

1. What would be your ideal world look like? Under ideal conditions what would our world be like to live in? Who'd be in charge? What would that leader be like? We all have problems as well as good things in life. It's easy to complain about the way things are. The challenge is to figure out a solution. Isaiah Chapter 11 gives us God's ultimate solution to that question. Then in Chapter 12 we have a short chapter that praises God for that solution to life's issues that will occur one day.
  - a) OK, so a wonderful world may come one day where God literally rules over the world, as people are forced to live or choose to live as He desires. How does any of that affect what I have to deal with at this moment? For starters, stop and consider that all people will live forever, either in God's presence or permanently away from His presence. We need to be aware of this utopia that Isaiah lays out for us, because whether we like it or not, the bible teaches us it'll be a reality and as Christians, we'll be ruling with Jesus at that time.
  - b) The next thing to realize is no matter what we're dealing with it'll last at the most only for this lifetime. You may be successful at whatever you consider success, but at the most it'll last one lifetime. You may be struggling at the moment with an issue. It'll only last at the most for one lifetime. The world with God ruling over it will last for eternity and if you're committed your life to serving Jesus and accepting Him as being in charge of our lives, and accept that Jesus is God, we'll be a part of this eternity as it will be described here.
  - c) Coming back to what Isaiah was dealing with in his day, he lays out life under God's rule because his nation was facing being conquered. Isaiah wanted to reassure the Israelites of his time that "This is not it". God still has long-term plans for the nation of Israel as God is going to rule the world from that nation despite all the tragedies they're facing for turning from Him as their God. The point for us is despite our failures to live as He desires we do He still has a wonderful eternal plan for the world with Him ruling over it.
  - d) If all of this is true, why wait so long? Let's be honest, it's been well over 2,500 years since Isaiah made this prediction. Why should we still trust it'd come true one day? Even if we read of Jesus reassuring us of these predictions and the book of Revelation validating also making similar statements, that's still all about 2,000 years ago. How do we know this isn't a bunch of stories told to reassure the Israelites through dark times that occurred so many centuries ago? If you've read my earlier lessons on Isaiah, you know he was accurate over his predictions of what happened to Israel soon after or a century after he made them. My point is if we can trust Isaiah with his "short term" accuracy, what make us think we can't trust God with "long term" accuracy?
    - i) As to why it's been 2,000 years since the time of Jesus and God still hasn't set up an eternal kingdom yet, stop and ask would you be able to appreciate that kingdom if Jesus came back 100 years ago? The short version of why God is waiting so long is to realize that He loves those who are willing to commit their lives to serving Him and is waiting as long as possible to gather in as many believers as possible.
    - ii) To quote Peter, "With God, 1,000 years is as one day and one day is as 1,000 years". (Based on 2nd Peter 3:8). The point is whether we like it or not, God works on His timing and we have to accept His timing. Consider that from the time of Abraham to the time of Jesus was about 2,000 years. Therefore it shouldn't surprise us that it has now been about 2,000 years since Jesus' time that Israel is now an independent nation again. My point being that even though it's been a long time since all these predictions were made, just because they haven't happened yet, doesn't mean they won't happen on God's timing. Just as the world we know it had a beginning one day in the past, so the world as we know it has to have an ending one day. Since it will have an ending, Isaiah is describing life after that ending. The next life should give us hope that life will be better than whatever we deal with in this lifetime.

2. That page long speech leads me back to Isaiah Chapters 11 and 12. If you read my last lesson, the last thing it talked about was comparing the world Isaiah knew to a mighty tree being cut down. He continues that speech by effectively saying, from that cut down tree, a new root will grow out of that tree stump to be that promised king. It's saying despite the fact that the nation of Israel is "cut down to nothing", God will raise up a king from Israel who'll rule over the world from there whether we accept it or not. Yes that ties to Jesus, as I'll explain that throughout this lesson.
  - a) Most of Chapter 11 describes a future world where God rules over that world. Life as we know it will change dramatically in that day. Isaiah fills chapter 11 with lots of examples of how life as we know it will change. Therefore, we'll know if Isaiah's words come true if those changes occur. Chapter 12 is a short "psalm" that gives God praise for what He'll do in that future day.
  - b) Some of the imagery that we'll read in this chapter ties to how Christians should live now as we trust in Jesus as our Lord. Much of it is also describing this ultimate future of what life will be like when the "Promised Messiah" (a Jews way of describing this eternal king who will rule over the world one day, and who we Christians call Jesus when the Second Coming does happen) rules over the world.
  - c) The point being is that God wants us to learn this stuff, so we won't be surprised when it does actually happen one day. Whether we like it or not, this chapter describes what life will ultimately be like when God literally rules over it and all people will either by will or by force have to accept God's ruling over this world. The reason we should care about all of this "stuff" is because we will be part of it one day, either by our own free will to accept it or be forced to accept it even if we reject God in this lifetime. To be honest, if we accept it freely, we'll have a much better eternity than if we reject it. Since God wants us to know what it is we have to accept for all of eternity, He lays it out for us in the bible: Chapter 11 is one of those places where it's laid out for us very clearly.
