



Author: Isaiah the prophet

Date: ca. 722 BC

Christmas in Isaiah

Jesus is the “promised One.” All the prophets testified of Jesus, of His suffering, and of our forgiveness in His name. Chief among these prophets is Isaiah. His writing has been called “The Fifth Gospel” because he preaches so clearly of Jesus, His birth, His life, His suffering and death and resurrection. Isaiah preaches Christ crucified for sinners. In this four-part Bible Study we will consider Christmas in Isaiah, looking specifically in Isaiah 7:10–16, 9:2–7, 11:1–10, and 12.

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Around the Word Bible Study Advent, 2015

Isaiah on Christmas Isaiah 11:1-10

Introduction: Psalm 132:11 promises, “The Lord swore to David a sure oath from which he will not turn back: ‘One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne.’” This promise is all over the Old Testament; the Messiah will be a descendant of King David. The people were to find their life and confidence in that promise. But what happens if the people of Judah abuse the promise, and think “It doesn’t matter how we live, God will protect us no matter how wicked we are”? This is an abuse of the Gospel, and Isaiah preaches against it.

“The Lord can still punish you *and* keep His promise of the Messiah.” This is the picture of the shoot growing from the stump. The nation of Judah is the tree which will be cut down by the Babylonians, but the Lord will bring for the Messiah from the seemingly dead stump.

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse...” (Isaiah 11:1). This is a image and preaching of both Law and Gospel. The Law is that the tree will become a stump. The Gospel is that the Lord will keep His promise and bring for the Messiah from the humbled nation.

Opening: Psalm 98

¹Oh sing to the LORD a new song,
for he has done | marvelous things!*
His right hand and his holy arm
have worked salva- | tion for him.

²The LORD has made known his sal- | vation;*
he has revealed his righteousness in the
sight of the | nations.

³He has remembered his steadfast love and
faithfulness to the house of | Israel.*
All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation |
of our God.

⁴Make a joyful noise to the LORD, | all the earth;*
break forth into joyous song and sing | praises!

⁵Sing praises to the LORD | with the lyre,*
with the lyre and the sound of | melody!

⁶With trumpets and the sound | of the horn*
make a joyful noise before the | King, the LORD!

⁷Let the sea roar, and all that | fills it;*
the world and those who | dwell in it!

⁸Let the rivers clap their hands;
let the hills sing for joy together

⁹be- | fore the LORD,*
for he comes to | judge the earth.

He will judge the world with | righteousness,*
and the peoples with | equity.

Glory be to the Father and | to the Son*
and to the Holy | Spirit;
as it was in the be- | ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. | Amen.

Read Isaiah 11:1-10

This lesson is the Old Testament reading for the first Sunday after Christmas. This is good and right, because this “shoot” and “branch” from the stump and root of Jesse is our Lord Jesus Christ.

v. 1: “the stump of Jesse”

Jesse was the grandson of Boaz and Ruth and the father of David (see Ruth 4:17). The “Stump of Jesse” refers to the throne of Judah. The nation will be cut down, but the Lord will still bring forth from it the Savior.

“shoot... branch”

This will now become a regular picture of the Messiah. Consider a few of these passages where the image of the “shoot” or “branch” is used to describe Jesus. See Isaiah 53:2, Jeremiah 23:5, 33:15, Zechariah 6:12, Revelation 5:5, and 22:16. How do these passages use the image of the branch to preach Christ?

v. 2: “the Spirit of the LORD will rest upon Him”

Jesus will be a King and Ruler according to the Spirit, which means His kingdom will be a spiritual kingdom. As Jesus testified before Pontius Pilate, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36).

Luther: “Here it is plainly indicated that that kingdom will not be physical but spiritual. In that kingdom all affairs will be conducted by the Spirit alone, and the Spirit will be poured out over the whole kingdom,” (LW 16:118).

Read Isaiah 61:1. How does Isaiah expand upon his teaching that Jesus will bear the Spirit without measure?

“wisdom and understanding”

See 1 Corinthians 1:24. *Who* is the wisdom of God?

“council and might”

See Psalm 16:7. *Who* gives us council? What is the result?

“knowledge”

See 1 Corinthians 8:1–3. What does Paul teach about knowledge? How is it dangerous? How is it made good and helpful? How does Jesus reign with knowledge?

“the fear of the LORD”

The fear of the LORD is a major theme in the Scriptures. The first commandment, “You shall have no other gods” means “we should *fear*, love, and trust in God above all things.” “The fear of the LORD,” Solomon teaches, “is the beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10).

See Psalm 147:11. What does this verse say about the one who fears the LORD?

Luther: “Thus the Christian man is fully equipped and a fit vessel of the Lord if he has wisdom, that is, purity of teaching, if he has understanding, that is, if he guards that doctrine pure and unimpaired, if he has counsel and if victory over temptation follows, if he leads an upright life with his brothers and uses all things to advantage and not as a stumbling block in the fear of the Lord. But where the fear of the Lord has been absent, the rest is easily perverted. This is a picture and description of Christ’s kingdom. These are His weapons. In this way that kingdom is extended and the twigs bear fruit,” (LW 16,120).

v. 4: “with the rod of His mouth.”

That is, with His Word. Jesus rules in the world through the Word, through preaching.

See Revelation 1:16 and its context. How does this image capture the teaching that Jesus rules with His Word?

Notice that it is “the meek” who benefit from His reign (see Matthew 5:5). The humility of faith is life in the kingdom of Jesus.

v. 5: “righteousness and faithfulness... His belt”

The kingdom of God does not come with strength and might, but with righteousness and faith.

Luther: “Both Christ and His kingdom have their own weapons, which are not physical, to be sure, as we read in Ephesians 6:10 ff., 2 Corinthians 10:4, and 1 Thessalonians 5:8. But righteousness and faith are His sword. By it all trials are overcome, when we believe that Christ is our Protector, in whom we have all things, even though we are sinners. Such, then, is this kingdom, that first the spoken Word of God is proclaimed and then it is believed, the Holy Spirit being active in both cases. This is the righteousness before God and, as 1 John 5:4 calls it, “the victory that overcomes the world” and all evils. This is the difference between this kingdom and all others, which are physical,” (LW 16,122).

Take a look at a few of the passages Luther references: Ephesians 6:10–

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20, 2 Corinthians 10:4, and 1 Thessalonians 5:8. How do the Lord’s gifts of righteousness and faith become our protection?

v. 6–9: “wolf... leopard... lion... bear... cobra”

These three verses are an extended allegory of the peacefulness of Christ’s kingdom. Through the preaching of the Word wicked, violent, and dangerous sinners are brought into the fellowship of the kindness of Christ.

Luther: “Human beings differing extremely among themselves—savage, wild, irascible, hateful, murderous, ungovernable, and the people of the gentle Christ—come to agreement through the preaching of the Gospel.

The church will convert the nations not by force but by the goodness of the Word. The lion will fill himself with straw and stubble, that is, he will become tame and adopt a domestic gentleness, just as the ox will submit to the hand,” (LW 16,123).

See Isaiah 65:25 and Ezekiel 34:25. How do the prophets use the picture of peaceful beasts to deliver the comfort of the Gospel?

v. 10: “in that day”

See Romans 15:12 and context where Paul quotes this verse from Isaiah. Notice Paul’s emphasis on God’s grace to the Gentiles. How does Paul understand the promise of Isaiah 11 to be fulfilled in Christ? How does this comfort us?



Closing Hymn & Prayer: Oh Come, Oh Come, Emmanuel

Oh, come, Oh, come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Oh, come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel. Amen.

—*The Lutheran Hymnal*, 62; st. 1–2

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