

Opening Monologue

Welcome to the AVC App! Many of you have visited here before, but I want to extend a warm welcome to everyone who is joining us. There's never enough time to cover everything in a sermon, which is why I started this app several years ago. By the way, we also have a large archive of past sermons along with extensive app notes that include deeper research. Just go into the app and select "Sermon & Study Notes," and you'll find all of it there.

Welcome to "The Tree of Life – Eden to Eternity." Last week we covered the Fall in the Garden of Eden, and this week we will press into the prophetic words of Isaiah. From Isaiah to the Gospels... where we read about God's supernatural redemptive plan.

The Fall in the Garden unleashed sin into the veins of humanity. As Scripture declares: "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Sin is so offensive to God that, biblically speaking, a blood sacrifice has to be made to cover the offense. (Hebrews 9:11-12)

The Lord didn't give up on humanity, and in the darkest of times—in the midst of the Israelites being held captive in Assyria and Babylon—the Lord's voice was heard through the mouth of Isaiah: "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him – the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord." (Isa. 11:1-2)

As we shall discover this week, Jesus is the Branch... He is the Tree of Life (symbolically) that gives everlasting life. Jesus said this: 'I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit, he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. 'I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.'

Jesus spoke all of those words just 24 hours before He went to the Tree—the Cross—to take upon Himself the curse of death and the forgiveness of sins so that we could live eternally with Him forever. From Eden to Eternity, God has always had a plan... Praise be to King Jesus!

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city." (Revelation 22:14)

Join us this Sunday as we learn about the Lord's redemptive plan for humanity. Yes... it is truly supernatural!

In Christ,
Rev. Brad Standfest

To Listen to this week's Sermon: "Wk 2 Resurrection Series- The Tree of Life: Eden to Eternity" Go to the Sermon tab here in our APP or use the links to our website or YouTube Channel where you can also listen to our Sermons:

Web: <https://www.almontvineyardchurch.org/media>

You Tube: <https://www.youtube.com/@almontvineyardchurch>

Key Sermon Text

Isaiah 9:1-2 & 6-7

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%209%3A1-2%20&version=NIV>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%209%3A%206-7&version=NIV>

Isaiah 11:1-2

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2011%3A1-2&version=NIV>

Matthew 1:21

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%201%3A21&version=NIV>

John 15:1-5

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%2015%3A1-5%20&version=NIV>

Revelation 22:14

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%2022%3A14&version=NIV>

Commentary, Spiritual Applications, and Theological Reflections

Sin requires a Blood Sacrifice

The theological foundation for blood sacrifice rests on a fundamental conviction about sin's nature and God's holiness. Sin provokes God's judgment, and he cannot overlook it. This offense creates separation between humanity and God (Isa 59:2), establishing the need for restoration.

The mechanism connecting sin to sacrifice operates through a principle of life exchange. Blood carries life itself, and God appointed it as the means through which atonement occurs. (Lev 17:11) Under the law, purification requires bloodshed—without it, there is no forgiveness. (Heb 9:22) This wasn't arbitrary ritual but reflected a deeper theological reality: sin carries the penalty of death (Rom 6:23), and the violation of God's holiness demands a substitutionary death sentence.

The Old Testament sacrificial system operated through identification rather than mere transaction. When the worshipper laid hands on the animal, this gesture identified them with the sacrifice, allowing them to participate in the animal's death through ritual identification. As blood was applied to the altar, the sinner's life was surrendered to God. This restored individuals and communities to wholeness in relationship with God.

The New Testament interprets Christ's death through this sacrificial framework. Christ appeared to do away with sin through his sacrifice, and his single offering sanctified and perfected all who are being sanctified. (Heb 10:10–14) His blood—unlike animal sacrifices—entered the heavenly sanctuary and purified consciences from dead works. (Heb 9:12–14) Christ became our sin offering, purging our impurities so we could be forgiven.

Biblical Passages on Atonement:

All have sinned and fall short of God's glory, yet are justified freely through grace by redemption in Christ, whom God presented as a propitiation through faith in his blood. (Rom 3:23–25) Walking in

light, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

[1] (Logos Bible Commentaries 1-3)

The Fall - From Eden to Isaiah to Jesus

Satan questioned God's word and encouraged Eve to disobey, and both she and Adam ate the forbidden fruit. The consequences were catastrophic: they were expelled from the garden and denied access to the tree of life, beginning their journey toward death. But crucially, God promised a coming Seed who would crush the serpent's head—establishing the redemptive thread that runs through all subsequent history.

Isaiah's Vision of Restoration:

From the stump of Jesse would emerge a shoot, and from his roots a branch bearing fruit. This image transforms devastation into hope. While Isaiah's earlier reference to a burned stump emphasized separation from sinful people, the stump of Jesse reinforces the messianic identity as the physical offspring promised to David. Remarkably, the Spirit of the LORD rests upon this figure, guiding him in wisdom and knowledge. The dead tree—representing the fallen Davidic dynasty—would produce new life.

The Last Supper

Twenty-four hours before his crucifixion, Jesus reframed the Passover meal itself. His words at the Eucharist contained sacrificial tones anticipating his sacrifice to establish the New Covenant. He declared: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." The Passover meal was a type of the final sacrifice to end all sacrifices, and unlike the blood of the lamb at Passover, Christ's blood would definitively take away sins.

