

*The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 28 December 2025. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.*

## **The Branch in Zion**

I must confess that I've always loved the sight of a beautifully decorated Christmas tree. When I was growing up, anyone who knew my family knew that my parents put up the Christmas tree in late November, and didn't take it down until early February. After we started to use an artificial Christmas tree in my later teen years, we kept up our tree even longer. It was not unusual for us to keep up our Christmas tree well into March, and sometimes into early April.

Now, as I said in the first message of this "Branch" series, the Christmas tree is a tradition that has developed in the last 600 years. Whether to put up a tree, or whether to celebrate Christmas at all, is entirely a matter of conscience for the believer. As for myself, though, I have come to see the tree in a very different way over the years, as I have studied the prophecies and types of Christ in the Old Testament. As we will see in this morning's message, the pine tree is, more than once, used as a prophetic picture of Christ Himself, and of the Kingdom that He will establish on earth one day.

Now, in the past several weeks, we've talked about several names of the Lord Jesus Christ—all of which involve trees. We've seen that the Lord Jesus Christ is called "**The Branch of the LORD.**" This means that He is the Son of God, who proceeds forth from God the Father in an eternal generation. We've seen that He is called the "**Branch of David.**" This means that He is a real, biological descendant of King David, through Mary's lineage, and a *legal* descendant of David through the royal line of His adopted father, Joseph. Jesus Christ is the heir to the throne of David; and one day, He will rule over the house of Jacob (and over the whole world). We've also seen that Jesus is "**the righteous BRANCH.**" The Lord Jesus Christ is utterly pure and righteous; and He imputes His righteousness judicially to all who believe on Him. He also imparts *actual* righteousness to believers every day, as they submit to Him. And one day, Christ will establish a literal Kingdom here on earth, which will be characterised by righteousness.

This brings us to the final message in this series. This morning, we will see that Jesus Christ is the Branch that will be established on Mount Zion. The title of this message is ***The Branch in Zion.***

**Read Ezekiel 17:1-4, 11-12, 22-24.**

### **I. The presence of the Branch on Mount Zion**

In one of Jesus' epic confrontations with the Pharisees, just days before His crucifixion, He asked these learned men a question from Scripture, which left them speechless: He asked them whose "**son**" the Messiah is. Now, this was a question that *any* Jew would have been able to answer, for the Scriptures plainly teach that the Messiah will be a descendant of David. And so, the Pharisees answered, "**The son of David.**" It was at this point that Jesus delivered the "stumper" question. Quoting from **Psalm 110:1**, Jesus said, "***How then doth David in spirit***

*call him **Lord**, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?"*

Now, the Pharisees were shocked by this challenge. They obviously had never thought this passage through before. Why *did* David call the Messiah *Adonai* ("Lord"), if the Messiah was to be *one of his own descendants*? The Pharisees knew very well that **Psalms 110:1** was a prophecy of the Messiah, because the whole psalm is about how the LORD will send the "rod of His strength" out of Zion, to destroy His enemies. Yet, here was David calling the Messiah "**my Lord**" (a title that belongs to God)! How could the Messiah be a man—a descendant of David—yet be God at the same time?

There is only one way that this could be possible: a *virgin* from the line of David would miraculously conceive, and bear a son; yet, this Child would also be called "the Son of God," because the holy seed in the virgin's womb would be created and placed there by God. This God-Man who came forth from Mary's womb is the Lord Jesus Christ; and one day, Christ will reign over the whole world from His throne on Mount Zion—the mountain that David established as the royal city of Israel.

Now, countless people in our world today get *really* triggered at the very mention of the word "**Zion**." Anyone who dares say that God is drawing the Jews back to their land, because it is theirs by inheritance, or who says that Christ will reign on Mount Zion one day, is called a "Zionist," or a "*Christian Zionist*." People who know nothing about the Bible connect all kinds of conspiratorial dots between the "Christian Zionists," dispensationalism, Nelson Darby, the C.I. Scofield Study Bible, the Rothschilds, the "military industrial complex," and the secret cabal that is pushing for WWII. This is what happens when hatred of Jews, too much time on YouTube, ignorance of the Bible, and lack of spiritual understanding, all converge into one. Folks, don't get your theology from conspiracy theorists on YouTube: get it from the Bible. Don't get your theology from memes on Facebook; get it from *God's Book*. God's Book says that Jesus the Messiah will reign in Mount Zion!

