

RIPE FOR HARVEST

When we're confused and uncertain, we're ripe for God's Spirit to fill us with His knowledge!

KEY POINTS

- ❖ Human history, biblical history, and even our personal journeys show us a general trend with people.
- ❖ In extended times of prosperity, we tend towards self-sufficiency—believing that we are in full control of our lives. It usually takes drastic events to get our attention and remind us that we are **not**, in fact, in full control.
- ❖ Isaiah 11:1-9 is couched in such a setting. Israel stood at the crossroads of God's judgement, and Isaiah foresaw the nation's exile into Babylon. But beyond that, He saw Israel's redemption by the Messiah (Jesus).
- ❖ Isaiah chapter 11 opens with the line, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit." Jesus embodied the Spirit and wisdom of the Lord.
- ❖ Symbolically, Israel is a tree that was planted and has flourished. God's judgment for their disobedience is to cut down the tree. Yet, in fulfilment of His promise to David of an eternal destiny, even the tree stump will still produce a shoot that will blossom into fruit.
- ❖ Isaiah goes on, prophesying in the first person, "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me..." (61:1). Fast forward to a synagogue in Nazareth on the sabbath day several centuries later and we find Jesus at the pulpit. He reads these very same words from Isaiah and then tells His audience that the scripture was fulfilled in their hearing that day (Luke 4:18-20). He is the prophesied Messiah, the Branch that will bear fruit.
- ❖ Now, if this is true, Jesus must be the reflection of the Lord in a way that Israel was unable to be. Isaiah tells us what this looks like, which is a restatement of the very principles of the law Moses gave: that God looks on the inside, but man looks on the outside (Is. 11:3-5).
- ❖ Isaiah foresaw that the earth would be filled with the knowledge of the Lord through Jesus. When the knowledge of God is complete, we return to the state in the Garden of Eden before the Fall (11:6-8).
- ❖ It is possible for the wolf to be tamed and for the viper to be quieted. Verse 9 states: "They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain." But how will this be?
- ❖ The time will come when Jesus' physical presence will bring this all into being. For now, though, it's **our** physical presence that will take this reality into the whole earth. We are His holy mountain.
- ❖ We need to boldly take the knowledge of the Lord to the world. We have a mandate to "fill" the earth with the knowledge of the Lord (Matthew 28:19-20), and we do this by sharing it, not imposing it. Jesus put it this way: "Freely you have received, freely give" (10:8).
- ❖ In the New Testament, when Jesus saw the confused crowds, He knew that they were ripe for harvest. Matthew 9 tells us that Jesus went *everywhere*, and He

KEY SCRIPTURES (NIV): Isaiah 11:1-9;
 Matthew 9:35-38; Revelation 5:5, 22:16;
 Romans 15:12; Isaiah 61:1-2

- did this because He knew that the people had a desperate need. He knew that they were lost and without hope of any alternative outside of Him. That's where we are today.
- ❖ People are as ripe for the kingdom harvest today as they were in the time of Jesus. The problem remains the same: For the knowledge of the Lord to cover the earth as the waters cover the sea, someone has to take it to them.
 - ❖ Matthew 13:3-8 gives us the parable of the sower. When people share the word (sow the seed), they should do so liberally. When there is a positive response (good ground), they should begin to make the disciples. When there is a negative response (stony ground), they have to stop sowing because the person is not ready. Our job is to sow and respond to the response.
 - ❖ Our theme this year is "restore, refresh, renew." We're still in the throes of a multi-year crisis and people need the Lord; they are ripe for the harvest. In this season, let's be the solution and not the problem.
 - ❖ We're interacting with people who've lost everything. Their lives are in ashes, in many cases quite literally, as they've lost loved ones. God has shown us that He can use us to bring beauty for those ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for this spirit of heaviness people are experiencing (Is. 61:3).
 - ❖ Why? Because He wants us to be trees of righteousness. He planted us and created us to be just that, so that He might be glorified.
 - ❖ In these confusing, uncertain times, let us remember that we are ripe for God's Spirit to fill us with His knowledge.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. "We are His holy mountain." With many of us having to isolate ourselves during this current time, how do we fulfill this mandate? (What needs might people have and how might we step up to meet them in light of current/ongoing restrictions?)
2. Compose a list of scriptures to use as you "freely give" that which has been given to you.

PRAYER TIME







Lord, as You have freely given to me, help me to freely give of Your gift to others. In Jesus' name.

Start-up: Have you ever received a gift you did not want? Did you ever let the gift-giver know that? Why or why not?

WEEK OF SUNDAY, JANUARY 9, 2022

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week's message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

-  (Reminds me/Confirms)
  (New idea)
  (Think about)
-  (Do this)
  (Speaks to my heart)
  (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

Go deeper with your Life Group family.
CONNECT-REFLECT-DISSECT THE WORD