

Isaiah Saw His Glory...#3
“When the Wolf and Lamb lay Down together”
(Is. 11)

Intro: Occasionally someone will come to your door and they will want to talk to you about the glorious future of earth. They will remind you of all the sin and violence and corruption of the present day. They will even remind you of how the animal world itself partakes in this violence and urge you to look to a future day when things will be different. Then there will be no sin on earth. All will be peace and harmony. Even the animals will no longer kill each other. To prove that they will perhaps ask you to read Is. 11:6-9.

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze; their young will lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. 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. (Isaiah 11:6-9)

Have you ever wondered about this interesting prophecy? Will man live on earth forever someday in a perfect world where the animals also live in perfect harmony? Or is there another explanation of this prophecy?

The Wolf and the Lamb in Context (Isaiah 11)

The King to come

Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. (Isaiah 11:1)

Jesse was the father of David. And since God had promised David a son who would rule on His throne, the Jews understood this passage to be speaking of the Messiah.

His endowment for kingship

And the Spirit of the Lord will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. (Isaiah 11:2)

To every Jew the coming of the Spirit upon a ruler indicated his selection by God to rule the people. The Spirit of the Lord would provide the qualities needed to be a great ruler.

The nature of His rule

And He will delight in the fear of the Lord, (Isaiah 11:3)

This king will favor those who respect God.

And He will not judge by what His eyes see, Nor make a decision by what His ears hear; But with righteousness He will judge the poor, And decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; (Is. 11:3b-4)

He will not judge by appearance or hearsay, but righteously and that without partiality. He will not favor the rich over the poor.

And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked.

He will punish evil doers.

Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist. (Isaiah 11:5)

His rule as king is in keeping with his own love of truth. He is consistently committed and loyal to God's law.

The blessings of His rule

Now we see in context these often quoted words:

And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze; their young will lie down together; and the lion will eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper's den. 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. (Isaiah 11:6-9)

The prophecy appears to describe perfect harmony between the inhabitants of the animal world and with the inhabitants of the human world.

Animals that once preyed on others will now refrain from doing so.

Carnivorous animals will become herbivorous.

Animals that once posed a danger to man will no longer be dangerous.

There will be no hurt or destruction, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord.

Gentiles will come to the king.

Then it will come about in that day that the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious. (Isaiah 11:10)

The nations will resort to the Christ for judgment and his resting place will be glorious.

The Israelites too will experience a great deliverance.

Then it will happen on that day that the Lord will again recover the second time with His hand the remnant of His people, who will remain, from Assyria, Egypt, Pathros, Cush, Elam, Shinar, Hamath, and from the islands of the sea. (Isaiah 11:11)

The Israelites are pictured as being gathered together again and delivered from their enemies.

What is the fulfillment of the prophetic picture of harmony in the animal kingdom?

Premillennialism teaches a literal fulfillment in a millennial reign of Jesus in the future.

The Jehovah's Witnesses find the solution in the restored Paradise on earth in which man will live forever. This is, they say, the eternal kingdom of God; 144,000 will rule in heaven and all else will live on earth.

Is there another possibility?

Identifying the time period of the King's Reign (Rom. 15:7-13)

In Romans 14-15 Paul urges the Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome to live in peace, to accept each other and not condemn one another even though they have come from very different cultural backgrounds that make it difficult for them to accept each other. But he offers them a very good reason to accept each other, namely, that they have all been accepted by the Christ, both Jews and Gentiles.

Christ became a servant to both groups:

For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; (Romans 15:8-9)

Paul further says that the OT taught this:

And again Isaiah says, "There shall come the root of Jesse, and He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, on Him shall the Gentiles hope." (Romans 15:12)

Three facts Paul clearly teaches.

The kingdom of God was in existence (Rom. 14:17).

Both Jews and Gentiles were a part of it.

The OT prophets like Isaiah had predicted the peaceable co-existence of both in the kingdom of the Christ!

So then the period in which the wolf and the lamb lie down together is said in Isaiah to be the same period in which the Gentiles resort to the root of Jesse. Notice in Is. 11:10

Then it will come about in that day that the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, (Isaiah 11:10)

But someone may say; but we don't see all the animals living in harmony.

We don't see people being safe from the attacks of deadly serpents, etc.

Did God intend for us to take the words of Isaiah literally or spiritually?

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. (Isaiah 11:9)

Notice that the harmony described is located at "God's holy mountain"; but in NT times the holy mountain of God is one that cannot be touched, but is spiritual in nature (Heb. 12:22ff).

Notice that the harmony of nature described is the result of the knowledge of God. But animals can't hear and obey the Messiah's Law! Isaiah is using figurative terms to describe the peace and harmony of the kingdom during the time that Jesus reigns upon His throne in heaven! It's not about animals; but about men! Through vivid figures of speech Isaiah describes an Edenic peace in the kingdom of Christ.

Learning an important lesson about the kingdom

I fear sometimes that my brethren may have learned to refute the literalism of the premillennialists and Jehovah's Witnesses but missed the proper application of this prophecy to themselves!

Jesus intended that His kingdom be one of true harmony and peace. And in fact, the prophet Isaiah says it will be. Wherever men truly comprehend the love of God that He has extended through the son of David and come under the rule of His law, there will be every effort to preserve the life and well-being of every citizen in the kingdom. There will be peace and harmony among the true citizens of the kingdom.

They will not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain.

This should be the motto is every child of God in his actions and attitudes toward every other believer. Yet I wonder sometimes when I see the way some of the brethren treat one another in their disagreements. And preachers are sometimes the worst in their "preacher wars" over issues that arise.

Perhaps Paul was also thinking of this passage in his application among the Jews and Gentiles in Romans 14. For there he wrote:

Do not destroy with your food him for whom Christ died. (Romans 14:15)

So then let us pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another. (Romans 14:19)

These verses take the message of Isaiah 11:6-9 and apply to God's church today! Let's keep that same spirit of peace and harmony and harmlessness alive among us as we seek to do the Lord's work.

Conclusion: If you would like to enjoy the blessings of the kingdom of Christ, we invite you to come to the King.