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Fruitfulness in Isaiah



Isaiah: A Topical Look At Isaiah - Steve Gregg

In this discussion led by Steve Gregg, the issue of fruitfulness in the book of Isaiah is examined. Gregg looks at several passages in the book and draws connections between them, ultimately highlighting the idea of spiritual fruit as being the most important type of fruitfulness. He also notes the parallels between the Old Testament and New Testament in terms of Israel's fruitfulness and how the message of the gospel was ultimately spread to the Gentiles.

Transcript

I'm trying to decide what all we want to cover in this session. I'm going to strike out a certain direction and hope that it materializes. I have notes from a previous year where things are a bit mixed up.

We're going to be talking about the theme of fruitfulness as a major theme, a major concern of God, as revealed in the book of Isaiah. The thing that makes it hard to know exactly how to approach it is that there's more than one image that the Bible uses, that Isaiah uses, of God's concern for fruitfulness. On the one hand, early on, we are introduced to the image of a vineyard from which God sought a certain fruit that he did not receive.

The fruit, of course, in that case, would be grapes. Elsewhere in Isaiah, we read of God's purpose as being fulfilled in the earth by the desert blossoming and budding and filling the earth with its fruit. And so that we have this repeated image of a desert, wasteland, or wilderness area becoming lush and fruitful.

In addition to that, we have the idea of God seeking fruit of another sort through his wife, which in the scripture is his people. He's looking for fruit there, too. And the imagery would be like that of the fruit of the womb, as sometimes a baby would recall, the producing of children.

And I might just start with that one because it seems to follow fairly naturally from where we left off last time. We were talking about the ways in Isaiah that ideas from the Exodus come into use. And the last thing I mentioned was the idea of the covenant relationship

that God entered into with Israel at Mount Sinai as a consequence of the Exodus.

And that marriage covenant resulted in a marriage between God and Israel. We saw that God indicated he's going to get another wife who's going to produce more children than Israel, his married wife, did. And that other wife I take to be a reference to the church.

Now, in the context of God having a wife, there is the assumption that a wife ideally is to bear children. There is the fruitfulness of a wife in the Bible measured. This might seem unkind to women who are barren or whatever, but it is measured nonetheless by her children.

It says in Psalm 128, speaking of a blessed man and his family life, it says in Psalm 128, verse 3, Your wife shall be like a fruitful vine in the very heart of your house, your children like olive plants all around your table. Thus shall the man be blessed who fears the Lord. The ideal family then of a man blessed by God is one whose wife is fruitful, fruitful like a vine.

Vines produce fruits, so do fruitful wives, and that is children. And he says so, your children like olive plants will be all around your table. Have enough children to go all around the whole table.

Now, that assumption prevails in the Old Testament, and therefore when God took Israel to be his wife, the assumption is that using the figure of speech of husband and wife between God and Israel, which of course is just a figure, he was looking for fruit. As any man is when he takes a wife, he wants children. At least in biblical times that was the case, and that was agreeable with God's way of thinking too.

Now, the children he wanted is not necessarily always a reference to physical offspring. That is to say, the fruit that God is looking for is not necessarily numbers of people, though that is part of it too. Numbers of children is something that the Bible in Isaiah refers to a lot.

But just fruitfulness in the same sense that a man seeks fruit from his vine, or that the book of Isaiah speaks of the desert filling the earth with fruit, the concept of productivity, of fruitfulness, that God's efforts produce something that he is seeking, is a theme that we want to trace through Isaiah here. And that requires that we start somewhere. Might as well start with the idea of a fruitful wife.

Israel, supposed to produce the fruit in the imagery of a husband and wife, would be the fruit of the wife's womb, a child. If you look, for example, at Isaiah 26, I think we'll start there. Isaiah 26, verses 17 and 18.

It says, As a woman with child is in pain and cries out in her pangs, when she draws near the time of her delivery, so have we been, meaning Israel, in your sight, O Lord. We have been with child. We have been in pain.

We have, as it were, brought forth wind. We have not accomplished any deliverance in the earth, nor have the inhabitants of the world fallen. Now, what is this all about? It says that Israel has been like a woman in birth pangs, crying out to be delivered, like a woman in hard labor.

It says in verse 18, we have been with child. We have been in pain. But when delivery came, there was no child.

We brought forth wind, which is to say we passed gas, is really what it means. I mean, it may sound crass, but that's exactly what it's saying. Isaiah was not delicate sometimes.

He's basically saying the nation of Israel, God's wife, was expected to produce fruit. A woman, when she's pregnant, ought to have a baby in there. But Israel went through all the pains.

Israel went through all the trials that should have produced fruit, but all they did was pass gas. They didn't produce anything of value. Now, the child that they failed to produce is identified at the end of verse 18 as deliverance in the earth, or salvation in the earth.

And the inhabitants of the world have not fallen, it says. Now, it's not quite clear how that's to be understood, whether it means fallen under the reign of God or fallen under the judgment of God is not altogether clear, but it's quite clear that the child in this image is not a literal child, that God, it's not that Israel was expected to bring forth a literal child. Now, in a sense, some could say Israel was expected to bring forth a literal child, because back in Isaiah 7.14, it said, The Lord himself will give you a sign.

The virgin shall conceive and bring forth a child, and shall call his name Immanuel. We know this to be a prophecy about Jesus. We know that the virgin that conceived and produced Jesus was Mary, but in an earlier lecture I pointed out, the virgin was also an emblem for Israel or Jerusalem itself.

And when Jesus did come into existence, it was through a Judean family. And the virgin of Judah, the virgin daughter of Jerusalem, did produce a child, and that child was God with us. However, in Isaiah's day, there was no fruit of this kind.

The nation had been in travail enough, they had suffered enough, they should have some fruit to show for it, but they had nothing. And that's the first point in our exploration in Isaiah of how this theme of the fruit of the womb was developed. Israel didn't produce it.

Israel married God at Mount Sinai, but didn't produce the fruit that God expected them to. If you look over at Isaiah 5, we have the same thing said with a different image, this time with an actual vineyard. Isaiah 5, verses 1 through 7. Now let me sing to my well-beloved a song of my beloved regarding his vineyard.

My well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug it up and cleared it out, cleared out its stones and planted it with a choicest vine. But he built a tower in the midst and also made a winepress in it, so he expected it to bring forth good grapes, but it brought forth wild grapes.

And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, please, between me and my vineyard. What more could have been done to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes? And now, please, let me tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will take away its hedge, and it shall be burned, and break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down.

I will lay it waste. It shall not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns. Keep your eye on that briars and thorns.

We're going to see briars and thorns many times in Isaiah, and this is a place that we need to take note of when we're trying to understand what briars and thorns are all about. And I also will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant plant.

He looked for grapes. It doesn't say he looked for grapes, but that's what it says earlier. I was looking for grapes, and I only found wild grapes.

But what was he looking for, really? I was looking for justice. And behold, oppression is what I found. I was looking for righteousness, but behold, what I found was weeping.

Now, God was looking for grapes. According to the parable of the vineyard, the grapes, the fruit he was looking for was justice and righteousness. He tells a story of how he's given Israel every advantage as a vineyard.

Judah is the vineyard, or Israel is the vineyard. The men of Judah are the plant that should have produced the fruit, but did not. Why did they not? Well, that's the great mystery.

It's not as if God didn't produce a good enough plant in the first place to produce the fruit. He had Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, a pretty good root system there. He put them in a fruitful land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

He removed the stones and hedged them about with his law so that they would, he protected them from oppressors. He actually drove the enemies out of their land. He told them to have no contact with such people who would influence them for evil.

