

A Kingdom of Peace

Isaiah 35, 65; Matthew 11
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Web Description: The Bible makes big promises about the good things that happen through Jesus. But when we look around at our world, we don't see all those things happening. Join us as we learn how to understand these Bible prophecies and see them come true in our own lives.

1. Welcome & would anyone like a Bible to follow along today?
2. Intro
 - a. We're taking a big step in the Big God Story today. The message we're going to read from Isaiah today is connected to messages from other OT prophets, and so the message that starts this Sunday will continue next week.
 - b. But let me start by asking you about promises.
 - i. Has someone ever left you with a broken promise? That's one of the worst feelings to me. When someone raises your expectations, gets your hopes up, and then let's you down. I imagine that's happened to most of us.
 - ii. Or have you ever been in a situation like that, where you felt let down, but then you had to ask yourself whether maybe it was your fault? Did that person really promise what I thought they did? Did I just misunderstand? Should I have trusted them in the first place?
 - iii. One last question: Have you ever felt that way about your faith? Have you felt that way about God? Like you trusted God to do what was right. God is supposed to make things better. Relationships should make sense now. Good should be rewarded, evil should be punished. God should provide for me if I put my trust in Him. Why am I still stuck here?
3. The ancient prophet Isaiah spoke a message from God that put people in a situation where they might feel that way. He spoke to ancient Israelites who lived in tough times, and he made them a big promise. They were a captured, oppressed people. Nation destroyed. Families separated. Lived in the worst land. But God promised something new. Let me show you a few examples of what God promised.

- a. He promised healing for the sick and wounded. **Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Isaiah 35:5-6 (p. 1040)**
 - b. And he promised economic progress and fairness. We don't always focus on this one, but this is from Isaiah 65. **They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the work of their hands. Isaiah 65:21-22 (p. 1092)**
 - c. He promised that nature itself would be healed. **The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy. Isaiah 35:1-2 (p. 1040)** And one other part of that promise is the promise that the whole world will take on God's peace. Wolves and Lions will be able to lay down next to lambs with no danger. There's a piece of art, a woodcarving out in our lobby that depicts this promise. Our own Pastor Carl carved that piece himself, and I thought you might like to hear a little more about it: **PASTOR CARL VIDEO**
4. Beautiful picture that Isaiah promised. He called it "a new heavens and a new earth." Has God kept that promise?
 5. And we can raise the stakes a little higher. Jesus reinforced this promise and said it was coming true in him. JBap story. Has it come true?
 6. Let me take a second to reinforce the shape of the Big God Story to answer this question. These are the note points on your study guide. If you know this story, you have a good foundation for understanding what the Bible says in any given passage, including questions like today. **Series Graphic**
 - a. Creation (A picture of the world the way it's supposed to be in the first place. Remarkably similar to what God promised to again.)
 - b. Fall (The source of our problems. And we get resensitized to it by reading things like Isaiah's vision and reminded of how far we've fallen.)
 - c. A Chosen People (The story of OT Israel, where we are now. God binds himself to his creation through a particular covenant people.)
 - d. Jesus (The life of Jesus. We'll be getting to this all-important part of the story starting on Christmas)

- e. New Creation – that’s what Isaiah said, and it’s what Jesus claimed
 - i. But the surprise (and this is the surprise that caused so many people not to understand Jesus and not to understand the meaning of His resurrection) the surprise is that it didn’t happen all at once. The power and salvation of God was unleashed in the world, but it’s not done yet.
 - ii. Jesus pointed to this unleashing in his own life. The sick were healed, sinners were forgiven, and Jesus taught the way of God to the world
 - iii. It happened with power in Jesus’ resurrection, when death itself lost its death grip over the world.
 - iv. It happened in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on God’s people. It happens when we experience the nearness of God, and it happens whenever and wherever God’s Spirit unleashes bits of the new creation among us. It’s no coincidence that the 24 organizations that spend their own time, money, buildings, and effort to make themselves a homeless shelter when the shelter is full are all Christian churches. That’s not a 24-fold coincidence. It’s not a coincidence that the one regime change of the 20th century that didn’t cause civil war was the one in South Africa that was lead by disciples of Jesus. That’s not a coincidence. The new creation has not been finished yet, but

7. A couple weeks ago one of our community group leaders sent me an email.
(SKT: Read the Email.)

- a. Yes, we do sing those songs. Because that’s the promise of God. And one of the messages I hope you’ll take home today is that this is God’s dream and plan for the world. Nothing less. And if you are in pain because the world you live in feels more like exile and less like home, if you struggle with disease, with a lack of peace, with a world that just isn’t right, then God’s word to you is a word of comfort and promise. Your past is not your future. Your present is not your future. Your future is in God’s hands, and it is good.
- b. The other take home message is that while your present is not your future, your future should shape your present. Do you follow me? This is not just God’s dream and plan for then, but it is God’s dream and plan our lives now. That’s what it means to be a disciple of Jesus, to live in the

unleashing of God's new creation that has already come among us. To live in and live for the peace and wholeness of our world. We'll have to connect this word with the word from some other Biblical prophets next week, but already now you can begin to ask yourself, am I cooperating with God to make this dream come true? Members of this church are working for the physical health of people in this world, they want to see the lame walk, the blind see, and the unhealthy gain health. Or maybe you're working toward economic fairness, so that people who build houses can live in houses and who labor hard can enjoy the fruits of their labor. Maybe you're invested in protection and restoration of the natural world.

- c. The Old Testament had a word for all of this. It was peace. The word was Shalom. It meant peace and health and wholeness. May God's peace come among us.

PRAY