

The Promise of Righteous Peace
Isaiah 2:1-4

May 24, 2009

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1. more on the last days^E

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^A Jeremiah 26:18; Micah 3:12-4:5; 1 Kings 4:24

^B Zechariah 14:10; Revelation 21:10

^C Psalm 72:7; Jeremiah 23:6; Zechariah 9:10

^D 1 Thessalonians 4 & 5, 4:18; 1 John 3:2-3; 2 Timothy 3:16-17

^E Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:2; 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; James 5:3; 2 Peter 3:3; 1 Peter 1:5, 20; 1 John 2:18

^F Luke 2:14; John 12:32, 14:27; Acts 4:10-12; Ephesians 2:14, 20-22; 1 Corinthians 3:11

–{1}. **Isaiah 2:1-4** **Promise of Righteous Peace**

A. Our text in its context

1. to see this, let us follow a winding trail to our text
 - a. a century after Isaiah, Jeremiah (26:18) said this – Micah of Moresheth prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah; and he spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, ‘Thus the LORD of hosts has said, “Zion will be plowed as a field, And Jerusalem will become ruins, And the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.”’
 - b. our adult Bible class should recall that Micah of Moresheth, prophesied at the same time as Isaiah; let us turn to that passage in Micah 3:12 – Therefore, on account of you Zion will be plowed as a field, Jerusalem will become a heap of ruins, And the mountain of the temple *will become high* {or, elevated} places of a forest.’
 - c. this is a prophecy of judgement, Jerusalem and the temple destroyed; but, Micah immediately continues to speak of restoration (4:1-3), And it will come about in the last days That the mountain of the house of the Lord Will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, And the peoples will stream to it. Many nations will come and say, ‘Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord And to the house of the God of Jacob, That He may teach us about His ways And that we may walk in His paths.’ For from Zion will go forth the law, Even the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He will judge between many peoples And render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they train for war.
 - d. these are the same words that we find in Isaiah; but to get the full context of Micah’s prophecy, let’s read on (4:4), Each of them will sit under his vine And under his fig tree, With no one to make *them* afraid, For the mouth of the LORD of hosts has spoken. – these are the words used to describe the land under God’s anointed king, Solomon, in 1 Kings 4:25 – So Judah and Israel lived in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. – so that this promise in Micah, as in Isaiah, is a Messianic promise, for verse 5 continues– Though all the peoples walk Each in the name of his god, As for us, we will walk In the name of the LORD our God forever and ever. – elaborating on that theme in the following verses, then to return to the theme of judgement

2. Let us sum up this promise in Micah in its context
 - a. it was spoken in the days of Hezekiah (and Isaiah)
 - b. it is part of an overall section about coming judgement
 - c. it provides an assurance that there will be a restoration
 - d. this will involve righteousness, and will involve peace
 - e. the description of that restoration is Messianic in flavour
 - f. the scene is not heavenly for idols and nations still exist

3. So, why do we find the passage in both Isaiah and Micah?
 - a. the possibilities are
 - (A) each prophet was independently inspired,
 - (B) one prophet quoted the words of the other, or,
 - (C) they each quoted the words of a third prophet
 - b. the Hebrew grammar very strongly suggests that Micah first spoke the passage and that Isaiah is quoting Micah, and for that and other reasons I believe this to be the case
 - c. in Isaiah it introduces announcements of judgement, an apt way to assure God's people of His ultimate kind purpose

B. Peace

1. peace is a universal longing of human soul
 - a. let me quote two songs echoing words from Isaiah
 - b. there is this old camp song

Gonna lay my heavy burden down, Down by the riverside,
Down by the riverside, Down by the riverside;
Gonna lay my heavy burden down, Down by the riverside
Ain't gonna study war no more.
Chorus
I ain't gonna study war no more,
I ain't gonna study war no more, Study war no more. ... etc.

c. and some of the other verses begin ...

... Gonna lay down my sword and shield

... Gonna stick my sword in the golden sand;

... Gonna put on my long white robe;

... Gonna talk with the Prince of Peace;

d. then here is part of a song by Thomas A. Dorsey^{2}. written in 1939, at the start of World War II:

Well, the bear will be gentle, and the wolf will be tame;

And the lion shall lay down by the lamb, (oh, yes)

Well the beast from the wild, shall be led by a little child;

And I'll be changed, changed from this creature I am (oh, yes)

Chorus:

There will be peace in the valley for me some day;

There will be peace in the valley for me, oh, Lord, I pray;

There'll be no sadness, no sorrow, no trouble, I'll see;

There will be peace in the valley for me.

