

God reigning

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[0 : 00] Now we're coming to the final study in our studies in Isaiah about God's kingdom will come. And we're going to read the passage which is on page 575 in the Bibles.

We're going to read chapter 11 and also chapter 12. Chapter 12 is a very short chapter. So, Isaiah 11 and verse 1.

The prophet writes,

In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart and those who harass Judah shall be cut off.

[2 : 37] Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah and Judah shall not harass Ephraim. But they shall swoop down on the shoulder of the Philistines in the west and together they shall plunder the people of the east.

They shall put out their hand against Edom and Moab and the Ammonites shall obey them. The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt, will wave his hand over the river with his scorching breath and strike it into seven channels.

And he will lead people across in the sandals. And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant that remains of his people. And as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt.

You will say in that day, I will give thanks to you, O Lord. For though you are angry with me, your anger turned away. That you might comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation.

I will trust and not be afraid. For the Lord God is my strength and my song. And he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

[3 : 45] And you will say in that day, give thanks to the Lord. Call upon his name. Make known his deeds among the peoples. Proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing praises to the Lord.

For he has done gloriously. Let this be made known in all the earth. Shout and sing for joy. O inhabitant of Zion. For great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel.

Amen. That is the word of the Lord. Now let's pray. Father, the glorious vision in these verses fills us with amazement.

Fills us with anticipation. And fills us with a sense of how great you are. Father, we praise you that one day this whole creation will reflect your glory.

The creation which you formed to be the theater of that glory will one day in every part echo.

Exactly who you are will bring praise to you, the great creator.

[4 : 50] And will rejoice in you, the God of its salvation. Let us help us in these moments as we look together at these verses. Open our eyes to see how wonderful you are.

And how great your plans for the future of heaven and earth are. And we ask this in the name of the King who will come. Christ Jesus himself. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Unless you don't watch the news at all, you must be aware that the political parties are gearing up for the forthcoming election.

You may not be a political anorak like me who enjoys watching political programs. I know it's sad. I know I ought to get a life. But I find them fascinating.

Now one of the things that's happening, of course, as the parties gear themselves up, they're making all kinds of promises. They are basically saying, vote for us and you will enter the promised land.

[5 : 53] Vote for us and everything will improve. Now we know very well that many of these promises will not be kept. I'm not being cynical because many of the promises will not be kept simply because people find they can't keep them.

Not that they make them insincerely. It's that they make promises, good promises, about a good future. And then, when the time comes, circumstances arise which make them impossible to fulfill. And we read a passage like Isaiah 11 and 12. We have a promise of a glorious future, of a new creation, of a promised land.

And it's a promise that will be kept. It's not being made by weak, fallible humans. It's being made by the Lord God Almighty, of whom it can never be said circumstances prevented him doing what he had promised.

So we've come to the end of this little series of studies. We're going to look briefly at the king who will reign. And the first thing to notice is this is a hope, not just for Isaiah's time.

[7 : 00] Not just for the people of Israel, people of Judah. This is the hope for the whole world. And this passage, like so many prophecies, is undated. And it's undated because you get anticipations of it throughout Scripture.

The anticipations, for example, when people from every language came up to Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost and heard about the mighty acts of God.

But it will only be fulfilled perfectly when the king returns. When he reigns, where'er the sun does its successive journeys run. And it's not just another king, it's another David.

There shall come forth, verse 1, a root, a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. Now, just at the end of the previous chapter, the prophet has been talking about the great nations, including Assyria.

And he said in 1033, Behold, the Lord God of hosts will lop the boughs of the tree with terrifying power. The great in height will be hewn down and the lofty brought low.

[8 : 09] He will cut down the thickets of the forest with an axe. And Lebanon, all its vast forests, will fall by the majestic one. These trees are going to be cut down.

But here's a tree that will never be cut down. A kingdom which will continue to grow and grow and grow. So what is this king going to do when he comes again?

