

Monday, June 22, 2020

## **The peaceful kingdom**

**- Pastor Hank French**

*The wolf shall live with the lamb,  
the leopard shall lie down with the kid,  
the calf and the lion and the fatling together,  
and a little child shall lead them.  
The cow and the bear shall graze,  
their young shall lie down together;  
and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.  
The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp,  
and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den.  
They will not hurt or destroy  
on all my holy mountain;  
for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD  
as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:6-9).*

This beautiful text begins with what is called a messianic prophesy. Isaiah prophesizes that from the line of King David will come a Messiah to fulfill the purposes of God. About this Messiah, Isaiah says, "The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:1-2). The ultimate consequence of the Messiah's coming will be the establishment of the "peaceful kingdom" where no one will hurt or destroy anymore because the "earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD."

Let's back up to Genesis and the story of creation. After creating humankind in God's own image, God said to them, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food" (Genesis 1:29-30). Notice that humankind and all the other creatures are vegetarians! No one eats meat! The point being that God's original intention was that life—all life—be sustainable without violence. Violence entered history following humankind's "fall" into sin.

Now back to Isaiah where "The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox." This text reaffirms God's intention that life—all life—be sustainable without violence.

Now let's move forward to Mark where we discover that after his baptism, "the Spirit immediately drove [Jesus] out into the wilderness. He was in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan; and he was with the wild beasts... (Mark 1:12-13). And he was apparently not in danger. Could this be Mark's way of saying that, in Jesus, God is moving to realize God's original intention that life—all life—be sustainable without violence? Is Jesus the precursor to the peaceful kingdom? Shouldn't we who follow Jesus commit ourselves to the vision of the peaceful kingdom where no one hurts or

destroys because the “earth [is] full of the knowledge of the LORD?”

Prayer: Lord, make us “instruments of your peace; where there is hatred let [us] sow love.” Amen.