With this in mind, let's return to the passage that we've just read. What is going on here? The LORD is giving us **a parable** (an earthly story that illustrates spiritual truth). In **verses 1-4**, the Lord give us the picture of a huge cedar tree of Lebanon; and on the top of this cedar tree is a branch that is higher than all the others. But then, a great eagle swoops down, crops off the uppermost branch with his beak, takes it to a "**land of traffick**," and sets it down in a "**city of merchants**." Now, what does this mean? Well, fortunately, we don't have to guess what it means, because the LORD explains it in **verses 11-12**. Let's read those verses again. (**Read Ezekiel 17:11-12.**)

The LORD's meaning is very clear: the **cedar tree** represents the royal family of King David. The **highest branch** on the cedar represents Jeconiah, the second-to-last king of Judah; and the **great eagle** that plucked off that uppermost branch, and carried it away to a "**land of traffick**," represents Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. Because Jeconiah worshipped idols and broke God's covenant, God allowed him to be taken away captive by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon, along with his mother, and many highly educated nobles and servants, in the year 597 B.C. In fact, God allowed Ezekiel himself to be taken away in this deportation, so that he could preach to the other Jews who had been taken away to Babylon, and call them to repentance.

Now, this much of the parable is history. But the *last* part of the parable has not happened yet. In **verse 22**, Ezekiel says that the LORD Himself (not some earthly king, but *the LORD*) will one day crop off the "**highest branch**" from the family tree of David, and will set this Branch on "**the mountain of the height of Israel**," and will plant Him there. On that mountain top, He will become a mighty "cedar tree," in which all the birds of the air will find rest and find lodging. What mountain is Ezekiel talking about? **Mount Zion!** One day, when Christ returns to earth to set up His Kingdom, He will sit down on His throne on Mount Zion; and He will be like a mighty cedar, providing shade, rest, lodging, and food for all the people of the world! Jesus Christ will give *protection, comfort, and material provision* to all mankind—just as a mighty cedar tree brings protection, comfort, and material provision for the birds that live in its branches.

By the way, if it be the tradition in your house to set up a fir tree at Christmas time, then use it as a teaching tool for your family. According to this passage, the fir tree is a biblical symbol of Jesus Christ, and His future Kingdom of peace: so why not use it to teach this truth about Christ to your family? Don't let Satan "secularise" this beautiful Biblical symbol. It actually means something! Christ came to earth once to purchase our salvation; and one day, He will come again to set up His Kingdom, and reign in the midst of His people Israel, on Mount Zion.

Time and time again in Scripture, God states that He is not done with Israel. He has *not* cast them off forever. Brethren, it is more imperative than ever that we have our theology about Israel right. It is imperative that we love the Jews, and pray that God will open their eyes, that they might believe on Jesus, and return to Him. Why is this so important? Because there are loads of co-called "Christians" out there who are spreading hatred toward Israel; and they usually justify their hatred by arguing that the church is the "new Israel." The flesh-and-blood Jews, they say, have been cast off forever, and have no right to the land of "Palestine." Folks, this is a lie! This false teaching comes from Augustine, not from the Bible. We do not "worship" Israel, of course: they are sinners just like you and me. Just as Gentiles must repent, the Jews must also repent of their sin, and believe on Jesus Christ, if they would be reconciled to God. We don't "worship" Israel; but we do worship the *God and Messiah* of

Israel, who has attached His name to His covenant people. During the great Tribulation period, Israel will finally repent, and believe on their true Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth; and when He returns to earth immediately after the Tribulation, He will exalt His people. During the 1,000-year Kingdom, ***“Many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and pray before the LORD”***; and ten Gentiles will take hold of the skirt of one Jew, and say, ***“We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.”***

**Read Jeremiah 23:1-8 and 33:14-26.**

**Read Isaiah 2:1-5.**

## **II. The power and peace of the Branch**

**Read Isaiah 11:1-16.**

Our world today is crying out for “Peace! Peace!”; yet, there is no peace. The United Nations was established in 1945 for the alleged purpose of stopping another world war from happening; yet, there have been more wars in the last 80 years than there ever were before. Despite their best efforts, sinful men *cannot* bring about peace by their own efforts, because men’s hearts are wicked, evil, and corrupt to the core. Only Jesus Christ will bring true peace to earth when He comes to set up His Kingdom.

