

## ISAIAH – LESSON FIVE

### ISAIAH 3:10 - 5:7

Vv. 10-11 remind us of Gal. 6:7-8: “ Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. 8 For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.” This principle is found all of the way through scripture. (See Obadiah 15.) But don’t miss the ray of light in v. 10. There are righteous among them who shall eat of the fruit of their doing.<sup>1</sup>

v. 12 – The fact that weak and evil leaders led Judah astray is no excuse. They deserved the kind of leaders that they had. Isaiah describes them as immature little boys controlled by domineering women. But they were still responsible for their actions. It is true according to the old saying, “Every tub shall stand on its own bottom.”<sup>2</sup> The leaders may have been the ones who destroyed the way of their paths, but it was the people who walked in the wrong way.

#### **Vv. 13-15 – Judgment of the Rulers**

Judgment is here. Jehovah stands to judge the peoples (the Nations). Isaiah declares that since God is the judge of the nations, he is also the judge of his own people. He starts with the rulers of his people. They are charged with having eaten up God’s vineyard, or his people (see chapter 5). Their houses are filled with goods stolen from the poor, demonstrating their corruption. V. 15 is the ancient equivalent of “What in the world were you thinking? Did you really believe that you could get away with that?” There is no real answer that can be given to this question asked by “the Lord, Jehovah of hosts.”

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1. This is not to say that the righteous would not suffer in captivity along with the unrighteous. It is to say that the righteous will not come to the same ultimate end as the wicked.

2. The oldest record of the saying found is, Let every Fatte [vat] stande vpon his owne bottome. [1564 W. Bullein *Dialogue against Fever* 48<sup>v</sup>]

## Vv. 16-4:1 – Indictment of Vain and Worldly Women

Having censored the rulers, Isaiah turns his attention to Jerusalem's vain and worldly daughters of Zion. The punishment that they are to receive for their part in the corruption of Judah is severe. There will be scabs on their heads and their secret parts will be laid bare.<sup>3</sup> "In that day," *i.e.*, the day when their heads are scabbed, their jewels, perfumes, and clothes will all be taken away. Instead of a sweet odor there will be body odor (rottenness); instead of a weekly trip to the beauty parlor there will be baldness; instead of a rope, a girdling of sackcloth. All of this will be topped off with a branding.<sup>4</sup>

Isaiah doesn't say specifically what these women had done, but from the punishments it is clear that they cared only for beauty. Their desire was for the finest of clothes, the odor of sweet perfume, the adornment of fine jewelry, and a fancy hair-do to top it all off. They cared only for themselves and had no thoughts, much less compassion, for the poor and helpless. The picture is one of conduct and character that are contrary to the holiness and righteousness of Jehovah. Neither Isaiah nor Peter (1 Pet. 3:1-5) condemns women for adorning themselves. What they both condemn is a proud and sensuous life patterned after the world with its lust and lascivious ways. These women had a far-reaching influence on the nation's morals and were leading the nation astray.

The final blow comes in the loss of the nation's finest men in battle (25). Great mourning will follow (26). This will create a shortage of "eligible bachelors," and the women will face the double disgrace of being unmarried and childless. As a result, seven women will lay hold on and offer themselves to any surviving male, and, in return for his name, promise to feed and dress themselves.

## CHAPTER FOUR

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3. Some commentators see the scabs as a disfiguring disease and the laying bare of secret parts as sexual abuse. To this they add captivity (a rope, v. 24) and bereavement (v. 25).

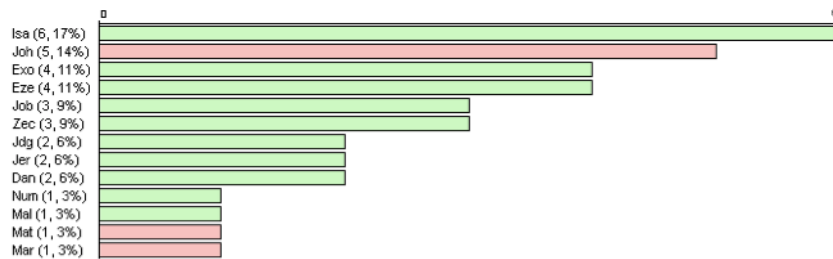
4. Isaiah doesn't identify the brand. It may be the brand that was placed on captive slaves.