The True Vine:

(Tree of Life) In John 15, Jesus completes the metaphor. Jesus is now that vineyard, fulfilling Israel's destiny and centering God's salvation-historical purposes in himself. The messianic community of believers are branches connected to Jesus, the true vine, with God the Father as the vine grower. Bearing fruit depends on believers "abiding" in Jesus, which means his words abide in them, since his word has already cleansed them.

Theological Overview

The arc moves from *severance* (the Fall cuts humanity from the tree of life) through *promise* (a stump will sprout) to *sacrifice* (blood seals the new covenant) to *organic union* (believers grafted into the true vine). The tree is not merely restored—it is transformed. What was lost through disobedience is recovered through Christ's self-offering and believers' living connection to him. Fruitfulness is no longer about external obedience but intimate, moment-by-moment dependence on the vine itself. The stump becomes not just a symbol of judgment but of resurrection: death gives way to unprecedented life, and the scattered branches of humanity are invited into organic unity with their source.

[1] (Logos Bible Commentaries 4-9)

The Context Leading into Isaiah

Isaiah 11: From Judgment to Hope Through the Messiah

After Solomon's death, the united monarchy fractured into two kingdoms. The divided monarchy faced two catastrophic crises: the Assyrian conquest of Israel in 722 BCE, followed more than a century later by the Babylonian conquest of Judah and the exile of its people.

The Davidic Collapse

Following Assyria's conquest of the northern kingdom in 722 B.C., the Davidic dynasty entered its slow decline as new empires like Assyria and Babylon threatened Israel. King Ahaz, rather than trusting God, made a treaty with Tiglath-pileser, marking the collapse of the Davidic dynasty's autonomy. After Josiah's death, subsequent kings revealed the weakness of the Davidic dynasty and

Jerusalem. Foreign rulers could remove Israel's kings at will—as happened with Jehoahaz. Jehoiakim became Babylon's vassal in 605 B.C., Jehoiachin was imprisoned for rebellion, and Zedekiah attempted to break free, ending with Babylon's eighteen-month siege of Jerusalem. In 586 BCE, a second Judean rebellion brought the Davidic monarchy to an end. Jerusalem was conquered, the temple burned, and all but the poorest were taken into exile in Babylon.

Isaiah's Prophetic Hope

Into this devastation, Isaiah spoke words of restoration. The original context of Isaiah 11 was the Syro-Ephraimitic War, when Isaiah delivered oracles of consolation to King Ahaz during the threat to Jerusalem and the Davidic throne.[Yet after the fall of Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty at the time of the Babylonian exile, the oracles in Isaiah 11 would have been read as a promise of the restoration of the monarchy and a return from Babylonian exile.

The prophecy emphasizes Messiah's lowly origin—a tree cut down, leaving only a dead stump, with a single shoot remaining growing low, near to the ground, eventually bearing fruit. Although the Messiah will be a descendant of David, He will not appear until the House of David has been reduced to what it was in the days of Jesse. The ax of God's judgment would cut down the proud tree of Judah. Isaiah prophesies about the stump that had once been glorious and powerful Judah. The royal line of David would remain because God had promised that the Messiah would come from David's line and rule forever.

~Jesus Christ: The Fulfillment~

Jesus was born into the House of David, in Bethlehem—the home of Jesse—in great poverty.[4] Jesus was given the Spirit “without measure.” In Scripture the number seven signifies perfection, completeness, or fullness. The sevenfold nature of the Spirit in Isaiah 11:2 is therefore synonymous with the measureless fullness in John 3:34.

Isaiah opens with the prediction of the Messiah in twofold manifestation—one appearance likened to a little shoot from the stump of Jesse, strengthened by the anointing of the Spirit of the Lord, and a second appearance as the glorious Judge. The New Testament reveals that these two appearances refer to two different historical advents of Christ. Isaiah looks beyond the disappointments of his own age to the coming of one who can only be God in the flesh, Jesus Christ. The first passage (9:6–7) focuses on His birth, while 11:1–9 focuses on the actualization of His reign. In New Testament terms, 9:6–7 was fulfilled in His incarnation, and 11:1–9 will be fulfilled in His second advent.

[1] Logos Bible Commentaries 10-16

Isaiah 11 Commentary

Isaiah 11:1-9

THEOLOGY. This new hopeful section returns to the theme of God's kingdom provisions and the messianic hope for the world, corresponding to the initial discussion of this theme in 9:1–7. Although the audience may presently suffer under adverse conditions as a consequence of Ahaz's sins and Assyria's oppression (11:16), they should trust God because of what he will do in the future. He will not abandon his people, but will cause the remnant to return (10:20–27; 11:10–12), deliver them from oppression, re-establish them as his holy people in Zion (cf. 4:2–6), and inaugurate an era of peace between the nations (2:1–5). This future glorious kingdom and its just ruler (9:1–7; 11:1–9) are set in contrast to the Assyrian kingdom and its arrogant ruler in 10:5–14. A Davidic king who rules with justice and gathers people from the far reaches of the world will replace the proud Assyrian tyrant who destroys and scatters many nations. The wisdom, strength, and Spirit of the LORD will empower this new king (11:1–4); he will not arrogantly depend on his own wisdom and strength as did the

haughty king of Assyria. God's people will no longer be weak and under a foreign yoke (10:10–11, 24–27), but will be powerful and free of domination (11:10–16).