3. Before I begin my verse-by-verse study of these chapters, let me give you my title for this lesson: "Understanding our eternal future and why we should we care about God's plans for that future". Therefore, let's see what God has planned for us as we start the verse-by-verse commentary.
4. Chapter 11, Verse 1: A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
  - a) To understand this first verse, let's look at in context of where we left off in Chapter 10. In that last chapter Isaiah was comparing the nearby kingdoms and empires of that day to a bunch of mighty tree's being cut down. Now picture a leftover stump of a once great tree. Out of that stump a new branch shoots up. That's the "shoot" of Verse 1.
  - b) Next the verse makes reference to "Jesse". If you know your bible, you may recall that the father of King David was a man named Jesse. We don't know much about him other than the fact he was David's father. Essentially Jessie was just an "average religious Jew" whose only great claim to fame was being the father of King David. The lesson here is if we think we're nothing special by living as God requires us to live, never underestimate how God's capable of using us. God took an "average religious Jew" made famous as David's father.
  - c) OK, most of us know that Jesus is a descendant of King David. Most of us also know that the Romans destroyed the Jewish temple in 70AD, which contained all the family records meaning Jewish people today don't know what tribe they're from. My point is this verse is describing a future "shoot" (descendant) of King David who'll "bear fruit" by being the leader over the world from Israel reigning from Israel.
    - i) If you ask religious Jewish people today, how'll they recognize the Messiah when he comes, the standard answer is he'll lead the Israelites to rebuild the temple. The more detailed answer is life will have the conditions laid out in this chapter. Yes I will lay out the case for Jesus being that Messiah throughout this lesson, but I also want us to understand why most religious Jews reject Jesus: For not overthrowing the government in His day and becoming the world leader.

- ii) Isaiah wrote this, centuries after King David lived. How do we know Isaiah isn't talking about one of the other kings of Israel that ruled before the Babylonians did destroy that place? The answer is in this chapter. The reason half of Chapter 11 is describing a world where there are no more predator animals, is so we'll recognize "the" Messiah when He comes, or as we Christians say, "When He returns". We'll get much more into the issue of Jesus as being the Messiah both in this lesson and in future lessons of this book. In the meantime, back to Verse 1.
- d) The last part of Verse 1 says, "From his roots a Branch will bear fruit".
  - i) Does that mean that when the Messiah returns he will have literal children? No. A better way to see this verse is to realize that when the Messiah comes, a way we'll know He's here is that those who believe in Him will "bear fruit" for Him. In order to understand this again I need to state something about bible prophecy: It'll often work in patterns. What I mean by that is often there will be short-term fulfillment of a prophecy to validate the speaker and a longer-term fulfillment as well. All I'm saying is don't be surprised if Isaiah combines references to events that tie to Jesus First Coming with events of Jesus Second Coming. We'll see examples coming up.
  - ii) Notice the word "Branch" is capitalized. That's because the Hebrew word used in this verse is based on the word "Nazarene or Nazirite". Among other things this is referring to is Nazareth is the town where Jesus was raised. It also refers to a vow a Jewish person can make when they're dedicating themselves to God. My point is simply that the word "Branch" is a pun with a double meaning. That word implies a way to recognize when the Messiah comes is He'll be "From Nazareth".
  - iii) Suppose you say, "OK, I don't buy that. How do we know that when the Messiah comes to rule the world He won't also be located in Nazareth or just be separated for God's use? The answer is the phrase "bear fruit". Consider of all the religions in the world, Christianity came from a fairly obscure religion in an obscure part of the world. Christians worshipped a "nobody" who was killed, as He claimed that He was God. I'm convinced the New Testament never would have been written, unless the original disciples were completely convinced beyond any doubt that He did rise from the dead.
    - a) My point is simply from an "obscure sect of an obscure religion" one has to admit that Christianity has grown to a point where multitudes believe that Jesus is not only God but also the promised Messiah. Even if one does not believe Jesus is God, one has to admit that those who believe in Jesus have "born fruit" for Him by spreading the word about Him all over this world in the last 2,000 years. One of the proofs that Jesus is the Messiah is I can't think of any other act in human history that has "born fruit" as much as the fact of the spreading of the word about Jesus over the last 2,000 years.
- e) But I thought that Isaiah Chapter 11 focuses on the Second Coming. Most of it does and it will become obvious as we go through this chapter. However, as I've stated Isaiah likes to mix references to Jesus First and Second Coming. Suppose you argue how do we know if this verse isn't referring to the idea that when the Messiah comes to rule over the world, it just isn't referring to those who trust in Him then "bearing fruit" for "The Messiah" then?
  - i) First I'd argue that all the effort made by Christians over the last two millennia will make it possible to bring the world's attention to Israel and the idea of having the Messiah rule from there be significant because multitudes of Christians spread the word about Him to make it famous.
  - ii) Second, even if the Messiah rules the world by force in this unknown future day, I can't imagine there are enough religious Jews to enforce His rule. It would take an army of worldwide believers to rule with Him in order to force that rule to work!
