

# The Righteous Judge of All the Earth

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     This is the Word of God. Please do keep that passage open in front of you if you can. Let us come before God in prayer before we come to it together. Let us pray. Father, we thank you for your Word. We thank you for these wonderful words.

And we pray now that you would open each and every one of our ears, that you would soften our hearts to receive your truth, that you might speak to each and every one of us this evening and stir in us joyful praise for you, for you alone are our Creator and Redeemer.

In the name of your Son, Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen. Well, in the faint hope of someone in our household sleeping ever so slightly longer in the morning, the east-facing bedroom has recently been adorned with blackout blinds.

I don't know if you've got that desperate before. It would be fair to say that success has been limited, but certainly not because the room is too bright. It is incredibly dark. So much so that when you first go in, you can't really, make out anything at all. I'll sometimes find myself fumbling around for where the screaming child is.

But as you spend more time in it, you start to be able to make out the objects, the frame of the bed, the outline of the pictures on the wall, the seat in the corner, the child in the bed. None of them particularly visible initially, but as you spend more time in there, you begin to make out ever more details of what is hidden in the darkness.

[ 1 : 5 9 ]     That is, I think, a little of what it has been like spending time in the opening ten chapters of Isaiah. When we first walked in, it might well have appeared to have been nothing but darkness, darkness, just pitch black. But having spent some time going through, while the darkness has become no less dark, as we've become accustomed to it, we've been able to make out, haven't we, ever more of the details, the specific shapes of Israel's sin, the outline of God's just wrath.

It has been dark, but the overall picture, I hope, has become ever clearer as we've spent time in these chapters.

But while the darkness may have seemed dominant, it has not been all-encompassing, has it? When you look at the door in our bedroom, you see a few slivers of light sort of peeking through from the outside.

Well, so too has been with these chapters. There have been moments, hasn't there? Moments throughout where hope has revealed itself. We saw Isaiah himself cleansed of his iniquity, giving hope that sinners could be forgiven.

We heard of a holy seed left in the stump of the desolated forests of Israel and Judah, a promise of life to come. We heard the promise of Emmanuel, God with us.

[ 3 : 3 4 ]     The promise of a child who would bear the government on his shoulders, the wonderful counselor, the prince of peace, the one whose kingdom would know no end.

Last week, we saw, didn't we, in the midst of the darkness, the promise of a remnant, small as it might be, a remnant that would return and the Lord's anger one day turned away, creaking through the edges of the doorframe, has been the promise of light on the other side.

Well, now, the door swings wide open, and the darkness is overcome. Because Isaiah 11 and 12, these are chapters of light.

They would be light in any context, but coming out of the darkness, they are gloriously bright. Because when you walk out of a dark room, you realize, don't you, you realize just how bright light is.

You take a moment to adjust as millions of photons rush into your eyes. Not because the light has changed in character, but because now we know something of what it means for light to be absent.

[ 5 : 02 ] And because of that, when we see it once more, it shines all the brighter. Isaiah 11 and 12 would be gloriously bright in any context. But after spending much of the last ten chapters with the blackout curtains down, the light that now shines forth is truly stunning.

So let us come with expectant joy to these chapters this evening. For they make known the goodness and graciousness of our gods that he will show to his people in spite of their darkness, in spite of our darkness.

And we'll see as we go through these chapters that they can and should bring us such joy. Because we'll see in just two short chapters how every major act of grace and mercy God has shown to his people from the beginning of time until Isaiah's day was only a foreshadow.

It was just the smallest glimpse of a far greater goodness to come. And so we have this evening four new and betters that we're going to look at this evening.

You'll see them there on the service sheet if you have one in front of you. As God goes one step further than acting as he had before for the good of his people, now promising to act fully and finally for them and for us through each of these divine mercies.

[ 6 : 43 ] So let us begin where Isaiah begins by looking at the new and better David. I don't know if you've picked up in the previous ten chapters, the promise of a new David is where so much of the hopeful language has been pointing us to.

I don't know if you remember what we saw back in chapter 9, those famous verses that many of us will be familiar with, of the child who will bear the government on his shoulders. In just the next verse, right, the very next verse after that, we read that he will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom.

And now if you just look there with me at the start of chapter 11, what do we see? We see a shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse, David's father.

