

Text: Isaiah 11:1-16

Title: "The road to God's resting place"

Time: 10/12/2025 am

Place: NBBC

Introduction: When our world uses the term *resting-place*, it normally refers to a cemetery. We speak of Arlington National Cemetery as the "final resting-place" of many who sacrificed much for our nation's freedom and security. You may have visited the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier there and read its Sentinel's Creed. It calls the Tomb the Unknown Soldier's resting-place:

"My dedication to this sacred duty is total and wholehearted. In the responsibility bestowed on me, never will I falter. And with dignity and perseverance, my standard will remain perfection. Through the years of diligence and praise and the discomfort of the elements, I will walk my tour in humble reverence to the best of my ability. It is he who commands the respect I protect, his bravery that made us so proud. Surrounded by well meaning crowds by day, alone in the thoughtful peace of night, this soldier will in honored glory rest under my eternal vigilance." The sentinels of the Tomb honor this sacred resting-place with the kind of dedication the resting-place that Isaiah mentions in our passage deserves (v. 10; KJV *rest* = ESV *resting-place*).

This resting-place of Isaiah 11 is, of course, a much happier place than a cemetery. It is the place that Jesus promised to prepare for us in John 14: "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God. You believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many homes . . . I go to prepare a place for you" (vv. 1-2). This resting-place is the believer's future home. It is the place He promised to give His followers in Matthew 11: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are

heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

The Old Testament called this place of rest *Zion*, referring to a future Jerusalem. "For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his dwelling place: 'This is my resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it'" (Ps. 132:13-14). Of course, God's ark never found an eternal resting-place in historic Jerusalem. There the ark was tossed about, disrespected, and finally lost to Israel's enemies. Here a future Jerusalem is promised as its resting-place here. A place God calls *Zion*.

Our chapter this morning is about this glorious resting-place as well as the road to it (v. 16). This road to God's resting place is a pathway of mighty salvation miracles, like the pathway Israel took in their exodus from the land of Egypt. God's hand redeemed His people from slavery at that time (Exod. 3:19-20, "And I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go, no, not by a mighty hand. And I will stretch out my hand, and smite Egypt with all my wonders which I will do in the midst thereof: and after that he will let you go."). God paves the way to His final resting-place by raising His mighty hand a second time (v. 11).

As we examine this resting-place together from Isaiah 11, we find that the prophet emphasizes three things about it for our instruction this morning.

I. God's resting-place shall be prepared by a promised Messiah (vv. 1-5, 10).

Illustration: There are essentially three parts to every plant – the root system, the plant itself, and then the fruit that the

plant produces. Those parts are divisible into subparts, but I would like to think of these three because they are mentioned in our passage in Isaiah's analogy of a plant.

Application The words *stem* and *root* point to the root system of Isaiah's plant (v. 1). The root system is referred to again in verse 10. The plant is called a *rod* or shoot and a *Branch* or sapling (v. 1). We find the fruit part of the plant in verse 1 in the phrase *a Branch shall grow out*. Literally, the original language here says *a sprout shall bear fruit*. It uses the same word we find in Gen. 1:22, where man's original charge was to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fruit of this plant will accomplish what God originally intended for His creation before man's sin.

What is amazing about this threefold description of Isaiah's plant is that each part of the plant is a symbol of the Messiah (God's *anointed one*). The Messiah produces the fruit in verse 1. The Messiah is the plant shooting up from the stump of Jesse in that verse. And the Messiah is the root of Jesse as well in verse 10. In other words, Isaiah tells us that Jesse came from the Messiah (v. 10), and that the Messiah came from Jesse (v. 1), and that as such the Messiah shall bear fruit. The Messiah created Jesse, and Jesse was an ancestor of the Messiah. He is both Creator God and created man. Jesus cites this Old Testament truth in Luke 20:39-44.

It is significant that Isaiah calls the Messiah *the stem of Jesse*. Other kings are sons of David, but this coming deliverer will be the son of Jesse like David. He shall be the promised David of the end times (Jer. 30:9, "But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them."). The Messiah's kingdom fulfills the promise of the Davidic covenant, which promised David's seed an everlasting throne. None of the other sons of David did so.

The Messiah is anointed for His fruit-bearing work by God's Holy Spirit (v. 2). It is the Holy Spirit who gives Christlike virtues to the life on which He rests. He gives wisdom and understanding against seducing spirits and doctrines of demons; He gives counsel and might against confusion and weakness; and He gives knowledge and the fear of the LORD against ignorant disrespect of the LORD.

It is the fear of the LORD that characterizes the Christlike life especially (v. 3a). *Quick understanding* translates a word meaning *to smell*. The idea is that the Messiah and His Christlike followers will smell like the fear of the LORD when the Holy Spirit rests upon them. One commentator defined the fear of the LORD this way:

"The fear of the Lord is the heart and core of Biblical religion. It involves a recognition of the absolute holiness of God; it is a fear based upon the recognition of that holiness and coupled with full reverence before Him. Such a holy fear had been manifested in the attitude of the seraphs above the throne of the Lord. . . . it recognizes that the creature is but dust before the holy Creator, and it prostrates itself in His presence, expressing itself in reverential awe" (Young, 383).

These virtues of this promised Christ ensure that His judgments are accurate and impartial (vv. 3b-4a), that His words fall on those who hear with the force of the word of God (v. 4b), and that He is truly righteous and truly faithful (v. 5).