Common theological themes play an important part in linking chaps. 10 and 11. For example, the remnant's return to the land in 11:10–14 is consistent with the remnant's return to God in 10:20–23. In both 10:26 and 11:15–16, the prophet recalls God's mighty deliverance of his people from Egypt at the Red Sea in order to arouse faith in the listeners. Throughout these chapters hope comes from trusting and fearing God (as in 7:3–9, 8:12–13, 17; 9:13; 10:20–24), not from relying on some strong foreign power. Though there is little historical information that would help date this message, these themes would be an appropriate message of hope (similar to 9:1–7) during the difficult time of Ahaz when everything seemed hopelessly lost. The future orientation of this chapter means that there are almost no hints concerning the actual date when this message was spoken.

The text describes a new ruler from Jesse's Davidic line (11:1) who fears the Lord (11:2–3), practices justice (11:4–5), establishes peace (11:6–9), slays the wicked (11:4), restores the oppressed people of Judah and Israel (11:10–16), and causes the earth to be full of the knowledge of the Lord (11:9). This figure calls to mind another kingly figure who will rule justly (Ps 72:1–2, 7), establish a time of peace and prosperity (72:3, 7, 16), deliver the oppressed (72:2, 4, 12–14), and cause the earth to be full of the glory of the Lord (72:19). This king in Ps 72 will rule the whole earth, from sea to sea, forever. He appears to be the same messianic figure mentioned in Ps 2, the one in the Davidic covenant in 2 Sam 7:11–16, and the one ruling justly on the throne of David in Isa 9:1–7. It seems totally inappropriate to identify this new king with Ahaz or Hezekiah.

GENRE. These messages begin with an announcement of the coming of a royal savior in 11:1–5 (not a birth announcement as in 9:1–7), a vision of a peaceful kingdom in 11:6–9, and a salvation oracle concerning the restoration of Israel in 11:10–16. The common theme of hope and divine deliverance from the evils of corrupt national and international relationships infiltrates the whole section. Although 11:10–11 fits the themes of the second half of the chapter, its narrative form is surprising in the middle of the poetic oracles all around it.

The idyllic description of a paradise-like condition in 11:6–9 presents numerous hermeneutical problems for interpreters. Hosea already has introduced the theme of God's covenant with the animals (Hos 2:18) and one of the covenant blessings looked forward to a time when there would be peace with the animals (Lev 26:6), but none of these are as explicit or as detailed as the peaceful relationship between the animals and mankind in 11:6–9. Some regard this as a later insertion based on similar motifs in 65:25, but J. van Ruiten has shown that it makes more sense to see 65:25 as dependent on the traditions in 11:6–9. It was not uncommon in the ancient Near East (and still today) to expect that the rise of a new political leader will produce an idyllic time of peace and a return to Eden-like conditions (51:3). One might interpret these animals metaphorically (Ezek 22:27 calls Judah's officials wolves and Ezek 34:6 calls the people sheep) though later prophets also seem to understand the ideal that God will restore the paradise of Eden once again at the end of time (cf. Ezek 34:25; 36:35). One should not be concerned with trying to explain the biology of how lions can survive by eating straw or how it is possible for there to be such dramatic changes in the animal behavior of vicious wild beasts. The prophet draws a picture of how God will transform the world. The picture communicates the beauty of his revolutionary transformational power, no matter how one interprets the scene (literally or metaphorically).

STRUCTURE. The hopeful promises of a Davidic shoot out of a stump in 11:1 is not directly connected to the fallen trees of Assyria in 1:29–31. The section includes two main paragraphs:

The just and peaceful reign of a Davidic Branch 11:1–9

The Davidic ruler 1–5

The idyllic kingdom 6–9

The Gathering of the nations to God 11:10–16

Reclaiming the remnant 10–12

Relations between the nations 13–14

God will bring the nations 15–16

Through the repetition of the same words, the emphasis of the first paragraph is directed toward how the “Spirit” will give “knowledge/wisdom” in order to establish “righteousness and justice.” The second half of the chapter focuses on the gathering of the remnant of both Gentile and Hebrew peoples from the distant corners of the earth (11:10–16). This paragraph is introduced by two “in that day” clauses (11:10–11) that were probably added when Isaiah put this material into written form. This conclusion seems evident because (a) 11:10–11 is prose and not poetry like the rest of the chapter; (b) the introductory “in that day” clauses are not found elsewhere in the chapter; and (c) 11:10 repeats much of 11:1, 12, while 11:11 summarizes 11:12, 16.

THE JUST AND PEACEFUL REIGN OF A DAVIDIC BRANCH (11:1–9)

A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—

and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper’s nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.

