

5. Noble Prince of Peace (1Q 2021—Isaiah)

Biblical Material: Isa. 9:1–5; Isa. 9:6, 7; Isa. 9:8–10:34; Isaiah 11; Isa. 12:1–6.

Quotes

- It is a first class human tragedy that people of the earth who claim to believe in the message of Jesus, whom they describe as the Prince of Peace, show little of that belief in actual practice. *Mahatma Gandhi*
- Peace is such a precious jewel that I would give anything for it but truth. *Matthew Henry*
- If you want to know what God has to say to you, see what Christ was and is. *C.H. Spurgeon*
- Jesus became as like us as God can be. *Donald English*

Questions

What are these important and familiar verses in Isaiah 9 telling us? Why are they so significant? This prophecy is surrounded by many other verses we don't use—why is this? Why was God so opposed to idol-worship (Isaiah 10)? Why is it only a “remnant” that returns to God? What of the “shoot” in Isaiah 11? How does this picturesque and idyllic vision fit?

Bible summary

Isa. 9:1–5 speaks of the light that will shine on God's people. In context this is a revived nation of Israel. It uses concepts of rescue from oppression and freedom from military conquest. The familiar words of Isa. 9:6, 7 point beyond the initial application, since the child is defined as mighty God and everlasting Father. Isaiah 10 speaks of the conquests of Assyria, and also the punishment for their cruelty. Isaiah 11 is a vision of future peace of the lion laying down with the lamb etc. Some aspects remain forever unfulfilled. Isaiah 12 is an expression of praise.

Comment

These chapters contain the well-known verses that are used in Handel's Messiah. As we re-read these familiar words, what stands out is the dramatic news that the one to come is not some human messiah, but it is mighty God, everlasting Father! Such a concept must have seemed blasphemous to Isaiah's hearers, who expected God the Father to be terribly remote. Similarly, when the Messiah did come, he was not received by his own because they were not expecting such a God. Irony of ironies: God is crucified for being God. Most of all, the One spoken of here is truly God as he is. The question arises, why was God seen so differently?

We may concentrate on the prince of peace, but many other verses here in Isaiah are about war, and God's anger. What do we do with such statements? Are they not as important? Are we reading selectively. Re-read chapter 9 and see what is the greater part of the content...

In these poetic verses we see a conflicted picture, a vision of what is and what could be. In all of this the great controversy is foundational, since the consequences are based on our choices. As the lesson points out, much of the apparent “confusion” or “contradictory” actions of God are based in his responses to us and our choices.

For those who believe we should not be social activists, look again at chapter 10. Here we have a clear indictment against those who trample on human rights, and who pervert justice by passing unfair laws. In the end there is a time of judgment, and even though God is very patient with all of us, he also allows us to experience the results of our decisions, and is strongly

condemnatory of exploitation and the misuse of power. As a consequence, he allows their enemies to conquer Israel as a way of helping them understand. Note also however that God also against the arrogant pride of his tool, the Assyrians. The aim is to rely on God (10:20).

The vision of vegetarian (straw-eating) lions and other images is clearly designed to fit their ideas. The ultimate objective is the restoration of harmony in God's universe, the at-onement between us and God in which the whole of earthly creation is involved. God promises his healing salvation in the psalm-like poem in chapter 12—water from the wells of salvation.

What, would you say, is the greatest heresy? What is the single most important mistake that can be made in the whole of Christian belief? What is the greatest heresy?

The most important and fundamental mistake is over who Jesus is. In some way, somehow, Christ is not God. The denial of the divinity of Jesus, in whatever way, and however slight, leads to us going off the rails as far as the truth is concerned. Of course believers don't usually say that they don't believe Christ was God. Nothing so simple. It is much more subtle, the most marginal distortion and perversion of the truth that leads in the end to an apostate Christianity. In some ways, perhaps with the best of motives, even church people are saying that Jesus was someone or something less than God. This has been true ever since the beginning of the Christian church.

The very first heresy was the Docetist heresy of Gnosticism, against which John wrote his gospel. The Docetists said that when Jesus took human form, he only appeared to do so. They believed that all material things were evil, and therefore Jesus could not have taken a real, physical body. It only seemed so. Which is why John says so much about Jesus actually taking our flesh, lived and dwelt with us. The Ebionites said that Jesus was just a man, who was then adopted by God and made into the Messiah. They too could not accept the full divinity of Christ. Arianism taught that Christ was god (small g) but not of the same order as the ultimate God. There was a time when Christ did not exist, he had a beginning, and was the highest of the order of created beings. Such a view again strikes at the full and eternal divinity of Jesus. Some groups that still believe this today, and indeed some of the church pioneers held to some form of Arian view.

The heart of true belief is that Jesus is "mighty God, everlasting Father:" God made manifest in Christ.

Ellen White comments

I perceive there is danger in approaching subjects which dwell on the humanity of the Son of the infinite God . . . Let every human being be warned from the ground of making Christ altogether human, such a one as ourselves; for it cannot be. {5 SDABC 1129}

Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed. . . . In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father. {TMK 338}

To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature. This is the pledge that God will fulfill His word. "Unto *us* a child is born, unto *us* a son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder." God has adopted human nature in the person of His Son, and has carried the same into the highest heaven. It is the "Son of man" who shares the throne of the universe. It is the "Son of man" whose name shall be called, "Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Isa. 9:6. {DA 25}