

Keep Hope Alive – Isaiah 2:1-4 & 11:1-9

Is 2 (p.567); We're just getting into our study of Isaiah . . .

And have already found that he's an uncommon prophet, with an uncommon message,
from an uncommon God, to an uncommon people, in uncommon times
Hence our theme for the year

And having started off in chapter 1 by addressing the *sin* of God's people, and warning
them of judgment – he immediately turns to a message of hope
A pattern he repeats throughout the book by the way; It's warning and rebuke, followed
by encouragement and hope, and then back again; Often within the same chapter
But here, at the beginning of chapter 2, it's hope; Is 2:1-4 (Intro)

The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

This introduction seems to indicate that Isaiah's prophecy is a *compilation* of messages
and visions; And indeed it is; As opposed to one continuous narrative . . .
Or flow of thought, like the book of Acts, or Exodus, or Esther
Which helps us understand it; Especially when he changes gears and topics so quickly

In any case . . .

*[2] It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD
shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it, [3] and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let
us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may
teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go the law,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. [4] He shall judge between the nations, and
shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither
shall they learn war anymore.*

In order to apply this passage, we have to understand it; The first key to which, is that . . .

• The ***latter days*** are both ***now*** and ***yet to come*** (v2)

See that in v2? *It shall come to pass in the latter days*; Or the *last days* as they're often
referred to; The point being – we're in them, and they're ongoing
They're not just future; That's the clear implication of the NT

Like when the Apostle Peter said that the outpouring of God's Spirit at Pentecost (Acts
2:17), was a direct fulfillment of the prophet Joel (2:28) . . .

Who said it would happen *in the last days*; IOW Peter was saying that they've begun
And since God's Spirit is *still* being poured out on people – we're still in them

And then there's the writer of Hebrews, who said that the time of *Christ* includes the last
days; Saying in Heb 1:2 – *In these last days* he [God] *has spoken to us by his Son*
Referring to all that Jesus said and did while he lived on earth
And if the last days were *then*, they certainly are now

And last, there's the Apostle Paul who confirms that, by *describing* the last days

Found in 2 Tim 3:1-5 where he says . . .

*But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. [2] For
people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to
their parents, ungrateful, unholy, [3] heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-*

*control, brutal, not loving good, [4] treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers
of pleasure rather than lovers of God, [5] having the appearance of godliness, but
denying its power.*

I don't think anyone would argue w/ the conclusion that those things are true right now –
every single one of them; Something Peter/James allude to as well (2 Pet 3:3; Js 5:3)
All of which places us smack dab in the middle of the last days
They started at Christ's coming, and continue until he returns; Which means they're
both now and yet to come; That the first key to understanding this passage . . .

The second, is to realize that . . .

• The ***mountain of the house of the Lord*** is God's ***rule and reign*** (v2)

It's a metaphor for his kingdom; Something that's often lost on us, because we don't *use*
that verbiage anymore; But in the Ancient Near East, they did
Many religions saw their gods as dwelling on a high mountain, and many of the nation-
states ruled from *literal* mountains; High hills
Places where their *house* was located as Isaiah says in v3 – their capital, the focal point
of their kingdom, the place where they dwelt

Which makes sense; If you occupy the high ground you'll be able to assert your influence,
and control the surrounding area all the more
So ruling and reigning "on high" was a religious, military, and political concept all tied
together; Making *the mountain of the house of the Lord* as Isaiah says in v2 . . .
The place and presence of God's kingdom, God's rule and reign

• Which, in Isaiah's day, was located in Jerusalem on Mt Zion
But in our day, in *the latter days*, it's located in the hearts and souls of those who know
him as Lord and Savior; A.k.a. the church
The place and presence of God's kingdom, God's rule and reign, is the church

Like Paul said in **1 Cor 3:16** – *Do you not know that you* [that's a plural you, speaking to
the church] *are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?*

Do you not know that you are the house of God? The focal point of his presence? The
place where he dwells?

And **1 Cor 6:19** – *Do you not know that your body* [individually] *is a temple of the Holy
Spirit within you?* Do you not know that as a believer . . .

