

Lesson Objective(s):

By the end of this lesson, we will analyze the importance of this prophecy for the people of God in Isaiah's time and today; celebrate the justice, righteousness, and peace that Jesus brings to God's people; and share with others the hope of eternal peace and justice found in Jesus' reign.

Teaching Tools:

Word puzzles may be developed from the following site: www.puzzlemaker.com. Also, www.dtlk.com has several visual aids that may be beneficial, as well as www.kidssundayschool.com which provide other helps for teaching.

Bible Journaling may be an interesting way to involve older teens in self-expression of the lessons they are taught. Visit www.lifeway.com/Articles/how-to-start-bible-journaling-in-six-easy-steps to find ways to use this valuable tool to learn and reinforce Scripture.

The Lesson:

Anyone can fall into a dark desperate situation, but no one needs to remain there forever. Regardless of whether the misery is from our own doing or from a force beyond our control, through the promise of a Righteous Lord, as believers, we have hope. The Bible teaches that the world is not doomed to perpetual disappointment. At God's appointed time, He will intervene to set all wrongs right and introduce the righteous government the world has longed for. He will do this through His Messiah, so eloquently presented by Isaiah in this week's lesson.

Background

The Source of Justice

General Topic: God Requires Justice

Sunday, December 19, 2021

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Lesson Text: Isaiah:2-7

Background Scripture: Isaiah 9:1-7

Isaiah 9:2 The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.

3 Thou hast multiplied the nation, and not increased the joy: they joy before thee according to the joy in harvest, and as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.

4 For thou hast broken the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his shoulder, the rod of his oppressor, as in the day of Midian.

5 For every battle of the warrior is with confused noise, and garments rolled in blood; but this shall be with burning and fuel of fire.

6 For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

One of the most influential Old Testament prophets, Isaiah lived and ministered in the Southern Kingdom of Judah for 58 years. Isaiah lived through one of his nation's most turbulent periods, during which he witnessed Judah's defeat by the Babylonian Empire and actually saw his fellow citizens taken into captivity. He prophesies during the reigns of five kings: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, and Manasseh. His free access to the palace in Jerusalem and his familiarity with court life imply that Isaiah belonged to Judah's wealthy class and may have been related to the ruling family.

However, this did not keep Isaiah from verbally attacking the aristocracy in defense of the common people. Much of Isaiah's writings strongly criticizes the people of Judah for their sinfulness and unwillingness to be faithful to the one true God. During the reign of King Ahaz of Judah, the kings of Israel and Damascus waged war against him. Instead of looking to God for support, Ahaz foolishly allied himself with the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser. Judah soon found itself a vassal state under the Assyrians. Later, the Assyrians invaded Judah and demanded great amounts of tribute. Ahaz's successor and son, King Hezekiah, rebelled, but his revolt was squashed out. Isaiah warned that their continued refusal to be faithful to God would result in disaster for the entire nation.

King Hezekiah refused to heed the prophet, and Judah was almost destroyed before the people turned back to God and begged Him to come to their aide. Throughout his ministry, Isaiah repeatedly called on the nation to rely on God, rather than military strength or political alliances. The Northern Kingdom had refused to listen to their prophets, Amos and Hosea. Instead, Israel had resorted to military might to assert their nationhood, and as a result had been soundly defeated and no longer existed as a nation. By the grace of God, Judah was for a time spared.

Darkness Ended (Isaiah 9:2-3)

During the time Isaiah lived, Assyria was a major military force that was defeating many countries. It is understandable that the future appeared foreboding and hopeless to the people of Judah. Judah was in a state of spiritual darkness and political distress as it helplessly watched the scorched earth policy of the invading Assyrians.

It is onto this scene that the prophet Isaiah introduces a wonderful prophecy of hope. Isaiah makes it clear that he is addressing Judah, the people who had walked in darkness and dwelled in the land of the shadow of death (Isaiah 9:2). This kind of darkness is a frightening but apt description of sin. This spiritual darkness contributes to the encompassing sense of hopelessness and helplessness.

Although Israel rejected God, directly and through His prophets, He still planned redemption for them—in due time. Matthew did not miss the glorious reality that, in his day, Jesus fulfilled God's promises delivered through Isaiah, even quoting the prophet's words (Matthew 4:15–16). Just as He did at the beginning of time, God will bring order to chaos, peace to strife, and justice to problematic systems.

