



Isaiah 32

A Kingdom of Righteousness

In every age, in every man there is an innate desire for perfect peace and security.

There are times in history when it seems like our beds are too short, and our covers are too narrow. Such a time of crisis was the Syro-Ephramitic War in 735-732 B. C., and the final sacking of Samaria by the Assyrians in 722 B. C. Those were turbulent times in the whole Mediterranean world. The people of Judah were filled with panic, and the kings were faithless. The people longed for peace and security. By the late eighth century B. C., many leaders advocated a military and political treaty with Egypt.

The king's cabinet advised going down to Egypt for help against Assyria, relying on their chariots of war, and not looking "to the Holy One of Israel, nor seeking His help." In sharp contrast Isaiah declared, there will be a King whose reign will be characterized as righteous (Isaiah 31:1; 32:1). God will draw a sword, "And the Assyrians will fall by a sword not of man, and a sword not of man will devour him" (31:8). King Sennacherib of Assyria died at his home twenty years after the LORD God destroyed his army. Yahweh is sovereign over Israel and the nations.

In Isaiah chapter thirty-two, the prophet writes, "Behold, a king will reign righteously, and princes will rule justly." The passage is much debated by scholars as to its messianic value. Many regard its "Messianic implications" as legitimate, however. It may be styled a Messianic prophecy because of the application of the principles of righteousness by the King. Isaiah is not thinking of the person of the Messiah alone as he does in 9:5ff and 11:1ff. However, the King's righteous reign is the very embodiment of God with His people. This ruler will be like a "shade" in a parched land, a "refuge" from the wind, a "shelter from the storm," and "stream of water in a dry country" (vv. 1-2).

The imagery in Isaiah thirty-two is Messianic. Even kings Ahaz and Hezekiah do not rise to the occasion. Isaiah has described judgment and punishment in chapter thirty-one. In sharp contrast, in this chapter he speaks of righteousness issuing in peace.

In chapter thirty-two the government is righteous as opposed to the unrighteousness of the kings of Judah. He is describing the character of a messianic government. No one but the Messiah King can rule in a complete state of righteousness. The Messianic kingdom is in view because of the sharp contrasts with the government in Isaiah's day.

The whole administration of this King will act according to righteousness. Even the "princes" under his administration will "rule justly" (v. 1). They will

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Even the "princes" under his administration will "rule justly" (v. 1). They will apply the principles of righteousness to the individual cases. They will be the kind of rulers God wants them to be. In the truest sense of the word it will be a "Davidic government" as described in Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-5, and He is a divinely appoint king (2 Samuel 7:13-16).

The emphasis here is not on the personality of the ruler as in previous passages in Isaiah, but the character of His government. It is of such a character that it can belong to no one but the Messiah. It characterizes His perfect righteous rule over His people. His government will be the opposite of what Isaiah has been describing in Judah. Boldly Isaiah says, "Behold the King!"

This King will be a protection for His people (v. 2).

Verse two is full of vivid detail. He writes, "Refuge from the wind," "shelter from the storm," "streams of water" in the desert, "shade of a huge rock in a parched land" (v. 2). This is not a selfish king looking out for his own skin. He cares about His people and watches over them. He provides protection for people.

He is not obsessed about His legacy. He has an eternal future because He is righteous and He rules in righteousness.

Spiritual hardness will be removed from the people's hearts (v. 3).

Verse three is in sharp contrast with 29:10. The time of spiritual hardness and blindness will be over. No longer will their eyes, ears and hearts be hardened as in Isaiah 6:9-10. People will turn to the Lord. They will have the ability to discern spiritual truth (v. 4). "The mind of the hasty will discern the truth." No longer will the teachers stammer, but they will speak clearly the truth. What a contrast this is to governments in our day. "No longer will the fool be called noble, or the rogue be spoken of as generous" (v. 5, cf. vv. 6-8). This king will not look into the eye of the TV camera and lie every time He opens His mouth.

Look at the negative contrast in verses six and seven. Can you imagine having a fool as a president? When the King comes there will be no more fake, sham or facades (v. 5). We are reminded that "righteousness exalts a nation." However, unrighteous rulers destroy it. "Fools" rule in unrighteousness.

How will He accomplish such an awesome task?

Verses 15-20 tells us it will not be by human means, but by the power of God. Judgment will come first (vv. 9-14). Salvation does not come "until the Spirit is poured out upon us from on high . . ." (v. 15). The idea is the Spirit of God will be "poured out" in generous bestowal. The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament is an index of divine power. Isaiah sees a new flux of divine power upon the ruler. The spirit will achieve great things in the latter days.

There is a progressive understanding of the Spirit of God in the Old Testament. The empowering presence of the Holy Spirit became a central facet of the Old Testament.

It begins, Isaiah says, when "the wilderness becomes a fertile field" (v. 15b). There will be abundance. "The fertile field is considered as a forest" (v. 15c).

Moreover, it also speaks to the moral and social needs (v. 16). The Spirit of God is revolutionary. You cannot remain the same and be under the control of the Holy Spirit. He brings about radical changes from the inside out. He brings blessings to God's people. Isaiah depicts the work of the Spirit as bringing about a new creation (24:18; 31:3; 44:3). The work of the Spirit of God is so revolutionary that He alone can restore what the depravity of sin has destroyed.

The Spirit enables the Messiah to rule with righteousness (v. 16). Justice and righteousness are the gifts of God. Jesus Christ was the perfectly Spirit-controlled man. "The Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove. . . And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness. . . . And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. . . ." (Luke 3:22; 4:1, 13). His whole life and ministry was always under the control of the Spirit of God.

What will be the result of this righteousness? Peace, perfect peace. "And the service of righteousness, quietness and confidence forever" (v. 17). The only way we can ever have peace in our world is through God's righteousness. Only when Jesus Christ rules in righteousness do we experience inner peace. Only when He returns as Prince of peace will our world experience everlasting peace.

"Then my people . . ." (v. 18-20). The Holy Spirit produces righteousness and the result is peace. Peace comes through righteousness alone. When the heart is filled with righteousness, there will be peace. A heart full of sin is not full of peace. It is turbulent. When you have that combination, you have perfect, everlasting peace.

Is Isaiah describing God's people as the sheep of His pasture in verse eighteen? He uses a term that denotes a pasture. The Good Shepherd provides for God's sheep. His people dwell in a restful pasture (Psalm 23). "My people will live in a peaceful habitation. And in secure dwellings and in undisturbed resting places" (Isaiah 32:18). God's people will dwell in perfect peace. The imagery is powerful: "peaceful habitation," "secure dwellings," and "undisturbed resting places." What a contrast this is to the "hail" of judgment described in verse nineteen.

Like Israel, we too, are tempted to put our trust in "short beds and narrow sheets" on a cold winter night. We are advised to trust in military alliances, materialism, humanism, scientific advances and technology, a strong central government, paternalism and if you are religious, legalism.

It is only when we come to the end of ourselves and acknowledge God's right to rule our lives that we can experience the divine empowerment for righteousness

There is only one source of security in an insecure world. It is found in the Prince of peace who reigns in righteousness.

When Jesus Christ, the Righteous King reigns, there is perfect peace.

Even so, come Lord Jesus. Come quickly.

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