  - iii) OK enough on that, time to move on to Verse 2.

5. Verse 2: The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD--<sup>3</sup> and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.
- a) Verse 2 refers to seven aspects about the Spirit of God. I'll discuss those in a minute. First if you've ever read the book of Revelation, there are references to "seven spirits of God" in a few places in that book. (Revelation 1:4, 3:1, 4:5 and 5:6). The key to understanding the book of Revelation is simply that it's written "in code". All I mean by that is that book has hundreds of references to other books in the bible. Those references to the seven spirits in Revelation tie to the seven aspects of God's spirit here in Isaiah Chapter 2.
    - i) Does that mean there are seven separate spirits of God? Of course not. Isaiah uses seven "aspects" of the Spirit of God to describe Him and that's the reference to the "seven spirits" we find in Revelation.
    - ii) Before I move on, I like to tell people that if you really want to learn your bible, the first book to study believe it or not is Revelation. That's because a good study of it will lead you to most bible books in order to learn all of those references. However this is a study of Isaiah, so I'll drop the Revelation references here.
  - b) Speaking of going to "other books of the bible", I'd like us to consider a reference from the book of Exodus. In that book the first God ordained worship center was constructed. We call it "The Tabernacle" in English. One of the items in that tabernacle was a seven-branch oil lamp. This was the only light for that tabernacle. This light was made of one "piece of gold" shaped with one light in the middle and three branches coming out of either side.
    - i) Therefore, there were seven oil lamps from one light. My question is if there were 12 tribes of Israel, why not a 12-branch light? Why a seven branch? The answer is it ties to the idea of the Spirit of God, being the "light" of God. Let me explain that:
    - ii) The reason the bible doesn't say a lot about the Holy Spirit as we Christians speak of Him, or the "Spirit of God" as it is referred to here in Isaiah, is because His job is to bring attention to God. The Spirit's job is to draw people to God and help us to see Him better. Just as that seven branch light made it possible to see the inside of that first tabernacle, so the function of the Spirit is for us to see God better and see His plan unfold for mankind.
    - iii) The reason we Christians see Him as a separate entity, but still God, is we have no idea where He'll work or who will accept Jesus as part of their lives. We are called to pray that people's hearts be open to Him, tell others about Him and then let the Spirit convict people of the truth of God. To state this another way, it's not our job to convert people, our job as Christians is to lead people to Jesus. It's the job of the Holy Spirit to actually convert people's hearts. The Spirit as being "part of God" in that we accept the Spirit as being perfect as God is perfect. Yet we're not to pray to the Spirit, as His job is to draw us to God the Father and to Jesus.
  - c) Believe it or not, all of that is background, simply to understand what Verse 2 is all about here in Isaiah Chapter 11. The first thing this verse says is a way we will recognize when the Messiah comes is "The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him".
    - i) The first of the seven aspects about the Holy Spirit is that God is the Spirit to begin with. Remember that when the word "LORD" is in capitals, it refers to God's most holy name. It's what we Christians call "Jehovah" which means, "I am that I am" as stated back in Exodus 3:14. My point is the "Spirit of the most Holy God" will rest upon the Messiah. A way we'll know that He's the Messiah in the first place is by the power of the Spirit working within Him. That'll lead us to the other six aspects of the Holy Spirit.
    - ii) In other words the way we can tell when the Messiah comes, is by the way He will act. We will get to all of that in a moment. For now I just want you to realize that a proof that the Messiah is who He claims to be is He'll be filled with God's Spirit.

- iii) Realize that the Spirit of God was an understood concept in the Old Testament. If you read Psalm 51:11, King David, the author, prayed for God to not take the Holy Spirit away from him. David believed the Holy Spirit can come and go. That was true before Jesus came into our world. A promise Jesus made is that He'll give the Spirit of God to anyone who asks Him. (See Luke 11:13 or Romans 8:11.)
  - a) All I'm saying is for the Christian, the spirit becomes part of our lives when we accept Jesus. Whether we choose to obey or ignore that Spirit as it takes up residence within us is our choice at any moment of our lives to make.
- d) Enough of that, a more important topic: How do we know God's Spirit rested on Jesus?
  - i) To answer, let's start looking at the other six aspects of Verse 2. Notice the aspects of the spirit is listed for us in pairs. The first one is "The Spirit of wisdom and of understanding".
    - a) Read the gospels sometime and ask was Jesus always aware of whatever of His situation? Try to find a scene where Jesus wasn't in complete control of whatever questions are being asked of Him or even whatever situation He was in at that moment. My point is simply that Jesus had God's wisdom of what to say and do in any given situation. For example, if you look at how Jesus condemned hypocrisy of the religious leaders of His day or notice He had compassion for the hurting, those are examples of God's wisdom being played out in whatever situation He was in.
    - b) Even the cross itself, was not an accident. Realize that it was God's will for Jesus to die on that cross. Does that mean His condemners were not guilty? The issue is "perspective". From God's all knowing perspective it was His will for Jesus to die and He was always in control of that situation. At the same time one can blame Jesus killers because they didn't want Him to rule over their lives. They wrongly thought by killing Him that would stop Him from ruling over the world. Again history has proved His critics wrong by the simple fact that multitudes of people trust in Jesus as being alive as He is ruling over our lives.
