in the earth. But when Messiah reigns, he will not do so alone, for his brethren shall reign as kings and priests with him (Rev. 5:10). The attributes that are required in order to perform just judgments therefore, must also be found within us. Though we do not have the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, in the sense of having the direct power of Yahweh being upon us, as in Jesus’ case, nevertheless we do have access to the Word of God, which is His “power unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). If we have this Word – which is spirit, and which is life (Jno. 6:63) – dwelling in us, we possess a spiritual power that can save our souls, and also prepare the New Man within us for perpetuation into the glory of the Age to Come. We would do well therefore, to consider the attributes possessed by Messiah, that we might permit the Spirit-Word to work the same characteristics within ourselves.

*“The spirit of wisdom and understanding”*

The Spirit of Wisdom is referred to a number of other times in Scripture, including Ex. 28:3; Deut. 34:9 and Eph. 1:17. The Exodus reference describes how that those

responsible for making the furnishings of the Tabernacle were endowed with the ability to do their work. The Deuteronomy reference describes the preparation of Joshua to take over from Moses, bringing the Children of Israel into the land of promise. And the Ephesians reference describes the apostle's prayer for the disciples there to be given the spirit of Wisdom, in order that they "may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of his glory of his inheritance in the saints ..." (Eph. 1:18). In short, the Spirit of Wisdom was always given for constructive purposes; to ensure the raising up of the Tabernacle, to ensure that Joshua had the ability to bring the Israelites into the glory of their inheritance and to ensure the believer knew the principles of conduct and doctrine that was governed by the common hope they shared. It is true that there is a time to break down, as well as a time to build up (Eccl. 3:3), but a wise man will be able to discern which is appropriate in a given circumstance. Men of wisdom are builders in the ecclesia, seeking to edify the body with the nourishment of the Word, at the same time as contending with error. Men of faith will build up, yet also wield the sword of the Spirit to cut down every thought and thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God. To possess the spirit of wisdom and understanding goes beyond an intellectual comprehension of the Word – vital though that is – it is a discernment of how to apply the principles of the Word in daily living, for the benefit of all the saints, and to the Glory of the Father.

*"the spirit of counsel and might"*

Both Counsel and Might are things which come from giving heed to the word of Wisdom. So we read in Proverbs: "*Counsel is mine*, and sound wisdom: I am understanding: *I have strength*" (Prov. 8:14). A Counsellor in Scriptural terms, is one to whom we can go to for advice, and instruction as to what course we may take in a given circumstance. So Ahithophel was David's counsellor, who turned against him in providing counsel to Saul. And so this is also one of the titles of the Master, as described in Isaiah 9:

"for unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, *Counsellor*, The Mighty El, the Father of the Age, the Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6).

But how does Messiah give us counsel? In what sense is he a Counsellor? Although we do not have access to him to ask for personal advice specific to our circumstance, He has provided us with teachings that enable us to direct our lives aright in the sight of Almighty God. The Sermon on the Mount is merely one collection of wise sayings of Christ; in addition to what is taught plainly there, he has also given us parables describing differing circumstances, and which describe what behaviour is required in each.

We have a specific instance of where Christ gave counsel to an ecclesia in Revelation chapter 3. There, we read concerning the ecclesia at Laodicea:

"Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: *I counsel thee* to buy of me gold tried in

the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see” (Rev. 3:17-18).

Here, the advice, or counsel, is to purchase gold (tried faith – 1Pet. 1:7), and white raiment (the righteousness of saints – Rev. 19:8). Here was a representative ecclesia which was failing to manifest the fruit of the Spirit, and concerning which remedial advice was given.

But we also ought to give heed to the same counsel, for the religious world of our day is no different to the Laodicean condition. Being neither hot nor cold, the noxious lukewarm teachings which emanate from the pulpits of Man’s Wisdom are stifling and sickening to the Saints of the Most High God. We ought to share the Spirit’s assessment of the circumstance ... but do we? In our age, rather than to see men earnestly contending for the faith, we behold men who send ambassages of peace to those who are at enmity with the Father, seeking “union” with those of different persuasions than the teachings of Christ. To remain steadfastly resolute in the face of the derision of men is truly a trial of our faith, and to clothe ourselves with the garments of Christ’s providing may well make us stand out from the ignorant crowds who speak evil of us for Christ’s sake. Yet if we do not seek after those things, these are the words of the Spirit to the Laodicean philosophers: “I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Rev. 3:16).

*“the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of Yahweh”*

Here, knowledge, and reverential fear are coupled together. The Proverbs teach us that: “the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge” (Prov. 1:7). He that cometh to the Father must firstly believe that He Is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him (cp. Heb. 11:6). To believe that the Father “is” must be coupled with the reverence that goes with the recognition of His Power and Might. The Jews of Messiah’s day did not choose knowledge, neither did they seek the fear of the Almighty (Prov. 1:29), therefore their destruction came suddenly. If we would be wise therefore, we must seek first the reverential fear of Yahweh, in order that we can then build upon our knowledge of Him, and so construct for ourselves an edifice of faith, which can resist the stormy blasts that life brings.

*And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of Yahweh*

Here, the word rendered “understanding” signifies *scent, or smell*. The point has been made by many, that this is the same Hebrew words translated “spirit” in verse 3. The idea has been expressed that verse 2 expresses Yahweh breathing the things pertaining to His Spirit, with Messiah breathing them in, as per verse 3. If this is the case, then we have a wonderful unity between the Father and Son in this place; with the reverential fear of Yahweh (mentioned again), Messiah lives and breathes in God’s spiritual atmosphere, to perform His Father’s Will in all things.

There is a lesson in point for ourselves here. We must be found breathing in the precepts and principles of Almighty God ourselves. But in addition to this, the unity which existed between Christ and his Father ought to be reflected in the interactions

of the believers between themselves. We can see this from John chapter 17, and the Lord's prayer which is recorded there:

"Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, *that they may be one, as we are* ... neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word *that they may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*: That the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them, that they may be one, even as we are one" (Jno. 17:11, 21, 22, 23).

Here, we ought to pause and consider our own standing. Is the unity between ourselves and the other brethren and sisters reflective of that unity which exists between the Father and Son? Or do we harbour grudges, and seek to avoid those who we don't feel we can get on well with? Let us all strive to attain that unity of mind and spirit which itself is a testimony to the world, that they might believe.

We come then to the emblems of bread and wine. In these things, we behold the judgment of Yahweh, and the intrinsic oneness between Him and His Son, in the common purpose of providing salvation for those who would be taught of God. In Christ, God condemned sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3). In Christ, Yahweh's righteousness was declared as the condition upon which sins may be forgiven. As we take these emblems into ourselves therefore, let us seek to assimilate into our beings the unity of the Father and Son, and let us seek to develop the Mind of Christ, bearing the attributes listed in Isaiah 11, that we, by His Grace, might enter into life eternal.

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