## JERUSALEM THE REDEEMED

### V. 2 – The Branch of Jehovah

Isaiah now comes to the end of his description of Jerusalem as it then existed to Jerusalem the redeemed. In 2:2-4 we saw how God envisioned it. Jerusalem was to be “control central” of his rule. It is from his presence in Zion that his law will go forth and to which the Gentiles shall come. In 2:5 – 4:1 we saw Jerusalem decayed and corrupted as it existed in Isaiah’s day. Instead of remaining what God has envisioned, Jerusalem (Zion), the people became corrupted with immorality and idolatry. They placed their confidence in the arm of flesh, not having learned that it would fail them. Walking as the nations round about leads to punishment for Judah just as it did for the gentile nations. In 4:2-6 Isaiah reveals Jerusalem redeemed. God’s promises will be fulfilled. Since the fall God has been working out his eternal promise in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:10-22). Evil will be purged; the new Zion will be made glorious by the Branch and by Jehovah; a new order will be divinely created; Jehovah will effect a cleansing.

That which will come to pass will come to pass *in that day*. When *that day* will be dictated by the context in which it appears. We saw in 2:2 that *the latter days* referred to the messianic age when the corruption and immorality had been removed by the judgment of captivity and the redemption of the remnant. The same time is indicated here – the time when judgment shall have been executed and Jerusalem redeemed. It is at that time that the Branch of Jehovah will be glorious. It is here that Isaiah introduces the concept of the “Branch.” This chart shows the use of “branch” in the Scripture.



Strong’s Hebrew defines the term as “a sprout (usually concrete), literal or

figurative:—branch, bud, that which (where) grew (upon), spring(-ing).” *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* says that the term is used 12 times in the Old Testament and that at least five of those occasions are Messianic in nature. It adds, “The first writer to take up the thought of 2 Sam 23:5 and use the root צמח as a noun to designate the Messiah is Isaiah (4:2). Many deny that Isaiah is referring to the Messiah when he speaks of “the Branch or Shoot of Yahweh” because it is paralleled by the expression “the fruit of the earth.” Therefore, 4:2 is simply a reference to the agricultural prosperity of the land. But this view fails to notice that both of these expressions are elsewhere messianic. It also neglects to account for the unusual limitation of this fruitfulness “in that day”; the fruitfulness is “for the survivors of Israel.” In this context it seems to have the concept not only of more than a “shoot” or “sprout,” it is a growing thing in which dwells life and vitality. Specifically, it is the salvation through the Messiah that Jehovah has undertaken for the sake of humanity. The promise of God lived! It was not forgotten. When the *branch* appears *in that day* it will be beautiful and glorious. The *Branch* is developed further in Isa. 11:1 where we learn that it will come out of the stock of Jesse, David’s father. In 11:10 the *Branch* is the ensign around which the nations will gather. More than 100 years later Jeremiah also spoke of the *Branch* (Jer. 23:5; 33:15), as did Zechariah, one of the last prophets (Zech. 3:8; 6:12-13).

There is disagreement among commentators as to exactly that to which the phrase “and the fruit of the land shall be excellent and comely” refers. Some commentators solve the problem by not speaking of it at all. Others make no positive suggestion but find fault with the suggestions of others. Young contends that it is a reference to the humanity of Jesus – the “Shoot” is from God and is his divine nature; the “fruit of the land” refers to his humanity. He gives several reasons to support his position: 1) the Hebrew writer had this passage in mind when he wrote 7:14 – “it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood”; 2) the parallelism between branch and fruit – the sprout is from the Lord and the fruit is from the land; he is the Sprout who comes forth from the Lord and the fruit who comes out of the land; 3) In many passages of Scripture there is a reference to the fruitfulness of the Messianic age; only here, however, is it stated that the fruit is for the dispersed of Israel; 4) The text provides no contrast between fruitfulness and

barrenness; if all Isaiah is teaching is that in the Messianic age the land will be fruitful, to what does this stand in contrast?<sup>5</sup> 5) Only when fruit of the land” refers to the Messiah does it make sense with what follows. If it just refers literally to the fruit of the land, the thought is immediately dropped and not mentioned again. If on the other hand the term refers to the Messiah, then, according to Young, Isaiah has given a general statement for which he then fill in the details in the following verses.