  - ii) The second part of the first pair of aspects of the Spirit of God, is that the Messiah would be filled with "understanding". I already beat it over our heads about how much Jesus "understood" the situation He was in. Even when the Messiah returns one way we'll recognize Him is simply by the fact He will have perfect knowledge of any situation. Think of it like a courtroom judge who perfectly understands the situation and judge it fairly. We'll get too more of that in Verse 4. My point here is simply that a way to tell when we're in the Messiah's presence is to realize He will have perfect understanding of a situation. By the way, one reason we accept Jesus as God is because of His "perfection" in understanding any situation.
- e) OK, time for "Pair #2": "The Spirit of counsel and of power"
  - i) The spirit of "counsel" is to point out that whatever He decides is the right thing to do in any situation. It would be like hearing a judge decide a case and agreeing it was the perfect decision made about that case. Christians look to Jesus as the One who counsel's us on how to live. It's by His words and living by principals stated in His word that we make the best decisions possible for our lives.
  - ii) Next we have power. If a person has the right words to say, but not the power to enforce those words, those "right words" are useless. A way we will recognize the Messiah is by the power He'll have to enforce His words. We Christians choose to obey Him by drawing upon His power, out of gratitude for our salvation. Think of God's power this way: He won't command us to do what we don't have the power to do in the first place. His power works through us, by us being able to obey His commands in the first place.

- f) The final pair of ways we'll recognize the Messiah when He comes is He'll have "The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD".
- i) Before I go any further, realize that these characteristics of the Holy Spirit don't tell us the whole story of who He is or what He does. These specific aspects are given so we can recognize that when the Messiah comes, we can know for sure that He is the Messiah because He fits these characteristics. The reason I'm going in detail in these categories is to show how well they tie to Jesus. OK, back to the details:
  - ii) The "Spirit of Knowledge" is the idea that the Messiah will know the right thing to do in any given situation. It's like being so full of Godly wisdom, He can correctly understand the whole bible, how to interpret it and how to apply it. He will know what to do in any situation. Consider that when Jesus walked the earth, you can't read of a situation where Jesus didn't know exactly what to do. He was always in control of a situation and it always worked out exactly as He meant it to work out.
  - iii) One of the things I like to pray for, is for God to give me the knowledge to make a good decision in whatever it is I face and try to do what it is His will. Life doesn't always go well and we all have to face tough decisions at times. Since we believe in a God that is all-knowing, we also believe in a God that can provide the wisdom to make a good decision at any given time. My point is the way we recognize that God's working in our life is by the knowledge He gives us to make good decisions.
  - iv) At the same time, the way we can recognize that Jesus is the Messiah and we'll be able to recognize Him at His return simply because of the Godly wisdom He has.
  - v) That leads us to the final aspect of the Holy Spirit: The fear of the Lord.
    - a) Both Psalm 111:10 and Proverbs 1:7 says. "The fear of God is the beginning of knowledge or wisdom". The difference between knowledge and wisdom is knowledge is about realizing what's the right thing to do in any situation while wisdom is actually applying that knowledge.
    - b) For the Christian, fearing God is not about fearing losing our salvation. To fear Him, is about realizing we can be punished for disobeying Him. It can mean for example, going to prison if we steal or murder. We will suffer in this lifetime if we disobey God's laws. Sometimes the suffering is subtle, or it can be major. I also argue we get rewards in heaven based on whether or not we were faithful to how God desires we live.
    - c) That leads me back to discussing "The Messiah". A way we recognize Him is He'll be full of "fear of the Lord". Jesus said that His will was to do what the Father wants Him to do. (Based on John 5:30). Even before Jesus went to the cross, He stated He was willing to do it because it was His Father's will to do it. (See Matthew 26:39). My point is Jesus "feared the Lord" not in the sense that He was inferior, but because it was His desire to do what God the Father wanted Him to do.
    - d) As to whenever the Messiah returns, a way we recognize Him is effectively all He will care about is doing God's will.
6. Verse 3b: He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; <sup>4</sup> but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked.
- a) The good news is we finished Isaiah's describing the role of the Holy Spirit and how we'll be able to recognize the Messiah based on His ability to be full of the Holy Spirit. I will be able to pick up the pace now, as the next section of text in effect will be "obvious" if we do accept the idea that Jesus is perfect in doing God's will, and be full of God's Spirit to carry out that will. Therefore as I discuss the text in these verses, picture Jesus returning to our world to judge it with God's judgment. That's a big part of the Second Coming.