He gave them his laws. Everything that he did for them should have produced a righteous and a just nation, a nation schooled and practiced in justice. But he says, when I came and looked and saw the product, it was everything but that.

It was sour. It was unpalatable. It was like wild, uncultivated grapes.

It's as if no one had ever given them any attention at all. It's as if they'd never heard a word from me in the first place. The fruit they produced was oppression and weeping, but not justice and righteousness.

Now, here we have, we've just seen two different images saying the same thing. The image of a woman in labor, supposed to be bringing forth a child, but ends up passing gas instead. The image of a vine that is supposed to produce grapes, but ends up producing unpalatable, unusable grapes, worthless grapes.

Both of these things have something in common. They have to do with fruitfulness in one sense or another. And they are talking about something spiritual.

In both cases, Israel was supposed to be the fruit producer, the vine and the wife. And in both cases, taking different metaphors, Israel proves unfruitful. They did not produce justice.

They were not a people of righteousness. They did not bring forth deliverance or salvation in the world. They did not live up to their potential in any sense.

Now, one thing that God said in this passage in Isaiah 5 was that because they did not, he was going to bring a judgment upon them, which is cast in the language of the parable of the vineyard. He says, I had a hedge around, I'm going to tear down the hedge. I'm not going to water on them anymore.

A vineyard needs water to grow. I'm going to tell the rain to not rain on them. I'm going to let the wild animals come in and trample them down.

All this has to do with his taking away his hand of protection and blessing from Israel and making them spiritually desolate. This had a short-range fulfillment in the Babylonian exile. And he allowed the Babylonians to come and overrun them.

It has, I think, an ultimate fulfillment in the Romans doing the same. And I'll say why I think it points there later when we look further at the issue of the briars and the thorns. Because in verse 6, as a consequence of this rejection of Israel, this judgment, this turning them over, this saying you've had enough time to bear fruit, you're out of here, you're history.

Their condition, which was that of a well-watered, well-cultivated vineyard, is now like a wilderness area. It won't be pruned or dug. It'll go to seed.

It'll go to weeds. It'll go to thorns and briars. And it'll be like a desert without rain.

So also verse 6 says. Now, one could say, well, that actually happened to the land of Israel. I mean, in biblical times, you read of it being like a land flowing with milk and

honey.

You read of the region of the Dead Sea being like the Garden of God in the days of Abraham. And now if you go over there, it's all desert. Although the modern Israelis have done enough, a lot to cultivate it and to irrigate it.

They've transformed it a great deal, but through artificial means. As far as the blessing of God and the nature watering it, it seems like Israel has got a lot less water in the centuries since the time of Christ than it did apparently in biblical times. Because it was lush in biblical times, but now it's mostly desert.

Now, this could, of course, be taken literally. Because they rejected Christ, because they did not bring forth righteousness and justice, God gave them over and eventually the region became desert-like and fruitless. But I think we should not consider that that would exhaust the meaning.

Because the fruitlessness and the desert-likeness of it is in the context of not producing the fruit of righteousness. All of the imagery in verses 1 through 6 is simply imagery. It has to do with a plant.

A plant needs water. God's not going to let it rain on it. The plant is Israel.

What it's supposed to produce is justice and righteousness. This is the spiritual thing it's talking about. What it's going to have in its place, where it could have had grapes, it's going to have briars and thorns, which are worthless.

Fruitless. He's going to expect nothing more from them. You remember when Jesus came to the fig tree in the final week of his life on earth, before his crucifixion, that it had foliage, it had leaves on it, but no fruit.

And he came hungry, looking for fruit. And when he got close, he saw there was no fruit on the fig tree. And he cursed the fig tree and said, No man will ever eat fruit from you again.

Now, there is never in the story an application made as to any symbolism of that story or whatever. But Christians throughout history, I think, in reading it, have always seen what seems fairly obvious. And that is that that was a symbolic action.

I mean, Jesus wasn't just peevish. He didn't just lose his temper for a moment and take it out on this poor fig tree. The action was symbolic.

The fig tree, most would agree, although the Bible doesn't say so outright, but it's certainly in keeping with many of the things he said in that final week about the very same subject, the fig tree probably represented Israel. Now, in telling the story of Jesus and the fig tree, the narrative usually says, depending on which gospel you read, that it

was not the time of figs. And that is why the fig tree didn't have figs.

It wasn't the time of figs. And so that makes Jesus seem all the more unreasonable in cursing the fig tree for not having any. But the reason that the tree was such a disappointment to Jesus is that even though it didn't have figs, it had leaves, and there were fig trees that would get unseasonably early figs.

And usually the leaves would come at the same time. If they had leaves early, they very commonly would have figs early as well. So seeing this tree fully foliated after the winter, it was springtime now, and the tree had its leaves, Jesus hoped he might find also figs under those leaves, although it was not the time one would ordinarily expect figs, yet they wouldn't expect leaves either.

It was premature. So he thought he might find some figs there, and he didn't. The tree was advertising as if it had figs because it had its garment of leaves, you see.

Now, if I do not much mistake the symbolism of that story, I believe that Jesus came to Israel hoping to find the fruit that God was looking for even in biblical Old Testament times. And the tree was advertising that it had fruit. The Israelites had a great outward show of religiosity, the Pharisees being the prime examples of persons who, in all their outward show, lived impeccably, although Jesus said they were like whitewashed tombs, clean and pretty on the outside, but full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

But that's just the point. That's like that fig tree. Outwardly, it looked like it would be a fruitful tree.

But if you look closer under the leaves, there were no fruit there. And Jesus came to inspect Israel. He came with that primeval hunger that God had always had, looking for fruit from his people.

And he found there an advertisement of fruit. He saw the portrayal of themselves as if they were fruitful, righteous people. But when he looked more closely under the shrubbery, there was no real fruit.

There was no real justice and no real righteousness. That which God had sought in Isaiah's time, he still sought in Jesus' time, didn't find it either time. And what he said in the parable of the vineyard here, that is Isaiah 5, was that God's going to just turn the place into briars and thorns and not rain on it anymore.

He never speaks in this passage of any turnabout of affairs. He's just given up on them. He's given up on their fruit.

Jesus, when he cursed the fig tree, said, No one will ever eat fruit from you again. Now, it's interesting how many people there are who do understand that fig tree in the Gospels to represent Israel, and yet who still expect Israel to be useful and fruitful again

someday in the future. But if the tree does represent Israel, then his statement is particularly damaging to the idea that there's any good to be expected from that nation again.

Because he said specifically, No man shall ever eat fruit from you again. Now, this to my mind is a parallel statement in action to what Isaiah showed in parable about the vineyard. God looked for fruit.

He gave every advantage to the Israelites to produce fruit. But when he looked up close and expected fruit, there wasn't any fruit to be had of any value. Therefore, he decrees it's over for them.

Look over at Matthew chapter 21. Matthew chapter 21, verse 33. This is a parable uttered only a few days after Jesus cursed the fig tree.

It's the same week. Hear another parable. There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it and dug a winepress in it and built a tower.

Now, thus far, does that sound familiar at all? Look back at Isaiah chapter 5, verses 1 and 2. My well beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill. He dug up and cleared out the stones, planted it with the choicest vines. He built a tower in its midst, also made a winepress in it.

Jesus is echoing Isaiah chapter 5. He's telling his own vineyard parable. But in language that was calculated to, of course, call to mind Isaiah's vineyard parable. And he continues.

Jesus adds a feature that Isaiah left out. And he leased it to vinedressers and went to a far country. Now, leasing it to vinedressers means... That's something that Isaiah didn't mention.