Homer Hailey interprets the phrase as spiritual fruit. He argues that the mountain of Jehovah and Zion-Jerusalem are the spiritual kingdom under the Messiah, and the Branch is the Messiah who will come to Zion in the latter days. Why, then, he asks, should not the fruit of the land, the mountain to which the peoples will come, be of a spiritual nature? Jeremiah, he further argues, said that the Branch will “execute justice and righteousness in the land” (Jer.23:5); hence the fruit of the land will be the spiritual fruit of those who submit to His rule of righteousness. He concludes that “this fruit will be *for them that are escaped of Israel*, that is, the remnant. His reasoning is appealing because it calls for a spiritual application; however, he does not identify the “spiritual fruit” nor does he state how the spiritual fruit is “for the remnant.”

McGuiggan rejects Young as “fanciful.” That is perhaps a bit strong. On the other hand it is not much strong than Oswalt’s comment. Oswalt acknowledges that Young makes the most detailed defense of the application of “the fruit of the land” to the humanity of the Messiah, but his final evaluation of Young’s position is that it “rests too much on scholarly ingenuity.” Albert Barnes makes a strong response to Young’s position.<sup>6</sup> He asserts:

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5. This argument is based on the fact that just as the coming of the “Branch” and the redemption of Zion is contrasted with the corrupt Jerusalem that led to captivity, the “fruit of the land” should be contrasted to something. Where is the contrast if all that the passage means that in the Messianic age the land will be fruitful?

6. Barnes’ (1798 – 1870) *Notes of the New Testament* were published sometime before 1872 when the last revision was published. This tells us that others held the position Young holds at a much earlier date. Barnes refers to some of them. Their identity is not relevant here. It is not certain when Barnes’ work was originally published, but at least some of it was published before 1865. That year

- 1) The second phrase, according to the laws of Hebrew parallelism, is most naturally an echo or repetition of the sentiment in the first member, and means substantially the same thing;
- 2) The phrase “branch of Jehovah” does not refer of necessity to his Divine nature. The idea is that of a decayed tree that has fallen down, and has left a living root which sends up a shoot, or sucker; and can be applied with great elegance to the decayed family of David. But how, or in what sense, can this be applied to Jehovah? Is Jehovah thus fallen and decayed? The idea properly is that this shoot of a decayed family should be nurtured up by Jehovah; should be appointed by him, and should thus be *his* branch. The parallel member denotes substantially the same thing; the “fruit of the earth”—the shoot which the earth produces—or which springs up from a decayed family, as the sprout does not from a fallen tree
- 3) It is as true that his human nature proceeded from God as his Divine. It was produced by the Holy Ghost, and can no more be regarded as “the fruit of the earth” than his Divine nature; Luke 1:35; Heb. 10:5.
- 4) This mode of interpretation is fitted to bring the whole subject into contempt. There are plain and positive passages enough to prove that the Messiah had a Divine nature, and there are enough also to prove that he was a man; but nothing is more adapted to produce disgust in relation to the whole subject, in the minds of skeptical or *thinking* men, than a resort to arguments such as this in defense of a great and glorious doctrine of revelation.

Barnes’ argument is persuasive. What then does the passage mean? Barnes’ conclusion above is reasonable. The fruit that springs up are those who come forth from the decayed family of David, which I understand to mean spiritual Israel.

McGuiggan does tell what he thinks it means as well as what he thinks it does not

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he was tried for heresy by the Presbyterian church because his commentary on Romans seemed to deny some of the tenets of Calvinism. It is said that prior to 1870 over one million of his commentaries had been sold.

mean. He gets rid of the problem with the second half of the verse by rejecting the position that the Branch is Messianic in reference. He relates Isaiah's message to Hezekiah's statement (37:31) that "the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward." He then argues that both references in v. 2 are to the remnant and that Isaiah's concept of the remnant developed into the remnant in other passages.