11:1 The contrast between the lofty/proud trees of Assyria and the lowly “slip, stump” of Jesse confirms that God is in the business of demonstrating his glory by raising up people of humble means. This has always been God’s methodology. The unimpressive green “shoot” (ḥōṭer) that will sprout from the stump of Jesse is a person from the Davidic royal line of Jesse, apparently the same Davidic son mentioned in 9:6–7. Although 4:2, 9:6 and 11:1 employ different Hebrew terms to refer to this messianic figure, the writer seems to be making a conscious connection between the “Branch of the LORD” in 4:2, the Davidic ruler in 9:7, and the shoot that will come from the stump of Jesse in 11:1. This twig/branch/shoot, which is the sign of life within the stump, will bear fruit—it will not die out or be cut off. The “shoot” (ḥōṭer) is a symbol of hope and a clear contrast to the hopelessness of Ahaz’s policies, which nearly destroyed the nation and its Davidic line of rulers (the stump).

11:2 This Davidic individual will experience God’s abundant blessing on his life. Israelite history causes one to expect that God would give his chosen kings a special measure of his spirit so that the king will follow God’s ways (1 Sam 10:6, 10; 11:6; 19:9; 20:23). As the Spirit of God rested on his servant David in the past (1 Sam 16:1–13; 2 Sam 23:2), so the divine Spirit will dwell or “rest” (nāḥa) on this new Davidic Branch, enabling God to use him in a special way. Three pairs of explanations define the Spirit’s impact on the character and abilities of this person. First, the Spirit’s influence will affect the mental abilities of wisdom and understanding as well as the moral ability to make right choices in judicial decisions (11:3; 1 Kgs 3:12, 28). Although the focus is on the internal capacity to perceive the relationships between factors and consequences, this gifting was aimed at the practical enabling of this future leader to rule with God’s wisdom (11:3–5), not just to create an extremely smart person. Wildberger contrasts these two characteristics by relating wisdom to handling problems of daily living, while understanding is the ability “to see beyond the details of a particular situation,

make an appropriate assessment, and come to conclusions about necessary decisions.” This new ruler will not make the foolish mistakes of Ahaz who acted based on what made sense from a shortsighted, human, political perspective.

Second, the Spirit of God will equip leaders with gifts related to the practical accomplishment of tasks. Because God will guide him, this person will give counsel (“wonderful counsel” in 9:6), devise amazing plans, and have the power to carry them out. This equipping does not relate to military planning alone (cf. 36:5), but would certainly include it (see 11:14–16). His action stands in contrast to Ahaz (2 Chr 28; Isa 7:1–13) and the Assyrian king (10:5–14), who made arrogant and unwise plans with the main purpose of surviving militarily rather than honoring God by trusting in his power (cf. 7:1–25).

Third, God will grant this person experiential knowledge of God that will be characterized by a fear of God. These two factors, knowledge and fear, point to an intimate relationship between this ruler and God.

Through the work of the Spirit and his close contact with God, this new leader will allow God to speak through his words and reveal himself through his actions. These are characteristics of an ideal charismatic royal leader who trusts God. These are the kind of spiritual leadership qualities that believers should use as a model when they are looking for godly leadership even today.

11:3–5 These gifts of the Spirit will enable the new Davidic ruler to govern very differently from Ahaz. Kings were ultimately responsible for establishing justice in each nation and the establishment of a just society was an ideal of ancient Near Eastern kings. Godly kings like David, Jehoshaphat, and Josiah did what was just in their judgments (2 Sam 8:15; 2 Chr 19:5–7; Jer 22:15–16), and the expectations for the future included a strong emphasis on an ideal era of justice (Ps 72:1–4). When a king “enjoys, delights in” his close relationship with God, he has a source of moral direction derived from a divine perspective on judicial affairs. This will cause him to make decisions as God judges, not based on the outward appearance of the person (that one can see) or on false claims (that one may hear). Decisions will be based on the true nature of the heart (1 Sam 16:7). Status, money, or political influence will not derail this new Davidic ruler’s perspective on justice, for idle boasts, excuses, deceptive lies, and false information by the guilty will not prevent the truth from being known. This is the kind of justice and righteousness already attributed to the eternal reign of the one who will sit on the throne of David in 9:7. This justice will be available to all (Lev 24:15; Deut 19:20), especially for the needy and poor, who frequently were cheated by the upper class (1:17, 23). This would contrast greatly with the oppression of the poor and robbing of the fatherless that existed in the reign of Ahaz (10:1–2).

This reign of justice will require the condemnation of wickedness, the imposition of penalties on the wicked, and the removal of God’s enemies (11:4b). The means of judgment will be the mouth of the Davidic ruler (the “rod/scepter of his mouth” and the “breath of his lips”), meaning royal decrees. Although the phrasing is peculiar, since lips do not literally slay people, it is clear that the authority of the word of this ruler is fully identified with the execution of his will. No one can resist his power and no injustice will remain in his kingdom. The aim is not to present a negative view of uncontrolled slaughter of wicked people, but to emphasize that everything will be guided by principles of justice, upright behavior, and consistent faithfulness (11:5). The righteous character of the Messiah will enable him to do the right thing in all circumstances while his faithfulness will ensure his consistent dependability. He will display perfectly the character of God because the divine Spirit’s gifts will hang like clothes (a belt or sash) around him (cf. 59:17–20; Eph 6:10–18).

