



**DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR SMALL GROUPS
11 & 12 DECEMBER 2021
THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT**

**“O KING OF THE NATIONS”
ISAIAH 2.2-4**

- **Begin by reading the Scripture passage together.**
- **Review the video of the sermon if needed (see <http://www.brmc.org.sg/category/resources/sermons>).**
- **Feel free to discuss as few or as many questions as best fits your group’s current context and present stage in life.**
- **Remember to budget some time (15-20 min) to pray with and for one another, before ending your group session.**

***O KING OF THE NATIONS and Desired One, Cornerstone that makes both one:
Come, and deliver us whom you formed out of the dust of the earth.***

***O come, Desire of nations bind
all peoples in one heart and mind.
From dust thou brought us forth to life;
deliver us from earthly strife.
Rejoice! Rejoice!
Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.***

Sidebox: Kings in the times of Israel

In its early history, Israel had no king, and was led by judges and prophets. After 400 years, the people approached Samuel asking for a monarch, as they sought to “be like all the other nations” (1 Samuel 8:19-20). Although disappointed at their lack of faith, God gave in to their pleas.

The nation was blessed by several good kings. Of note:

- King David: “a man after His own heart” (1 Samuel 13:14) who trusted the LORD deeply (1 Samuel 16:37)
- King Asa: whose heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life (1 Kings 15:14) and destroyed the idols erected by his father
- Kings Hezekiah and Josiah: who “did what was right in the eyes of the LORD” (2 Kings 18:3,22:2), restored the services of worship in the Temple and led the nation in celebrating the Passover.

Yet the good kings were greatly outnumbered by those who did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord. Isaiah lived during the reigns of several kings, including that of King Ahaz in Judah. Following the ways of the kings in the northern kingdom of Israel, Ahaz made idols and even participated in child sacrifice (2 Chronicles 28). And even these so-called good kings sinned, often severely. David himself committed sexual adultery and murdered the woman’s husband, one of his own loyal captives.

In this antiphon, we are reminded of a King who rules on a different set of principles and priorities. The same creator God who “fashioned us from dust” and who sent Jesus to die on the cross, will also rule as “King of the Nations” and bring peace to the world. Jesus’ reign is built upon his loving sacrifice.

Discussion Questions

1. Isaiah speaks of a future time where “in days to come, the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established as the highest of the mountains” (v.2).

1a) What is the significance of ‘mountain’ in this verse?

- In the Bible, mountains were important places where God met his people. Mountains hold great significance throughout the Bible. Think about Moses receiving the Ten Commandments on Mt Sinai (Exodus 19), Abraham sacrificing Isaac on Mount Moriah (Genesis 22), Elijah winning victory over the false prophets on Mount Carmel (1 Kings

18), and Jesus' transfiguration on a mountain (see Matthew 17; later tradition attributes this as Mount Tabor, mentioned in Judges 4).

- “The mountain of the LORD’s house” refers to Mount Zion, one of the hills on which the city of Jerusalem is sited. The LORD’s Temple built by King Solomon was located in Jerusalem, which became synonymous with Mount Zion.
- Many other ancient peoples also shared the cultural symbolism of mountains as places of divine presence or encounter (e.g. Zeus on Mt Olympus in Greece, and Baal on Mt Cassius in northern Syria). This perhaps arose from the shared cultural perception that mountains are closer to the heavens. In a similar vein, the Samaritans also built an alternative Temple on Mount Gerizim – the woman in John 4 refers to this Samaritan temple without naming the mountain.
- Thus, when Isaiah speaks of Mt Zion being the highest of all mountains, the reference may be both to its literal physical elevation, as well to Mt Zion’s spiritual loftiness. The LORD is more highly exalted than all the other so-called gods.

1b) What does the ‘LORD’s house’ refer to?

- The LORD’s house (Hebrew *bayit*) is God’s dwelling/presence, which in the Old Testament was primarily located in the physical Temple structure in Jerusalem / Mt Zion. The Temple was a place which was revered and considered holy, where the people would be able to meet the LORD.
- However, even in the Old Testament, it is acknowledged that the LORD, being the Creator of the universe, does not reside in a physical location (1 Kings 8:27, 2 Chronicles 2:6, Isaiah 66:1, Jeremiah 23:24. See also Acts 17:24).
- We are reminded in John 1:14 of how “The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us”.
- In Christ, we – the church universal, the one people of God – have become God’s temple, the dwelling place for God’s Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16-17).

1c) What is the significance of “all the nations streaming to [Mount Zion]”?

- Isaiah paints a glorious picture when every person, regardless of their race, ethnicity, nationality, or culture, will be welcome in the LORD’s presence.
- This is significant because the physical Temple in Jerusalem was not fully open to non-Jews. In Jesus’ time, non-Jews (that is, Gentiles), were not allowed to go any further into the Temple complex than the so-called Court of the Gentiles. Prominent signs were placed at the boundaries warning that the penalty for violation was death. Acts 21:27-29 describes one such purported violation and the frenzy which ensued. All these underscore that the physical Temple was not in fact open “to all nations”.

- Just as the Bible acknowledges that the Lord over all the universe is not restricted by a physical structure, so the Bible likewise affirms that the Lord over all the universe calls everyone, without restriction as to their background, to come seek and worship him.

2. With references to vv.3-4, how will God achieve the peace that is set out in v.4?

- In contrast to seeking political dominance or nationalism, the nations will approach the mountain of the LORD, and seek out “(God’s) ways, so that (they) may walk in his paths”.
- The nations will be attracted to the LORD’s teachings and laws such that “they will turn their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks” – it is their willing response.
- This is also reflected in the words of the antiphon, where Christ is described as the “desire of the nations”.

3. Consider the second line in this week’s antiphon – what does it mean when we proclaim God as our ‘cornerstone’?

- A cornerstone represents the foundation on which the entire structure of the building is constructed. It is the first stone to be laid, and ensures the building is stable.
- We yearn for God to save and redeem all nations, and in this, Christ is the cornerstone, the very foundation of humanity’s salvation. We are warned in Matthew 21 (where Jesus quotes Psalm 118) not to reject the cornerstone. In Ephesians 2:19-22, Paul tells of how through Christ, and together with the apostles and prophets, both Jews and non-Jews are made ‘citizens’ and ‘members of his household’. 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:28, Colossians 3:11, and Revelation 7:19 all reinforce this same point – that Christ calls all nations and peoples to him to constitute his one Body and one Temple, regardless of race, ethnicity, or culture.
- Sadly, through the centuries, race, ethnicity, and culture have been hindrances toward Christian unity and mutual love. We reject racism as unbiblical and yearn for God to unite all peoples as one in submission to Christ the King.

Response, Application, Prayer

- 4. As we acknowledge Christ as 'King of the Nations', we surrender our desires to his plans and 'rule', and look to his law and judgement (vv.3-4).**
 - Are there any areas in our lives where we have difficulty allowing Christ full sovereignty? Pray for one another that we may faithfully submit to his rule over our lives and for the world.**

- 5. As Christians, we take heart that one day, "nation will not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (v4)". Yet to those who don't know Christ, it can be easy to feel like many things in the world are spiraling out of control with little hope for peaceful resolution.**
 - This Advent, pray that God will stir up our hearts to share this wonderful peace with those around us.**
 - Ask God to show you a person whom he wants you to be a witness to in this season. Perhaps this person may be of a different ethnic or cultural background.**