

CHRISTADELPHIAN BIBLE POSTAL COURSETutor's Name: Date: Student's Name: Ref No.: **LESSON 11 • THE KINGDOM OF GOD - PEACE ON EARTH**

Reading: Isaiah 35

Peace on earth - when?

When Jesus was born, the angels sang for joy. The words of their song are written in Luke 2:14:

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."

Yet from that day to this, there has never been any real and lasting peace on earth. And there never will be, until Jesus comes back to the earth to set up the Kingdom of God.

The Old Testament tells us a lot about that Kingdom, and gives us many pictures of the time of peace and prosperity that it will bring.

The extent of the Kingdom

CHRIST REIGNS ON EARTH AS KING

Look again at Psalm 72. In this Psalm we are given a picture in words of the time when God's Kingdom is established on earth. But, for the moment, notice particularly verse 8: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth." This tells us that the Kingdom set up by Jesus, centred in Israel, is going to extend over the whole earth. We find the same thing in Psalm 2:8, where God speaks to Jesus, saying: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen (nations) for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." (When the Bible was first written in English, about 400 years ago, the word "heathen" meant exactly what our word "nation" means today. Let us look up one more verse. Turn to the 14th chapter of Zechariah, and read verse 9: "And the LORD shall be King over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.")

The rule of Christ

end of man's rule; resurrection of believers

end of all sin and death

Jesus Christ will rule from Jerusalem, his capital city, which he once called "the city of the great King" (Matthew 5:35). His law will go out through all the earth, as we read in Isaiah 2. Read verses 1-4, and note particularly:

"Out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem."

An ideal kingdom

Suppose you were asked to say what conditions you would like to live under in an ideal world.

One of the first things you would ask for would be security; freedom from fear, and peace to enjoy the fruits of your labour. In fact, you would probably have a picture in your mind something like the one the prophet Micah gives us:

"And he (that is, Jesus Christ) shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid: for the mouth of the LORD of Hosts hath spoken it" (Micah 4:3,4). But before there can be peace, there must be a real effort on the part of men to walk in the ways of God. So long as men continue to go their own way, there will be trouble. So one of the first works of the Lord Jesus will be to teach all nations the ways of God. But, you may say, there are some who simply would not listen! That is true, and those who do not obey will be punished, as we read in Isaiah 11:4: "With the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" - for, remember, when Jesus comes back, he will be all-powerful.

Who will be in the Kingdom?

1. First, there will be the rulers. These will be the men and women who have been disciples, followers of Jesus, from all ages, who have now been given eternal life by Jesus at his coming. They will be kings and priests, helping Jesus to rule the world. They will be immortal people (that is, people who will not die again). "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Revelation 5:9,10).

2. There will also be Jews who have accepted Jesus as their king. Jerusalem will become the capital city for the whole world. All nations will look to it, because God's law will be based there. "At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the LORD; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart" (Jeremiah 3:17). Christ will be among them, and they will be greatly blessed, although they will still be mortal (that is, still able to die).

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3. When Christ comes, God's judgements will be severe, and many people will perish. But those who are left alive, throughout the world will, under the rule of Jesus, learn to do that which is pleasing to God - as it tells us in Isaiah 26:9: "When thy judgements are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. "

Prosperity for all

With such perfect conditions as there will be then, there will be prosperity on every hand. Psalm 72:16 says: "There shall be an handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon." Mountain-tops are usually bare. If there is corn upon the top of the mountains, we can imagine how abundant it will be in the valleys. As we read in Psalm 67:6:

"Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. "

Even the deserts will be green in those days. Read the beautiful verses again in Isaiah 35:1,2 which tell us how -

"The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing."

Healing of mind and body

With these blessings will come also the blessing of greater health and strength. When Jesus lived on earth nearly 2000 years ago, he brought health to many who were sick, by using the power that God had given him. In the Kingdom of God, this power will be seen again. Read on in Isaiah 35 to verse 6: "Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing." We can well imagine, too, that the mortal people will live longer than they do today. The prophet Zechariah tells us that this will be so. He says: "There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof" (Zechariah 8:4,5). These verses speak of Jerusalem, but, as we have seen, the blessings of the Kingdom will extend over all the earth.

The sure word of God

Perhaps you are thinking, 'All this sounds very nice, but it is surely too good to be true'. If the promises which we have read about depended on men, then we certainly could put no trust in them. Even the best men may not be able to do what they promise, because of human weakness.

But these promises come from God, and we may put all our trust in them. Read Isaiah 55:6-11, and notice particularly verse 11: "So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth; it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

So we may look forward with joy to that time when there shall be "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace" (Luke 2:14).

Even greater perfection

The Kingdom age will last for a thousand years. We speak of this time as 'the Millennium' - 'Millennium' is just another way of saying 'a thousand years'.

It will be a wonderful time, but it will not be perfect. The ordinary men and women living in the Kingdom will still have human nature, which finds it so easy to sin. They will still grow old and die. We are even told that some of the nations will rebel against the rule of the Lord Jesus at the end of the thousand years.

He will, of course, completely overcome them. At that time those who have been faithful in the Kingdom age will be given the gift of eternal life. Those who have died will be raised for judgement by Jesus.

Then, the whole earth will be filled with the glory of God, and He - the great Creator - will be "all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Summary

1. When Jesus comes back, he will become King of the World.
2. His capital city will be Jerusalem.
3. All over the world there will be peace and prosperity, health and happiness.
4. In his worldwide Kingdom, everybody will learn to obey God's commandments.
5. In the Kingdom there will be -
 - (a) immortal people, who followed Jesus and obeyed God in their lives. Being immortal they will no longer suffer pain or have to battle against sin. They will help Jesus to rule and care for the world and its peoples in the Kingdom of God.
 - (b) mortal people who have survived the dangers and terrors of the judgements of God on an evil world. They will learn to serve and worship God.

Chapters to read: Psalm 72; Micah 4:1-7

Learn by heart: Psalm 22:27,28: "All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's: and he is the governor among the nations."