11:6–9 The future kingdom is described as something similar to a paradise with peace and security, even the removal of the original curse on the relationship between man and the animals (Gen 3:14–19). Natural enemies in the animal kingdom will live together, feed together, and play together, but the strong or poisonous beasts will not harm anyone. Fear and danger will

disappear and they will be replaced with harmony and peaceful relationships. Formerly dangerous animals (like the wolf, lion, or cobra) will not even harm the most vulnerable children. This fundamental change in the nature of animals omits mention of the change in the nature of mankind, but the emphasis on righteousness and the end of evil requires a radical change in man's behavior too. This rather idyllic picture points to a future kingdom when there will be no evil, conflict, or death on God's holy mountain (cf. 2:2–5; 4:2–6; 65:25). The text does not fully explain what has brought about this transformation of the enmity between creatures; it just states that it will exist. One could certainly assume that the coming of the Spirit-filled ruler of righteousness from the line of David will have something to do with this new world order. This will be the kingdom where God will live on Mount Zion and will teach all the people who come there (2:1–2). All the people there will be holy (4:3–4; 11:9). This will be the time when “the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD” (11:9). This is the time that the seraphim looked forward to in their song of praise in 6:3. It will be a glorious kingdom that will make everyone forget about “the magical kingdoms” that people build on this earth. [2a]

John 15:1-5

Jesus knew that his physical presence with his precious disciples would soon end. He also knew that these men would need a clear understanding of their position with God, as well as what was expected of them. So he consciously filled their minds with pictures and ideas to help them survive the days to come. But these same lessons also provide vital resources for preparing future generations of disciples to grow in their faith.

Jesus regularly used objects and customs from daily life to illustrate profound spiritual lessons. Many of these are no longer available or common in our times. The introduction of machinery has made farming, for instance, remarkably different from what it was in Jesus' time. But the growing and care of grapevines has changed little over the centuries. The following facts about grapes help us understand Jesus' use of that particular plant to illustrate the relationship he expected between himself and his disciples:

- Grapes are the most widely grown fruit in the world.
- Archaeological evidence from Egyptian tombs shows that grapes were being cultivated 2,500 years before Christ.
- Even today, grapes are central to Israel's agriculture and economy.
- The grapevine is part of Israel's national emblem.
- Grapes are consumed in three popular forms: fresh, raisins, wine.
- Grapes grow in a multitude of colors, sizes, and flavors.
- The quality of a vine is only as good as the rooted stock. Individual branches are grafted into a healthy, productive stock.
- Vines are adaptable, but require attentive care: water, fertilizer, pruning.
- New plants are pruned for three to five years to “train” them before they are allowed to produce a crop.
- Good roots produce for as many as a hundred years.
- For their size, vines are very productive, yielding as much as eighty pounds of grapes in a single season.
- Disease and lack of productivity can spread from dead branches that have not been removed.
- Well-tended grapevines are beautiful and aesthetic plants.

15:1–2 “I am the true vine.” The grapevine is a prolific plant; a single vine bears many grapes. In the Old Testament, grapes symbolized Israel's fruitfulness in doing God's work on earth. The prophets had written of Israel as God's vine, carefully planted and cared for. But the vine was a disappointment because it yielded only rotten fruit; that is, they refused to give him love and obedience. This is very graphic and poignant in Isaiah 5:1–7, a passage Jesus seems to have drawn

upon here (see also Jeremiah 2:2, 21; 6:9; Ezekiel 15; 17:5–10; 19:10–14; Hosea 10:1; 14:7). Jesus, with all believers “abiding” in him, is the true vine—the true fulfillment of God’s plan for his people (see Psalm 80:8–17). The new society of God’s people—Christians—originates from Christ and is united to him as branches to a vine.

BARRIERS TO FRUITFULNESS

Barrier– Explanation — Implication

Lack of proper nourishment– Poor supply of water or nutrients will destroy the vine.– If Christ’s life and love do not flow in us, we will be spiritually unproductive.

Disease — Insects and disease move from dead wood into healthy plants.— Ongoing sin and unresolved past issues will lead to spiritual ineffectiveness.

Immature branches— New branches require several years of pruning before they can produce. — We need time to grow. Growth may involve suffering.

Improper pruning — A wise gardener knows what to remove in order to bring about fruitfulness.— Our priorities and the focus of our energies must be guided by Christ and his Word, not our own wisdom and desires.

No gardener — Vines need constant attention. — Resistance to God’s guidance and pruning leads to unfruitfulness.

Separated from the Vine — Branches must be attached to a healthy root stock. — We must not think for a moment that we are capable of surviving apart from Jesus Christ. He is the giver and sustainer of life!

“My Father is the vinedresser.” God is the Gardener, the cultivator of the Vine and the branches. In order to achieve their best productivity, grapevines need the attention of a loving gardener. Wild vines are unproductive. God’s role in producing growth is recognized throughout the Bible. Paul described his work as merely part of God’s plan when he wrote, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow” (1 Corinthians 3:6 NIV, see also Colossians 2:19).

