



AWAKE

THE RIGHTEOUS  
REIGN OF  
GOD

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# THE ORDER OF SERVICE

- I. Bell tap or organ voluntary as a signal for silence
- II. Singing
- III. The Apostles' Creed
- IV. Prayer, closing with the Lord's Prayer in concert
- V. Singing
- VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
- VII. Responsive reading of the lesson text by school
- VIII. The Decalogue

## THE LESSON

- I. Organ interlude while the classes are being arranged
- II. Class study of the lesson
- III. Warning bell — 5 minutes
- IV. Closing bell — silence

## THE CLOSING

- I. Singing
- II. Review and application of the lesson
- III. Secretary's report
- IV. The Church School Creed
- V. Singing
- VI. Benediction

## EDITORIAL STAFF

Rev. Dr. Roderick Belin, Publisher  
Faith Waters, Lessons  
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## THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

## THE CHURCH SCHOOL CREED

I believe my AME Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

*AME Discipline*





# Your God Reigns

*Lesson Scripture: Isaiah 52:1-12*

*Focus Scripture: Isaiah 52:7-12*

**KEY VERSE:** How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”  
Isaiah 52:7

## WORDS TO KNOW

*PEACE – a state of security and tranquility*

*SALVATION – deliverance from foes, safety, rescued*

*REIGN – to act as king*

*SENTINELS – soldiers or guards whose job is to stand and keep watch*

*REDEEMED – to be freed*

*PURIFY – cleanse, make pure*

## FOCUS SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 52:7-12

- 7 How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns."
- 8 Listen! Your sentinels lift up their voices, together they sing for joy; for in plain sight they see the return of the Lord to Zion.
- 9 Break forth together into singing, you ruins of Jerusalem; for the Lord has comforted his people, he has redeemed Jerusalem.
- 10 The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.
- 11 Depart, depart, go out from there! Touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of it, purify yourselves, you who carry the vessels of the Lord.
- 12 For you shall not go out in haste, and you shall not go in flight; for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rear guard.

## INTRODUCTION

For the summer quarter, we are going to focus on the theme, *The Righteous Reign of God*. The summer quarter explores the biblical teachings about God's reign. Beginning with Old Testament declarations of God's righteous reign, the lessons proceed to Jesus' teachings about the kingdom of God. The third unit considers additional New Testament texts that elaborate on the theme of Jesus as king and what it means for believers to participate as joint heirs with Christ in God's eternal reign.

In unit one, "The Prophets Proclaim God's Power," is a five-week study of the reign of God as depicted in Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah, and Zechariah. The prophet Isaiah was reared in an aristocratic home and married to a prophetess. Isaiah called the people to turn from their sins and warned them of God's judgment and punishment. Today's lesson is focusing on God's powerful and peaceful reign.

*Do you struggle to feel hopeful during times of trouble in your life? What happens when you do not get the desired outcome you prayed for?*

## BIBLE STORY

Isaiah is considered by some to be the greatest prophet; and, his writings are first of the latter prophets of the Bible. The first thirty-nine chapters of Isaiah carry the message of judgment for sin. He warns Judah, Israel, and the surrounding heathen nations about God's judgment for sin. Isaiah desired for the people to live godly lives in obedience to God's commands. The nations refused to listen to Isaiah's warnings. There are consequences for our actions.

The second half of Isaiah, comprised of twenty-seven chapters, is a message of forgiveness, comfort, and hope. Isaiah's message of hope is rooted in the expectation of the coming Messiah. Based on what Jesus Christ has done, God freely offers forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith. If we follow and obey God, we can have eternal peace and fellowship with him.

The events in the second half of Isaiah occur after the seventy-year captivity of God's people. Their disobedience led to punishment from God. But God always offers hope for those who repent and change their ways. In chapter fifty-two, Isaiah declares that the Lord will rescue his people. We all have struggles in our lives that seem overwhelming. But when we remember Jesus is our redeemer, we can be at peace knowing God is in control.

The enemies of God paid nothing for acquiring Jerusalem, nor acknowledged his power, and so have no claim on his people. Nor would they be paid any amount of money for their return. God would be glorified for rescuing them from Babylon. Whatever situation you are facing, it is nothing in comparison to God's power! "Your God reigns!" (vv.7 - 10; Zech. 6:8 -14). God has sovereign rule over the world. Those who hear the message from God are commanded to rejoice. Even in the midst of the ruins of Jerusalem, there was reason to sing and rejoice. God had comforted and redeemed Jerusalem.

