



An Advent Study of ISAIAH 11:1-10, ROMANS 15:4-13 and MATTHEW 3:1-12

*All scripture is written for our
encouragement. This week we reflect on some
less comfortable aspects of Christ's ministry.*

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ISAIAH 11:1-10

- 1 *There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.*
- 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 disputes 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 strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.*
- 5 *Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.*
- 6 *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.*
- 7 *The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.*
- 8 *The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, 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.*
- 10 *In that day the root of Jesse, who shall stand as a signal for the peoples—of him shall the nations inquire, and his resting place shall be glorious.*

10. Do these things highlight aspects of Christ's ministry that we may be uncomfortable with? How do we reconcile ourselves to this?
11. How can we respond to John's message, and call to repent? How can John's message "prepare the way" in each of us, to receive Christ afresh this Christmas?

ROMANS 15:4-13

- 4 *For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*
- 5 *May the God of endurance and encouragement grant you to live in such harmony with one another, in accord with Christ Jesus,*
- 6 *that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
- 7 *Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.*
- 8 *For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God's truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs,*
- 9 *and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, "Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name."*
- 10 *And again it is said, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."*
- 11 *And again, "Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples extol him."*
- 12 *And again Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope."*
- 13 *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope.*

MATTHEW 3:1-12

- 1 *In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea,*
- 2 *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*
- 3 *For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord; make his paths straight.’”*
- 4 *Now John wore a garment of camel’s hair and a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.*
- 5 *Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him,*
- 6 *and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.*
- 7 *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”*
- 8 *Bear fruit in keeping with repentance.*
- 9 *And do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father,’ for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham.*
- 10 *Even now the axe is laid to the root of the trees. Every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.*
- 11 *“I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*
- 12 *His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into the barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

1. Looking at the passage from Isaiah; what do you understand by “a shoot of Jesse”? Who is Jesse? Who is the ‘stump’?
2. Isaiah says about the ‘stump’, that the “Spirit of the Lord” will rest on him, and give a threefold elaboration of who that Spirit is. Isaiah uses six terms; what are they? What do they tell you about the ‘stump’?
3. What is it that the ‘stump’ will do? List four things? What will be his motivation?
4. Isaiah mentions two things that will not be present in the actions of the ‘stump’; what are they? Similarly, Isaiah mentions two attitudes that the ‘stump’ will have; what are they?
5. The New Testament interprets the Isaiah passage as referring to Christ. Romans says this prophecy was “written for our instruction.” How might this scripture lead us to ‘encouragement’ and ‘hope’?
6. The Roman church was a mix of Jew and Gentile; why does Paul urge them to have “one voice”? What kind of division might there have been among them?
7. How does Paul say that Christ became a servant to the uncircumcised? Why would this give the uncircumcised cause to celebrate?
8. Looking at the passage from Matthew’s gospel; who was the “one crying in the wilderness”? How did he “prepare the way of the Lord”?
9. How does John talk about the one who comes after him? How does John describe his ministry?