The 1,000-year Kingdom of Jesus Christ will be a time of absolute peace. **Isaiah** prophesied that ***“of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end.”*** There will be absolutely no injustice under Jesus Christ’s rule, because He is all-knowing, all-powerful, and perfectly righteous. He will be able to see every situation aright, and will thus be able to make righteous judgments. Furthermore, the saints who lived and died during the Old Testament age, the New Testament age, and the Tribulation period, will be in their resurrected, glorified bodies; and they will be given authority in Christ’s Kingdom, as well. They will rule as kings under the Lord Jesus Christ; and, like the Lord Jesus, they will be able to make righteous judgments, because they will no longer have sin natures. Think of that, Christian. *You* will be given authority in Christ’s Kingdom! Yet, *how much* authority you will be given will depend upon how zealously you served Christ during this lifetime. **Second Timothy 2:12** says, ***“If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.”*** (In other words, if we do not serve Christ very faithfully now, we will be denied greater responsibility and authority in His kingdom.) **Revelation 2:26** says, ***“He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations.”***

During the 1,000-year Kingdom, Jesus Christ will sit on His throne in Jerusalem; and the whole world will come to worship Him. There will be no war or oppression of any kind. The inhabitants of earth will ***“beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”*** A world without war or oppression sounds pretty nice, doesn’t it? Yet, it gets even better. As Isaiah says, the LORD will cause even the animal kingdom to be at peace during the Kingdom age! The wolf will *literally* dwell with the lamb, the leopard with the kid, the calf with the lion, and the cow with the bear. The lion will *literally* eat grass, and not meat; and children will *literally* play with venomous snakes, because they will no longer be venomous. Isaiah says, ***“They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD.”***

Every year at Christmas time, we sing the hymn “Joy to the World,” by Isaac Watts; but what few people realise is that this hymn is talking about the *second coming* of Christ to earth. When Watts wrote his poem “Joy to the World,” he was basing it upon **Psalm 98**; and **Psalm 98** is a prophecy of the future Kingdom age. Let’s look at it.

### **Read Psalm 98:1-9.**

What we have just read is a prophecy of Christ’s *Second Coming*. Yet, we sing this song at Christmas, at a time when we are thinking about Christ’s *First Coming*. Why? Because there could be no Kingdom without the cross! Jesus came to earth the first time to become our **Salvation** from sin, death, and hell, by dying on the cross for our sins; and when He returns to earth to set up His 1,000-year Kingdom, all the world will see Him, and worship Him as their Saviour. In **verse 3**, David says that ***“All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.”*** When David said ***“salvation,”*** he wasn’t merely talking about seeing *evidence* of God’s salvation: He was talking about seeing the one who *is* Salvation—the one whose name *means* “Salvation.” Jesus’ name, Yeshua (which means “Salvation”) is being used here, as a proper name. *He* will judge the world with equity. *He* will remove the enmity between nations, and between beasts in the animal kingdom; and He will even remove the curse from the ground. In the song **“Joy to the World,”** the third verse says, “No more let sins and sorrows grow, nor thorns infest the ground.” It was because of man’s sin that God cursed the ground with thorns and thistles; but in **Isaiah 35**, we are told that during the Kingdom age, ***“The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing.”***

One day, true peace will flow from Mount Zion, where Christ will be seated. The United Nations may conduct all the “peace-keeping missions” that they want; but they will never bring peace. Only Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, can do this! Christ is called the Prince of Peace because He will one day set up a Kingdom of peace on earth. Most importantly, though,

He is called the Prince of Peace because He can bring peace to a sinner's *heart*, when the sinner surrenders the throne of his life to Him. Have *you* surrendered your heart to Him?