It focuses on those who had the care of the vineyard as the main reason why fruit was never delivered. Now, in Israel, this was not an untypical scenario. A landowner might own some real estate that was just for income purposes.

He didn't live on it. He wasn't a farmer himself. He inherited it or bought it for income property.

And it was capable of producing much fruit. And so, if a person wished, he could hire people to care for it who wished to have a vineyard, for example, or a field. And they would pay in lease some portion of the product.

They would keep... You know, if it was a good year, they'd be richer. If it was a poor year, they'd be poorer. But the owner would get a portion of the crop as his lease payment for his property they were using.

Now, this is the scenario Jesus paints. A man, you know, he set up a vineyard, leased it out to vinedressers, and went on a trip. It was for them to take care of, for them to groom, for them to cultivate and produce fruit.

Now, verse 34, When the vintage time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again, he sent other servants more than the first, and they did likewise to them.

Now, I think all interpreters can see clearly that this is a reference to the Old Testament period where God, seeking fruit from Israel, the vine, the vineyard, sent his prophets to preach. And the message was basically, the master wants the fruit. And what was the fruit? Justice and righteousness.

That's what the prophets preached. God was looking for justice and righteousness from his people. And the prophets said so.

They said, the owner wants the fruit. Where's the fruit? And the leaders of Israel treated the prophets in just the manner that these servants were treated. They beat them up.

Some were killed. Some were thrown out of the country. Then it says, verse 37, Then last of all, he sent his son to them, saying, They will respect my son.

But when the vineyard vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance. And they caught him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.

Now, they saw that this was the son of the owner. They knew the owner was getting old. And possession is nine-tenths of the law.

If the heir who would inherit the vineyard and take over as their landlord after the owner's death were dead, then at the owner's death, it'd be hard for anyone to get it from them. Like I said, possession is nine-tenths of the law. The owner's dead.

His heir is dead. Who's going to get it from him? So they wanted to keep what they had at the owner's expense. They didn't want to give the owner what he wanted out of it.

So they killed his son. Jesus said, Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers? And his audience said, He will destroy those wicked men miserably and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons. Jesus agreed and said in verse 43, Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

Now notice, the kingdom of God has fruits that God's looking for. Israel has not produced the fruits. Therefore, the opportunity is going to be taken from them permanently and

given to someone else who will produce the fruits of the kingdom.

That someone else, that nation, is the spiritual nation, the church, the spiritual Israel. And we know that because Paul tells us that through the Holy Spirit we produce the fruit of love, joy, peace, gentleness, meekness, self-control. The fruit that God's been looking for all along is now being produced through the Holy Spirit in the people of God in the church.

Now, Jesus here says that they've come to a transition time because notice in the parable, one after another the messengers came and were beat up and so forth. But it says in verse 37, Last of all, he sent his son. Last of all.

Last of all what? Last of all opportunities for the vineyard. You see, throughout the whole Old Testament time there was always another prophet, another prophet, another prophet. They beat him up, killed him, whatever.

There would be another one. They'd have another chance, another chance after. But the string of chances eventually comes to its end.

And the last chance, last of all, he sent his son. And they killed him. And that was their last chance.

Now it's going to be taken from them and given to someone else. There's not a clue that it'll ever be given back to them again later. Why should it? The ones he's given to are going to produce the fruit.

Why should you ever take it from them and give it back to Israel? He said, I'm going to take it from you because you've had 1,400 years to produce the fruit and you've done nothing but kill my messengers, including my son. And I'm going to give the opportunity to someone else. You're going to be a barren, fruitless fig tree withered from the root.

No one will ever eat fruit from you again. And I'll give the opportunity to someone else who will produce the fruit. And that's the end of you.

That's basically what Jesus said there. Now, you might remember, we looked a moment ago at chapter 22. Actually, it was, I guess, in our previous session, but it doesn't seem very long ago.

It was earlier this morning. There was that parable about the wedding feast. And notice how many parallels there are in the language of that parable and this one.

Notice the king made a wedding. He provided a feast. And in verse 3, he sent out his servants to call those, just like he sent servants to the vineyard.

To call upon the vine dressers to produce the fruit. These servants who called the people to the feast were the prophets. But the people didn't come.

So, what did he do? He sent other servants, verse 4. Just like in the previous parable, verse 36. Again, he sent other servants, more than the first. This whole Old Testament period is servants and more servants being sent.

Prophets and more prophets being sent. Chances and more chances being given. But the people turned him down.

Eventually, there's an end to chances. And we read of it in chapter 22. When it says, in verse 7, when the king heard about this, he was furious.

He sent out his armies and destroyed those murderers. And burned up their city. Then said to his servants, the wedding is ready and those who were invited were not worthy.

Therefore, go into the highways and bring others to the wedding. Now, the wedding will be furnished, but not by those who were originally invited. Fruit will come from the vineyard, but not from the original owners.

I should say, tenants. They weren't the owners. Israel is given chances.

Eventually, their chances run out and God destroys them. Burns up their city. Notice the parallel in the language.

In 22.7 here. This is Matthew 22.7 where it says, He destroyed those murderers and burned up their city. The parallel with that in the previous chapter.

Where they said to him, verse 41, He will destroy those wicked men miserably. And lease his vineyard to other vinedressers. Same thought.

Destroy them. Give it to someone else. Destroy their city.

Give it to someone else. This is obviously a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. He burned up their city.

And the extension of the opportunity to the Gentiles forever after that. Being the fruitful ones. Now, back to Isaiah.

We've seen in Isaiah 5 and Isaiah 26. Two different ways in which Israel has been portrayed as fruitless. In ways that God expected fruit.

Now, we will see that Isaiah anticipates a time when God will get the fruit that he wants. In terms of the imagery of a child being born. The fruit of the womb.

Turn with me to chapter 42 of Isaiah. Isaiah chapter 42. And verse 14.

God says, I have held my peace a long time. I have been still and restrained myself. While they were killing all his servants who were asking for the fruit.

And while, you know, he went through the whole Old Testament period. Restraining himself from ultimate smashing him to pieces. Now, I will cry like a woman in labor.

And pant and gasp at once. God is going to cry like a woman in labor. He is going to bring forth, as it were, in this image, something.

A child. Look at Isaiah 53. Isaiah 53.

This is about Jesus. In verse 11 it says. Isaiah 53, 11.

He shall see the travail. That means child labor. Child birth labor.

He shall see the travail of his soul and be satisfied. By his knowledge, my righteous servant shall justify many. For he shall bear their iniquities.

Now, God is going to be in travail like a woman with child. It is Jesus who travails in his soul. God shall see the travail of Jesus' soul.

And be satisfied. That this is going to produce the fruit. This travail.

This labor. Pain. Is going to produce the wanted fruit.

Let me show you something Jesus said about this. Over in John 16. John 16.

Jesus said in verse 20. Most assuredly, I say to you. To his disciples in the upper room.

He said, you shall weep and lament. Because he is going to die. But the world will rejoice.

And you will be sorrowful. But your sorrow will be turned to joy. When he rose from the dead.

Then he gives his illustration. Verse 21. John 16, 21.

A woman, when she is in labor, has sorrow. Because her hour has come. But as soon as she has given birth to the child.

She no longer remembers the anguish. For the joy that a human being has been born into the world. Therefore, you now have sorrow.

But I will see you again. And your heart will rejoice. And your joy no one will take from you.

Now, Jesus spoke of his own death. And his own suffering. As travail.

Like a woman bringing forth a child. He and his disciples experienced sorrow. Because the hour had come.