*You are the place of his rule and reign? His kingdom? You are******

So while the place and presence of God's rule and reign in *Isaiah's* day was located in
Jerusalem – in ours, it's located in the church; The hearts/souls of those who are his

• And then last on this point . . .

When Isaiah says that *the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as
the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills* . . .

It doesn't mean that there's going to be a great upheaval of the ground somehow, so that
Zion is *physically* elevated above the other mountains . . .

It means that in the last days, and this is the yet to come part – God's rule and reign will
be *preeminent*; Foremost

Superseding and displacing all other forms of *religion*, and overshadowing all other
types of power – political, military, social, and spiritual

In the latter days, God's rule and reign will be established as the *most* influential, and most powerful, of all; Which is obviously yet to come in many respects

So no matter how bad it gets, no matter which world power rattles its saber, no matter how many zealots fill the streets; No matter how rough your life is . . .
Or how hopeless things may seem at times – keep hope alive; B/c . . .

God *will* reign supreme (v2)

It was a message God's people desperately needed to hear *then*, with Assyria on the prowl and Babylon close behind . . .

And it's a message we desperately need to *believe* now, with all the unrest we face in the world; Not to mention the whirlwinds of social upheaval and malaise of moral decay
God *will* reign supreme someday; It's not a pipe dream, it's a promise

- Not that he doesn't *now*; Not that he doesn't rule supreme now; He does; He's completely sovereign and in control; 100%
But there will come a day when he exerts it, when he exerts his will and manifests his sovereignty and shows his supremacy – on *earth*, just as he does in *heaven*
The very thing he taught us to pray; It's going to happen; The time *will* come

A time we know from the Bible, as the *Millennium* – the thousand year rule and reign of Christ, right here on earth (Rev 20)

A time according to **Dan 7:27**, when – *The kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.*

Or in Isaiah's words – God's hill, will be the highest hill, and we'll be a part of it*****

So keep hope alive; No matter how bad things get, whether in *your* life, or in the world – God *will* reign supreme someday; *It shall come to pass*; In the meantime . . .

People *will* keep coming to him (v3)

Yet another cause for hope; And a great deal of it

After saying in v2 that – *the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills . . .*

He says at the end of v2 – *all the nations shall flow to it* [indicating an unbroken movement], [3] *and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob [i.e. to the place of his presence], that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths."* For out of Zion [again, the localized place of his presence in that day; but all over in ours] *shall go the law* [Isaiah says], *and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.*

No matter what happens, people are going to keep coming to the Lord; They're going to keep seeking him; They're going to keep going to those who can teach them his ways
In the latter days . . . all the nations shall flow to God's kingdom, to God's church
It's happening all over the world, and it's happening right here in ours
People *continue* to walk in the doors, they *continue* to come to Christ, and they *continue* to walk in his paths, doing what he wants and living his way
Many of you are living examples

- I love how **Dan Buraga** put it recently, reflecting on their first service in the Washington DC area . . .

"It was incredibly encouraging [he said] to watch people drive in, some for more than an hour, who had heard of a new church committed to the Scriptures, and wanted to come and worship with us. Their thirst was affirmation of God's leading to plant a church." And affirmation that Isaiah's prophecy still holds true – that if you *build* it, they will come; If you preach the word and teach God's ways, they'll show up*****

B/c people are *hungry* for the truth; And sick of the lies – the lies of our culture and the lies of religion; Not only that, they're tired of their life, lost in their way . . .

Filled with regret, and scared of the future; Not all; But many

Many peoples shall come, v3; Many ethnic groups; Many families; Many individuals

- It's a promise I cling to; Especially in times of *doubt* when I wonder if *anyone* is going to come; Or keep coming; Or walk the talk; Or get saved; Or be baptized
Or want the truth; Especially when it hurts so much, like last week

Promises like this encourage me when I'm down, and *fuel* me when I'm not

Spurring me on to keep branching out, keep pushing the envelope, keep expanding our work, and keep preaching the Word

B/c based on *Isaiah's* prophecy – there's more to come; More ministry, and more people
People who are actually *looking* for the way, and the truth, and the life
And *wanting* to walk in God's paths

So when you wonder whether your work for Christ is worth it – keep hope alive
When you question whether your tithes do any good – keep hope alive
When you feel like it's all for naught – keep hope alive
B/c it's not; People *will* keep coming to him

And last . . .

