

Advent 1

December 1, 2013

Is. 2:1-5

Messiah's Peace Spreads to All Nations

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Dearly Loved by God in Christ Jesus,

Happy New Year. Today, we begin another Church Year. In the first half, we follow Jesus' footsteps from Bethlehem to Calvary to his Ascension; from Mary's virgin womb to the cross to the mountain. Then, God's Word guides us in ways to "beat our swords into plowshares, and our ~~swords~~ into pruning hooks."

We begin our journey on another mountain. The prophet Isaiah saw great days ahead for "the mountain of the LORD's temple." This mountain in Jerusalem was the place Abraham had offered his son, Isaac. Its name was Mt. Moriah, or, Mt. Zion. Here Solomon built the first temple. One day a new temple would rise after the remnant of Israel returned from captivity in Babylon.

Rising above Jerusalem, the mountain of the LORD was the high point of worship for Judah and Jerusalem. Whenever God's nation looked up, the people saw it towering overhead. Here was the tangible evidence of the peace the prophets promised was coming in the Messiah.

Messiah's peace would be not only for the Jews, but also for all nations. His coming would be so wonderful that the news and benefit of it would spread abroad. What a glorious picture of the day Isaiah's church would transform into the New Testament Church. This new mountain of the Lord would be the source as **Messiah's Peace Spreads to All Nations.** It spreads from the mountain of the church through the gospel; it spreads in the ultimate consummation of his Advent.

What Isaiah "saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem" was in a spiritual sense rather than about the literal province and city. The LORD gave Isaiah a prophecy about "the last days," beginning with the Savior's first advent and ending with his second advent.

We are living in those days that the Lord has established his mountain. "As chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the

hills." The Christian Church, all believers in Jesus Christ, rises above all religions in that it possesses the saving gospel. Jesus Christ has paid for the world's sins on the cross. Messiah's peace spreads from the mountain of the church through the gospel. Messiah's peace spreads to all nations without any cultural favoritism. The Messiah does not tie his peace to any nation or nationality. "All nations will stream to it."

It is on that mountain, the church that "he will teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths." The LORD will do the teaching here, not man. How will Messiah do that? "The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem." Law here means God's Word in general including the commandments and the gospel. Isaiah used parallel thoughts to strengthen his argument. Law and word of the Lord are the teachings God has revealed in the Holy Scripture. The church is Zion and Jerusalem in a spiritual sense.

The commandments God has revealed awaken sin in us. We experience the condemnation of our consciences because of our covetousness, anger, impatience, lust, and just plain self-reliance without thought of God. The gospel changes our hearts. It gives us peace with God through our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Our feet follow. We want to walk on the narrow road of salvation, faith in Christ, and not the broad road that leads to destruction; either our own works or worship of false gods. We want to walk in his paths of righteousness rather than on our own path of sin. The peace we have in Christ for our troubled consciences and fears spreads from the mountain of the church through the gospel.

Messiah's peace that spreads to all nations goes forth from the mountain of the church through the gospel for a distinct purpose. It spreads in the ultimate consummation of his Advent.

We closely tie Jesus' advent as the Messiah, the Christ, to the consummation of Old Testament prophecies. I plan to stay in Isaiah for our sermons as we prepare for Christmas for just that reason. We will see other pictures the LORD gave the prophet to depict the peaceful blessings Messiah, Jesus, would bring.

Here Isaiah spoke of a peace that the Savior would bring with him when he came. The prophet pictures that inner peace the Savior brings to replace our warfare with God and with our own sins. That peace of forgiveness leads us to seek to live in peace with others.

Isaiah compares the peace we have in Christ as leading to the cessation of war. "He will judge between the nations and will settle

disputes with many peoples.” The Word of God condemns our sins, judges us guilty. We see our guilt, and acknowledge it. God give us peace in the gospel. God has eliminated in Christ our hostility with him. There is no better way for us to get rid of hostility with others than Christ’s way of forgiveness.

We are then like people who “beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.” Jesus Christ brings peace to our hearts. He has reconciled us to God. There is then the fruit of that peace. It replaces the causes of warfare against others with love and care for others. This is not some peaceful time of actual cessation of war leading to Christ’s return and rule over a millennial kingdom. This is the cessation of all hostility with God through Christ and the way that leads to peace and harmony with my neighbor.

What did Isaiah see in this vision? In the last days, now, the church would share the gospel of peace in Jesus Christ. That gospel is for all, Jew and Gentile. Isaiah does make a special point of inviting the Jews as the holders of the promise first. “Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD.” A remnant of God’s people would, and many peoples have come.

Welcome to start of another church year. Here is the very best way to experience it. “Come, let us go to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths.” Amen. <SDG>