This is not just a child of David, this is a new David and it is a better David because look at what is said of this David in those opening verses of chapter 11.

Verse 2, The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the Lord.

[ 8 : 09 ] The Spirit of the Lord himself will rest on this new David so that he will be equipped to rule perfectly and judge justly.

All of those characteristics, aren't they? They are what is needed to rule rightly. Aren't they wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, the knowledge and fear of the Lord?

And it enables him, verse 3, to judge not just by what he sees or hears, but with absolute righteousness.

Even the best law courts in the world make mistakes because all we can do, can't we, is make our decisions best as we can on what we see and hear.

But sometimes not the whole story is seen, sometimes not every account is heard, sometimes there is much more going on far beneath the surface that we cannot see.

- [ 9 : 09 ] Not so with this judge. Not so with this king. In order for someone to rule perfectly, they must know, mustn't they, exactly what is right, exactly what is wrong.
- And they must know everything and understand everyone. Who can possibly fulfill such a brief?
- Well, the new and better David can. He will fairly judge all, including those who are so often victims of injustice, the poor of the earth, the needy.
- Who is this new and better David? Paul lays out plainly for us in Acts 13. He says, from David's descendants, God has brought to Israel the Savior, Jesus.
- Just as he promised. Jesus is the new and better David. Jesus is the one upon whom God's Spirit rests. Jesus is the one who can and will judge with perfect justice.
- [ 10 : 29 ] Jesus is the one who can judge. Jesus is the one who can judge. And he can judge justly because he knows all things and he knows all people. We know now, don't we, who the new and better David is.
- And we know that he will one day judge justly. But we are still waiting, aren't we, for the day when that will come into its fullness. We are still standing with the people of Isaiah's day, looking into the future and waiting for that great day when every wrong will be righted.
- Every injustice will be accounted for. But that day is coming. God has declared it in his words.
- And nothing can stop it. And when it comes, we see there in verse 4, don't we? When it comes, nothing wicked will be left standing. There will be no unrighteousness.
- Because Jesus is the new and better David. He is coming to judge the whole world with perfect justice. And all that will be left standing will be what is good and what is right.
- [ 11 : 57 ] All that will be left standing is what is good and what is right. And so we see, secondly, through this just judgment, He will bring about a new and better Eden.
- in verses 6 to 9. By justly striking the earth, as we see there in verse 4, and through the breath of His lips slaying the wicked, the King, doesn't He, He removes from the face of the earth everything that can or did cause harm.
- And so He will bring about everlasting peace. That's what we saw promised back in chapter 9. And this everlasting peace extends to all of creation.
- I think when we read this, when we read these verses, we realize that peace is even greater than what we might think peace is.
- Certainly I found that myself as I was dwelling in these verses through the week. Because what do we think peace is so often? Perhaps I should speak for myself here, but I suspect many of you are in the same boat.
- [ 13 : 10 ] If there was a match on between Celtic and Rangers and the news were to report that the match was played out peacefully, what does that mean?
- Or what would we assume that meant? We'd think, wouldn't we, no blood was shed. Success. But you also know, don't you, what that does not mean.
- To say it happened peacefully does not mean that the fans of both teams kind of happily mingled through the game. It doesn't mean that they abolished the away end and let everyone sit wherever they wanted.
- No one ever said a bad word to anyone. It doesn't mean they were, they were wishing well for one another and sort of gently applauding when the other team scored. It's not what peace means there, is it?
- Because often I think what we mean by peace is simply that we managed to keep hostile parties far enough away from each other that they didn't cause any harm. When we rightly hope for peace in warring countries, are we expecting them to become close friends?

[ 14 : 28 ] Or are we just hoping that they'll be able to restrain their hatred for a time? We speak about peace, but I think what we often mean is enough separation that denies the possibility of warfare between hostile parties.

But what real peace is, biblical peace is not only the cessation of warfare, but the restoration of relationships.

True peace is the total absence of enmity and the perpetual presence of harmony. That is the peace that Jesus will bring.

And that kind of peace will result in a new and even better Eden. A place without any hostility.

Through justly judging what is wicked and making an end of them, a restoration of Eden is what the new and better David does and will bring about. And just look at what is happening in those verses in verse 6 to 9.