“Every branch in Me.” Believers, both sincere and false, are pictured here as the branches. The union between the Vine and the branches is characterized by the expression in Me. Christ is the Vine, and God is the Vinedresser who cares for the branches to make them fruitful. The branches are all those who claim to be followers of Christ. The fruitful branches are true believers who by their living union with Christ produce much fruit. But this union can be broken. The Father “cuts off every branch ... that bears no fruit.” Those who become unproductive—those who turn back from following Christ after making a superficial commitment—will be separated from the Vine (see 15:6 for more discussion on the specific identity of the unproductive branches). Unproductive followers are as good as dead and will be cut off and tossed aside. Fruit is not limited to soul winning. In this chapter, answered prayer, joy, and love are mentioned as fruit (15:7, 11–12). Galatians 5:22–24 and 2 Peter 1:5–8 describe additional fruit, explained as qualities of Christian character.

In contrast, “every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.” The combination of the Greek words, airei (translated “takes”) and kathairei (translated “prunes”) provides an interesting word play that English cannot match. Jesus made a distinction between two kinds of pruning: (1) removing what does not bear fruit, and (2) cultivating what does. Successful gardeners know that pruning, cutting back the branches, increases fruit bearing. Each spring vinedressers cut back each vine to its root stock to enhance its fruitfulness. Sincere believers, the fruitful branches, will be “pruned,” meaning that God must sometimes discipline us to strengthen our character and faith.

But branches that don't bear fruit are "cut off" at the trunk and completely discarded because they are worthless and often infect the rest of the plant. People who won't bear fruit for God or who try to block the efforts of God's followers will be cut off from his life-giving power.

PAINFUL GROWTH

The act of pruning appears harsh. The vinedresser cuts back the lush, growing branches just as they are about to flower. The wise gardener knows that good must sometimes be sacrificed for better. Grape branches or tendrils can grow very fast and very long (twelve to twenty feet). But as they develop length and size, they use resources that could be channeled into making fruit. Pruning focuses the growth and energy of the plant. A lush vine with little fruit has failed its purpose.

God's pruning of our lives can be painful. He may limit or remove achievements, objects, and abilities. These may not be wrong in themselves, but God knows they will detract from our fruitfulness. We must not resent God's pruning. Instead, God's discipline should cause us to turn to him with renewed desire to be productive.

15:3–4 **"You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you."** The Greek word for "cleansed" (katharoi) means "purged" or "pruned." (It is the participle form of the verb kathaerei appearing in verse 2.) Jesus' illustration here shifts to a different level. This cleansing is spiritual, taking away the contamination of sin. This verse indicates that the disciples were already clean because they had accepted the Lord's word; they were ready for fruit bearing. But not so with Judas, the betrayer; he was not clean—therefore, he was one of those branches that had been cut off.

"Abide in Me, and I in you." **This verse presents an important theme in this passage:** Believers are to abide or remain in Jesus, the Vine. The Greek word for "abide" is spoken as a command. It also has an ongoing emphasis; that is, the command to "abide" is not fulfilled in a single act. Abiding, for the disciples and for all believers today, means to make a constant, moment-by-moment decision to follow Christ. And we must not be passive—believers don't just sit and "abide" until they die. Instead, we must be active—we have a lot to do.

ABIDE IN ME

Abiding in Christ means:

- believing that he is God's Son (1 John 4:15)
 - receiving him as Savior and Lord (John 1:12)
 - doing what God says (1 John 3:24)
 - continuing to believe the gospel (1 John 2:24)
 - relating in love to the community of believers, Christ's body (John 15:12)
- Each of these activities begins at some point, but the long-term (branch-to-vine) practice is "abiding."

"As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me." Curiously, a grapevine branch can survive and produce foliage for a while after it has been severed, but it cannot produce fruit unless it is connected to a root stock. As Jesus had a living dependence on the Father (see 6:57), so believers in Jesus need to have a living dependence on him.

15:5–6 **"Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing."** Each branch that continues to remain in the Vine will continually produce fruit. This "fruit" could be new converts (15:5), or "the fruit of the Spirit" (see Galatians 5:22), or both. The fruit of the Spirit displayed in our lives should attract people to Jesus and thereby make them new members of God's vine. Jesus' emphasis here was not to dwell on our glaring inadequacies, but to remind us of the incomparable adequacy that comes from our relationship with him.

ARE YOU ATTACHED?

Many people try to be good, honest people who do what is right. But Jesus says that the only way to live a truly good life is to stay close to him, like a branch attached to a vine. Apart from Christ our efforts are unfruitful. Are you receiving the nourishment and life offered by Christ, the Vine? If not, you are missing the key to living the Christian life.

A Glance at Eternity

As we discovered this week, Jesus is the Branch—He is the Tree of Life, symbolically, the One who gives everlasting life.

In Isaiah 11, the Branch is none other than Jesus Christ. This prophecy found beautiful fulfillment at His birth in the Gospels, when the shoot from the stump of Jesse sprang forth as the promised Messiah, anointed by the Holy Spirit.

But Isaiah doesn't stop there. In verses 6 through 9, the prophet paints a breathtaking picture of the everlasting peace and harmony that will one day fill the earth:

“The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.” (Isaiah 11:6-9)

This is far more than poetry—it is a heavenly vision of restored creation. The curse of sin that began in Eden is fully reversed. Predators and prey dwell together in perfect peace. Even little children play safely among creatures that once brought fear and death. This is the everlasting theology of the Kingdom: a world where the knowledge of the Lord covers the earth like the seas, and harmony reigns because the righteous Branch has come.