- b) I'm reminded of a Christian bumper sticker that's a little dirty, but makes a good point. It reads, "Jesus is coming back and this time He's really pissed!" The point is whenever Jesus returns it will be to judge the world. It's not just about judging everyone who ever lived. It is also about creating a world that is fair to everyone. Remember my opening statement question about what would an ideal world look like? That answer is in these verses. Here we read of the Messiah judging those in need and helping the desolate. Isaiah uses some colorful language in Verse 4 to effectively state that whatever Jesus says, will occur as He decides. It's one thing for someone to say go do this or else. It's another thing to have the power to enforce that decision. Therefore when this verse says that the Messiah "will slay the wicked", that should give us a reason to fear Him as He judges our world. It's also to realize in that ideal world, the decisions of a perfect ruler will occur whether we like His decisions or not.
7. Verse 5: Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.
- a) Verse 5 is another example of Hebrew poetry. The word "and" connects the two halves of this verse that give a similar idea. For us, the idea of a belt or waste line being a source of judgment is a strange idea. In the Middle East back then, men wore long robes. The robes were tied at the waste. The word picture used here is just as a belt is used to tie a robe, so the "belt" of the Messiah will be the "tie" that brings the correct decisions to our problems.
- b) It's a little like Paul's statement of us "putting on the belt of truth" in life. (Ephesians 6:14.)
- c) Remember that Isaiah's trying to describe life in this future utopia. He's saying that just as the leader will make the right decisions, it'll be like a belt that ties our robe shut as we can trust that robe will stay "shut" once that decision is made. I admit it's strange to compare God's justice to a robe and a belt, but it's an analogy that worked in the culture of Isaiah's time and place.
8. Verse 6: The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. <sup>7</sup> The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. <sup>8</sup> The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest.
- a) OK John, how will we know if and when all of this will occur? These three verses give us a great clue to recognize the "when". Imagine a world where a lion running loose around, but the lion isn't a threat to us because that lion is a vegetarian. Picture a world where it is safe to let our children play with a cobra snake because it won't bite them. Try this one: A world where predator animals graze next to non-predator animals as whenever this does occur, there will be no more predator animals.
- b) The point is we'll know when the Messiah comes because life will dramatically change . If a great world leader comes on the scene, but animals still kill other animals, we know that a world leader isn't the one being described in this chapter. These verses here about life as we know it changing dramatically, are designed to be the proof of how we recognize all of these changes when they occur.
- c) So if there are no predator animals, won't there be an animal population problem? Don't know. I suspect if the world changes that much, so will the desire to reproduce. Some of the commentators suspect that we Christians will be vegetarians that day as well. So does that mean we should become vegetarians in preparation, or eat all the meat we can before it occurs? The answer is that this world is so different, how we act now in terms of diet is not meant as a preparation for it. Yes proper diet is necessary for a healthy life. That's not the issue here. I'm just saying we don't have to change our eating habits as to prepare for whenever this change occurs in terms of what we're allowed to eat.
- d) All I'm saying here is the way we recognize when Jesus returns besides the fact that we all can see the event on our "smart phones" or other video screens, is by the dramatic changes to the world we live in as predator animals will not be a part of that future world. Yes we still have to live as God desires now, but we have to eat now like we may in that world.

9. Verse 9: They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.
- a) The last few verses focused on the "when" so we'll know when all of this will occur. Here in Verse 9, we get a focus on the "where". The point is Jesus will rule the world from "the holy mountain". Jerusalem is located several thousand feet above sea level. It is referred to as a holy mountain here and elsewhere in the bible.
  - b) The way these verses tie to the last group is to say that there will be no "natural death" of one animal to another as Jerusalem will be associated with "eternal life". This verse is not saying that the new non-predator world will be in Jerusalem only. It's saying this location will be the center of power of this worldwide government.
  - c) It's sort of fun to consider how much time the United Nations spends discussing what to do about Jerusalem. That city has no special natural resources. There are no great rivers nor is it on the coastline. Yet the world is obsessed over it's future, or at least one would think so based on the actions of the United Nations. There's a classic joke told by a leader of a small country at the United Nations. It goes, "Can we talk about something else other than Jerusalem? It seems like that's all we ever do around here."
  - d) The important point is whether we like it or not, or whether we accept it not, God's going to rule over the world one day with Jerusalem as the headquarters. While the members of the United Nations may not be crazy about it, God will make it happen one day.
    - i) If you ever wondered why the world of nonbelievers hates Israel so much, ponder the dark spiritual forces behind that hatred! Satan's goal is to delay as long as it is possible for Jesus to come rule from that city. Why do you think there's such a big worldwide effort to destroy the Jewish nation? The demonic force behind it wants to prevent "The" Messiah (i.e., Jesus) from ruling the world from there, one day.
  - e) From discussing Jerusalem the text moves to the entire world. Isaiah uses another of his colorful metaphors to say that just as water covers (think fills) the seas so God's word will fill the entire world. One has to admit that based on the technology of Isaiah's day, it'd be hard to picture. How can a Messiah rule over the whole world? I'm sure Isaiah figured if God is God, He can rule over the world from wherever and whenever He wants. In our world of high technology, it may be technically easier, but there is still the issue of people not wanting anyone to rule over their lives, let alone the God of the Bible. Therefore, this future utopia will be forced upon people. In other words people will be forced to accept a lifestyle of the Messiah ruling over the world.