When he returns, not in humility, not incognito, but when he comes in his glorious majesty to judge the living and the dead, what's he going to do?

Well, first of all, he is going to restore Eden. That's really chapter 11, verses 1 to 10. He is going to be filled by the Holy Spirit.

Verse 2, the Spirit of the Lord shall rest on him. His role is going to be wise, wisdom, and understanding. Once again, politicians get things right and get things wrong often.

[9 : 08] Sometimes there are wise decisions. Often there are foolish and bad decisions. This king will not make foolish decisions. And the spirit of counsel and might.

There will be powerful role. He will put down his enemies. He will get rid of all the problems. The spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. He will lead people into a true understanding of who God is.

Now, this happened partially, as I've said already in this series, when Jesus came the first time. When he defeated sin, disease, and death. When he showed God.

When he came, Emmanuel, God with us. And if you read Luke's Gospel, you'll find over and over again, the phrase used of Jesus. He came into Galilee in the power of the Spirit.

So there's a fulfillment of that. Partial fulfillment. He was restoring Eden, if you like. Paradise in many people's lives. And at the end of the Gospel of Luke, when the dying criminal turns to him in faith, he says, I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise.

[10 : 18] So, he's going to restore Eden. He will be just, verses 3 and 5. The corrupt society in which Isaiah was ministering.

You can read about earlier in the book, in chapter 1 and in chapters 3 and 4. You'll notice he'll protect the weak. He'll be impartial. He'll not judge by what his eyes see or what his ears hear. It doesn't mean he'll not see anything or hear anything. It means he'll look and he'll see exactly what the situation is. He'll listen and he'll, once again, understand, right, the very heart of it.

And he is clothed with righteousness and faithfulness. By the way, this metaphor, this picture of clothing, runs through Scripture. This really is a metaphor for inner character.

When Adam and Eve fell and tried inadequately to cover themselves with fig leaves, the Lord God gave them the skins of an animal right through Scripture until Paul says in Romans, chapter 12, Put on the Lord Jesus Christ.

[11 : 24] And then at the end of the Bible, the bride of the Lamb is clothed in linen. So he is the righteousness. He is showing God's character and faithfulness, his commitment to carry it out.

Now that's the king who is going to come to restore Eden. But more particularly in 6 to 10, we have this wonderful passage about how he will remove the curse from creation.

You read the story in Genesis, creation is cursed because of Adam's fall. That doesn't mean creation is all bad. There are beautiful things in creation.

There are sunsets. There are butterflies. I'm glad to see they're coming back to our country again after some absence. There are moonlight walks.

There are autumn leaves. All these beautiful things. The world is also filled with sadness and sorrow. There are tsunamis. There are earthquakes. There's acid rain and all the rest of it.

[12 : 23] When the king returns, he will remove the hostility and the curse, the wolf and the lamb, the leopard and the goat, the calf and the lion.

Be a safe place for children. Verse 8. The nursing child, little child, shall lead them. Verse 6. The nursing child shall play over the whole of the cobra. We're all horrified by these dreadful stories we hear about paedophiles and the abuse of children.

One of the signs of the curse and of the fall, surely. That will no longer exist in the new creation.

Now, of course, what we don't know and what we won't know until it actually happens is how much of this is metaphor and how much of it will actually be the case.

Remember the point about metaphor and picture, of course. It's to give us a deeper insight into reality. And I would always want to say in a passage like this, what happens will not be less than what's here.

It will be more than what's here. It will certainly not be less. And, of course, there's many questions we don't know the answer to. Clearly, in Eden, in Paradise, at the beginning, there were no predators and there was no prey.

[13 : 46] But since the fall, of course, that's what's happened. Does that mean God will... I mean, since he talks about wolves, lions and bears, does that mean that these creatures will still exist, but their predatory, nasty, killing nature has been taken from them?

I don't know. But certainly, this is a big thing. God is not just going to redeem human souls. He is going to restore creation.

