CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
DECEMBER14 2024

Scripture Story: Isaiah 11; 29; 40.
Commentary: *Prophets and Kings*, chapter 58.

a candle in the dark



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flashlight

"Century after century passed away; finally the voices of the prophets ceased. The hand of the oppressor was heavy upon Israel. As the Jews departed from God, faith grew dim, and hope well-nigh ceased to illuminate the future. The words of the prophets were uncomprehended by many. . . . But in heaven's council the hour for the coming of Christ had been determined; and 'when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son. . . .' Galatians 4:4" (*Prophets and Kings*, p. 700).

key text

"Those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

(Isaiah 40:31, NIV)

what do you think?

When things are really going badly for me, I usually . . .

___ talk to someone about it.
___ pray.
___ think of something I can do to make things better.
___ get more and more discouraged.
___ try to avoid dealing with the situation.
___ focus on positive things.
___ imagine a time when things will be better.

did you know?

The prophecies of Isaiah come from some of the darkest hours of Jewish history—from a time God seemed to have abandoned His people. Foreign invaders threatened the nation of Judah. Long after the time of the historical prophet Isaiah, his prophecies took on deeper meaning as the nation entered its darkest time—the time Jerusalem was captured by the Babylonians, and its people were taken into captivity. But through God's prophet came a message of hope for the future.

Like a tiny candle flame flickering in darkness came the promise that someday the years of exile and captivity would end. God's people would be restored to their land.

But the prophecies of Isaiah looked forward to more than just a return from exile. They pointed forward to a coming Deliverer who would do far more than provide freedom for exiled captives. They foretold the coming of a Messiah who would set people free from bondage to sin and despair. When things were at their worst, God gave His people the hope of ultimate deliverance.

INTO THE STORY

"A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear LORD—and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

"He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; 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. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist.

"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. The cow will feed with the bear and their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the cobra's den, and the young child will put its hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

"Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint."

(Isaiah 11:1-9; 40:28-31, NIV)



OUT OF THE STORY

What promises did God make to His people in these passages?

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_____

What hope would those promises have offered to Jews faced with the loss of their freedom and their homeland?

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If you lived in the time of the exile to Babylon and you heard or read these prophecies, how do you think they would make you feel?

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What kind of Messiah or Deliverer is promised in these passages? What will He do for God's people?

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How are these prophecies relevant to us today? What hope do they offer for people in 2024?

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punch lines

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned" **(Isaiah 9:2, NIV).**

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this" **(Isaiah 9:6, 7, NIV).**

"And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us" **(Romans 5:5, NIV).**

"But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship" **(Galatians 4:4, 5, NIV).**

further insight

"From the days of Enoch the promises repeated through patriarchs and prophets had kept alive the hope of His appearing."—Ellen G. White, *Prophets and Kings*, p. 699

"In word and deed the Messiah was to reveal the glory of God the Father, to make known to fallen humanity the infinite love of God."—Ellen G. White, *Royalty and Ruin*, p. 244

Sabbath

Read Galatians 4:4, 5 and Isaiah 51:4-6.

In His Word, God has committed to humanity the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are the supreme, authoritative, and the infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the test of experience, the definitive revealer of doctrines, and the trustworthy record of God's acts in history" (Fundamental Belief 1, The Holy Scriptures).

When things were darkest for the people of Israel, God promised hope in the form of a Deliverer who would come and restore the world to a perfect state. When we're at our darkest hour, God also promises to help us. Choose one Bible verse from the passages we're studying this week, plus one other Bible promise, that can give you hope when you're feeling discouraged. Write both verses out below:

Sunday

Read Isaiah 11:1-9 and Isaiah 40:28-31.

Imagine that you are one of the exiled Jews in Babylon. When you think of what has happened to your homeland and your people, how do you feel? What are your feelings toward God?

When you meet on the Sabbath with other Jews in exile, someone stands and reads the words of the prophet Isaiah—the same passages found in our *Into the Story* section. As you listen to these words, what thoughts and ideas come to mind? Do they change the way you feel about the future? about God?

Monday

Read Isaiah 40:31.

In some Bible translations this passage begins: "Those who *hope* in the LORD . . ." Other translations begin: "They that *wait* upon the LORD . . ."

The idea of *hope* is closely connected to the idea of *waiting*. If we always got what we wanted right away, we'd never know the meaning of the word "hope." Hope is what we do when things aren't going our way, when our prayers aren't answered right away. Hope is what carries us through the dark hours while we *wait* for an answer to prayer. What are you waiting for today? What gives you hope?

Tuesday

Read Isaiah 25:9.

Read the passage from *Prophets and Kings* in the *Flashlight* section of the lesson. In this passage Ellen White takes us beyond the time of Isaiah, beyond the time of the exile and return from Babylon, to the era when Jesus was born. At that time, Mrs. White says that "faith grew dim, and hope well-nigh ceased to illuminate the future." Yet it was at that very time that God's divine plan fell into place. When things seemed so dark that many people had given up hoping for a Deliverer, at that moment God Himself came into the world in the form of Jesus of Nazareth—the ultimate Deliverer.

God's people waited thousands of years for the promise of a Messiah to be fulfilled. Jesus' followers have waited 2,000 years for the promise of His second coming to be fulfilled. Do you think today we're living in the time when faith has grown dim, and hope no longer seems to illuminate the future? If so, what can this passage say to us?

Wednesday

Look up Isaiah 9:6 in the *Punch Lines* section. Using a Bible concordance and/or a chain reference Bible, find other verses in the Old Testament that foretell the coming of Jesus. List some below. What information does each verse give about the coming Messiah?

Thursday

Read Psalm 31:24; Jeremiah 29:11; Romans 15:13; and Romans 12:12.

Our Bible lesson this week has been all about offering hope to people who are discouraged. When the Jews were discouraged and felt God had abandoned them, the promise of a Messiah and Deliverer gave them hope. What gives you hope when times are tough? If you had a friend who was discouraged, what hope could you offer? Can you think of someone you know now with whom you can share this hope? How will you do it?

Friday

Read 1 John 5:14.

In your prayer time today, ask God to keep hope alive in your heart. If you're discouraged about any situation in your life right now, choose a Bible verse you can memorize and repeat to give you hope. Tell God in prayer that you are claiming that verse as His personal promise of hope to you!

this week's reading*

Prophets and Kings, chapter 58.

**Royalty and Ruin* is a special adaptation of *Prophets and Kings*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press®. Get more information about it by going to www.cornerstoneconnections.net and clicking on "Conflict of the Ages series." By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages series each year.