

**Conversations on
Isa. 11:1–10**

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Watch the clip from *All Dogs Go to Heaven* (bit.ly/AllDogsCharlie). In the film clip, Charlie sees a lion lying down with lambs and hears that heaven is orderly and calm. Is this a good image of heaven? Why or why not?

WHAT is important to know?

The vision of harmony in verses 6–10 is often referred to as the vision of “the peaceable kingdom.” The image is of a return to Eden when God’s reign is finally consummated. When the anointed one described in earlier verses ushers it in, broken creation becomes the completely harmonious creation God intended. The earth will now be filled with the “knowledge of the LORD” (v. 9). This Hebrew term for knowledge is more than cognitive information; it is the full entering into and experiencing of what is known. So the earth will be infused with the reality of God, and it shall be as comprehensive as the waters of the sea (v. 9). (*Bruce C. Birch*)

- ✧ Read verses 6–10. How is this description different or like your idea of Eden or the coming of God’s reign? How will the fulfillment of God’s reign be a “return to Eden”? Or will it be different in some way?
- ✧ What is the difference between knowing as “cognitive information” versus knowing as “entering into and experiencing”?

WHERE is God in these words?

The church is not the kingdom of God, but its relationship to the kingdom signals its mission. The realm of God shines through the witness and mission of the church as the poor have good news preached to them and are judged with righteousness and equity. The Messiah awaits the church in a future of righteousness marked off by the gifts of wisdom and understanding, counsel and might, knowledge and the fear of God, beckoning the church to a new future not of its own making but one made possible by YHWH. The challenge is not to be stuck in the traditions of the past but to be open to the new realm in which the proud will be punished, the humble will be exalted, and the practice of justice will be the order of a new day. (*Noel Leo Erskine*)

- ✧ Why is it important that God’s future is not one of the church’s making?
- ✧ What does the church have to do with the kingdom of God?

- ✧ Where does the church seem “stuck” in tradition? How might our traditions help us to recognize God’s promised new day?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

This is how hope gets its start—it emerges as a tiny tendril in an unexpected place. Where are the stumps in our own lives; where do we feel cut off? Can we imagine or believe that even now God might be nurturing the growth of something new and good from our old, dead dreams? Consider what areas of our lives most need the promise of new life, and how we might become open to such newness. Isaiah’s promise is not just a future one; even now there are tiny signs of hope and life in places that look dead and discarded. (*Stacey Simpson Duke*)

- ✧ Where are there “stumps” in your life, or places where you have felt “cut off”?
- ✧ How has God nurtured in you the growth of something new?
- ✧ Where have you seen unexpected signs of hope and new life?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

What of the “little child” who leads them? Shall Christians think of Jesus again? We should not make this move too quickly. Like the calf, lamb, kid, and ox, the child stands for the vulnerable, and is joined by others even younger and more vulnerable, happily playing in a safe world at last. Why is it the child who leads the whole bleating, mooing, yipping, snuffling, roaring, giggling company? The new creation wants a human presence—new, bright, undefended, and free—to love and care for it all. (*Paul Simpson Duke*)

- ✧ Why is it important not to move too quickly to think of Jesus in this passage?
- ✧ What would it take to make this world safer for the most vulnerable?
- ✧ What do children teach us about love for all creatures?

*God of love, thank you for your presence among us.
Help us recognize your loving presence in the world. Amen.*