

THE STEP OF PROMISE

Is. 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

God has a wonderful plan in everything He does. He does not do anything without having a motive behind it ... and the motive always ultimately demonstrates His glory, Who He is. *That* is so important for every believer to have confidence in for there is never any problem too big for God. I'm not suggesting we always understand what He permits, and I also know it is one thing being confident when life is going well, and quite a different thing when it's not ... but we have the same God, - the same Heavenly Father, - Who continues to be in control and, as Paul wrote, **Rom. 8:28** ... all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Throughout the Scriptures we see how God directs nations, - Ps. 47:8 tells us He reigns over the nations, *God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.* ... As we read through the prophets we see how He had a plan for Egypt, and Assyria, and for all the nations ... and of course, He had, - and He has, - a plan for the nation of Israel.

God's plan even comes into the ordinary daily living of ordinary people. For example, Sarah was an ordinary woman who served God along with her husband Abraham ... but when it came to *truly* believing God for the way ahead, she was somewhat lacking because she laughed when she heard she was going to have a baby in her old age ... Nevertheless, despite her unbelief, Isaac was born.

Hannah was another ordinary woman. Her husband, Elkanah, loved her dearly ... but no amount of love on its own would produce a child ... but one day God met with her and gave her the desire of her heart, **I Sam. 1:20** that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, *Because I have asked him of the LORD.*

Another very ordinary young immigrant girl was introduced to a wealthy man called Boaz. ... She married him and together Ruth and Boaz had a child and they called him Obed. In turn Obed married, and he also had a son, and he was called Jesse. Jesse became a father. His eldest son was called Eliab, the next eldest was Abinadab, then Shammah ... and his youngest son was David. ... And from that family, - out of a little place

called Bethlehem God chose a young boy who would become the greatest of the kings of Israel.

God starts where no one else would. He takes a little piece of insignificance and He makes it into something most beautiful. ... That is what He has been doing from the beginning, as we find in Gen. 2:7, *And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.* ... He picked up what was lying loose on the earth, - it had a purpose, for out of the soil He formed the man in His own image, and gave him dominion over what He had created. ... Even that dust lying on the ground ... God had a wonderful plan for it, to His glory!

For His glory, He invested in human beings ... and yet, as Moses said on Mount Sinai, Ex. 3:11 *Who am I ...* and as King David also asked, II Sam. 7:18 *Who am I, O Lord GOD? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto? ... I Chron. 29:14 who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.* ... God starts in the little place, and out of nothing, He does a work to His glory, as the hymn writer describes, "Little is much when God is in it!"

Let's return to Bethlehem to just over seven hundred years before the birth of Jesus to consider **the step of promise** God into this world ...

HIS HUMILITY

So often we read this beautiful verse and detach it from its context ... but look and see what God is saying during those very dark times, Isaiah [*Jehovah is salvation*] 11:1 *And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.*

In the previous chapter, God is judging Jerusalem and the people of Israel for their infidelity, 10:1 *Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees, and that write grievousness which they have prescribed; 2 To turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless! They had become so foolish and blind they could not recognise how God had blessed their nation. They took Him for granted ... They ignored His Law through Moses, and His teachings through the prophets, and they lived without any regard of their responsibility before Him.*

In Jer. 16:10 the prophet described the state of their hearts as they arrogantly contradicted God, *Wherefore hath the LORD pronounced all this great evil against us? or what is our iniquity? or what is our sin that we have committed against the LORD our God?* They could not understand the message coming from the prophets for they had placed their own importance above God, and they had long since exchanged His Word and His Law for the words and laws of their own self-imposed officials. And they thought everything was going fine! ... Their religion suitably vague because it had so little relevance to their daily affairs ... but they were *happy* with that. It was also vain because their religion complimented their society. And all in all, their religion had become valueless because there was no real point to it, except to feed their own agenda.

