

group Bible Study – January 10, 2007

Read Isaiah chapters 8-14

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We're learning this quarter that the two main themes of Isaiah are: judgment and salvation. In other words, as we said last week, "The Lord your God is angered by the selfishness and injustice of his people," *but...* "This Holy God will himself be our salvation."

You can't have one without the other – we need the judgment and the mercy both to understand God's work in the world. Without judgment, the victims of the world would have no justice. We must clearly hear God's strong "no!" to all that has corrupted his creation. It's a fierce word, and in the face of this judgment no evil can stand. But on the other hand, we must always remember that this judgment is Good News, it is not a terror – because we know that the Judge is the one who has himself become the victim and who now lives by his Spirit in the mess of the suffering world. God's strong "no!" to the evil of the world is only the other side of his overwhelming "yes!" to all that he has made. He has created us for the purpose of knowing his goodness, now and forever. God's judgment against evil in our nations, our families and our own hearts clears the way for the coming of his righteousness in the world.

In chapters 8-14 we see God's plan for the world laid out in great poetic force. We see that he desires goodness, not suffering, for his people. He has laid the foundation for a kingdom for himself on the earth, and he intends to make this kingdom a full reality for all to see. How will he do this?

In the beginning of chapter 9 we read that "there will be no gloom for those who were in anguish" because "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined." What is this great light? It is the Messiah – God's chosen representative who will lead the people into the kingdom of peace:

His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom. He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time onward and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this. (Is. 9:7)

The promise of God is that he will save his people by sending them a messiah, a chosen leader, who will show them the future of God's promise. We read that "the Spirit of the LORD shall rest on him" and he will rule the people with wisdom and righteousness (Is. 11:2-4). This is the way that God will save his people. And what does it look like to be saved by God in this way? We glimpse a powerful vision of God's kingdom in chapter 11:

The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the small goat, the lion and the calf together, and a little child shall lead them... They will not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Is. 11:6,9)

Study Questions (for individuals or groups):

- The book of Isaiah is Scripture for both the Jewish and the Christian faiths. Discuss how a Jewish and a Christian person might differ in their interpretation of Isaiah 9 and 11.
- Does it make sense to call the judgment of God "Good News"? In what way is this good news, not only for us but for the whole world?
- Read the passages again that describe Isaiah's vision of the future kingdom of God. Do you think this is an accurate description of the Christian hope? How might this vision of the future inspire us to live in the present?