[ 15 : 41 ] The wolf will live with the lamb. The calf and the lion and the yearling will lie down together.

There will be such peace between them that even a young child can lead them. The point is, isn't it, even the relationships where we cannot possibly fathom unity, even the relationships where division seems to come by nature and be necessary, even those relationships will be peaceful.

The lion will eat straw like the ox. God will change the very nature of his creation. And if you can do that amongst species, how much more, how surely will every peaceless relationship in our lives and in our world, how surely will they also be made right?

And not only is it a new Eden, it is a better Eden. Because something something went wrong, didn't it, in the first Eden?

There was peace, but then there was no peace. Because the devil in the form of a serpent led astray our ancestors.

[ 17 : 14 ] And because of his deception, we chose enmity with God. But the new and better David is bringing about a new and better Eden because look at what is happening there in verse 8.

The wolf and the lamb are lined together as are the lion and the cows, but when the child goes near the cobra's den and the viper's nests, there is nothing, is there?

I think we might be supposed to understand that they are empty. Whatever, it is certain, isn't it, verse 9, that whatever serpents there might be there will neither harm nor destroy.

The carnivores dwell peacefully with the herbivores, but the home of the deceivers is harmless. And so this is a better Eden because while there was peace in the old Eden, there was the potential, wasn't there, for division resulting in enmity and death.

Not so here. Not so in the new and better Eden. The cobra's den is safe territory. Even the child's, the one who lacks wisdom and discernment, the one who might believe a lie, they can go near it and no one need fear.

[ 18 : 51 ] When Jesus comes again to judge the earth, the kingdom he will usher in will be one of perfect peace that can never be disturbed. Because when Jesus comes to judge the earth, he will bring everlasting peace.

That is a glorious picture, is it not? It is a beautiful picture of a perfect place where everyone dwells in lasting peace. But who will be there?

Who will enjoy life in paradise? Because there is not much left, is there, by this point in Isaiah?

There have been three sort of main nations, haven't there, that have taken center stage. Judah, Israel, and Assyria. And every one of them has been found guilty in God's sight, deserving of judgment because of their unrighteousness, peace.

And so, facing his wrath, that has been everyone so far. And so, as we saw back in verse 4, if the new and better king is going to bring this paradise about through just judgment of the wicked, if everyone is wicked, who will be left to inhabit the place of perfect peace?

[ 20 : 28 ] look there at verse 11 with me. And see what the Lord does with the same hands that had been raised in anger against his people throughout these opening chapters.

With the hand that was raised against Judah and Israel in chapters 5 and 9, now the Lord reaches out a second time. but not in judgment, but rather to reclaim, to reclaim the surviving remnant of his people.

If in the previous section we were pointed to a new and better Eden, all the language here points us to a new and better exodus. The exodus was when God rescued his people from Egypt, when he took them from a distant land to himself so that they could dwell with him and so that he could dwell with them in the promised land.

It is that same picture being portrayed for us here. God rescuing his people from foreign lands spread far and wide to come and dwell with him in his land.

And so this land is not empty because even though God's people deserved punishment for their wickedness, they are instead redeemed, reclaimed, brought back by God, by his saving arm, saved from his own just wrath.

[ 22 : 23 ] We saw a glimpse of how this can justly happen back in Isaiah 6 when Isaiah found himself ruined and unclean in the presence of a holy God.

But God cleansed him. He cleansed him, he made him clean by a sacrifice. And Isaiah later in this great prophetic book will make much clearer who will pay that sacrificial price.

It would be God's servant who would be led like a lamb to the slaughter, who would bear our sin, pierced and crushed for our iniquities and transgressions.

And we know, don't we, that God's servant is Jesus, the new and better David. It is the king of chapter 11 who will judge the world justly, who would be punished for our transgression.

And because that is who this king is, the Lord can justly, righteously call his scattered people from every corner of the earth. Because he has bought them back.

[ 23 : 58 ] He has redeemed them through the blood of his son. And so he reaches out his arm once more, not this time in judgment, but in mercy, to bring back to himself those who had wandered far away.

And he will stop at no end to do so. Just look there at verse 15 with me. 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 anyone can cross over in sandals. 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.