We know this glorious picture finds its ultimate fulfillment in the closing chapters of Revelation. There, those who have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb gain the right to eat from the Tree of Life and enter the gates of the New Jerusalem. Just as Jesus declared Himself the true Vine and us the branches, He is the source of this eternal life and peace.

Jesus spoke those words in John 15 just twenty-four hours before He went to the Tree—the Cross—to take upon Himself the curse of death. There He provided the forgiveness of sins, so that we could live eternally with Him forever.

The Tree of Life stands as a central symbol of restoration and redemption that frames the entire biblical narrative, from creation to the new creation. In Revelation, the tree parallels the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, but with a crucial reversal of humanity's condition. After Adam and Eve sinned, they were barred from eating from the tree of life. Yet because of the forgiveness purchased through Christ's blood, believers will one day eat freely from it—when sin's power is finally destroyed and eternity with God is secure. Eating from the Tree of Life pictures the gift of eternal life itself. In paradise, God will restore the perfect fellowship that existed in Eden before sin entered and ruined the relationship between people and God.

In the new creation, this tree grows on each side of the river of the water of life and bears twelve crops of fruit, yielding a fresh harvest every month—continuous provision, never a season of lack. Beyond sustenance, the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. This echoes Ezekiel 47:12 and emphasizes that the water of life produces health and strength wherever it flows. In God's kingdom, His people will have no unmet physical or spiritual needs, and all the hurts of the nations will finally be healed.

This is the hope set before us: a renewed creation where the righteous Branch rules, the curse is lifted, and perfect peace and fellowship with God last forever. [4a]

Resources: Rev. Brad Standfest, (1) Logos Bible Commentaries: [1] Joe M. Sprinkle, Leviticus and Numbers, ed. Mark L. Strauss and John H. Walton, Teach the Text Commentary Series (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2015), 27–28. [2] Leland Ryken et al., in Dictionary of Biblical Imagery (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 54. [3] R. Larry Shelton, Cross and Covenant: Interpreting the Atonement for 21st Century Mission (Colorado Springs, CO; Milton Keynes, MK; Secunderabad, AP: Paternoster, 2006), 73–74. (4) Bruce B. Barton, Revelation, ed. Grant R. Osborne, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2000), 24, 267-268. (Logos Bible Commentaries 4-9) [4] Jacob Shatzer, Biblical Ethics: A Short Companion, Essentials in Christian Ethics (Brentwood, TN: B&H Academic, 2024), 40. [5] Barry Danylak, Redeeming Singleness: How the Storyline of Scripture Affirms the Single Life (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2010), 96–97. [6] Thomas J. Lane, The Catholic Priesthood: Biblical Foundations (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2016), 38–39. [7] Matthew Barrett, Canon, Covenant and Christology: Rethinking Jesus and the Scriptures of Israel, ed. D. A. Carson, New Studies in Biblical Theology (London; Downers Grove, IL: Apollos; IVP Academic, 2020), 51:142. [8] Andreas J. Köstenberger, A Theology of John’s Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God, Biblical Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 241. [9] Eckhard J. Schnabel, New Testament Theology (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2023), 752–753. [10] Claire Mathews McGinnis, “The Scriptures of Israel (The Christian Old Testament),” in Scripture and Its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible, ed. Michael J. Gorman (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2017), 60–61. [11] Abner Chou, Lamentations, Evangelical Exegetical Commentary (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2014). [12] J. J. M. Roberts, First Isaiah: A Commentary, ed. Peter Machinist, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015), 189–190. [13] Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, Messianic Christology: A Study of Old Testament Prophecy Concerning the First Coming of the Messiah (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1998), 42–43. [14] John A. Braun, Isaiah 1-39, The People’s Bible (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Pub. House, 2000), 149. [15] Hans K. LaRondelle, The Israel of God in Prophecy: Principles of Prophetic Interpretation (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 1983), 152. [16] Barry Webb, The Message of Isaiah: On Eagles’ Wings, ed. J. A. Motyer and Derek Tidball, The Bible Speaks Today (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 75–76. Smith, Gary V. 2007. Isaiah 1–39. Edited by E. Ray Clendenen. [2a] The New American Commentary. Nashville: B & H Publishing Group. [3a] Barton, Bruce B. 1993. John. Life Application Bible Commentary. Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House. [4a] Bruce B. Barton, Revelation, ed. Grant R. Osborne, Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2000), 24, 267-268.

Sermon Notes:

Week 2 of the Resurrection Series: The Tree of Life – Eden to Eternity

Happy Sunday, everyone! We are just one week away from Resurrection Sunday. Ready or not, here we are. And for those of you on Spring Break—we’re counting on you to bring back the warm weather!

Welcome to everyone joining us online. Here are our AVC connections: YouTube, the AVC App, and Facebook/Website.

Let’s pray.

We are in a Resurrection Series titled The Tree of Life: Eden to Eternity.

In Genesis Chapter 3, sin entered into the veins of humanity. Two trees stood before Adam and Eve—the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Instead of eating from the Tree of Life, Satan enticed them to eat the forbidden fruit.

