

The Ruling Peace of Christ (Isaiah 11:1-10)

Every king rules. The King Isaiah is prophesying about in 11:1-10, is no exception, but His rule is unlike any earthly kingdom the world has ever known. Verses 6-9 is a beautiful passage that announces a kingdom of peace. ⁶ *The wolf will live like a foreigner with the young ram; the leopard will lie down with the young goat. The calf, the young lion, and the fattened steer will be together, and a little boy will lead them.* ⁷ *The cow and the bear will graze together. Their young ones will lie down together. The lion will eat straw like the ox.* ⁸ *The nursing child will play near the hole of the cobra. The weaned child will put out his hand on the viper's nest-hole.* ⁹ *People will not treat anyone badly or destroy anyone on My entire holy mountain. For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

In the world of sin, the wolf preys on the young ram – nothing more than a helpless lamb; the leopard stalks the goat; the lion, learning to growl and hunt, kills the solitary calf for food. But where this Son of David rules, all hostility will cease. Former enemies will live side by side in peace. Even a nursing child and a weaned infant, will have nothing to fear. Isaiah paints the ideal picture of what nature must have been like before the fall into sin. In a world filled with hostility, bloodshed, and discord, the vision of this peaceable kingdom soothes us.

But how should we understand this account? Some commentators believe that this is a beautiful wish and a pious dream. Even though it can never be attained, they believe it serves to fill us with hope and provides a goal toward which we should work. Other commentators believe it to be a picture of the future world after the return of Christ. Still others contend that the Messiah's kingdom will be an earthly kingdom where this description will prevail. They hold to some kind of millennium that the Lord will establish either before or after He returns to earth. But when we encounter such ideas, we must remember the definition of His kingdom that Jesus gave Pilate: “*My kingdom is not of this world,*” (John 18:36).

The correct understanding of the passage must come from verse 9. There Isaiah says, *People will not treat anyone badly or destroy anyone on My entire holy mountain. For the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*

This is a picture of Christ's gracious rule over His own, the assembly of believers who belong to the Prince of Peace. Because they know the Lord, and His knowledge fills them like waters cover the sea, they live in peace and harmony with one another. Sinful nature boils within human hearts and leads to hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy, (Galatians 5:20-21). But the gospel changes human hearts and fills them with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). Paul urged Christians to live in harmony and encouraged them to love (see 1 Corinthians 13 and Romans 12).

Some may object that Christians do not live in peace and harmony with one another under Christ's rule. It is undoubtedly true that believers on earth are still plagued by their sinful nature and that this nature will lead to trouble, discord, and argument among Christians too. Nevertheless, the preaching of the gospel brings believers into agreement and motivates enemies to embrace and forgive as they have been forgiven. The peace with God through Christ produces peace among His followers. Even if that peace is marred by sins of jealousy, prejudice, pride, and hatred, it can and does exist among those who follow the Prince of Peace.