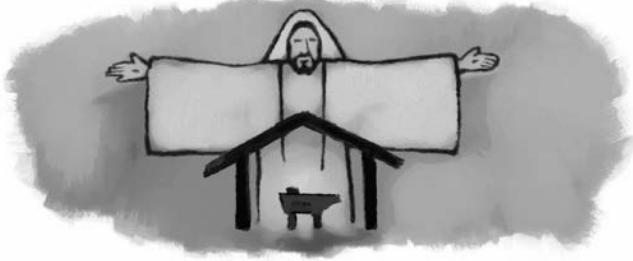


Noble Prince of Peace



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week's Study: *Isa. 9:1–5; Isa. 9:6, 7; Isa. 9:8–10:34; Isaiah 11; Isa. 12:1–6.*

Memory Text: “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace” (*Isaiah 9:6, NKJV*).

Dr. Robert Oppenheimer, who supervised the creation of the first atomic bomb, appeared before a U.S. Congressional Committee. They inquired of him if there were any defense against the weapon. “Certainly,” the great physicist replied.

“And that is—”

“Dr. Oppenheimer looked over the . . . audience and said softly: ‘Peace.’ ”—Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7,000 Illustrations: Signs of the Times* (Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishers, 1985), p. 989.

Peace is an elusive dream for the human race. It has been estimated that since the beginning of recorded history the world has been entirely at peace only about 8 percent of the time. During these years, at least 8,000 treaties have been broken. During the half century following the end of World War I, which was supposed to be the *war to end all wars*, there were two minutes of peace for every year of war.

In 1895 Alfred Nobel, the inventor of dynamite, provided a trust to establish a prize for individuals who make an outstanding contribution to peace. However, even some winners of the Nobel Peace Prize have been involved in violent conflict.

This week, we’ll read about the only One who brings true, everlasting peace.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, January 30.

End of Gloom for Galilee *(Isa. 9:1–5)*

Why does Isaiah 9:1 begin with a word (*But/Nevertheless*) that indicates a contrast to what precedes it?

Isaiah 8:21, 22 describes the hopeless condition of those who turn to the occult rather than to the true God: wherever they look, they will “see only distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness” (*Isa. 8:22, NRSV*). By contrast, there will come a time when “there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish” (*Isa. 9:1, NRSV*). The people of the Galilee region are singled out here as receiving the special blessing of “a great light” (*Isa. 9:2, NRSV*). The nation will be multiplied and rejoice because God will have broken “the rod of their oppressor” (*Isa. 9:4, NRSV*).

The region of Lake Galilee is depicted here because it was among the first territories of Israel to be conquered. In response to Ahaz’s request for aid, Tiglath-pileser III took the Galilee and Transjordanian regions of northern Israel, carried some of the people captive, and turned the territories into Assyrian provinces (*2 Kings 15:29*). So, Isaiah’s message is that the first to be conquered would be the first to see deliverance.

Whom does God use to deliver His people? (*Isa. 9:6, 7.*)

When and how was the prophecy of Isaiah 9:1–5 fulfilled? (*Matt. 4:12–25.*)

Not by accident, Jesus’ early ministry was in the Galilee region, where He gave hope by announcing the good news of God’s kingdom and by healing people, including delivering demoniacs from bondage to the occult (*Matt. 4:24*).

Here is where we see a perfect example of how the Bible takes events that happened in Old Testament times and uses them to prefigure things that will happen in New Testament times. The Lord mixed images from one era with those of another, such as in Matthew 24, when Jesus mingled the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 with the destruction at the end of the world.

If someone were to ask you, What has Jesus delivered you from, what would you answer? What personal testimony can you give regarding the power of Christ in your life?

A Child for Us *(Isa. 9:6, 7)*

Here is the third special birth in the book of Isaiah, following mentions of the births of Immanuel and Maher-shalal-hash-baz.

What is special about the Child found in these verses? *(Isaiah 9:6, 7)*

Notice that this Deliverer has several names/epithets that describe Him in various ways. In the ancient Near East, kings and deities had multiple names to show their greatness.

He is “wonderful,” just as the divine Angel of the Lord described His own name to Samson’s father as “ ‘wonderful’ ” (*Judg. 13:18, RSV; the same Hebrew root*) and then ascended toward heaven in the sacrificial flame on Manoah’s altar (*Judg. 13:20*), thereby prefiguring His offering of Himself more than one thousand years later.

He is referred to as divine (“Mighty God”) and the eternal Creator (“*Everlasting Father*”; see *Luke 3:38: “Adam, son of God,” NRSV*).

