

Epiphany 1, 2017
Prophetically Speaking
St. Andrew's Anglican Church
Jacksonville, Or
By Rev. Mr. Bill Baker

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isaiah 60: 1-3)

Arise, shine; for thy light has come...Oh, we would do well to read the Prophet Isaiah. It is, after all, Isaiah who illustrates so powerfully how the Almighty is going to bring about the salvation of mankind. It is Isaiah who lines it all out and where we can see the workings of God in our time, as we witness the lives of those who lived in the darkness, before the Almighty was manifested in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Going back to the beginning of Isaiah, we can see right away in chapter 1, Isaiah, being used by the Lord, speaking to a corrupt nation, *“Hear, O heavens, and give ear: for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.”* And when did this rebellion begin?...It began in the garden of course, but most people, when envisioning this episode in the Garden of Eden, imagine that it was after eating and gaining the knowledge of good and evil that the rebellion began. But, look closer...the rebellion really began at the mere decision to take the fruit in the first place...the sin was not simply and only in the act itself, but in the thought that provoked it! Mankind, being inclined to sin...only needed a nudge.

And, by the time we get to chapter 6, we see the Holiness of God as he lets it be know that sin will not go unpunished, that inequity will be dealt with. As Isaiah was lifted up to see heavenly visions he is told to return and tell the people, *“Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.* And then Isaiah is told that the hearts of his people will be made fat, that they will be satisfied by their iniquities, that they may not understand their errors and be converted...they must suffer to realize the depth of their transgressions and their inability to

recover on their own merits. Brothers and sisters...we are in a serious time out! And unfortunately it is our stubbornness that continues to condemn us for eternity...

Now, Isaiah is a big book...66 chapters! And, fortunately for us, by chapter 9 we can already see the Almighty at work on our behalf.

“Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation...The people that walked in the darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Wow! So, what’s the plan? What do these exciting words really mean? Well, I’ll tell you this...God is not hiding his plan from Isaiah and Isaiah in turn is prophetically clear in chapter 11, *“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord...”*

So, here we have the promise, but we must not forget the purging is still required. There will be lament, there will be tears, and there will be violence, the roots of which find their source in that serpent who cast the first doubts on the minds and hearts of man so long ago...a voice that beguiles from the darkness. But, the prophecies of Isaiah give us hope... *“And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever* (Isaiah 32:17).

This is why we are warned in chapter 44 to give up idols and false gods and follow the Lord of Lords. I know I am giving you lots of scripture, but this is good stuff; *“Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God...they that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit.”* God sees our situation so much clearer than we are able, and his plan for our redemption only requires our repentance and faith...

But, where does our faith come from? How is our desire to behold the Almighty edified to the world? Isaiah 53 gives the answer; *“Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?”*

REVEALED! It is the grace of God through and in Jesus Christ by which we come to the Father. It is not the man whom we desire as Isaiah 53:2 testifies, but the divine that suffers within the man for our redemption, *“he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our inequities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed* (Isaiah 53:5)“.

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising” (Isaiah 60: 1-3)

The book of the prophet Isaiah is incredible and astonishing. Approximately 2700 years ago Isaiah records a heavenly vision which is to take place right here on planet earth...the birth of our Saviour. I wonder how many listened and felt the pull of truth as he expounded the words of God to a rebellious people. I wonder how many of us today are feeling the pull of truth, as Jesus Christ knocks on our hearts. 2000 years ago...700 years after Isaiah took his last breath, Jesus was born in Bethlehem during the days of Herod the king and wise men came from the east asking *“where is he that is born King of the Jews”*. They know don't they!...the divine truth in pulling them and they are seeking the messiah...the savior of the world...they know. But Herod, he is troubled and concerned and in demanding to know where this so called messiah is to be born, he is told by his own priests, *“in Bethleham of Judaea; for thus it is written of by the prophet.”*

Yes, it is the prophet Isaiah they are referring too! Isaiah was a prophet and his prophecies are attested too in the Gospels. And if we are to believe the messages of God sent through men like Isaiah then we of course can believe men like the Apostle John whose visions are recorded in the book of Revelation and speaks to us of the last days when there will be a new heaven and new earth (which by the way is how Isaiah's prophecy also ends in chapters 65 and 66). And there are others. Take Joel for instance. In an eternal blessing for all of God's people, the Lord tells Joel, *“ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed. And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,*

your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions.” But wait you say...that’s Old Testament, maybe that was referring to some other time that has already transpired...okay, but let’s now look at the Book of Acts, written by the Apostle John who also wrote...the visions in the Book of Revelation. In Acts chapter 2 John tells us this, *“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.* Words fitly spoken 2700 years ago...words fitly spoken 2000 years ago...words to remember as we seek to hear the truth through the chaos of our time. Biblical prophecy is behind us, before us and in the midst of us.

We just went through the season of Advent... a time of looking to last things...end times. Anglicans are not very good at such things, but scripture is full of the light that illuminates the future. Our time, maybe like others as well, seem as though the end is near...and maybe it is...or...maybe it isn’t. But we rely on prophecy when we use it to support what we already know has happened...like the birth of Christ. So why are we so shy of prophecy in our day? A famous quote by St. Augustine says, “The new is in the old concealed, the old is in the new revealed.” So true and all the more important when we can acknowledge that we are not living in the new heaven and new earth YET. There is more to come and bible prophecy is still a big part in the spreading of the Gospel. If we are attuned to the signs of the times we must keep our eyes and ears open to what is transpiring all around us. We need not be afraid of what is happening but rest in faith knowing that in the end God Almighty prevails.

In the end...what I want you to grasp with all your might, is that God’s word is the final word. No matter what you feel, or what you hear, what you think, or what you witness...a new heaven and a new earth will come...why believe this?...because the bible says so and it is God’s word to his people. His prophets have been proven right every time, Israel still stands today as a remnant of God’s chosen and the church remains the champion of the world as its suppressors fail to eliminate it. Don’t be afraid of prophecy, its engagement serves to keep our hearts and minds focused on our Father in Heaven.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.