### III. The provision and produce of the Branch

**Read Zechariah 3:8-10.**

In the last several weeks, we've examined **verses 8 and 9** several times; but we haven't yet read **verse 10**. In this verse, God promises that during the future Kingdom age, when the BRANCH is reigning over Israel and the world, every man will sit under his own vine and fig tree. In **Micah 4:4**, Micah prophesied the same thing, except that he added a little more detail. He said, ***"They shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid."*** What does this mean? It means that there will be great prosperity throughout the land! Even in the most prosperous times in Old Testament Israel, never could it be said that *every* man had a vineyard, or a fig tree, to sit under! First of all, there were always poor folk among them, who owned no land, and who were dependent on the kindness of others; and secondly, the land simply was never that productive. But during the 1,000-year Kingdom, the land will be unbelievably productive. Water will be abundant; and the ground will not be cursed anymore. Not only that, but the *safety and security* under Christ's just reign will make it possible for people to thrive materially. In the world that we currently know, corrupt politicians, aristocrats, and oligarchs do their best to keep people poor, and enrich themselves; but under Christ's righteous rule, there will be unspeakable prosperity. However, not only will Christ provide for people *materially*: He will provide for them *spiritually*.

**Read Hosea 14:1-8.**

In this passage, Hosea is prophesying of a future day, during the Kingdom age, when Ephraim (the ten northern tribes of Israel) will have repented and returned to the LORD. They will no longer go to heathen nations like Asshur (Assyria) to make unholy political alliances: instead, they will trust in the Lord their God. They will no longer backslide into moral degradation: instead, they will cast aside their idols. As a nation, they will be like a budding lily, or like a healthy olive tree, or thriving corn, or a blossoming vine. With that in mind, look at what the LORD says about *Himself*. **(Read verse 8 again.)**

In the first half of the verse, Ephraim is speaking to God as He says, ***"What have I to do any more with idols?"*** But in the *second* half of the verse, Ephraim is no longer the one speaking. God is now replying to Ephraim; and He says, ***"I have heard him, and observed him (Israel); I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found."***

Once again, God is comparing Himself to a fir tree—a source of refuge and fruit. During the Kingdom age, Jesus Christ (who *is* Jehovah in the flesh) will provide not only *physical* fruit, but also spiritual “fruit” for His people. That is what He means when He says, ***“From me is thy fruit found.”*** As a nation, Israel will produce fruit that remains: and Christ is the one who will give them the power to produce this fruit. They will have ***“the fruit of the Spirit,”*** which is ***“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.”*** Not only Jews, but also Gentiles, will understand and live the truth that Jesus taught when He said, ***“I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.”***

On many a Christmas morning when I was little, I received toys under the Christmas tree; and those toys did bring a certain kind of “joy.” However, the joy eventually wore off. In fact, the toys themselves sometimes didn’t last long. (I remember when I got a set of toy phones, which were connected by a wire, and which actually transmitted the sound of the person’s voice on the other end; but Christmas Day was over, it somehow was broken, and didn’t work anymore.)

The “toys” of this world pass away: and I’m not just talking about kids’ toys. Many Christians are pursuing “toys” of this world, which they think will make them happy; but they never deliver. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, gives spiritual fruit that does not pass away. That is why Isaiah prophesied, ***“Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.”*** It won’t be merely a *temporal* joy that Israel will have: it will be an ***“everlasting joy,”*** which comes from having forgiveness of sins, and eternal life with God. Do *you* have this full joy, Christian? Or is your joy diminished, because you are seeking things of this life, instead of eternal things?

You know, we who are saved *say* that Christ is first in our lives; but *is* He? What if we were to put that claim to the test? First of all, if you were to **lay out all your receipts** of your disposable income (of all income beyond your living expenses), what would your spending reveal? Would it show that the things of God, and the advancement of the Gospel, are most important? Or would it show that other things are far more important to you? **Test number two: what do you spend most of your time thinking about?** Do you think about the Lord and His Word throughout the day? Or do you hardly think about the Lord at all, and think about other interests and pursuits far more? **Test number 3: what are you most ready to defend?** Are you ready to defend the truth of God’s Word? Do you study God’s Word diligently so that you can give an answer to those who reject and challenge the Person and work of Christ? Or would you be much more ready to defend why you think your favourite football team will win the world cup? **How about your recreations? Would you be able to go a whole week without indulging in your favourite hobby or recreation?** Or would you

hardly be able to stand it? In contrast, would you be able to go a week without reading the Bible, praying, going to church, or talking about the Lord, and not really miss it? If so, there is another “god” in your life that needs to be cast down. Christian, abide *fully* in your Saviour, so that you can bring forth fruit for Him, and have abundance of joy in your life!