It is the exodus, but it is new and it is better. The Lord won't just part the sea, he will dry it up, he will stop at nothing to bring his people back to himself.

He will stop at nothing to bring his sinful people who had rebelled against him and his rule, who had put their faith in the powers of this world instead of the power over all the world. God will stop at nothing to save them.

[ 25 : 15 ] That is exactly what we see in Christ, is it not? God's stopping at nothing to bring his people into his paradise.

grace. The father giving up his one and only son, whom he had loved with an infinite and eternal love from before the beginning of time.

The son laying down his own life, so that a highway would be made clear for the returning remnants, so that scattered sinners could be brought near.

The new Eden will not be empty, because the Lord will call his people from every corner of the earth, and no enemy will ever penetrate the walls of this garden.

Those who oppose God's people will not enter, but all who the Lord calls will come. He will make sure of it. He will stop at nothing to bring his people back to him.

[ 26 : 40 ] Is that not such wonderful assurance, brothers and sisters, that in spite of our sin, in spite of the darkness we have seen, our God, out of his love, will not stop pursuing his people.

He will stop at nothing to ensure that every one of his sheep are brought into his folds. The good shepherd lays down his life for his sheep, and if we are sheep, we can rest assured he will never let us go.

and so we will, despite the darkness that is within us, dwell with him in paradise.

The new and better Eden is not just an idyllic portrait in a fairy tale holiday brochure. It is our home.

home. It is where God is gathering us to come and be with him forevermore once his king returns in glory.

[ 27 : 57 ] It is a glorious picture, and it unsurprisingly leaves us finally with a new and better song to sing.

If you went through the Psalms, you would find time and again many of these ancient hymns, either dwelling exclusively or mentioning in part the greatness, the wonder, the majesty of the original exodus, rightly praising God who worked mighty deeds for his people.

And we can and should still sing those songs. But we do so, don't we? We do so knowing we are part of a new and better exodus.

And so we have an even better song to sing. That is what chapter 12 is all about. Because God has called us from the ends of the earth, ends of the earth that most, if not all, of the people in Isaiah's day wouldn't have even known existed.

God has reached out with his arm to us, not in judgment, but in salvation to redeem us. And to do so in Christ dying on our behalf, he went further than drying up the seas in order to bring us into a new and better Eden.

[ 29 : 19 ] It is the most mighty, miraculous act of all. What else can we do? What else should we do? But sing a new song unto the Lord.

Lord? Just look with me there through chapter 12, Isaiah, because they are wonderful verses that I fear I will detract from if I try and explain them too much.

But hear how beautifully these verses summarize how we can and should respond to all that we have heard in Isaiah over the last few weeks. He writes, in that day I will praise you Lord, for although you were angry with me, your anger has turned away, and you have comforted me.

Surely God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. The Lord, the Lord himself is my strength and my defense. He has become my salvation.

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation. In that day you will say, give praise to the Lord. Proclaim his name. Make known among the nations what he has done.

[ 30 : 37 ] And proclaim that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord, for he has done glorious things. Let this be known to all the world. Shout aloud and sing for joy, people of Zion.

For great is the Holy One of Israel among you. Our God has done glorious things.

And so we sing and shout aloud that the whole world might hear and know that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father, for he has turned his anger away from us.

He has given us a sure and certain hope, life everlasting in his paradise. And he himself is our strength and our defense, who will see to it that every one of his people, every one, are brought safely home.

God's love. What else can we do but shout aloud and sing for joy, for great and holy is our God.

[ 31 : 57 ] Let us come before him in prayer before we raise our voices to our great king in song together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Father, we thank you that the new and better David is coming one day soon to judge all things justly and that through that judgment a new and better Eden will arise where there will be perfect peace forevermore that can never be disturbed.

We confess that if we were to stand in our own works on that day of judgment we would be justly slain with the wicked but we come now to sing a new song of praise for you have redeemed us not because of who we are but because of who you are bringing all your people out of their sin and into your presence from every corner of the earth by paying the debt we owe through the precious blood of your son and so we sing praise to you our lord and our god and praise to our king and savior Jesus Christ maybe he be honored above all through all including our lives word thought and deeds for he alone is worthy in his most precious name we pray amen we pray we pray ■■■■■ so