

Nov. 30, 2014 – Isaiah 9:6-7 (OT: Isaiah 64:1-9 Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 Gospel: Mark 13:24-37)

ISAIAH'S ROYAL PROPHECIES
I. This King Will Bring True Peace

This Advent seasons we will be considering four royal prophecies given through the prophet Isaiah. They foretell of the the coming King, Jesus. The first prophecy we consider tells us that this King will bring true peace.

Peace is a word that you see and hear a lot this time of year. It appears on cards and in songs. The Christmas season, however, can be anything but peaceful with all the shopping, cooking, cleaning, and planning that one often needs to do to get ready for the holidays. That is why the words of Isaiah 9:6-7 are so important for us to read and hear.

Isaiah wrote these words at a time when the Jewish nation was divided into the northern kingdom of Israel, and the southern kingdom of Judah. It seemed to be a time of peace. While there was occasionally some strife between the two kingdoms, both were prospering. The problem was that Israel had turned away from God and was worshipping idols and Judah was following suit. Because of this God was about to bring the Assyrians to attack and scatter Israel, and a bit latter, the Babylonians to attack and take Judah into exile. The seeming peace was just the “calm before the storm” of God’s judgment.

God sent prophets, like Isaiah, to warn Israel and Judah and to turn them back to the Lord. At the same time there were many false prophets who told the people that everything was fine! These prophets proclaimed peace when there really wasn’t any peace, at least not with God.

Today we hear similar false prophets who tell us that God loves us no matter what we do. They tell us that there is no hell, or, if there is, it is only for those people who do really bad things, but I’m OK and you’re OK, so there is nothing to worry about.

The problem is, that is not true. We are all born in sin and we have failed to obey God’s commandments. This is not OK with God. Our sin has separated us from God and we are by nature His enemies and do not have peace with God. “*There is no peace,*” says the Lord, “*for the wicked*” (Isaiah 48:22). And by nature, we are wicked.

Israel’s problem was idolatry, and that is ours as well. The first commandment God gave was, “*you shall have no other gods before Me*” (Exodus 20:3) While we may not worship idols made of wood or stone, how often does something become more important to you than God? Have you been more focused on the gifts you’re giving (or getting) this Christmas than on the gift God has given you in the Child who was born unto you in Bethlehem? Too often we put our wants and desired ahead of the Lord, and seek our kingdom rather than His.

God tells us we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus put this a very season-appropriate way when he said, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive*” (Acts 20:35). But do you really believe that? Imagine it is Christmas Eve, or Christmas Day, whenever you usually exchange gifts. You’re excited to see how everyone will like what you have given them. But after all the packages have been sorted and passed out you discover that while everyone has a pile of presents in front of them, you have none! No one has given you anything! How would you feel? I’d be upset! What about me?!? Where are my gifts?!? But that isn’t the attitude God wants us to have.

This is why Isaiah’s royal prophecy of the King who will bring true peace is so important. The Child that is born unto you – the Son who is given unto you – is the Prince of Peace. He brings true peace because He brings you peace with God.

Ephesians 2:14-15 tells us, *“For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.”* Jesus is your peace because He fulfilled all the commandments for you when He came to earth and lived a perfect life. He died to pay for and take away your sins so that *“the chastisement for our peace was upon Him”* (Isaiah 53:5). He took away the condemnation of the law that was upon you. By His sinless life and innocent death on the cross He removed the enmity and made peace between you and God.

This is true peace; it goes beyond anything we experience in this world. The word “peace” in the Bible is very rich. It goes beyond mere quiet and the absence of war or strife. It refers to completeness, wholeness, harmony, and fulfillment. All these things God has given you through Christ Jesus.

If we do not have peace with God, any good that we may have here on earth is just temporary and fleeting, like the prosperity Israel and Judah had in Isaiah’s day when God’s judgment was just around the corner. Jesus asked, *“For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?”* (Mark 8:36).

But through Christ you do have peace with God. It is not based on your circumstances but on what Jesus has done. And because you are reconciled to God, you can have peace in any situation, even in the midst of strife and war.

In Isaiah’s prophecy we see another reason only Jesus can give us true peace: the peace He brings is eternal. *“Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”* (v. 7) We may experience times of peace here on earth – times of quiet and tranquility – but they usually don’t last. Even our lives are passing away. But the peace that Jesus brings will have no end.

As we enter Advent, we often look in two directions. We look back at Jesus’ first coming as the Child born unto us in Bethlehem. He came then to bring us peace with God by offering Himself to take away our sins. We also look forward to when *“He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation”* (Hebrews 9:28). He will come to live with us and rule forever so that we will fully experience the peace He brings – a peace without end.

When we read the Old Testament prophecies about Jesus, these two events often appear as one. It is similar to how the high-rise buildings downtown appear from a distance. When you are far away, they look like they are all clumped together with no distance between them, but as you get closer, you realize that one building is actually behind another and that they are two separate buildings.

Isaiah wrote the words of this prophecy over seven hundred years before Jesus’ first coming. In his view Jesus being born as a Child and ruling forever as the Prince of Peace were not distinct events. They seem to be two separate events to us who are living in the end times, but it is important to remember that Jesus is ruling now and we have His peace here on earth.

Jesus brought us peace not only through His life and death, but also through His resurrection from the dead. He ascended into heaven to sit at the right hand of God the Father where He rules with all authority in heaven and on earth.

When Jesus told His disciples that He would return to the Father, He said to them: *“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”* (John 14:27). The peace that Jesus has left with us is not an

outward peace, which is the only peace this world can give, but an inner peace that comes from God. No matter what you face, the peace of God will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, so that you do not need to be troubled or afraid (Philippians 4:7).

We are also awaiting Jesus' return. When He comes again to gather His elect, we will outwardly experience the peace He has already given us when join Him in the new heavens and the new earth. The tranquility and quiet we may find here on earth pales in comparison to the peace we will have in heaven with God. God gives us a picture of this peace in Isaiah 11:6: "*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them.*"

So when the holidays get hectic or anytime you experience strife in this life, remember that Jesus, the King, brings you true peace: true peace with God through His perfect life which He sacrificed on the cross for your sins, true peace from God in every circumstance because He rose from the dead and ascended to rule in heaven, and true peace that is without end when He comes again in glory – for He is your Prince of Peace.

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