Throughout the book of John, Jesus said, My hour has not yet come. My hour has not yet come. Sometimes it says, they wanted to kill him.

But they couldn't take him. No one laid hand on him. Because his hour was not yet.

But Jesus now talks about the woman whose hour has come. She is in travail. She is in pain.

Because her hour has come. He says in verse 21. To give birth to the child.

But once she has given birth to the child. She no longer travails. She has produced that which her travail was intended to produce.

And he is talking about himself. His own death. The travail of his soul.

As it says in Isaiah 53, 11. Produced the child. The new child.

Which is the church. And we will talk about that in Isaiah. In a few minutes.

We will get to the verses in Isaiah that actually talk about that. In fact, that is what comes next. Look at Isaiah 66.

Isaiah chapter 66. Verses 7 through 13. This is quite near the end of the book.

So, it obviously gives us the consummation of God's purposes. Much of which has been frustrated throughout the early parts of the book. Is now seen fulfilled.

As it comes to an end. Chapter 66, 7 through 13 says. Before she travailed, she gave birth.

Before her pain came, she delivered a male child. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in one day? Or shall a nation be born at once? This child is a nation. The nation that will bring forth the fruit of the kingdom.

The man child represents a nation. The church. Shall a nation be born at once? It was on the day of Pentecost.

One day. For as soon as Zion travailed, she gave birth to her children. Shall I bring to the time of birth and not cause delivery? Says the Lord.

Shall I who cause delivery shut up the womb? Says your God. Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad with her. All you who love her rejoice with joy with her.

All you who mourn for her. That you may feed and be satisfied with the consolation of her bosom. That you may drink deeply and be delighted with the abundance of her joy.

For thus says the Lord. Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river. And the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream.

Then you shall feed on her sides. And you should be carried and dandled on her knees. As one whom his mother comforts.

So will I comfort you. And you should be comforted in Jerusalem. This is the upshot of the earlier passage in chapter 26.

Where it says we were in labor. Zion travailed but brought forth wind. Well, Zion, that is the remnant of Zion.

Jesus and the disciples were the faithful remnant in his day. Did travail. Jesus went through travail.

And as soon as he did, he brought forth a child. A nation, actually. The church.

And so the fruit is the fruit of the church. That is born here. Let me show you a couple of things in other prophets that are similar.

Well, just one other thing. In Micah. We looked at Micah earlier for a cross reference.

Again, contemporary and local. A local contemporary with Isaiah. In Micah chapter 5. A pretty well-known verse.

The first one I want to look at. Verses 2 and 3. Micah 5, 2 says, But you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to me the one to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. Therefore, he shall give them up until the time that she who is in labor has given birth.

Then the remnant of his brethren shall return to the children of Israel. Now, there is a prediction that the one who is to be the ruler of Israel is going to come from Bethlehem. This, of course, is the birth of Jesus, as everybody who is a Christian knows.

And because that time will come when Bethlehem will bring forth this child, God is, until then, going to give up Israel. From Micah's time until roughly the time of the Messiah. Until Bethlehem brings forth this ruler.

Until there is a ruler to rule them, there will be no kingdom to be ruled. And God is going to give them up for a while. How long? Until the time comes when she who is in labor has given birth.

That is, until the time that the church is to be born. And then the remnant of his brethren, that is, the faithful remnant of Israel, will return to God. And they came to Christ.

The disciples of Jesus were the remnant. And, of course, many have been added since then. The point I want to make is that this imagery is from Isaiah.

You can look at Micah chapter 4 also. Verse 9 and 10. Micah 4, 9 and 10 says, Now why do you cry aloud? Is there no king in your midst? Has your counselor perished? For pangs have seized you like a woman in labor.

Be in pain and labor to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in birth pangs. Now, there are birth pangs here the nation is going through. Actually, the particular birth pangs referred to in verse 10 are the Babylonian exile.

Because it says later in verse 10, And you should go even to Babylon, and there you should be delivered. There the Lord will redeem you from the hand of your enemies. The Babylonian exile and then the redemption from it.

But the exile is a birth pang. It was like bringing forth the thing necessary to bring forth a child. But they didn't bring forth a child, except maybe the remnant of themselves came out of Babylon.

But the ultimate is connected with the Messiah coming from Bethlehem. The Messiah to be born in Bethlehem is the one who will signal that the time has come for the woman in travail to give birth. So, here we have these ideas scattered throughout Isaiah.

Now, one of the things that's clear with reference to this birth thing, the woman producing, is that the fruit in this case is in fact people. Whereas the fruit of the vineyard is justice and righteousness, the fruit of the womb here is a nation, is a population, is a community, is a people of God, which is the church. And you can see, reference that in Isaiah, a couple of places that are some of my favorite places in Isaiah.

Isaiah 49, verse 18 and following. I just, I don't know why, I always love this passage. It's got so many things in it that point to the church.

Though dispensationalists would say this has to do with the glory of Israel in their latter days yet to come. But, I said verse 18, but let's look a little earlier. Let's look at verse 14.

But Zion said, the Lord has forsaken me and my Lord has forgotten me. The time frame of this is no doubt the abandonment of Israel when God gave up the nation after the time of Christ. Then God answers, can a woman forget her nursing child and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you.

Here God is comparing himself like a mother. See, I have inscribed you in the palms of my hands. Your walls are continually before me.

Your sons shall make haste. Your destroyers and those who laid you waste shall go away from you. Lift up your eyes.

Look around and see. All these gather together and come to you. As I live, says the Lord, you shall surely clothe yourselves with them all as an ornament and bind them on you as a bride does.

For your waste and desolate places and the land of your destruction will even now be too small for the inhabitants and those who swallowed you up will be far away. The children you will have after you have lost the others will say in your ears, the place is too small for me. Give me a place where I may dwell.

Then you will say in your heart, who has begotten these for me since I have lost my children and am desolate? A captive and wandering to and fro. And who has brought these up? There I was left alone, but these, where were they? Thus says the Lord God, behold, I will lift my hand in an oath to the nations and set up my standard for the peoples and they shall bring your sons in their arms and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders. Kings shall be your foster fathers and their queens your nursing mothers.

They shall bow down to you with their faces to the earth and lick up the dust of your feet. Then you will know that I am the Lord for they shall not be ashamed who wait for me. We're going to stop there.

There is, let me first of all talk about what the imagery is. The idea is a woman who has lost all her children. And she says, I'm desolate, God has forsaken me.

My family is over. It's the end of my family because God has taken away all my children. He says, oh no, no, there's a sequel to this.

You're going to have more children. A lot more. A lot more than you ever had before.

And in fact, there will be so many that you can't fit them all in your land. The land which was vacated by the Babylonians first and the Romans later, which originally contained them. The children you're going to have afterwards, they're going to say this land is too small for us.

We need more space than this. The imagery is like someone's got so many new children they need a bigger house. They won't all fit.

Well, there's two ways to understand this, both right. One is that this refers to the state of Israel when their children have gone to Babylon. Verses 24 through 26 talk about the return of those from Babylon.

And the desolation of Israel or of Judah is by the Babylonians carrying them away. Now, that is a short-term fulfillment. The ultimate fulfillment is when they were all wiped out by the Romans.

Now, the reason I know that this looks beyond the Babylonians to the Romans is because the fulfillment does not apply to the Babylonians. There's no sense in which it could be said that after the Babylonian exile, the number of people who inhabited Jerusalem were enormously more than before. Only a very small remnant ever returned from Babylon to Israel.