    - i) What I pondered is if the whole world will be filled of the knowledge of God, does that mean there will be no more bible studies? Does that mean pastors and priests won't be needed anymore? Personally, I see just the opposite. If this utopia means people have to live as God desires, "enforcers" will be needed all over the world to explain what God desires and how He desires to live. Whether angels do that or if we Christians are involved in that role, we'll have to discover later in the next life.
    - ii) If you think about it, the bible doesn't say much about eternity. We get some idea here in Isaiah, but most of the bible focuses on how God wants us to live now. We do get a few clues about "utopia" and I suspect that whatever we do in that world, God will continue to use us for His glory. My point is I'm convinced that when all of this occurs, it won't be boring to us. We don't sit on a cloud all day playing on a harp. Somehow I suspect God's going to get us involved in the process. As one of my late mentor's joked, "I've already claimed the Hawaiian island of Maui, so you don't get that place!"
  - f) In the meantime, I still have six more verses to go in this chapter, plus the short six-verse "Psalm" that is Chapter 12, which praises God for this utopia vision. Keep in mind as we go through all of this is not just what "utopia" will be like. A better question is to ponder how we should live today based on this utopia. With that in mind, time to move on.



10. Verse 10: In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. <sup>11</sup> In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea.
- a) A great underlying question about this chapter is how will we know when this is going to occur? Yes we'll know it occurs by a lack of predatory animals. How will we know when it begins? To answer the "when", the text starts with the "who". Again the text describes a descendant of King David (based on his father's name), the "Root of Jesse". Let me put it this way: The reason this person is called the "Root of Jesse" is to describe Him as having a humble beginning. Just as David became king from a "nobody" background, when the Messiah appears He's come "out of nowhere" to be the leader. I believe the world will be forced to accept Jesus as a solution to the problem ending a world at war with itself.
  - b) All of that theology leads us back to Isaiah's day. The nations being described in Verse 11 were all nearby countries to Israel. Recall that Israel in Isaiah's day was destroyed by both the Assyrian Empire and later by the Babylonian Empire a 100 years later. What Isaiah is saying here is that God will gather His people from wherever they're lived back to Israel to live under the rule of that Messiah.
  - c) This leads to a quick discussion about the term "second time" in Verse 11. Some argue the first time was the Exodus out of Egypt. I don't because the text says God will gather them "that is left". Therefore, I'll argue that the "first time" as life after the Babylonian Captivity when the Israelites were allowed to return to their homeland. That leads to the question of when is the "Second time"? Israel was not gathered to form a nation again until about 2,000 years later when Israel became a nation again in 1948. If you study world history no nation has ever been conquered, scattered and became a nation again. Except for Israel as they have now has done it twice.
    - i) So are you saying this prophecy came true in 1948? Not completely, as let's face it we don't see lions and little kids playing together just yet. What I suspect is in that year, we saw the start of a moment that will come completely true when we'll see the Messiah rule the world from there. To repeat the classic Jewish joke, when this event occurs, the Jewish people will ask, "So is this your first visit or your second?"
  - d) Final words on these verses: The text ends with "islands of the sea". I think that's Isaiah's way of saying God's going to gather His people from all over the world back to Israel as it will be the time when all of this "utopia" begins.
11. Verse 12: He will raise a banner for the nations and gather the exiles of Israel; he will assemble the scattered people of Judah from the four quarters of the earth.
- a) If you think I was exaggerating when I said the "islands of the sea" can represent the rest of the world where Jewish people lived, Verse 12 is my proof.
  - b) By the way, when I hear as an example, Iran threaten to wipe out Israel and kill all Jewish people, I know that they're messing with God and that nation will suffer for that desire.
  - c) One thing that's important to grasp about the bible is that Jewish people and the Christian church have separate beginnings as well as separate destinies. I believe Christians will be welcoming Jesus ruling over the world, but at the same time we have to recognize that we worship a God that is "Jewish" that will rule over the world from a Jewish nation.
  - d) The point as it relates to these verses is that Jesus will rule over a literal Israel where all of them will live one day. The Jewish population of the United States is roughly equal to the Jewish population of Israel. This text is saying God will one day gather all of them to live in that country as He'll rule over them from there. So does that mean that all of the Jewish people should go move there now? Of course not. It means that as we get closer to these events occurring, is the Jewish population of Israel will increase as God gathers those who are "His people" to that land.

12. Verse 13: Ephraim's jealousy will vanish, and Judah's enemies will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, nor Judah hostile toward Ephraim.
- OK, time to bring all of this "utopia" back to Isaiah's time. Back then, Israel was split into two separate kingdoms. Of the 12 tribes of Israel, the one called Judah was the dominant tribe of the Southern Kingdom. The tribe of Ephraim was the largest one of the Northern Kingdom. The simple point here is that a sign of when the Messiah comes, is that Israel is no longer going to be split into two separate kingdoms. That's another reason many bible prophesy buffs love the fact that Israel is united as a single country again. We see that as a sign we're close to this age taking place.