The life of creation, the planet, will become a wonderful place to live in. And the creatures will... And humans will live together, as they did in Eden.

And remember, when I say restoring Eden, it goes a bit further than that. It's not simply restoring Eden. This is something more permanent and not vulnerable.

The point about Eden is that the people in Eden, Adam and Eve, were innocent. Whereas, the redeemed people of God will be like Christ.

[14 : 50] There's no possibility of any... of Satan interfering with this, because we read in Revelation that Satan is cast out into outer darkness. So, Satan, sin and death will no longer be there.

Not just that no one will die, but it's impossible for anyone to die, because death has been destroyed. And this is going to happen because of the shoot from the stem of Jesse.

Interesting, he's both the shoot and the root. In other words, he comes from Jesse, but Jesse comes from him. And you see this once again in the Gospel of Luke.

When Jesus came into the world, he both came to the remnant. People like, obviously, Mary and Joseph. People like Zechariah and Elizabeth. Both people like Anna and Simeon.

But he also came from them. It's this wonderful paradox. He comes to us, and he is one of us. He will restore Eden. A glorious new creation, in which all that is beautiful, all that is wonderful, all that is lovely, all that is of good report, from this creation, will continue, but it will continue in an uncorrupted and permanent state to all eternity.

[16 : 10] So, first of all, he will restore creation. He will restore Eden. Secondly, in verses 11 to 16, he will rule the nations. He will reign over the whole world.

In that day, I've said before, when you get this phrase, in that day, in the prophets, that means the day that is still to come, the day of the Lord, when God sets up his kingdom.

And he will extend his hand yet a second time. Now, the first time was when he brought his people from Egypt. The first time was the Exodus. This is the new Exodus.

And this would happen after the exile, when people came back to rebuild the temple, to rebuild the city of Jerusalem. That was a very, very partial film.

The remnant will return, and all these places, Assyria, Egypt, you know, all these places in the ancient world. Then this phrase, the coastlands of the sea, or the islands, this is looking out towards the Mediterranean.

[17:09] The perspective is shifting west, and so on. You know, in other words, the whole of the known world of that time. And, of course, all of the, and by extension, the whole of the world.

And the ancient enemies will, the ancient enemies will be friends. In verses 13 and 14, Ephraim was the name used for the northern kingdom, Israel, which was taken off to Assyria, and Judah, the southern kingdom, eventually taken to Babylon.

They will no longer be hostile. God's people will be united. And the nations will be conquered by the gospel. There will be a highway, verse 16, from Assyria.

That's when they came up from the land of Egypt. Isaiah is, Isaiah is updating, if you like, for the people of his time. Long before, Egypt had been the great enemy, where God's people had been, had been imprisoned for, for centuries, really.

In Isaiah's day, Assyria is the main problem. Now, of course, in our world, there are huge problems, national, international problems, anti-God forces. But once again, when the time comes, God will prepare a highway, from whatever corresponds, to Assyria and Egypt.

[18:26] He'll rule the world. He's not just the Jewish king, he is the king of the world. And you get, this is the beginning of Matthew's gospel. Isn't it fascinating?

The first people, who come to give, worship to the Jewish Messiah, are Gentiles, the wise men, from the east. Now, they wouldn't know everything. They saw a star.

They realized, that a great prince, had been born. And they realized, possibly, there would be descendants, of the exiles, still living there. You may have told them, the prophecies of the Old Testament.

They do what you'd expect them to, go to Jerusalem. And then, they're guided, to Nazareth.

Remember, they came 18 months later. Don't be fooled by the Christmas guards, that show the wise men, coming in one door, as the shepherds leave, by the other.

Because, there was, Jesus was already a toddler, if you like, by that time. So, these are the two great things, that will happen. The king will restore Eden.

[19:28] He'll bring in the new creation. The king will rule over the world. Then, in chapter 12, the king will be praised. What's the fitting response, to these wonderful acts of God, in the past, and the acts, that he is yet to carry out?