Where, then, does that leave us? It leaves us in a position where we cannot be dogmatic; however, that does not mean that we should not come to a conclusion. It seems that those who do not see the Messiah in 2a just aren't looking closely enough. Isaiah 11:1 is a good commentary on 4:2a. Isaiah speaks of a shoot out of the stock of Jesse will come forth and "a branch out of his roots will bear fruit." The Hebrew writer may have had this verse in mind in Heb. 7:14. Thus we know that this passage is Messianic. 11:1 has two entities – the shoot and a branch out of his roots that will bear fruit. 4:2 has two entities – the branch and the fruit of the land. Thus, the primary difference in the passage is the source of the fruit—in 4:2 it is the land; in 11:1 it is a branch that comes from the shoot. Is there really any difference? What is the land? Is it not redeemed Jerusalem-Zion. In the context are we not looking at spiritual fruit as in 2:2-3? Surely we are. Favoring this conclusion is the fact that it is consistent with the entire prophecy of Isaiah.

But we are not through with 4:2. Isaiah says that the fruit of the land *shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel*. Homer Haily says that this refers to the remnant. Young translates the phrase, "to the remnant of Israel." The English Standard renders the passage: "In that day the branch of the LORD shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land shall be the pride and honor of the survivors of Israel. Put together, the thought seems to be that the spiritual blessings that the Lord shall provide for the remnant will be the remnant's pride (excellence) and comeliness (honored by that with which they are robed).

### **Vv. 3-4 – The Escaped of Israel – The Remnant**

This language seems to confirm that verse 2 speaks of the remnant that remains in Zion-Jerusalem. It is the remnant that exists according to the election of grace (Rom.

11:5). This remnant shall be called holy, even everyone that is written among the living in Jerusalem. Whereas position had been based on rank (3:2-3, 14), in the new Jerusalem it would be based on holiness of life. The fact that they will be called holy is based on the fact that they are holy before the Lord. God does not call things that are not as if they are. They are found *written* among the living in Jerusalem. They are in God's book. This status will occur when *the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion*. One great truth to be learned here is that God sees things far differently than man. The Lord calls the finery so prized by the daughters of Zion filth. They will be cleansed by the washing of the Lord's judgment. Concomitantly, the Lord will purge the blood of Jerusalem from its midst. The blood of Jerusalem undoubtedly came from murders (1:15) and from denying the essentials of life to the helpless (3:14-15). This purging will be accomplished by *the spirit of justice, and by the spirit of burning*. This is clearly a judgment from God. Scripture often uses fire in connection with cleansing and purification (Mal. 3:2-3; Matt. 3:11-12; 1 Cor. 3:13-15).

#### **Vv. 5-6 – Protection and Guidance of the New Zion**

The holy remnant in the New Jerusalem will enjoy the safety and security from Jehovah that they had sought in the arm of flesh. The language of verse 5 is reminiscent of God's guidance in the wilderness – a cloud of smoke by day and the shining of a flaming fire by night. It is a condition that will be created by Jehovah. The word used for "created" is the same word used in Genesis of the original creation. It is a new creation like the original creation. This term for "creation" is used to describe that which God is to bring to pass for his people. In 65:17 Jehovah says that he will "create" new heavens and a new earth. He calls upon his people to be glad and rejoice forever in that which he will "create." He promises to "create" Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. An unidentified Psalmist<sup>7</sup> wrote: "a people which shall be created shall praise Jehovah (102:18; see 2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15). God's glory will provide a covering over the new Jerusalem and over her assemblies wherever they may

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7. The Psalm may have been written during the Babylon captivity. It has been conjectured that the author was Daniel, but there is no real basis for the conjecture.



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Moreover, Jehovah will provide a pavilion for a shade from the heat, a refuge from the storm, and a cover from rain. The latter days have come and that which Jehovah promised has been performed. But if God is to dwell among us we must be cleansed from our guilt and sin. God cannot and will not dwell in a defiled temple. Once cleansed, God's holiness must somehow characterize our lives. As Amos asked, "How can two walk together unless they be agreed (Amos 3:3)?"

Too much of that which passes for Christianity today is presented as a get rich quick scheme accompanied by perfect health. It is called the "health and wealth" gospel. Not only is it not true, it often causes those who do not enjoy "health and wealth" to conclude that God has abandoned them or that Satan is oppressing them. What has happened is that people have forsaken God and are, in essence, using him as both banker and physician who will make loans that don't have to be repaid and provide physical health without charge. God does neither in response to actions motivated by greed. His will is that we lay up treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19; 19:21), and as for our health, he refers us to the Great Physician to seek strength for the inward man even though the outward man is decaying (2 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 3:16).