Conversely, God's presence is equated with light. God declares that Israel will receive His light-His life and wisdom—in the midst of chaos and confusion. The great light that will appear is Jesus Christ, the Messiah. Seven hundred years later, Jesus would begin His ministry and bring light into this very land that is now plunged into darkness (John 8:12). Isaiah insists that because a Messiah is coming, there will be "joy" instead of the gloom (Isaiah 9:3).

The hope of the people is to be placed in the Lord, not in reliance on military strength or political savvy. Present-day saints should be reminded that we are not bound by our present circumstances; we can rejoice in our hope in the only One who can remove the gloom from our lives. From a Roman prison, the Apostle Paul rejoiced in his

chains: Rejoice in the Lord always: and again, I say Rejoice (Philippians 4:4).

Burden Eliminated (Isaiah 9:4-5)

Multiple comparisons can be made between Isaiah's reference to the Messiah and Gideon's victory over the Midianites. The yoke, staff, and rod are images of oppression (Isaiah 10:5, 24, 27), which in Gideon's case came from an opposing army of 120,000 (Judges 8:10). God reduced the Israelite army from 32,000 to a mere 300, making them outnumbered 400 to one. The whole purpose was so there was no way the Israelites would receive the glory.

Clearly, the sovereign God secured the victory (Judges 7:2). The lesson of Gideon is a lesson of trust and faith in God (Judges 7). God overcame the Midianites and delivered Israel with Gideon's tiny army—in the same way He would ultimately break the power of sin and bring redemption to the world through a tiny infant. This infant would grow to be the One who took everyone's sin and shame. The One who was beaten would deliver humankind from the rod of injustice; the one who bore the yoke of the Cross would deliver people from their impossible burdens.

Kingdom Established (Isaiah 9:6-7)

How wonderful it is to Christians to note that the birth of this Child, introduced by Isaiah, is a gift to us from God Himself. Isaiah stresses that He will be given. Here, Isaiah's prophecy recognizes that the Messiah will be a legitimate heir to the Davidic throne, a point of paramount importance to the people living in the time of this writing.

When Jesus came to redeem Israel, He became the focal point of a new and better government. His kingdom is eternal, and all who come to God through Him in humble submission will be a part of His government, of which He is the head (Ephesians 5:23).

When we read the government will rest on his shoulders, we see Isaiah's poetic description of the Messiah as a capable and sovereign ruler, not to be confused with a mere human king. Isaiah further identifies the Messiah as Wonderful, Counsellor. Here, we are assured that the Messiah will rule with infinite wisdom that exceeds human limitations. He will be efficient and effective in the planning and implementation of His divine plans. When we affirm Jesus as our greatest counselor, we will cease our desire to lean on human understanding and reasoning for solutions to life's problems.

The prophet's description of the Messiah as Mighty God recognizes the full omnipotence and absolute deity of the Savior. The qualities of eternal tenderness and protection are evoked with the title Everlasting Father." Jesus offers us the same compassion and provision that the loving and caring Father shows toward His children who love, fear, and obey Him.

Finally, Isaiah declares that the Messiah is the Prince of Peace. Not only will He bring peace, but He will rule with peace. As the Prince of Peace, He will provide His children with eternal rest and joy that will be an integral part of His kingdom. Christians have the blessed assurance that at the very moment we place our trust in Jesus, He gives us His perfect peace. This does not mean that all of our problems will go away. Professing Christ will sometimes bring strife. However, if we remain steadfast in our belief in Christ, we will find God's peace will pass all understanding (Philippians 4:7). We can have confidence that we will never face our problems alone. He will always be with us, guiding and providing protection through our darkest hours.

Final Thoughts

The prophet Isaiah lived in a time of political turmoil and spiritual confusion. The people of Judah were understandably anxious as the powerful Assyrian army gathered at the gates of Jerusalem. Their world was similar to ours in some ways. Many people are stressed and feel powerless, hopeless, and helpless. But we must

always remember that the God of Justice is our source, and He is always in control.

The Son of God has already come, but the day is coming when He will show Himself to be the reigning King and Ruler. The promised Messiah will rule the world in perfect righteousness and justice. Having already appeared as God in the flesh, Jesus will one day fully manifest His righteous rule, fulfilling the many prophecies concerning Him. The Lord will be the perfect Ruler of a perfect kingdom, a kingdom that will conform to God's ways. Only God in His loving zeal can bring such a thing to pass. Isaiah saw all of this in his vision of a child.

Be Salt! Be Light! Be Blessed!