  - Here's a question to ponder: If all the Jewish people from all over the world move back to Israel in that day, won't the land itself have to be bigger? Yes. That leads us perfectly to Verse 14:
13. Verse 14: They will swoop down on the slopes of Philistia to the west; together they will plunder the people to the east. They will lay hands on Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites will be subject to them.
- In Isaiah's time, these were the names of the countries that bordered Israel. What we call the country of Jordan today was called Edom, Moab and where the Ammonites lived back in Isaiah's day. Along the coastland some of the Philistines that still existed despite all the efforts to wipe them out. If you travel to Israel today and look across the Jordan River you will see some hills that are still called Edom and Moab today.
  - Even though those people groups don't exist today, the names of those locations are still referred to by their biblical names at times.
  - Notice the word "They" to start the verse. The point is the Israelites will either be lead by the Messiah to conquer this land or it will happen in preparation for the Messiah. Will we see another war between Jordan and Israel in the future? All I know is Isaiah is predicting Israel will have this land as part of its territory one day in the future. One small way we'll know if Isaiah is still relevant today is if this prediction comes true in the future.
  - OK, that covers the land to the east. What about Egypt to the south and the great threat of the Assyrian Empire to the northeast that Israel faced in that day? Verse 15:
14. Verse 15: The LORD will dry up the gulf of the Egyptian sea; with a scorching wind he will sweep his hand over the Euphrates River. He will break it up into seven streams so that men can cross over in sandals. <sup>16</sup> There will be a highway for the remnant of his people that is left from Assyria, as there was for Israel when they came up from Egypt.
- To understand these verses, you need to know a little bit about Middle East geography. Where the Nile river dumps into the Mediterranean Sea, there is a wide gulf. Back when Isaiah wrote this that area was called the Egyptian Sea as they were the dominant player back in Isaiah's day.
  - In the original text it doesn't say "Euphrates River", but just "River". Some commentators say it refers to the Euphrates River that borders the capital of the Assyrian Empire in what is today part of Iraq. Others say it refers to the Nile River. Either way, God is saying we'll know when the Messiah is about to come, because God will divide up this river into seven smaller streams so that people can cross over it in sandals.
  - In Verse 16 Isaiah predicts there will be a highway from Assyria to Israel. When we think of a highway today we think of a big concrete roadway with cars traveling at high speeds. Back in Isaiah's day a highway was a popular travel route for those traveling on foot or by animals such as camels or donkeys. The point being that despite the fact that many of the Israelites will be taken into captivity and be relocated in Assyria (Iraq today), God will make it possible for their great river to be cut into seven pieces and people walk across it.
  - OK, out of curiosity, how would all of that work today? My guess is there will be a great earthquake in that area which splits up that river into streams. When the Messiah comes to rule, "Iraq" will be forced to live under the Messiah's rule and travel freely to and from.

- e) Gee John all of that is neat and I'm glad there will come a day in the future where they're be no more wars in the Middle East as the rule of the Messiah there settles all of that. How does any of that affect me today? It reminds us that whatever we're dealing with today in our life at the most will last for a lifetime. It shows us that God has great eternal plans for this world as all people who choose to draw close to Him will be able to, including what I believe is us saints as well as the people God's called to be His people in the first place.
    - i) What this utopia vision of the future shows us is that God loves what He's created. He wants to spend eternity with us out of His love for us. On our end we have to freely choose to be with God ourselves or else that would be "forced love" and not a mutual love relationship. In order for God to spend eternity with those of who do choose to freely love Him, He has to create a world where He can rule from in order to show people that He is God and draw close to those who He's called to be His people in the first place.
    - ii) My point is this utopia is necessary in order for us to have a physical place to live where we can draw close to God in the first place.
    - iii) With that said, we're ready for the short "Psalm" of Chapter 12 that praises God for doing all of this in the first place:
15. Chapter 12, Verse 1: In that day you will say: "I will praise you, O LORD. Although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away and you have comforted me.
- a) Notice the word "you" near the start of this verse. Who is the "you" that praises God here? In a direct sense, it refers to Israelites who freely chose to trust God to guide their lives.
  - b) Despite their collective sin of rejecting Him, Israelites will honor Him as God in that day.
  - c) That leads to the concept of God's anger. In one sense it refers to the fact that at the time Isaiah wrote this, most Israelites turned to idols and rejected God. It also shows the fact that God has forgiven them of their sins.
  - d) One thing I love about Christianity is we never have to worry about being good enough for God. Because we believe God Himself paid the price for our sins, we can be assured we're 100% forgiven of our sins. The key question to me has always been "Now what?" If we are saved that way, what are we to do about it? What God desires is we use our lives in order to make a difference for Him. In other words, we serve God not to earn His love, but to show gratitude for what He's already done for us.
  - e) OK, that covers us Christians. What about the Jewish people who won't accept Jesus when He returns? What I suspect is that when this utopia starts, it'll become obvious that He is the Messiah and there will be mass acceptance of Him. There's an interesting prediction made that "They will look at me who they have pierced". (Zechariah 12:10). The point is I believe there will be a large recognition by Israel that they have killed their Messiah when He was pierced by nails on a Roman Cross. Effectively, anyone who doesn't want Jesus to rule over their lives pierces Him by that rejection. A future day is coming when all this is going to occur. That's when the "you" (Israel) will praise God because He's rescued them for all of eternity despite their collective rejection of Jesus to this present day.