And God warned them He was going to ‘come down on them heavy’, v.3 *what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from far? to whom will ye flee for help? and where will ye leave your glory? 4 Without me [i.e. you have deserted Me, you have driven Me away] they shall bow down under the prisoners, and they shall fall under the slain. ... God’s judgment would result in them being carried off prisoners by a powerful and cruel army into a foreign land. ... And when that happens, how will their vain, vague, and valueless form of religion serve them in ‘the day of God’s visitation’ ... when He will judge their unfaithfulness?*

And Isaiah’s prophecy introduces the proud wicked godless nation of Assyria which threatened the people of Israel and Judah ... He prophesied how the King of Assyria would *boast* against Jerusalem, 10:13 *By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent; and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants like a valiant man.* God would use such an obnoxious ruler who considered himself invincible, unconquerable, and ntouchable ... Yes, God uses such people ...

This was the mighty King Sennacherib of Assyria, a powerful nation ... and he would centre his aggression on a small country like Israel. ... God used Assyria to discipline His people, v.5 *O Assyrian, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation. 6 I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. ... And yet, in the midst of God’s wrath He promised to show mercy towards His people, v.12 *Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the**

Lord hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout [*proud, arrogant*] heart of the king of Assyria, ... The King of Assyria would be stopped from capturing Jerusalem, v.17 And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briars in one day; 18 And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body ... 19 And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write [*list*] them. 20 And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob, shall no again stay [*rely*] upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel, in truth. 21 The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God. 22 For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

... The Lord gave them hope, and He used the symbolism of the forest to impress upon His people, Is. 10:33 Behold, the Lord, the LORD of hosts, shall lop [*cut off*] the bough with terror: and the high ones of stature shall be hewn down, and the haughty [*the exalted*] shall be humbled [*brought low*]. 34 And he shall cut down the thickets of the forest with iron, and Lebanon shall fall *be cast down*] by a mighty one. ... The exalted trees in the forest of the nations will be struck down ... In their own might King Sennacherib would have easily conquered and destroyed Jerusalem, except for the fact God, - the Mighty One, - was in control ... and God would only allow him to go so far. In 701 BC, outside the city walls the armies of Sennacherib were ready to capture and destroy Jerusalem, and he boasted to King Hezekiah how he would leave the city in ruins ... but he failed for he was 'cast down by the Mighty One', and he had to return home. where, Is. 37:38 it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword ... and that was the end of him!

Such were the mighty 'trees of the forest' 'chopped down' ... and then, - God in His Word introduces His news about *the Branch!* Is. 11:1 And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots ... No tall cedar of Lebanon, no mighty forest, ... *just a Branch!*

God promised to lop the bough with terror, He will hew down the high ones of stature, and all the thickets in the forest will be cut down ... but out of a small town in Judea, from a little family so insignificant as not to count, there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.

... For a branch to grow, it takes time and nourishment ... and the Branch from out of the stem of Jesse would grow among His people, - He would [Is. 53:2](#) grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground ... He would come unto His own. ... And the prophecy looks ahead to how the mighty trees will inevitably fall, and yet, out of the stem of Jesse God would raise a Branch unto His glory! ... It is like the great statue Nebuchadnezzar built, that everyone was ordered to bow down to. The head of the statue was gold, its chest and arms were of silver, its belly and thighs were of iron, its legs were of iron, and its feet were of a mixture of clay and iron (two elements that don't mix). Then, from, - as it were, - out of nowhere, Daniel told Nebuchadnezzar about the Stone, [Dan. 2:34](#) Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces ... [35](#) ... and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

Just a 'Stone' which initially the 'builders would reject' (cf. Ps. 118:22) ... Just a single Branch ... [Jer. 23:5](#) Behold, prophesied Jeremiah, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. [6](#) In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. ... There is God's plan, - Judah and Israel are going to be saved ... one nation once more ... and the promise centres around the 'Branch'.

... As their descendants would come to look at Jesus, they would see nothing attractive about Him. He was like all the other children ... just a 'Branch' that 'stemmed' out of the family 'tree' ... **His Humility**. ... He is not like the mighty cedars of Lebanon, and He is not like the mighty trees of the forest ... *He is just a Branch*. The people of His day didn't consider Him worthy of their investigation, [Is. 53:2](#) For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground ... and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him ... [Mt. 13:55](#) Is not this the carpenter's son?