Peace will win out (v4)

God *will* reign supreme; People *will* keep coming to him; And peace *will* win out

In the latter days, v4 – *He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples* [i.e. he'll bring about reconciliation and restoration]; *and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks* [they'll change their instruments of destruction, into implements of production]; *nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.*

Despite the conflict, unrest, wars, and terrorism that plagues our world these days – peace will eventually win out

It was a promise that must have filled God's people with hope in Isaiah's day . . .

And a promise that should do the same in ours; Especially on this side of the cross

B/c it's possible, only . . .

• **Through Christ (11:1-9)**

Peace *will* win out, but only through Christ; Something Isaiah *also* prophesied, in chapter 11; And I want you to see it; Especially the connection between the two; Is 11:1-9

After saying in chapter 10 that God would cut down his enemies like trees in a forest, including those in Israel who were rebellious – he says in 11:1 . . .

There shall come forth a shoot [a new twig, a new source of life] *from the stump of Jesse* [Jesse was King David's father, from whose lineage God had promised a king who would reign forever; It's found in 2 Sam 7, and called the Davidic covenant]

There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots [Jesse's roots] *shall bear fruit* [will do much good]. [2] *And the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD.* [3] *And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD* [his greatest joy will be honoring, revering, and obeying his Father].

He shall not judge by what his eyes see [this shoot, this branch, this one on whom God's Spirit would rest], *or decide disputes by what his ears hear,* [4] *but with righteousness he shall judge the poor* [with justice and compassion], *and decide with equity* [fairness] *for the meek of the earth* [IOW he'll make decisions based on the truth, not appearances; knowledge, not assumption; Paying particular attention to the lowly and humble]

And he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth [the power of his spoken word], *and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.*
There will come a day when this offspring of Jesse, will judge the living and the dead
And with the force of his voice, he'll pronounce a final death sentence on the wicked

[5] *Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins.*
From his humble beginnings and divine presence, to his absolute power and perfect judgment – *righteousness* and *faithfulness* will be the main attributes of his work

- All of which results in unprecedented peace
[6] *The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.* [7] *The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox* [that's unprecedented peace]. [8] *The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.* [9] *They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain* [in all my reign God says, there will be unprecedented protection]; *for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea* [that's unprecedented wisdom].

No longer localized in Jerusalem on Mt Zion, the *knowledge of the LORD* will be *everywhere*; But only b/c of the work of Christ – past, present, *and* future

And we know he's the one of whom Isaiah speaks, b/c his life fits the description, and he said as much
Like the time he was in the synagogue, and after reading from Is 61 (Lk 4:18-21), which says – *The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me* . . .
After reading that, Jesus told them that the prophecy has been fulfilled in their hearing
IOW I'm the one of whom Isaiah spoke, Jesus said
Confirming the very thing that Isaiah prophesied in chapter 11; Saying, *the Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him* (2)
The point being, that peace will eventually win out, and it will come, through Christ

- Which should come as no surprise to those of you who are already his; B/c it's already true in your *heart*; We *already* have peace that exceeds our ability to understand
But praise be to God, that's not where it stops

After a time of unprecedented judgment where Jesus will *strike the earth with the rod of his mouth . . . and kill the wicked* . . .
And a time where wrongs will be made right as Isaiah goes on to say here in chapter 11 and in chapter 2 . . .
After that, peace will win out; Not just in our hearts, but in our *world* (**Summary**)

So no matter how bad it gets, or how hopeless things may seem – keep hope alive
All is not lost, and never will be; All is not lost, and neither are we

Prayer – Lord, you are marvelous in our eyes as the Psalmist says; And we trust your word – b/c you are good, and faithful, and true to your promises; So fill us with all joy and peace in believing; So that by the power of your Spirit, we may *abound* in hope; And do the same in our giving now – with our *tithes and offerings*; Fill us with hope

Close – Baptism; Work for Christ insert; Parking (Sunday only); Visitor bags