In verse 10, there is mention of the "Lord has borne his holy arm." God's arm is often associated with redemption and salvation. God would redeem Israel from Babylon and all the world would see the deliverance. Ultimately, the glory of the redeeming God would be seen in Jesus Christ, especially at his return. God redeemed us from

sin through the sacrifice of his son, Jesus Christ.

Cyrus, God's anointed, decreed that the Jewish exiles could return safely to Jerusalem (45:1; Ezra 1:1 – 4). God desired for the people to leave but not touch any of the pagan religious objects (v.11). The priests and Levites, who were responsible for taking back the articles of the temple seized by Nebuchadnezzar, had to purify themselves first. The people did not rush out of Babylon. God would protect the Jewish people just as he had when the Israelites were freed from Egypt (v.12; Exo. 13:21, 14:19 – 20). They also had the king's approval and protection.

*How would the Jewish people experience peace? How do you create and experience peace in your life?*

## SANKOFA

**Preventing Gun Violence: How My Life's Work Became My Life's Purpose** by Rev. GLENN G. GRAYSON (*Summary*)



Rev. Glenn Garrett Grayson, M.Div. was the pastor of Wesley Center AME Zion Church in Pittsburgh, PA. He also served for 17 years as the presiding elder of the Pittsburgh District. Despite his best efforts, he could not shield even his own family from the senseless violence that occurred in the area. On October 17, 2010, his innocent son, Jeron Xavier Grayson, became a part of this tragic statistic when he lost his life through senseless gun violence.

In 2000, Rev. Grayson founded a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, The Center That C.A.R.E.S. (Children/Adults Recreational and Educational Services). Presently, The Center That C.A.R.E.S. is highly noted for its after-school tutorial and enrichment programs, serving over 125 families from grades Pre-K through college throughout the Hill District Community of Pittsburgh. C.A.R.E.S. is much more than an acronym. It represents the foundation on which youth and young adults can build their lives with positive experiences that expand their learning. The C.A.R.E.S. promise to every child who enters its doors is to be met personally where they are in their diverse levels of personal, social, and academic development. Each child will be given



a helping hand to climb, step-by-step to meet adulthood with the strength and courage to be able to reach their life's plans and goals.

In 2011, to continue the important community work that had begun and to make good on the life of his son and the many lives of other innocent victims of gun violence, The Center That C.A.R.E.S. purchased a 14,000 sq. ft. community center in Pittsburgh. The center, which sits in the heart of Pittsburgh's Hill District, had been closed for more than 12 years at the time of purchase.

Upon opening in July 2014, the community center would be renamed the Jeron X. Grayson Community Center and would be devoted to continuing the necessary preventative work of enriching the lives of middle school and high school students, with an increased emphasis on preventing gang activity and gun violence.

Source: <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2014/04/07/preventing-gun-violence-how-my-life-s-work-became-my-life-s-purpose>

*How did Rev. Grayson turn the pain of losing his son to gun violence into a work to promote peace? What can you do to promote peace where you live?*

## REAL TALK, FAITH WALK

Our actions can lead to consequences that are unexpected. The Israelites were punished for their disobedience and taken into captivity. After 70 years, God rescued them. The same can happen to us if we are not cautious.

Corion Evans, who was 16 years old, rescued three teenage girls from drowning. Then he also had to rescue a police officer who was drowning too. God always has a way to rescue us even in the most challenging situations. Listen to him describe what happened.

[https://youtu.be/ymLY\\_kgf75o](https://youtu.be/ymLY_kgf75o)

What songs do you like to listen to that encourage you to joyfully praise God? Search on your music streaming devices and find two

songs that encourage praise of God. Or use the *AME Hymnal* to find two songs. Once you find them, share the songs with a partner.

## SUMMARY

1. Who is going to give the captives peace in the midst of their struggles (v.7)? Where does your peace originate from?
2. Why did God tell the people to “sing for joy” (vv.8 – 9)? Why do you praise God? How do you praise God?
3. Who would protect the people as they traveled back to Jerusalem (v.12)? Who can we trust to protect us when we are troubled?

