

## From Our Pastor November 10, 2018

Sabbath Greetings to Everyone!

On 11 November, at 5:00 am, an armistice with Germany was signed in a railroad carriage at Compiègne, France. Tomorrow is the 100th anniversary of that day-- the end of World War 1, also known as "The Great War" and "The War to End all Wars"--which of course it was not. At 11 am on 11 November 1918—"the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month"—a ceasefire came into effect. There were still six hours between the signing of the armistice and its taking effect, so the opposing armies on the Western Front began to withdraw from their positions. But fighting continued along many areas of the front. How senseless were the deaths of the men who died during those six hours.

The armistice was agreed to because both sides were exhausted. Germany assumed that the "14 Points" proposed by US President Woodrow Wilson would be agreed to by the British and French, pretty much agreeing that the sides would all just quit fighting and return to the way things were in July of 1914. After all, German armies still occupied some of France and most of Belgium, so they did not feel defeated. The Kaiser's armies had retreated from the battlefield in good order.

German Chancellor Hindenburg, who had started the war, and other senior German leaders spread the story that their armies had not really been defeated. This resulted in the stab-in-the-back legend, which attributed Germany's defeat to the supposed intentional sabotage of the war effort, particularly by Jews, Socialists, and Bolsheviks. A young corporal named Adolf was among those incensed at German leadership and was determined to win the war next time.

The state of war came to an official end with the signing of the Treaty of Versailles. It was signed on 28 June 1919 in Versailles, France exactly five years after the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand which led to World War I. President Wilson spent months in France negotiating the terms of the treaty with the British, French, and German leaders. Angering the French and British, he strongly defended lenient terms for Germany so that the nation could rebuild and engage in trade. However, Wilson became ill--some believe he had his first stroke combined with pneumonia--and was bedfast for weeks. When he recovered well enough to attend meetings, he abandoned his position and gave in to the putative demands of the Allies.

Germany was forced to accept the responsibility of for causing all the loss and damage during the war, give up large territories including all African colonies, plus pay reparations of 132 billion marks-- equivalent to US \$442 billion today. Several leaders warned that the treaty was simply a road to another war. John Maynard Keynes (a British delegate to the Paris Peace Conference), predicted that the treaty was too harsh—a "Carthaginian peace." The twenty million or so who died in this first World

War, were to be followed to the grave by two and a half times that number beginning twenty years later.

The treaty was an effort to create peace after a terrible and costly conflict, but it was a failure. It stands as one more effort with good intentions, but bad results.

The words of the prophet Isaiah came true, "The way of peace they have not known..." (Isaiah 59:8). The true path to peace is to follow the words of our creator. As Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, was inspired to write, "To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace." (Luke 1:79)

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