Jesus is the promise of God to this world. God promised that through the nation of Israel He would send His Son into this world, and that through His Son not only Jews but Gentiles from across the globe would be saved. He did not send His Son to be born in Herod's palace, - as the Wise Men from the east considered appropriate. He came unto his own, and his own received him not ([Jn. 1:11](#)).

There would have been many ‘trees’, so tall and so mighty, which would distract the unwary. Those ‘trees’ are so beautiful, and the fruit they yield looks so attractive ... and yet every one of those other ‘trees’ would be chopped down, and only one would remain standing ... the *Branch* Who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

Just a Branch ... **His Humility**, ... and it was so plain many blinded eyes could not see. They considered His humility a sign of weakness. They saw Him as unsuitable and inadequate, **Jn. 1:46** *Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?* - He is only a small Branch in a large forest, - He is of no significance! ... That’s Jesus. ... But, how wrong they were, for this Branch speaks of the Saviour. When every other tree in the forest will have been broken down, He, - this Branch, - will still be standing.

This is just the opening verse in a beautiful chapter which speaks of the reign of our Lord, when the Branch (v.1) becomes the Banner (v.10 in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an *ensign* of the people). ... This Branch, - the Lord Jesus Christ, - **Is. 11:10** ... shall stand for an *ensign [a banner/standard lifted up]* of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. **11** And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again *the second time* to recover the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria, and from Egypt, and from Pathros, and from Cush, and from Elam, and from Shinar, and from Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. **12** And he shall set up [*lift up, raise*] an *ensign* for the nations [*goyim*], and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. ... **16** And there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt. You see, **Mt. 1:21** thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall *save* his people from their sins.

He is our Banner today, raised over the people of God in every nation across this world. ... Behold the Lamb of God, John said (Jn. 1:29,36). ... At this Christmas time, we announce the *Christ* of Christmas, - there would not be a Christmas without Him. “God sent His Son, they called Him Jesus”. ... It is *more* than a Christmas story for it is how the Saviour’s Father gave Him as a ransom for His children.

Isaiah promised the Gentiles would seek Him ... and that was a promise Simeon the priest in the temple, - over six hundred years later, - repeated, **Lk. 2:32** *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel* (cf. Is.

42:6 and 49:6). ... And that is how today Gentiles out of every nation are being saved.

Satan would have us believe (in the West) our message of the Gospel is not getting through ... we are losing the battle and we soon shall be finished! ... That is *not* the truth because instead there is the greatest ingathering of souls taking place throughout the nations today ... even in countries where the Name of Christ and His Gospel are forbidden ... Precious souls, - like never before witnessed, - are being saved out of idolatry and superstition and false religion ... Just as Jehovah shattered the power of Assyria, He continues to shatter and crumble the opposition to His Word, *Zech. 4:6 Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.*

And then there is coming a day, - when the heavens and the earth will pass away, and in their place God will wonderfully form a new heaven and a new earth, to replace the old ... when a thousand years will be as a day ... When you travel this world and see how beautiful it is ... it will be nothing like what is awaiting God's people! ... And what shall be the victory song of the Redeemed? ... *Is. 12:1 And in that day thou shalt say, O LORD, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. 2 Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. 3 Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation. 4 And in that day shall ye say, Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted. 5 Sing unto the LORD; for he hath done excellent things: this is known in all the earth. 6 Cry out and shout, thou inhabitant of Zion: for great is the Holy One of Israel in the midst of thee.*

CONCLUSION This is **the Step of Promise** ... and to achieve God's purpose He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus, **His Humility**.

It is a thing most wonderful,
Almost too wonderful to be,
That God's own Son should come from Heaven,
And die to save a child like me.
And yet I know that it is true;
He chose a poor and humble lot

The apostle said, ... *II Cor. 8:9 though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. ... His humility*, and through it He achieved all He planned, - the redemption of His people.

In Him the promises of God are being fulfilled ... Here, even in **His humility**, ... **The Steps towards the Cradle ... The Step of Promise**, Is. 11:1 there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. May God encourage us through the study of His infallible and inerrant Word! Amen.