And the fitting response, is praise. And this little chapter, is a wonderful picture, of genuine praise, and worship. Because, first of all, there is personal testimony, in verses 1 and 2.

I will give thanks to you, O Lord. You are angry with me, your anger turned away. Behold, God is my salvation. This is echoing the song of Moses, in Exodus 15, when the people were brought safely, across the Red Sea.

This is personal testimony. If we are going to enjoy, that kingdom, we need, to know, the king. We need to recognize, that he is the king.

We need to give our lives to him. I mentioned already, the dying criminal, on the cross, beside Jesus. He saw exactly, the same as everybody else saw.

[20:38] Everybody else saw, this is a, this is a, humiliated, man, probably a charlatan. He deserves to be there. That's what the other, that's what the other, that's what the other criminal said.

This man, looked at Jesus, and realized, who he was. What did he say? Jesus, remember me, when you come, in your kingdom. That's how all of us, must come to Jesus.

Remember, he is the king, king of our lives. And if we are going to share, that kingdom with him, then we need to know him. We need to know him now. So that personal testimony, we, we don't come to Christ, in droves, we're not, mass, there's no such thing, as a mass conversion.

We have to come to Christ, as individuals. So there's personal testimony. But, the second thing, and this is, this is important, is there is communal rejoicing.

We come to Christ, individually, but then we become part, of the community, of his people. And that's the point, it seems to me, in verses three and four, with joy, you will draw water, from the

wells of salvation.

[21 : 46] The you there is plural, and you will say in that day, give thanks to the Lord, call upon his name. Individual salvation, but then becoming part, of the family of God, and rejoicing together, as we, as we live our lives for him, as we sing his praises, as we listen to his word.

And then the third element, here, is proclaiming, that salvation, the end of verse three, to the end of the chapter, make known his deeds, among the people, proclaim that his name, is exalted.

Now I mentioned, these services, at the beginning, at the beginning, and many, many churches, many of you, will be in other churches, will be doing this kind of thing, over the next few weeks. This is proclaiming, that his name, is exalted.

As we know, at Christmas time, people will come into churches, and will hear, about the mighty deeds of God, who don't normally come. That's why, these are always great opportunities, to do what Isaiah said, sing praises to the Lord, for he has done gloriously, let this be made known, in all the earth.

So you see how it's moving out, personal acceptance, of the king, communal rejoicing, at the king, and his salvation. And then that song, that blessing, flowing out, to the whole world.

[23 : 06] As Cheryl Wesley says, in one of his hymns, Oh, that the world, might taste and see, the riches of his grace. And who is he? He is the Holy One, of Israel.

Now a few chapters, before, the great call of Isaiah, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord, of hosts.

Because, that, when this great day comes, when the king restores Eden, when he reigns over the nations, when he gathers his redeemed people together, then Zion will be fit to receive him.

When he came the first time, of course, Zion threw him out. They crucified him. They rejected him.

When he comes again, it will be fit for him. And as always, Isaiah is moving between, 8th century Zion, 8th century Jerusalem, and the whole world.

Zion suggesting, the immediate presence of God, the whole world, the extent of the blessing. So who is the king, who will come? King who will come, is, the king who will come, is the king, who will restore Eden, bring in the new creation.

He is the king, who will rule over all the nations. He is the king, who will be praised, imperfectly now, but by the whole creation, Psalm 148 or 49, I can't remember exactly offhand, talks about the trees, the mountains, the hills, the seas, the rivers, praising him.

[24 : 40] And that, ultimately, is what Christmas is about. And that is a song, worth singing. Amen. Let's pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Lord God, in this dark time of the year, as winter, as winter and darkness dominate the landscape, we praise you for, that a great light has dawned in the darkness.

We ask that in the days to come, many people who do not know you, many people who have not made you king, will come to know you, and become part of that glorious kingdom, as we look forward to the day, when he shall come again.

Amen. Amen.