He is a King of the dynasty of David; His kingdom of peace will be eternal.

Given these attributes, whom alone could this Child be? *(See Luke 2:8–14.)*

Some have attempted to identify Him with King Hezekiah, but the description far surpasses any ordinary human being. Only one person fits: Jesus Christ, the divine Son of God and Creator (*John 1:1–3, 14; Col. 1:5–17; Col. 2:9; Heb. 1:2*), who was born to us in order to save us and give us peace. He has received all authority in heaven and on earth, and He is with us always (*Matt. 28:18–20*). While retaining His divinity, He also has become human for all time, ever able to sympathize with our weaknesses (*Heb. 4:15*). “Unto us a child is born” . . . forever!

“When Christ came to our world, Satan was on the ground, and disputed every inch of advance in His path from the manger to Calvary. Satan had accused God of requiring self-denial of the angels, when He knew nothing of what it meant Himself, and when He would not Himself make any self-sacrifice for others. This was the accusation that Satan made against God in heaven; and after the evil one was expelled from heaven, he continually charged the Lord with exacting service which He would not render Himself. Christ came to the world to meet these false accusations, and to reveal the Father.”—Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, book 1, pp. 406, 407.

What does this quote tell us about the character of God?

The Rod of God's Anger *(Isa. 9:8–10:34)*

This section explains Isaiah 9:1–5, which predicts deliverance for the gloomy, anguished people who had trusted in the occult and fallen prey to military conquest and oppression: “the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian” (*Isa. 9:4, NRSV*).

Read through the sufferings of God's people as shown in the above texts. Compare the curses in *Leviticus 26:14–39*. Why did God punish His people in stages rather than all at once? What does this indicate about His character and goals?

If God had wanted to destroy His people, He could have given them up to the Assyrians right away. But He is patient, “not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance” (*2 Pet. 3:9, NRSV*). As in the period of the “judges,” God let the people of Judah and Israel experience some results of their folly so they could understand what they were doing and have a chance to make a better choice. When they persisted in evil and hardened their hearts against Him and the appeals He sent through His messengers, He further withdrew His protection. But they continued to rebel. This cycle was repeated in a downward spiral until there was nothing more God could do.

Read through *Isaiah 9:8–10:2*. What sins are the people guilty of? Against whom have they committed them? Who is guilty among them?

What we see here, as seen all through the Bible, is the reality of free will. God made humans free (He had to; otherwise, we could never truly love Him), and freedom involves the option to do wrong. And though time and again God seeks to woo us by revealing His love and character, He also will allow us to face the fruit of our wrong decisions; pain, suffering, fear, turmoil, and so forth, all in order to help us realize just what turning away from Him leads to. And yet, even then, how often these things don't make people put away sin and come to the Lord. Free will is wonderful; we couldn't be human without it. Woe to those, however, who use it wrongly.

How has God used suffering in your own life to turn you away from a wrong course?

Root and Branch in One *(Isaiah 11)*

Who is the “shoot” that comes out “from the stump of Jesse” (*NRSV*) in **Isaiah 11:1**? (See also *Zech. 3:8*; *Zech. 6:12*.)

Isaiah 11:1 picks up on the imagery of a felled tree in 10:33, 34. The “stump of Jesse” represents the idea that the dynasty of David (son of Jesse) would lose its power (*Dan. 4:10–17, 20–26*). But there would arise a “shoot/branch” from the apparently doomed “stump”; that is, a Ruler descended from David.

Why is the new Davidic ruler also called the “root of Jesse”? (*Isa. 11:10*.) What sense does this make? (*Rev. 22:16*.)

The description fits only Jesus Christ, who is both “the root and the descendant of David” (*Rev. 22:16, NRSV*). Christ came from the line of David (*Luke 3:23–31*), who was descended from Adam, who was the “son of God” (*Luke 3:38*) in the sense that Christ created him (see *John 1:1–3, 14*). So, Christ was David’s ancestor, as well as his descendant!

In what ways does the new Davidic Ruler reverse the evil effects of sin and apostasy? (*Isaiah 11*.)

He thinks and acts in harmony with the Lord, judges fairly, punishes the wicked, and brings peace. When He takes over, the Lord will bring back, restore, and unite a faithful remnant of Israel and Judah (*compare Isa. 10:20–22*). There will be a strong, united monarchy as in the days of King David, who defeated the Philistines and other peoples. But the new Ruler will be greater than David in that He will restore peace even to the essence of creation itself: predators will no longer be carnivorous, and they will coexist in tranquility with their former prey (*Isa. 11:6–9*).

