

## **REJOICE OVER GOD'S GREEN THUMB**

**This is what the LORD God says. I myself will take part of the tip of the cedar and plant it. From the topmost of its shoots I will pluck off a tender sprig, and I myself will plant it on a high and lofty mountain. <sup>23</sup> On the high mountain of Israel I will plant it. It will produce branches, bear fruit, and become a magnificent cedar. Flying birds of every kind will live under it. In the shelter of its branches they will nest. <sup>24</sup> Then all the trees in the countryside will know that I, the LORD, bring down the high tree and raise up the low tree, that I make the green tree dry up, and I make the dried-up tree blossom. I, the LORD, have spoken, and I will carry it out. (Ezekiel 17:22-24)**

Gardening season is in full swing! We, and no doubt many of you, have planted seeds, watered, weeded, and worried over the dryness of this year. Especially the trees that were transplanted last year and this spring are challenged by the lack of rain. Through Ezekiel God tells us about a special gardening project that he has developed.

When we recall that Ezekiel was God's prophet to the Children of Israel during their captivity in Babylon, God's green thumb nurtures in us the same confidence and peace as those residents of the Babylonian Captivity received. Through Ezekiel the "Gardener" lays out his plan. He will cut off the top of a cedar tree and plant that tender sprig on a tall mountain. It will flourish into a mighty cedar that will provide shelter for every kind of bird.



This 17<sup>th</sup> chapter of the prophecy of Ezekiel is a "challenging parable to the house of Israel" (v. 2). It portrays the fall of the kingdom of Judah and what appears to be the end of the dynasty of King David. But at the end of the chapter comes these verses which provide a beautiful and comforting promise of the Messiah and his work of redemption. That sprig that was cut off and rooted on the lofty mountain is our Savior Jesus Christ. What a humble and tender beginning he endured when he took on human flesh! But Scripture tells us that: "The child grew and became strong. He was filled with wisdom and God's favor rested on him." (Luke 2:40) His might is seen most clearly as his humiliation transitions into his exaltation. He won that great victory over sin, death, and Satan. Taking up their commission his disciples went throughout the world proclaiming forgiveness and salvation and eternal peace. Now birds of every kind (Christians from every nation, tribe, language and people [Rev. 14:6]) find a place for their nests in what has become a mighty tree.

The mighty One had done exactly what he said in verse 24 – he brought down the high tree and raised up the low tree. The apparent end of David's dynasty had occurred. His descendants did not trust in the LORD God. They put their confidence in their own wisdom and an alliance with Egypt, yet Babylon had prevailed. But the God of free and full salvation kept his promise. He made sure that a descendant of David would establish a mighty spiritual and eternal kingdom in which every person can receive true and lasting peace.

So I must ask myself – In what tree have I built my nest? The world, Satan, and even my own sinful flesh tantalize me with all sorts of apparent nests of safety. Is Jesus really better than the government safety net? Is pursuing a life of Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, and sanctified use of the gifts God has given me really better than all the attractions of this world? Are the dollars I have earned and saved and invested really worth more than Jesus, my dearest treasure?

Only Jesus offers a sure refuge for all our problems. Don't fly to him only when the storms of life blew you down! Build your nest in Jesus, that mighty cedar. He provides all that you need. He is your all in all, in days of sunshine and in stormy seasons.