#### IV. The proviso of the Branch

**(Read Zechariah 3:8-9 again.)** Throughout December, we have looked at Christ’s title, “The Branch,” from many different angles. However, before we close this morning, there is something extremely important that you must know about the Branch: **He has a proviso—a condition—for entering into His Kingdom.** That condition is that you *receive Him*, by simple faith and repentance of heart. You see, in this vision that God gave to Zechariah, Christ is pictured not only as “the Branch,” but as the “Stone” of Israel. God put before Zechariah a stone (a foundation stone for a building); and on this stone was the engraving of seven eyes. What does this mean? It means that Christ is the Foundation Stone of Israel; and the seven eyes represent the fact that Christ is filled with the seven qualities of the Holy Spirit. Christ has the Spirit without measure, because He Himself is God, and is equal with the Holy Spirit. What, then, does this have to do with receiving Christ? It has *everything* to do with it! Let’s see what David said about “the Stone.”

#### Psalm 118:22-26

There is a Jewish tradition which has been passed down through the centuries; and it is said to be real history. The Jewish sages say that while the Temple of Solomon was being built, there was a capstone that they had set aside to adorn the top of the building; but no one liked it. They cut other capstones; but for some reason, no matter how hard they tried to find a better one, none of them would quite fit. Finally, out of sheer necessity, they put the original capstone in place; and it fit perfectly. The builders then broke out into singing, and sang the words of King David, from **Psalm 118:22: “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes.”**<sup>1</sup> Little did they know that they were acting out a prophecy! *Jesus of Nazareth* is not only the Foundation Stone, but the **“headstone of the corner”—the Capstone.** Tragically, though, Israel has been rejecting their Cornerstone for centuries; and because of their unbelief, the Kingdom is being put on hold until the day when they finally *repent*, and believe on their true Messiah. Generation after generation of Jewish souls have passed into eternity without the saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ; and they will never enter the Kingdom. Instead, they will be cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth.



Folks, the same that is true for the Jews is true for all of us. Every one of us *must* repent, and believe on the Son of God, in order to miss Hell, and spend eternity in Heaven. Jesus said, ***“Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.”*** “But Pastor,” you say, “what does ‘repent’ really mean?” Well, remember what we read back in **Hosea 14**? He said, ***“O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.”*** That word ***“return”*** means “to turn direction”—to make a 180-degree turn from the direction you are going. It means to turn to God, from sin. Instead of the sacrifice of a calf on the altar (or whatever religious ritual that you *think* is earning you favour with God), God wants the “sacrifice” of a contrite heart. The Bible says, ***“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise.”*** If you will believe, with your heart, that Jesus died for your sins and rose again to pay the full debt of your sin, and will repent of your sin, and let Him come into your life to be Lord, He will save you, and give you eternal life.

**Conclusion:** If you aren’t sure whether you are on your way to Heaven, then heed the words of Hosea. Take with you words, and say, “Father, I believe that your Son has already done everything that I need to be saved. I believe He died and rose again to pay for my sin. Please take away my iniquity, and receive me graciously, for Jesus’ sake.” If you will receive Christ, the Branch, by simple faith, He will save you, wash away your sin, and come into your life immediately; and someday, you will enter the glorious Kingdom that He has prepared for all who love Him. If you are saved, it’s time to get serious. “The Branch of David” is coming back to this earth; and the only question that will matter in the Kingdom will be, “How faithfully did I serve God in this life?” Let Christ produce the fruit of the Spirit in your life—and the fruit of souls saved from eternal misery, because you gave them the words of life!

<sup>1</sup> David Baron, *The Ancient Scripture for the Modern Jew*, pp. 162-163.