Is Isaiah 11 talking about just the first coming of Christ, just the second, or both? Look through the prophecy and mark down which texts talk about which coming.

In Isaiah 11, both comings of Jesus are presented as one picture. They are tied together, because they are two parts of a whole, like the two sides of a flat plane. The plan of salvation, to be completed, requires both Comings: the First, which already has happened; and the Second, which we await as the consummation of all our hopes as Christians.

What did Christ accomplish at the First Coming that gives us such assurance about the Second Coming? What is the purpose of the First Coming if it doesn’t result in the Second?

“You Comforted Me” (*Isa. 12:1–6*)

Isaiah 12 is a short psalm (song) of praise to God for His merciful and powerful comfort. The psalm, put in the mouth of a member of the restored remnant, compares the promised deliverance to that of the Hebrews in the Exodus from Egypt (*see Isa. 11:16*); it is like the song of Moses and the Israelites when they were saved from Pharaoh’s army at the Red Sea (*see Exodus 15*).

Compare this song in Isaiah 12 to Revelation 15:2–4, the song of Moses and of the Lamb. What are they both praising God for?

Isaiah 12:2 comes close to identifying the coming Deliverer as Jesus. It says that “God is my salvation” and “he has become my salvation” (*NRSV*). The name Jesus means “The LORD is Salvation” (*compare Matt. 1:21*).

What is the significance of the idea, contained in the name of Jesus, that the Lord *is* salvation?

Not only does the Lord *bestow* salvation (*Isa. 12:2*) but He Himself also *is* salvation. The Presence of the Holy One of Israel in our midst (*Isa. 12:6*) is everything to us. God is with us! Not only did Jesus *do* miracles but He also “*became* flesh and lived among us” (*John 1:14, NRSV, emphasis supplied*). Not only did He bear our sins on the cross, but He also *became* sin for us (*2 Cor. 5:21*). Not only does He make peace, but He also *is* our peace (*Eph. 2:14*).

No wonder “the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples” (*Isa. 11:10, NRSV*). When He is lifted up on the cross, He draws all people to Himself (*John 12:32, 33*)! A remnant shall return to the “mighty God” (*Isa. 10:21, NRSV*), who is the Child born for us, the “Prince of Peace” (*Isa. 9:6*)!

Dwell more on this idea that Jesus *is* our salvation. Read Romans 3:24. It says that redemption is in Jesus; redemption is something that happened in Him, and it is through God’s grace and mercy that we can have an eternal share in that redemption, as well. In other words, that redemption that was *in Him* can become ours by faith, and not by works, because no works we do are good enough to redeem us. Only the works that Christ did, which He credits to us by faith, can bring redemption. How does this truth give you hope and assurance of salvation, especially when you feel overwhelmed by your own sense of unworthiness?

Further Thought: “The heart of the human father yearns over his son. He looks into the face of his little child, and trembles at the thought of life’s peril. He longs to shield his dear one from Satan’s power, to hold him back from temptation and conflict. To meet a bitterer conflict and a more fearful risk, God gave His only-begotten Son, that the path of life might be made sure for our little ones. ‘Herein is love.’ Wonder, O heavens! and be astonished, O earth!”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 49.

“Christ was the one who consented to meet the conditions necessary for man’s salvation. No angel, no man, was sufficient for the great work to be wrought. The Son of man alone must be lifted up; for only an infinite nature could undertake the redemptive process. Christ consented to connect himself with the disloyal and sinful, to partake of the nature of man, to give his own blood, and to make his soul an offering for sin. In the counsels of heaven, the guilt of man was measured, the wrath for sin was estimated, and yet Christ announced his decision that he would take upon himself the responsibility of meeting the conditions whereby hope should be extended to a fallen race.”—Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, March 5, 1896.

Discussion Question:

As we saw in Isaiah 11, the Lord presented both comings of Christ in one picture. This can help explain, at least somewhat, why some of the Jews didn’t accept Christ at His first coming, because they expected Him to do the things that will happen only at the Second Coming. What does this tell us about how important it is that we have a proper understanding of the nature of Christ’s advent? How can false views, for instance, of His second coming set people up for Satan’s great end-time deception? (See Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, chapter 39.)

Summary: In the days of Isaiah, whose name means “Salvation of the LORD,” God promised His remnant people salvation from the oppression that was coming upon them as a result of national apostasy. This prophecy of hope finds its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus, whose name means “The LORD is Salvation.”