And though the population grew over the years to be a respectable number, yet there was no outstanding, almost miraculous appearance of great hordes of new babies or new inhabitants after that. So the desolation of the wife, the reason they're saying, I'm desolate, could be because of the Babylonian thing. But the prediction that they're going to have more children than ever before, more than the land could contain, never was fulfilled, even after the return from Babylon.

But if the desolation of Israel spoken here and losing her children has to do with God's rejection of that old vineyard, God's rejection of that wife, divorcing his wife for adultery and taking a new one, starting a new family or whatever, the images shift throughout the scripture. But the children that have come would be the Gentiles. And that seems to be what it's saying anyway.

It's talking about the church. The remnant of Zion is going to be multiplied. And you can't fit them all in Israel because they aren't all Israelites.

The land that you're in is too small to contain all the seed of Abraham, the spiritual seed of Abraham, that are going to come through the new covenant. Let me show you reasons why we know this is talking about the Gentiles coming in. One, it says in verse 18, lift up your eyes, look around and see all these gather and come to you.

All who? Well, he's just referred in verse 17 to your destroyers and those who laid you waste. Those who were once destroying you, the Gentiles, are now going to be coming to you in great numbers. Further, it specifically says in verse 22, I will lift up my hand as an oath to the nations, that's the Gentiles, and set my standard for the peoples, and they shall bring your sons in their arms and your daughters shall be carried on their shoulders.

These children are coming from the nations. Now, those who think that the children are all supposed to be Jewish in the latter days of the restoration of Jerusalem would say this just means that the Gentile rulers will facilitate the return of Jews back to Israel. But I believe that the standard raised up to the nations is to call the nations to Israel.

That is to the spiritual Israel. And it says, notice in verse 19, in the middle of that verse, your waste and desolate places and the land of your destruction will even now be too small. Those who swallowed you up will be far away.

The children you will have after you have lost the others will say in your ears, this place

is too small for me, give me a place where I may dwell. Then you will say in your heart, who has begotten me these? Where have these come from? Who brought these children up? It's like a whole bunch of adult children have just appeared and I don't remember bearing them or grazing them. You know? I lost all my natural children, but it's like I've adopted this huge family that someone else must have raised previously because where did they come from? This speaks of the need for the Israelites, the true Israelites, to open up their eyes to the fact that the children of God are not going to be just Jewish.

In fact, most of the Jews are going to be lost and a great number of Gentiles are going to be added to their family. And this is the fruit that the labor of Jesus is going to produce. Now, there's another passage which is very much like this, which gives us an ability to be sure about our interpretation of the one we just looked at because it's so like it, and yet it's quoted in the New Testament as being about the church.

Isaiah 54, 1-3
Isaiah 54, 1-3 Sing, O barren, you who have not born. Break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not prevailed with child. For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman, says the Lord.

Enlarge the place of your tent and let them stretch out the curtains of your habitations. Do not spare. Lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.

For you shall expand on the right hand and the left, and your descendants will inherit the Gentiles, the nations, to make desolate cities inhabited. Now, here the figure is, again, you need a bigger house. You need a bigger tent.

Israel is not big enough to accommodate all the children that God is going to bring forth. You're going to inherit the nations. You're going to inherit these children, Gentiles.

The family of the true Israel of God is going to be overrun, practically, with Gentile converts. This is a principle recurring theme in Isaiah, and we'll look at it in other light later on. But the fact that that means this is clear from verse 1. Now, if the latter part of verse 1 was not there, we might understand it differently.

Because it says, you who have not born, O barren, you who have not prevailed with child. This could be arguably, oh, that's referring to the Jews, because back in chapter 26 we found they didn't bear a child. Now he's saying, oh, the time will come when you will bear a child.

But that doesn't work in this verse, because he says, for your children are going to be more numerous than the children of the married woman. Well, if this fruitful person bringing forth all these children is Israel, then who is the married woman? The married woman was God's wife, Israel. And therefore the apostle Paul, when he quotes this verse in Galatians 4 and verse 27, applies it to us, the children of the new covenant.

The Gentiles, principally. They were the ones who were barren. They were the ones who

had never born or prevailed.

See, Israel at least had prevailed, they just had not born. They had been in travail, but they had brought forth wind. But the person addressed, or the entity addressed in chapter 54, verse 1, has never prevailed, never so much as been pregnant, never so much as known, been intimate with God, so as to ever bear any fruit for him.

These are the Gentiles who have never known God. But the prediction is that the Gentiles are going to produce more children for God, going to be a more fruitful wife for God, a new wife, than the married wife he took at Sinai, Israel. And then it goes on to the need for the Jewish remnant to expand their vision, to make a bigger tent.

The family is going to be big, but it's going to be mostly flooded with Gentiles. Many children from the Gentiles. So, here's how this idea works.

You've got Israel as God's wife, supposed to bring forth a child. Goes through travail enough, but produces nothing but wind. Then there's a prediction that God himself and the Messiah are going to travail.

And upon travelling, and the remnant, the faithful remnant of Israel are going to travail too, and bring forth a child. Now, we know that Jesus indicated that that was his death, was his travail. And the child that came forth was a nation, according to Isaiah 66.

A nation born in a day. The nation of the people of God, the church. What these passages in Isaiah 48 and Isaiah 54 tell us is that this nation is principally made up of Gentiles.

This huge family that God's going to have will not come from Israel, but from the church. Through the death of Jesus. As a result of the travelling of Jesus, great numbers of Gentiles.

The fruit that God has sought all along. He will have it. Now, getting back to the image of regular fruit.

You know, the vineyard, the grapes God was looking for. There is a prediction in Isaiah chapter 27. That this fruit will be forthcoming also.

I would just remind you, I know I do all the time, but Isaiah is a big book, and sometimes it helps to be reminded. Chapters 24 through 27. Significant unit of chapters.

The transition from the old order to the new order. The destruction of the old is in chapter 24, and scattered throughout the rest of it. But chapter 27 and some of the earlier parts of the chapters speak of the establishment of the new.

And to my mind, there's no question. But that chapter 27 verses 2 and following are about the new covenant order. Isaiah 27.2 says, In that day sing unto her a vineyard of

red wine.

Now notice, back in chapter 5, he says, I'm going to sing a song about my beloved's vineyard. This is a song of doom. Because the vineyard didn't produce any fruit.

The vine was fruitless. And therefore the song said God's going to wipe it out, turn it into a wasteland. It will be covered with briars and thorns.

No rain on it. It will be a desert land. But now there's a new song.

A new song is being sung. A song not about that fruitless vineyard, but about a fruitful vineyard. Sing to her a vineyard of red wine.

I the Lord keep it. I water it every moment. Lest any hurt it.

I keep it night and day. Fury is not in me. Who would set briars and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them and burn them together.

Or let him take hold on my strength that he may make peace with me. And he shall make peace with me. Those who come he shall cause to take root in Jacob.

Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit. Now, Israel will blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit. This whole section is so full of things I don't know where to start itemizing them.

You've got a choice given. There are those that would make war against God in verse 4. And those who would call upon him and lay hold of his strength and find peace with him in verse 5. There's two options offered to people here under the new covenant. A person can resist God as the Jews did when Jesus was here on earth.

They killed him. They continued to resist the church. They were the thorns and briars that the old vineyard had become thorns and briars, spiritually speaking.

And God burns them up. He says, anyone who wants to set thorns and briars against me, let him go against me in battle and I'll just burn them all up. Now, on the other hand, if anyone wants to lay hold on my strength and have me on their side and make peace with me, that's available too if you want.

You're in the valley of decision. You can either fight against God or lay hold on him and have him on your side. Now, those who come, verse 6, those who do seek to make peace with God, I'm going to make them take root in Jacob.