It is a tough lesson to learn, but the truth is that God is not too concerned about our being happy in this life. He is very greatly concerned that we be holy. A man can be happy on his way to hell. Comfort, security, and pleasure are all by-products, not ends within themselves. If we make "things" (including health) primary, we become idolaters and we lose those things even as we cherish and hoard them (Matt. 10:34-39; 16:25-26). If we place God first, he will bless us as he sees best and with such blessing we shall be satisfied because we know that we have him and that he is all we need. Other things may come and go and we can have joy in both knowing that he has no desire to deprive us, but that even in the fire he seeks to do us good.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **The Vineyard and Its Fruits**

The exact time of this prophecy cannot be determined. Some place it in the latter days of Jotham and others in the early reign of Ahaz. The chapter discloses a people who were reaping that which they had sown. They had sown corruption, immorality, and rebellion; they were reaping the harvest of their evil deeds. Isaiah's preaching must have seemed as the ranting of a crazy man. After all, these were the chosen people of God. They had enjoyed the peace and prosperity of Uzziah's reign and its continuance in Jotham's reign. Surely this peace and prosperity was a display of the favor of Jehovah.

### **Vv. 1-7 – The Song of the Beloved and His Vineyard**

Isaiah is a very versatile prophet. In these verses he becomes a singer. In his song he compares Judah to a vineyard. This is a common comparison in scripture (Psalm 80-8-12; cf Isa. 3:14). Some call it a love song. What Isaiah is doing is telling a parable in song. One commentator suggested that, because Isaiah knew that his message would not receive a ready hearing, he disguised himself as a minstrel and beguiled his hearers with song. Then the commentator quit preaching and went to meddling. He suggested that this demonstrated how creative and skilful the prophets were in communicating their message. He still would have been alright had he not added, "gospel preachers take note!" The opening of the song is surely demonstrative of the love that God had for his people. This, of course, assumes that the "beloved" of whom he sings is Yahweh. That is, I think, a correct assumption. It was Isaiah's beloved who "had a vineyard (v. 1). The love is demonstrated by the care that God took in planning and creating his vineyard. He selected a fruitful hill, prepared the soil by digging it and removing stones, supplied it with the choicest vines, built a watchtower in its midst to shelter the watchman who was to protect it man or beast would destroy it, and prepared a winepress for its harvest (v. 2). But after all of the tender, loving preparation, the vineyard brought forth only wild grapes.

This brings the love song to a conclusion. It is followed by "tough love" lamentation. In v. 3 the speaker is now God, the owner of the vineyard. He calls upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the men of Judah to judge between him and his vineyard. "And now," he says. The tone has changed. The time of judgment has come. They are

called to judge, not in the sense that the decision is theirs, but to judge the truth of two facts that would prove their guilt and justify their punishment. The two questions (v. 4) containing the two facts are: 1) Was there anything that I could have done for my vineyard that I did not do; and 2) Did it bring forth wild grapes? They knew the answers. They were so obvious that no answer needed to be recorded. There was nothing else that God could have done. He had delivered them from Egypt. He had led them through the wilderness by cloud and by fire, providing water, food, and clothing. He had brought them to and given them the Promised Land. He had forgiven their oft rebellion. Surely God had the right to expect that they would now heed his commands and walk in his ways. But they did not and would not!

Thus God had no choice but to pronounce his judgment (vv. 5-7). He will take away the hedge, break down the wall, he will lay it waste, he will cease caring for the vines (neither prune nor hoe), he will cease watering it with his rain. The result is total ruin – cattle shall eat it and be trod it down, it will lay waste, it will brow up with briers and thorns.

In v. 7 Isaiah once more speaks and applies the parable to Israel. The time for poetry is passed. Israel is the vineyard and the men of Judah were God's pleasant plant. God looked for justice but found only bloodshed.<sup>8</sup> God look for righteousness, but heard only a cry.<sup>9</sup> How sad. God set his affection upon and found his delight in his vineyard. He did not choose her because she was bigger and better, but because in her he could show his glory (Deut. 7; John 15:16). Because of her disobedience, God now pronounces six woes upon her.

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8. Literal translation by *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*.

9. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* comments on this passage: "A strong cry frequently indicates that righteousness is absent or judgment is being executed. Even though Yahweh established Israel as a nation to produce justice and righteousness he discovered bloodshed and a cry, i.e., the city was oppressing the unfortunate."