2. men have been seeking peace for centuries

a. there have been countless peace treaties

b. President Woodrow Wilson was a staunch idealist with a deep hope for world peace. It cut to his very heart to declare war on Germany in 1917, his decision cut to his very heart, causing, it is said, him to put his head down on a table and cry. He, with others, saw that war as 'the war to end all wars' and became a leading advocate for the League of Nations, which he hoped would ensure peace.^{3}

c. in 1938, Chamberlain returned from Germany, his eyes blinkered by his desires, announcing 'Peace with honour ... peace for our time!' Nevertheless, war marched onward, erupting full-scale some eleven months later

d. the League of Nations failed, as has the United Nations

3. with this universal longing, why cannot we have peace?

a. the answer goes back to the dawn of history in Eden

b. mankind was created for relationships in God's garden

- (A) a relationship with God who walked in that garden
- (B) a relationship with Eve, created that he not be alone
- c. but sin marred both those relationships
- d. sin has marred the relationships of all mankind ever since
- e. so sin is the reason there is war; it is sin that denies peace
- f. and sin was the reason for Judah's distress
- g. in our text today, God promises that He is going to deal with that reason; and he is going to do so righteously
- h. there will be peace, real peace, for those who will listen

C. The Highlights of the Promise of Righteous Peace

1. keep in mind the context of the passage in Micah
 - a. Jerusalem and God's house were to be destroyed
 - b. this promise is not for the immediate future, but for 'the last days' and has been interpreted variously as the time of the return from exile in Babylon, the time of Maccabees, the restoration of Herod, and at the coming of Messiah
 - c. in 1990, Newsweek reported on a group called the Temple Mount Faithful who hoped to hasten Messiah's coming by taking over the mosque area and rebuilding the temple; they have already carved a 3-ton cornerstone without iron ^{-(4)}}.
 - d. but we shall return to that phrase, 'the last days'
2. second, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be exalted
 - a. historically that was part of Jerusalem
 - b. and this is interpreted either physically
 - (A) some seeing this being fulfilled as the area around it is levelled flat as described in Zechariah 14: 10
 - (B) other seeing this as the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven (Revelation 21: 10) either to rest upon that mountain or be floating above the old city
 - c. or it is interpreted in terms of its importance
 - (A) that temple in Jerusalem will gain in dignity
 - (B) that there will be a world-wide respect for it

3. third, that temple will be a temple of truth
 - a. it will be a visible residence of the God of Jacob, of Israel
 - b. it will be a place to learn of God's ways – how we should live in order to please him
 - c. it will be a place where God's law is declared, and God's word is proclaimed

4. fourth, people will be drawn to come to this temple
 - a. there will be many people
 - b. there will be people from all nations
 - c. these people will invite other people to this house of God
 - d. and, the implication is, people will turn to God

5. fifth, God – for we see this as a Messianic passage – in Christ
 - a. is going to arbitrate and judge between nations
 - b. he is going to judge among peoples
 - c. and as His judgements are just and righteous
 - d. there will be no need to resort to war to settled disputes

6. sixth, there will be peace
 - a. sword and spears – not that these will be the weapons of war necessarily at that time – will be done away with
 - b. ploughshares and pruning hooks – not that these will be the particular way of farming – will take their place « (now here is a picture of a more recent ploughshare, but an actual ploughshare of those times was more of this size – a mattock – more readily converted to a sword and back) »
 - c. and those of this time, 'Ain't gonna learn war no more!'
 - d. what a beautiful, assuring picture of righteous peace God lays out as an assurance for the people to whom He is about to announce the coming judgement – what a way to show that His purposes are kind and for their best interest.
 - e. you notice that I have not tried to fit these into a scheme or timetable of the future; why not? ... let's examine ...