This I take to be the remnant of Israel in Jesus' day. In Israel there were two kinds of people when Jesus came. Most of them were these thorns and briars and at war with God whom he burned up.

But there was a remnant who came. There was a remnant who returned. There was a remnant who laid hold on him and made peace with him.

Of that remnant, he said, after he's burned up the thorns and briars of the rebellious Israel, this new Israel made up of those who have come to God, the remnant who have made peace with God, he'll cause them to take root as a new vine, a new vineyard, and it'll produce fruit and fill the earth. This is the church rooted in Christ and the remnant of Israel that came to him in those days. We were all evangelized by people who were evangelized by people who were evangelized by them.

Now, one thing I find kind of humorous, though a little sad, is that one dispensational teacher I used to sit under loved to quote, verse 6, Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit. This person loved to take tours to the Holy Land and show people how Israel was irrigated, Israel had been a desert and was now being made fruitful, and liked to quote the statistics, whether it was true or not, I don't know, but I give him credit that it was. He said that today, one third of the world's citrus fruit is grown in Israel.

And it's one of the chief exports from Israel is citrus fruit to all parts of the world. He says, isn't it amazing, the prophet said, Israel shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit. Literally.

See, this is where literal interpretations bring you. You think that because modern state of Israel is exporting great amounts of citrus fruit, that this somehow is connected to this prophecy that Israel will fill the world with fruit. Well, any teacher who's inclined to think that it means that ought to pay attention to the context.

Grapes are what are in view here, not citrus fruit. It is a vineyard that is producing the fruit, and it is no doubt the same fruit that the previous vineyard didn't produce, which is justice and righteousness. This is spiritual fruit, not literal physical fruit.

So what we have here is sort of the flip side of chapter 5 of Isaiah. Isaiah said, I'm going to give up that vineyard, I'm going to cause no rain to rain upon it, I'm going to turn it into briars and thorns, and it's going to be trampled down, and that's the end of that. But the flip side is, I'm going to have a vineyard of red wine, I will water it every moment, verse 3 here says, 27.3. I won't let anyone hurt it, I'll guard it day and night, I won't tear down its hedge, and it will produce the red wine I'm looking for, it will produce the fruit.

In fact, this Israel made up of the remnant of those who return to God, those who make peace with God at a time when He's burning up the others who are thorns and briars, those who come to Him will be the Israel that He will plant, the spiritual Israel who will fill the earth with the spiritual fruit that God is looking for all the time. That's what this is talking about, as near as I can ascertain and make sense of it in view of the rest of Isaiah. And that also agrees with another major theme in Isaiah, and that is the idea of a

desert, wasteland, producing, becoming a fruitful place.

Sometimes it's actual fruit, sometimes it's more like a forest idea, but the idea is a barren desert, dry place, incapable of producing any fruit or any plants of value, is going to be transformed miraculously by God into, usually it's a garden, sometimes it's a forest or something like that, but the idea is there's a radical transformation into a lush, fruitful, habitable place from that which was a wilderness. Now, having seen what we just saw in Isaiah 27, the people, the wicked people are the briars and the thorns. We will see in many of the passages that describe the desert in Isaiah, briars and thorns are a typical feature.

And I think that briars and thorns have to do with the unfruitfulness of the natural Israel. We saw already in chapter 5, verse 6, about the vineyard, I will lay it waste. It will not be pruned or dug, but there shall come up briars and thorns.

Briars and thorns are the epitome of fruitless things that cannot produce fruit, they're not even designed to. By nature, they're fruitless. And so, the judgment that comes upon Israel results in fruitlessness, desert waste, no rain raining upon it, briars and thorns there.

If you look at chapter 9 and verses 18 and 19, Isaiah 9, verses 18 and 19 says, this is describing Israel, for wickedness burns as the fire, it shall devour the briars and thorns, and kindle in the thickets of the forest, they shall mount up like rising smoke, through the wrath of the Lord of hosts, the land is burned up, and the people shall be as fuel for the fire, no man shall spare his brother. This is probably talking about the Assyrians coming in and destroying Samaria. But notice the people of Samaria, the Israelites, are going to be burned up.

It says in verse 18, it shall devour, this fire of judgment will burn the briars and thorns, but it's clarified in verse 19, the people will be as fuel for the fire. The briars and thorns are the people, fruitless Israel. Now, look over at chapter 10, in verse 17, it says, so the light of Israel will be for a fire, and his holy one for a flame.

It will burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day. It will consume the glory of his forest and of his fruitful field, both soul and body, and they will be as when a sick man wastes away. Then the rest of the trees of his forest will be so few in number that a child may write them.

Now, this judgment speaks of, it's symbolic. First of all, the glory of the forest will be destroyed. The thorns and the briars will be burned up.

I mean, even the desert, you know, it was once a fruitful field. Verse 18, it will destroy the forest of his fruitful field. Apparently, this is symbolic because it says both soul and body.

What's being burned up is people, apparently. Soul and body are being destroyed. And he compares it as when a man wastes away sick.

We saw that that's one of the images in Isaiah of the nation, under the judgment of God, like a sick man needing a healer. In verse 19, where it says, then the rest of the trees of his forest will be so few in number that a child may write them, or may count them. Children can't count very high.

It's basically saying there's not going to be much left of what was once a lush forest. The trees will be so decimated that a child could give you a full count of them, even though he can't count very high. So we see here, again, the imagery like that.

Now, back to chapter, not back. Okay. Now, having looked at this, we've seen that trees and fruitful field are used almost interchangeably.

When something is turned into a desert or a wasteland in Isaiah, it was once a forest or it was once a fruitful field. And those things are both, you know, good things, but a desert is a desolate, ugly thing. Yes.

That's a good question. I think basically the people are the thorns and the briars. I think here we have, to my mind it makes sense, but I can see how it would be difficult for me to explain what I think it means.

Consuming the briars and the thorns is God judging the wicked people. Turning, consuming the glory of the forest, the fruitful field would be basically changing the metaphor. Whatever glory they may have seemed to have.

I mean, in God's eyes, they've been briars and thorns, but in their own estimation or in the world's estimation, they were once powerful. They were once prosperous. They were once lush.

They were once something, but that's going to change. They're going to turn into, it's kind of shifting metaphors. It's a good point you raise, and it's hard for me to explain how I personally understand that, but I see it as sort of a shifting of the metaphors.

The point being, the point to notice is that trees, fruitfulness, vines, things like that, those are all representative of good, valuable, fruitful things that God is blessing. Briars and thorns, desert, wasteland, fruitlessness, that's all stuff that God curses. There's a curse upon it.

Now, let me take you through some verses here that will give you some ideas of how people are likened to trees. Throughout the book of Isaiah, there are many times when people are likened to trees or God's people, either as individuals or as collectively. In chapter 2, verses 12 through 13, believe it or not, this is all going to come together in a wonderful way.

We're kind of going on some sidelines to pick up some scrap ideas that are going to tie in. We'll tie them together at the close. Isaiah 2, verses 12 and 13, it says, Now, the oaks and the cedars here are going to be judged by God because they're high and lifted up.

That is because they're proud. Well, obviously, this is a symbol for proud people because oaks don't really get proud. And there's more reason to see it that way than just this.

Look at chapter 10, which we looked at a moment ago. And I just wanted to show you that 18 and 19 talk the same way. The forest and the fruitful field are going to be destroyed, soul and body, in 10.18. These must be people because only people have souls and bodies.

And so when it says, Because the trees will be so few in number that a child may write them, in verse 19. People, the population, decimated. Now, further on in chapter 20, let me see here.