## CLOSING DEVOTIONS

*Prayer: God, thank you for all you have done for me. I praise you for salvation, peace, and protection. Amen.*

**HYMN: “TO GOD BE THE GLORY”**  
(AMEC HYMNAL #21)

# God's Kingdom of Peace

*Lesson Scripture: Isaiah 65:17-25*

*Focus Scripture: Isaiah 65:17-25*

SAMPLE

**KEY VERSE:** The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord. Isaiah 65:25

## WORDS TO KNOW

**REJOICE** – to be joyful

**DELIGHT** – pleasure

**DISTRESS** – to feel harassed or troubled

**ACCURSED** – to be under a curse or bad prediction

**VAIN** – ineffectual, idle

**CALAMITY** – doomed for misfortune

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE: ISAIAH 65:17-25**

- 17** For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth; the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind.
- 18** But be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating; for I am about to create Jerusalem as a joy, and its people as a delight.
- 19** I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress.
- 20** No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.
- 21** They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.
- 22** They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat; for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.
- 23** They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord—and their descendants as well.
- 24** Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear.
- 25** The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, the lion shall eat straw like the ox; but the serpent—its food shall be dust! They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

**INTRODUCTION**

How would you respond to the question, “What are your hopes and dreams for your life?” Most people desire to have a career, family, house, peace, and a long life. It is only natural to want prosperity and longevity. Because without hope, we can be led to have feelings of despair and depression. The world is chaotic. Just listen to the news or read the newspaper. People are killing one another for no reason. Children are turning against parents. Schools are not safe places. There are diseases of unknown origins killing people. What are we supposed to do?

In today’s lesson, Isaiah 65 describes God’s new creation in which God will establish perfect peace.

*How do you view the future of the world, based on what you see happening now?*

## BIBLE STORY

Isaiah gives us a glimpse of God's "new heavens and a new earth" (65:17). He had previously promised God would do "new things" for his people (42:9; 48:6). It will be a place where no sin dwells. All of the pain, crying, suffering, sickness, sorrow, and evilness of this world ends and will never be remembered again. God's people are encouraged to "be glad and rejoice forever in what I am creating" (65:18). The new Jerusalem God creates is worth rejoicing about.

After the Israelite's seventy years of captivity and exile, God would create the new Jerusalem and restore the people. They would enjoy abundance, peace, and security. God also rejoices in the new city and will be greatly pleased with the Israelites who are new people. And God takes joy also in the people's joy and peace with him (65:18-19).

Isaiah's prophecy is directly connected with the Messiah's kingdom and the cross. The Messiah's (Jesus) coming would undo all the effects of the fall (Gen. 3) by providing a way for reconciliation with God. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross gives us the path to peace (Eph. 2:13 – 17). Ultimately, there will be a final judgment on God's enemies and the eradication of violence (Rev. 20:7 – 15).

In the new creation, God's people will have complete satisfaction. We will not experience the sufferings and frustrations that result from sin, but will enjoy life as God intended for us to enjoy it (65:21– 23). The absence of sin will mean that, above all, we will live in perfect fellowship with God. The world of nature also will benefit in this new era of genuine peace and harmony (65:24 – 25).

*What is unique about "the new heaven and new earth" that God will create? How does the promise of a new world make you feel? How can we experience the peace of God in the midst of the turbulent times we currently live in?*

## SANKOFA

"True peace is not merely the absence of tension; it is the presence of justice." — Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.





We may think if we do not have any trouble or strife in our lives, it means we have peace. This needs to be explained in light of the quote by Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He is saying that just because a person does not have inner struggles, unrest, or hostility with an individual or group, this does not equate to true peace. True peace is when justice is present. Justice only occurs when everyone is treated with fairness and equity in society, the justice system, schools, on jobs, etc. When God creates a new heaven and new earth, we will experience true peace because of God's judgment and justice.

*What actions did Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. take to ensure true peace for all?*

## REAL TALK, FAITH WALK

God desires for us to be peacemakers. What actions can you take as individuals, and as a group, to help ensure all people can experience true peace now? Write down some actions:

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This week, discuss with your church missionary society and Y.P.D. a service project that can be done based on your proposed actions.

## SUMMARY

Based on today's lesson, what emotions will we experience in the new heaven and new earth? How do the animals and humans relate to each another? What happens to those who are violent and wicked? Why will God be rejoicing?

God's promises of a new heaven and new earth offer us hope and peace. The world will become like the Garden of Eden, but much better. For these reasons we can rejoice no matter our current circumstances. We have to be intentional in our pursuit of peace. What special places, songs, or circumstances give you peace? Everyone needs to reconnect with God to receive the hope and peace that he gives us.

**CLOSING DEVOTIONS**

*Prayer: God, we are suffering because of injustices, violence, and all types of evilness on earth. Your promises contained in your Word give us hope. We are going to seek to be peacemakers wherever we go with the help of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

**HYMN: "WHEN PEACE, LIKE A RIVER"**  
(AMEC HYMNAL #448)

SAMPLE