This resting-place shall be prepared by this promised Messiah. Someday all nations will seek this place, although today nations still rage against the Messiah and imagine a vain thing (v. 10; Psalm 2). In that future day, this resting-place will be glorious. Will we join the nations of today in the rebellion of unbelief against the banner raised by the Messiah,

or will we be among the nations of the world someday who seek out and follow that banner? Isaiah calls us as he did sinners in his day to faith in this Messiah, because God's eternal resting-place is prepared by Him.

II. God's resting-place will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord (vv. 6-9).

Illustration: I am thankful for the teachers I have access to, who are teaching me lessons from the Book of Isaiah. They have spent a lifetime studying this book. One is Edward J. Young, a Presbyterian brother who taught Old Testament at Westminster Theological Seminary for many years. He passed away in 1968. My other teacher is J. Alec Motyer, a retired Anglican professor who taught at Trintiy College in Bristol, who studied the Book of Isaiah for most of his life.

Application: I mention these men with appreciation and thankfulness, but I do not always agree with their conclusions. Dr. Young especially is critical of the truth we hold here of a promised millennial age. It is his approach to some content in Isaiah to see spiritual truth that applies to our church age, rather than literal fulfilment of these promises in a future for Israel. But in regard to the verses we have just read, even Dr. Young admits the following:

"It must be noted that Isaiah has placed great stress upon the animals themselves, and this very fact shows that it is impossible to carry through in detail a figurative interpretation. If all is merely figurative, what is the point of such detailed statements concerning the change in animals?" Commenting this way, my Presbyterian brother departs from Calvin, who wrote of this passage, "Though Isaiah says that the wild and the tame beasts will live in harmony, that the blessing of God may be clearly and fully manifested, yet he chiefly means what I have said, that the people of Christ

will have no disposition to do injury, no fierceness or cruelty. They were formerly like lions or leopards, but will be like sheep or lambs; for they will have laid aside every cruel and brutish disposition.” Calvin saw an allegory of character traits here, not literal animals.

Recognizing the need for the literal fulfilment of these promises about animals, Dr. Young proposes that this literal fulfilment happens in Revelation 21 with the new heaven and the new earth. I would agree that animals will be like this in the new earth, but I believe we are reading here about conditions in the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Isaiah says that the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth like the waters cover the sea (v. 9). I do not think Isaiah is referring to the new earth of Revelation 21, because that new earth will not have a sea. This reference to a sea seems out of place if Isaiah meant the new earth.

Instead, a day is coming when this earth will still have its seas, and just like the way the waters cover them, so shall the knowledge of the Lord cover the earth. For that reason, sin’s curse will be lifted, and the earth will experience a time again like the time when God first made man and woman on it, prior to their sin and its curse (Gen. 1:29-30). The knowledge of Yahweh floods out sin’s curse. The curse of sin is abated to the degree that the knowledge of Yahweh, the God of the Bible, fills the earth. Is the knowledge of the Lord flooding our lives this way? (Phil. 3:7-11).

III. God’s resting-place will be enjoyed by a regathered Israel (vv. 11-16).

Illustration: Those who deny the millennium deny that the future will see a saved and restored nation of Israel. For this reason, Dr. Young teaches regarding these verses, “What

Isaiah is here describing cannot, of course, be understood in a literal sense" (399). I believe that Isaiah himself would have come to a different conclusion. Other prophets too would have felt differently, as Dr. Young himself admits: "The prophets delight to picture as one of the blessings of the Messianic age the healing of the breach between the northern and southern kingdoms" (397). That delight of the prophets must have taken these promises literally.

Application: And so an Israel that still rejects her Messiah will ultimately be saved by Him. Some of us too have rejected the Messiah, Jesus Christ, over and over again, while we still breathe the air of the goodness of God that leads us to repentance. The Apostle Paul encourages church members of Rome to glean an important truth from the literal fulfillment of these promises about Israel's future: "As concerning the gospel, they are enemies for your sakes; but as touching the election, they are beloved for the fathers' sakes. For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:28-29). When God gives a gift, He does not take it back; when He calls out a promise, He always delivers on that promise. For this reason we can trust that His promises to us are true. Israel's continued survival throughout the times of the Gentiles is a miraculous testament to the truth that God keeps His promises.

Conclusion: So like the sentinels of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, every believer is a sentinel of the glorious resting-place of Isaiah 11. These patriots of Arlington set a wonderful example for us about how to perform our duty. Hear their words once more: "My dedication to this sacred duty is total and whole-hearted. In the responsibility bestowed on me, never will I falter. And with dignity and perseverance, my standard will remain perfection. Through the years of diligence and praise and the discomfort of the

elements, I will walk my tour in humble reverence to the best of my ability. It is he who commands the respect I protect, his bravery that made us so proud.” Is the Messiah, Jesus Christ, the One who commands our respect, the One whom we are truly proud to serve with dedication and to the best of our ability?

Isaiah wrote about the road to God’s resting-place to a sinful nation so that they would repent of their sin and believe on the coming Messiah for salvation from sin. And having come, Jesus the Messiah told His disciples, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No man comes unto the Father but by Me.” “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.”

So now in our day, our duty is to take Isaiah’s message about this road to God’s resting-place to our lost and dying world. We have the Messiah’s banner, the cross, and we have His power, the Holy Spirit resting on us. We need only to yield to Him and dedicate ourselves to this cause. Will you do so today?

“A man came—I think it was actually in Philadelphia—on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction—the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

—David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

Preachers and Preaching