Oh, I'm sorry, chapter 10 still, verse 33. It says, Now, Lebanon is a symbol here. Lebanon was not in sight in this prophecy.

Lebanon is either in this place referring to Assyria or to Israel. Both are possible. Lebanon is only mentioned because that was the place where all the cedars were.

The cedar forests of that region were in Lebanon. And since he's using the imagery of cutting down a forest, he uses the name Lebanon symbolic for the place he's talking about because it's like a forest where the trees are being all cut down. And it's clear that the trees here are really symbolic for people because he talks about those of high stature will be hewn down.

That means cut down with an axe. The haughty will be humbled. So here it's proud people being compared with proud cedars of Lebanon.

Looking further, in chapter 56, in verse 3, Isaiah 56, 3. It says, Do not let the son of the foreigner who has joined himself to the Lord speak, saying, The Lord has utterly separated me from his people. Nor let the eunuchs say, Here I am, a dry tree. For thus says the Lord to the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths and choose what pleases me and hold fast my covenant, even to them I will give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters.

I will give them an everlasting name that should not be cut off. And he says the same thing to the foreigners, the sons of the foreigners in verse 6 and following. Now, what is that talking about? It's the eunuchs and the sons of the foreigners were the ones who were excluded from the tabernacle.

A person who was injured in his stones, as the scripture puts it, could not enter the tabernacle. Likewise, the sons of foreigners, the Gentiles could not enter. He's saying

now, these people who were traditionally excluded from God's house under the law, under the new dispensation, if they keep the covenant and obey God and honor him, they will have a place better than the Jews who do not keep this covenant will have.

That is eunuchs and Gentiles, people who the Jews would not allow into their tabernacle, will be in God's house and given honorable positions there above sons and daughters, as above the sons of the kingdom of the Jews, who reject God. Now, the point here is that the eunuch should not say, I am a dry tree, he says in verse 3. I've never said I'm a dry tree. Why would anyone want to say they're a dry tree? Well, apparently the idea of a man being symbolized by a tree is taken for granted.

Not only here, but we'll see elsewhere as well. In chapter 27, I know we're going back and forth, but there's a reason that I take it in this order. Yeah, Isaiah 27, verses 10 and 11.

It says, the fortified city will be desolate. That's Jerusalem being destroyed in 70 AD, in my opinion. The habitation forsaken and left like a wilderness.

Just like the vineyard was going to be trampled down and made into a wilderness. So that which was God's vineyard, Israel, will be destroyed and it will be given to another nation that will bring forth the fruit of it. What will happen to the Jews? Israel of the old, left like a wilderness, spiritually speaking.

And the calf will feed and there it will lie down and consume its branches. When its boughs are withered, they will be broken off. The women come and set them on fire.

For it is a people of no understanding. Therefore, he who made them will not have mercy on them. And he who formed them will not show them any favor.

That is, these people of Israel who do not have understanding, although God gave them opportunity to, they didn't want it. He'll show no favor. Now notice what it says in verse 11.

When its boughs are withered, they will be broken off. The women come and set them on fire. Two New Testament passages come immediately to mind.

Do they not? Can you think of two New Testament passages just off the top of your head that are drawn from this particular verse? Romans 11. Romans 11, verses 16 and 17. Paul is talking about Jews and Gentiles and the tree, the olive tree.

Romans 11, 16 and 17. Paul says, for if the first fruit is holy, then the lump is holy. And if the root is holy, so are the branches.

And if some of the branches were broken off, and you, that is Gentiles, being olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them became partaker and root of the fatness of

the olive tree, do not boast against their branches. Now, some branches were broken off. What branches is Paul talking about? Jews who did not believe.

Isaiah said, when the boughs are withered, they will be broken off. This happened in connection with the transition from the Old to the New Covenant. Those Jews who did not come into the New Covenant were broken off.

Gentiles who came in were grafted on. Now, there is another New Testament passage that this Isaiah passage calls to mind, and that is in John, chapter 15. John 15, verses 5 and 6. Jesus said, I am the vine.

You are the branches. He who abides in me, or remains in me, and I in him, bears much fruit. For without me you can do nothing.

If anyone does not abide in me, or does not remain in me, he is cast out as a branch, and is withered. And they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. Withered branches, thrown out, collected, and burned.

That is from Isaiah 27, verse 11. Although in Jesus' case he is referring to a vine, which is also from Isaiah, chapter 5. He is mixing the metaphors. But in Isaiah 27, verse 11, when its boughs are withered, they will be broken off.

The women will come and set them on fire. The way that that image is used by Paul and by Jesus, of the Jews that do not come to Christ, do not come into the New Covenant, they will be burned, they will be thrown out, leaves little reason to doubt that we are interpreting this correctly if we say that Isaiah 27 is talking about the destruction of Jerusalem, when that fortified city is made desolate. And its replacement by a new Jerusalem, a new Israel.

By the way, just in passing, check over at Jeremiah, chapter 11. Because here, I am sure Paul had this passage in mind as well, in that Romans 11 statement about the branches being broken off the olive tree. Because in Jeremiah 11, in verse 16, it says, The Lord called your name Green Olive Tree.

So did Paul. Paul called it an olive tree in Romans 11. Lovely and of good fruit, with the noise of a great tumult, he has kindled fire on it, and its branches are broken.

So the image of branches being broken off an olive tree comes from also Jeremiah 11, 16. Paul says that some of the olive tree branches have been broken off, that some Gentile branches have been added on in their place. Okay, so the idea of people being like trees or tree branches, a typical image in Isaiah.

And when the trees are dry, when the trees are withered, or the branches are withered, they are of no use. They are to be burned. On the other hand, there are trees that are planted by the Lord.

We see in Isaiah 61, you are familiar with the first two verses, we have seen them several times, Jesus quoted them, said they were fulfilled in their hearing. Something Jesus came to accomplish at his first coming, verse 3, to console those who mourn in Zion, that would be the faithful remnant, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy instead of their mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified. The people of God in Christ are the trees of righteousness.

Not the withered trees that have to be burned or cut down, or the briars and thorns, but trees, strong trees of righteousness, planted by the Lord. I mentioned this, I think, a few days ago, but in Matthew 15, when the disciples said to Jesus, did you not know that what you said offended the Pharisees? He said to them in verse 13, Matthew 15, 13, every tree that my Father has not planted will be plucked up by the roots. He is referring to the Pharisees.

Those were not the planting of the Lord. They were not trees of righteousness. The disciples were trees of righteousness.

The Pharisees were not planted by the Lord, and therefore they would be plucked up, and they were in 70 AD. Their whole system was plucked up. Now, I want to show you some verses that have some more of this kind of thing.

In Isaiah 4, verse 2, speaking of the planting of the Lord, the trees of righteousness, here we have, in Isaiah 4, verse 2, this is the second of the Messianic passages in Isaiah, and this is the beginning of it. In that day, the branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing for those of Israel who have escaped. Now, it's for the remnant.

The true Israel, the remnant who escaped the Holocaust of 70 AD, their fruit will be good. The vine that was destroyed in that Holocaust didn't have good fruit, but this remnant will produce good fruit, and that's because the branch of the Lord is Jesus, and He's the one producing the fruit in them. In chapter 60, I realize we're going all over the place, but again, the order of passages was selected advisedly.

Isaiah chapter 60, and verse 21, this also is a lengthy passage about the church, but in Isaiah 60, verse 21, As your people shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. So, God's people in the New Testament era are the branch of His planting, or the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord. These images are all very closely related to each other, though they're obviously somewhat different from each other.