D. What is the Purpose of Prophecy?

1. Prophecy is not given ...

- a. just to satisfy our intellectual curiosity
- b. for us to chart out time-tables of what God is going to do
- c. I knew a man when I was in my teens who spent his time going from church to church, arguing his particular ideas on the second coming of Christ, and splitting churches
- d. this is not the purpose of prophecy

2. Let me suggest a few reasons prophecy is given in the Bible ...

- a. foremost, to bring sinners to repentance, as the wrath of God against sin is declared;
- b. to demonstrate that the word of God is what it says it is, as we see the prophetic word in it fulfilled; the gospels use the testimony of prophecy to validate the message of Christ;
- c. to encourage the people of God that God is in charge: e.g., in 1 Thessalonians 4 & 5, Paul foretells some events of Christ's return; and gives a purpose in 1 Thessalonians 4: 18 – '[Therefore comfort one another with these words.](#)'
- d. to purify believers, 1 John 3:2-3: '[Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. {that is prophecy} And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.](#)' That is the purpose.
- e. and, as with the rest of Scripture, '[... for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.](#)' (2 Timothy 3:16-17 NAS)
- f. so, rather than seek to explain all of the mysteries that are in this marvellous promise of righteous peace, let me rather in a Scriptural fashion make an application of what it says.

E. Application

1. the first thing that I would like to note is that the NT – and we must use the NT to interpret the OT prophecy – says that we are living in the last days;
 - a. in Acts 2:16-17, Peter, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, tells us categorically that what then

- happened was a fulfilment of a prophecy to take place in the 'last days'
- b. Hebrews 1:2 tells us that God 'in these last days has spoken to us by His Son, ...' – they are already here
 - c. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:11 that upon us 'the ends of the ages have come' – they have already arrived
2. but, the NT also uses 'the last days' in reference to the future
- a. the last days are not yet finished
 - b. 1 Peter 1:5 speaks of the 'salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.'
 - c. James 5:3 warns the rich who are storing up the wrong type of treasure for 'the last days' when judgement comes
3. now I have just selected a few passages referring to the last days, the last hours, or the last times; but I believe that the NT teaches that 'the last days' commenced with the first coming of Jesus Christ (see 1 Peter 1:20) and culminate with the second coming of Jesus Christ (see 1 Peter 1:5, already quoted)
- a. and during this period of time
 - b. there is a more important temple mount for us; this is
4. the temple of God's people; those in the church of Jesus Christ
- a. in this age this fulfills the promise of righteous peace
 - b. listen to the announcement of Jesus' birth by the angels: 'Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased.' (Luke 2:14)
 - c. and Jesus' parting words to his disciples: Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful. (John 14:27)
 - d. and Paul's words in Ephesians 2:14 on the church (that is the body of people in Christ, not a building!) 'For He Himself {i.e., Christ} is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall'
 - e. in this age righteous peace can only take place in Christ
 - f. to us Mt. Calvary is more important than Mt. Moriah

- g. Jesus Christ is the cornerstone of a new temple; in Acts 4: 10-12, we read these words: *'... by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead — by this name this man stands here before you in good health. He is the "stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone."* And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.' and He is its foundation: *'For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.'* (1 Corinthians 3:11 NAS95)
- h. it is the church, believers, that comprises this temple: Ephesians 2:20-22 *... Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit.*
- i. it is into this temple, in this age, that we have been given the commission to bring men, women, boys and girls, to find salvation in Jesus Christ – how do we do that
- (A) Jesus said, *'And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.'* (John 12:32) – and in this He spoke of His death on the cross for our sin
 - (B) but, if I may say so, these words have another sense
 - (C) where Christ is exalted, He draws people to Himself
 - (D) as an aside, the church that exalts the foundation, Jesus Christ, will itself be exalted; the church that fails to exalt Jesus Christ, that abases Him, will be abased
- j. so we may make this conclusion, that while we may not be able to know either when or in what manner the glorious events spoken of in today's text may take place, we have a clear application and mandate that until such time as Jesus Christ shall return, individuals and as a local body of Christ we need to worship and exalt Him that others may come to know the peace of God which is found in Him.

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ASV	American Standard Version of 1901
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
ERV	The Revised Version of 1885
NAS	New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation
NIV	New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society
NKJV	New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers
NLT	1996 New Living Translation © 1996 by Tyndale Charitable Trust
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version © 1989 by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
PHIL	New Testament Translation © 1972 by J. B. Phillips
RSV	Revised Standard Version © 1946, 1952 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.
WEY	The New Testament in Modern Speech © 1902, 1912 R. F. Weymouth

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Some valuable commentaries on Isaiah are:

EBC	<i>The Expositor's Bible Commentary</i> © 1986, Zondervan
EJY	<i>The Book of Isaiah</i> – Edward J. Young, © 1965, Eerdmans
K&D	<i>Commentary on the Old Testament</i> – Keil & Delitzsch – 1890

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