  - f) To relate this to us, we can praise God despite the fact we still sin, and at times turn from what He desires for our lives. Yet we know He's forgiven us of all our sins as He Himself paid the price for that sins. Therefore His anger is turned away from those of us who've freely accepted this offer of salvation so (key point) we can spend eternity drawing close to God. The reason God created us in the first place is so He can draw close to what it is He created in the first place. The key reason for this utopia is so that God can spend all of eternity drawing close to those that love Him and vice versa.
  - g) As I've stated earlier in this lesson, I don't know what we do for all of eternity, but I'll bet it won't be boring. God has plans for us to draw close to Him and rule with Him as we do serve Him for eternity. What that entails we have to see. All I know is that if He wants us to draw close to Him, that's a better plan than anything else we can do with our lives.

16. Verse 2: "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid. The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation."
- Verse 1 said that God is comforting us with His eternal plans for our future.
  - Verse 2 has two different names for God listed. The word "God" refers to Him as creator. The word LORD when it's written in all capitals is the most holy name of God that means, "I am that I am". When we want to emphasize something, we may repeat ourselves. Kind of like in English when we say something is very, very good. That's why "LORD" repeats.
  - Remember why we praise God. It's not because He needs to hear it. We praise Him as to remind ourselves of who's in charge of our lives. I've stated in past lessons that I am sure that when we get to heaven we're going to spend a lot of time praising God, so we should get used to doing that now. That's why I like to sing in church. I want to get used to what I'll be doing for all of eternity. I don't sing well, which is why I'm not in the church choir. Still I know that God loves to hear us sing out despite our singing ability. That's why the bible is full of places like this verse telling us to be grateful for our salvation and tell Him of our appreciation for that salvation. That's what this verse does in a poetic fashion.
17. Verse 3: With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.
- I don't think Isaiah is talking about literal wells here. He's using an analogy to say when we praise God, it satisfies our desire for salvation. What popped in my head as I read this verse is Jesus telling the woman at the well about how He'd provide "living water" so she won't have to drink of the water of that well. (John 4:10). My point is I'd say what Isaiah is praising God for here is the same idea of what Jesus was trying to teach about how God provides what we as humans can't get on our own, a need to draw close to the God who made us in the first place.
18. Verse 4: In that day you will say: "Give thanks to the LORD, call on his name; make known among the nations what he has done, and proclaim that his name is exalted."
- Remember how I said if we believe in Jesus, now what? Verse 4 gives us a "now what": God wants us to praise His name out of gratitude for what He's done for us (given us our eternal salvation) and spread the word about Him. I see this verse is an Old Testament as an Old Testament equivalent of the "Great Commission". Jesus said our "now what" is to go into the world and tell people about Him. (Based on Matthew 28:19). Here Isaiah tells the Israelites that do believe in God to go into the "nations" and proclaim His name.
  - If you think about the history of Israel, they've never been great evangelists. Yes there has been some history of spreading the word about Him. Mainly they just looked inward and focused on trying to obey God's laws themselves as opposed to trying to go lead Gentiles to worship God. That's one reason why Jesus First Coming was necessary as effectively it took the Gentiles to spread the word about Jesus around the world.
19. Verse 5: Sing to the LORD, for he has done glorious things; let this be known to all the world. <sup>6</sup> Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel among you."
- If you ever wondered why people sing in church and synagogues, these verses give us the answer. Again, we don't do it as God needs to hear it. We sing to remind ourselves of the great things God's done for us. We sing as a witness to others of how God has blessed us.
  - Let me finish by addressing those who think, "God hasn't done much for me, so why do I have to sing out to Him?" Suppose you were born with a horrible disabling disease or if you got horribly injured somehow. How do we praise God when we're suffering? What we have to remember is "perspective". We can feel sorry for ourselves or be grateful we're alive in the first place. We can remember that God created the world we live in. We can be grateful for the utopia He's promised us in the future and whatever blessings we enjoy as we live in this life. My point is you can observe the world and realize that something greater than us must have made it and then be thankful to that God for making it. Or we can sit around and feel sorry for ourselves based on negative things that happened in our lives. Yes pain is real, but so is perspective. That's what I'm trying for us to see here.

20. OK, enough of that. The key point of this lesson is to grasp that despite whatever we're dealing with at the present time, God has a wonderful plan for our eternal future. Therefore, we should take a little time every now and then to praise Him for what He has done in our lives as well as what He will do in the future. Speaking of praise, time for my ending prayer on this topic.
21. Father, we thank You for the world you've given us to live in. Despite whatever issues we have to face, we know that You love us, care for us and what to guide us so that we can use our lives for Your glory. Help us not to waste the most valuable thing You give us, our time so that we do use some of it to make a difference for You. Make it obvious to us how it is You want us to use our time and our resources so we can make a difference for You in the time we have to live here in our world. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.