They're so close that one can hardly doubt the identity of meaning. In chapter 55 of Isaiah, we find that God is going to replace the region of briars and thorns with a lush forest of trees. Isaiah 55, which is in general a passage about the New Covenant, verses

12 and 13 says, For you shall go out with joy and be led out with peace.

The mountains and the hills shall break forth into singing before you. All the trees of the field, no doubt referring to people in this case, shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree.

The old rebellious Jew is the thorn and the briar. The planting of the Lord are the righteous. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree.

Instead of the briar shall come up the myrtle tree. And it shall be to the Lord for a name and an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. Now, the thorn and the briar was the rebellious Israel who refused to produce fruit.

The inhabitants of a spiritual wasteland, a spiritual desert wasteland, well, instead of that wasteland, God is going to have a forest with cypress and myrtle trees, which are the trees of his planting, the planting of the Lord, the righteous. So here, in the figurative language of desert plants being replaced with those of a forest, we are actually talking about the replacement of the old Israel with the new. The destruction of the old system and its replacement with the new symbolically described in this way.

Now, the last set of verses that we have to take in a very quick time is where the prophecy talks about the desert land becoming fruitful, being watered, and so forth. In chapter 51, in verse 3, it says, For the Lord will comfort Zion, he will comfort all her waste places, he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord. Joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving, and the voice of melody.

Now, here this theme is brought up, God will make the desert like the garden of Eden. Okay, keep that thought in mind. In chapter 34, Isaiah 34, verses 34-11 through 35-2.

Okay, we're going to go right from 34 into 35. From 34-11 on into chapter 35, verse 2. But the pelican and the porcupine shall possess it, that is, the spiritual wasteland. Also the owl and the raven will dwell in it, and he shall stretch out over it the line of confusion and the stones of emptiness.

They shall call its nobles to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all its princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in its palaces, nettles and brambles in its fortresses. It shall be a habitation of jackals, a courtyard for ostriches, these are desert animals.

The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the jackals, and the wild goat shall bleat to its companion. Also the night creature shall rest there, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Now, look at chapter 35, verse 1. This is a kingdom passage.

The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose. It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it.

The glory of Lebanon is the forest. It's like the desert will become a forest also. It will blossom and become a forest like Lebanon.

Now, there's a lot of this kind of language in Isaiah, and I don't know that we have the time to look at all the places where it's found, but some of the places tell us a lot. The last two passages we looked at talked about the desert blossoming with joy. Joy is a spiritual thing.

It's a spiritual fruit. And there's much reason in Isaiah to identify this fruitfulness with an entirely spiritual condition, not strictly speaking a physical fruit. In chapter 41, verses 18 and 19, chapter 41, 18 and 19, I will open rivers in the desert, or the desolate heights, and fountains in the midst of valleys.

I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, the myrtle and the oil tree. I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine and the box tree together, that they may see and know and consider and understand together that the hand of the Lord has done this, and the Holy One of Israel has created it.

Now, he's talking about, again, the desert becoming a place full of trees. One of the reasons it happens is because of the watering of the desert. But this watering of the desert is interpreted for us.

If you look at chapter 44, chapter 44, and verse 3, it says, For I will pour water on him who is thirsty and floods on the dry ground. Same idea, but look at the explanation. I will pour My Spirit on your descendants and My blessing on your offspring.

They will spring up among the grass like willows by the watercourses. Now, notice, what is this watering that produces these plants? It's pouring out My Spirit. Pentecost.

I will pour My Spirit on all flesh, God said with reference to Pentecost, and likewise, that's what it's talking about here. If you look at chapter 32, and verse 2, we saw this verse. It's about Jesus.

It says, A man will be as a hiding place from the wind and a cover from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land. Now, Jesus is compared with rivers of water in a dry place. The Holy Spirit is poured out like rivers of water on a dry people in Isaiah.

Now, in chapter, there's more. Let me give you, in the little time we have, some of the ones I think are most important. Look at, let's see, chapter 32.

We're already at 32. Look in the same chapter. Chapter 32, verse 13.

On the land of My people will come up thorns and briars. This is, of course, natural Israel. Yes, on all the happy homes in the joyous city, because the palaces will be forsaken.

The bustling city will be deserted. Its forts and towers become lairs forever. A joy of wild donkeys and pasture animals.

Notice verse 15. Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness will become a fruitful field, and the fruitful field counted as a forest. Now, we've seen that a fruitful field and a forest are both alternate images for what the desert is going to become.

We see in various passages that God's going to pour out water in a desert land and make this thing happen. The water, however, is the Holy Spirit and Jesus, depending on which passage you look at. In chapter 32, verse 2, He is the river in a dry place.

In chapter 41, the Holy Spirit is the river that's poured out, or the water that's poured out. But here we see the people of Israel will be a barren wasteland until when? Until the Spirit is poured out, that is, until Pentecost. And then the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted as a forest.

And look at verse 16. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness will remain in the fruitful field. What are justice and righteousness but the fruit that He was looking for in the first place? When God poured out His Spirit, then the desert, the spiritual wasteland, becomes fruitful and produces the fruit that God was looking for right at the beginning.

And look at verse 17. The work of righteousness will be peace. That has a New Testament parallel, Romans 5.1. Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God.

The fruit of righteousness, justification, is peace, Romans 5.1. There's tons here. There's just tons here, really. In chapter 35, in verse 7, we have in this Messianic Age prophecy, it says the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water, and the habitation of jackals, where each lake shall be grass and reeds and rushes.

The picture, again, being slightly different but the same concept. What is the fruit? It is, as we saw, righteousness and justice that is produced through the Holy Spirit being poured out. The desert land is a symbol of spiritual waste.

Spiritual fruitlessness, because the Holy Spirit is not poured out there. John the Baptist said that when Jesus comes, he will baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire. I believe that Israel, in the days of Jesus, was at a crossroads.

Every Jew had to decide whether he's going to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, become a watered, fruitful Jew, part of the remnant, part of the nation that would bring

forth the fruits of it, or whether he'd receive the baptism of fire, the judgment of God upon those that refuse to be fruitful. Well, there's more, but we're about out of time. Let me just show you two more verses to show that the fruit in question is spiritual fruit, or it's righteousness, really.

Chapter 45, verse 8. 45.8 says, Rain down, you heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness. Let the earth open, let them bring forth salvation, and let righteousness spring up together. I, the Lord, have created it.

Now, he's going to water the desert. What kind of water are we talking about here? Well, what's coming down from the clouds in this imagery is righteousness and salvation. Obviously, we're talking about spiritual rain, spiritual product, produce.

One more verse. Chapter 61, verse 11. For the earth brings forth its bud, and the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth.

So the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations. A field brings forth its fruit. God will, in similar manner, cause righteousness and praise to spring forth, like fruit in the sight of all nations.

By the way, this statement, The earth brings forth its bud, and the garden causes the things that are sown in it to spring forth. In Mark 4.28, there is that parable Jesus told. The kingdom of God is like a man who sowed seed.

He went to sleep, he woke up, the seed grew. He did not know how, because of itself the earth causes the seed to grow. Mark 4.28 says, The same kind of idea.

The kingdom of God here. Just like the earth, in a way man doesn't understand, causes things to grow out of it. So, in the kingdom of God, God causes his fruit to grow through his people.

First the blade, then the ear, then the full corn in the ear, as the King James says, or the head, and the ripe grain in the head. There is much cross-referencing that would be fruitful and fun to do at a time like this. However, we have just run out of time for our class, and therefore I will leave it to you as you study through Isaiah, to notice these things and sort them out for your own profit and pleasure.

Alright, we are now out of time, and you're dismissed.