Look, I'm just saying... if you need someone to blame for something besides our politicians, I have someone for you! (LOL)

Here's the deal: Sin is so offensive to God that there has to be a blood sacrifice for forgiveness to take place.

But here's a praise today: God did not give up on humanity. God didn't give up on you and me.

Scripture declares: "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

Who would save humanity? And what would the Lord possibly do?

Have you ever faced a life-altering dilemma? Let me tell you what the Israelites—the Jewish nation—went through. It certainly was life altering.

Israel had experienced the glory days under King David and Solomon. Wealth and prosperity filled the nation, where people were eating and drinking and enjoying life. 1 Kings 4:20 describes the scene: "Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy." Unfortunately, after eighty years of shalom, foreign nations—Assyria and Babylon—destroyed Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. To make matters worse, the people, children, and families were taken into captivity in foreign nations. Their homes and everything they worked for was stripped away.

[Can you imagine]

When all hope seemed to be lost, God sent His message of promise and restoration through the prophet Isaiah.

Friends, what is to come is supernatural. The Tree of Life is on its way.

God's voice echoed throughout the foreign lands from a prophet named Isaiah. God was declaring, "I am coming for your rescue."

Let's read Isaiah:

"Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan—The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." (Isaiah 9:1-2)

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this." (Isaiah 9:6-7)

Understand this: The good news of the Gospel is on its way. God was announcing, "I am sending My Son to rescue you." It wasn't going to be a kingdom on earth only—rather, a Kingdom of Eternity. It's everlasting. It's Paradise.

Isaiah's voice prophesies again, moving us even closer to the Gospels of Jesus.

Let's read in the Bible: "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord." (Isaiah 11:1-2)

- Jerusalem was reduced to a stump.
- New growth will rise out of this stump and grow into a tree and have branches.

Christians, this is a remarkable story. It is the Tree of Life from Eden to Eternity.

As we turn to the New Testament, Jesus Christ was born from the line of Jesse as promised in Isaiah's prophecy.

Matthew 1:21 declares: "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Just before Jesus would go to be hung on a tree—the Cross—we hear Eden's voice, and the stump has now grown into the Tree of Life.

Jesus said this at the Last Supper, twenty-four hours before His death:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (John 15:1-5)

Friends, what was lost in Eden would be fully restored through Christ's death and resurrection.

I close with this passage in Revelation:

"Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city." (Revelation 22:14)

Closing Prayer

Devotional Questions:

1. In the darkest seasons of life—much like Israel's exile in Assyria and Babylon—how does the promise in Isaiah 9:1-2 bring you hope?

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned." (Isaiah 9:1-2)

Where in your current circumstances do you need to fix your eyes on the "great light" that is Jesus, the coming rescuer announced by God?

2. Isaiah 9:6-7 describes the child born as "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace," whose kingdom will have no end. How does this prophecy strengthen your confidence that God has a supernatural rescue plan even when human kingdoms and personal dreams lie in ruins?

What aspect of Jesus' identity in this passage do you most need to cling to right now?

3. The sermon pictures Jerusalem reduced to a stump, yet a shoot springs up from the stump of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-2). In what ways has God brought new life and growth out of the "stumps" or broken places in your own story?

How does the Spirit resting upon the Branch—"the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord"—encourage you to trust Him

for fresh fruitfulness in your life?

4. Romans 3:23 declares, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” and the sermon reminds us that sin is so offensive to God that a blood sacrifice is required. How does the reality of sin’s offense highlight the depth of God’s mercy in not giving up on humanity—or on you personally?

5. Jesus was born from the line of Jesse as promised, and Matthew 1:21 states He would “save his people from their sins.” Reflecting on the journey from Eden’s forbidden fruit to the Cross, how does knowing Jesus came specifically to rescue sinners from their sins give you hope for complete forgiveness and restoration today?

6. Just twenty-four hours before His death on the tree (the Cross), Jesus declared in John 15:1-5, “I am the true vine... Remain in me, as I also remain in you... apart from me you can do nothing.” What does “abiding” in Christ look like in your daily life?

Where might the Father be pruning you right now so that you can bear more fruit, and how can you respond with trust rather than resistance?

7. The sermon connects the Fall in Eden—where access to the Tree of Life was lost—to the full restoration through Christ’s death and resurrection. What was personally “lost” in your life because of sin, and how have you seen (or how do you long to see) that loss redeemed through your connection to Jesus, the true Vine?

8. Revelation 22:14 says, “Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city.” What does it mean practically for you to “wash your robes” in the blood of the Lamb, and how does this promise of access to the Tree of Life and the eternal city fill you with hope for everlasting life?

9. From Eden’s expulsion to Isaiah’s prophecies, to the Cross, to the New Jerusalem, God never gave up on His plan to restore humanity. In your own “life-altering dilemmas” or seasons of captivity (emotional, relational, or spiritual), how does this unbroken redemptive thread encourage you that God is still at work rescuing and restoring you?

10. The entire biblical story of the Tree of Life—from the garden, through the stump of Jesse that becomes the Branch, to Jesus as the true Vine who hung on a tree, and finally to the restored Tree of Life in eternity—points to resurrection hope. How does this grand narrative change the way you face trials today?

What one step of abiding, repentance, or praise can you take this week to live more fully in the hope of everlasting life with Christ?