

Advent in Isaiah

The Mountain of the Lord

Isaiah 2:1-5

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The Mountain of the Lord

Scripture

Today is the First Sunday of Advent. This year's Old Testament Scripture Readings for the Season of Advent are taken from Isaiah. So, I have decided to preach from these Scripture Readings. I am calling this series of messages, "Advent in Isaiah."

God called Abram out of Ur of the Chaldeans and led him to the Promised Land. Abram, who became Abraham, would be the one through whom God would bring to the world the blessing of knowing him (Genesis 12:1-3). The great tragedy of Israel was their repeated faithlessness, which blunted their testimony to the Gentiles. But God's purpose always succeeds, and in order that all people in the world (including Gentiles) might receive his blessing, God would send one of Abraham's descendants, from the house of David, who would be Immanuel (God with us, Isaiah 7:14).

Though the prophet Isaiah denounced hypocrisy, greed, and idolatry as offenses against God, he also foresaw the Savior of sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God-with-us (Isaiah 7:14), the child destined to rule forever (9:6-7), the hope of the Davidic throne (11:1), the anointed preacher of the gospel (61:1-3), and much more.

Isaiah pictured the mountain of the Lord, which was a reference to the presence of God, to give God's people hope regarding the triumph of God's purpose for his people, when nations will hurry to learn his way as the only way of salvation.

Let's read about the mountain of the Lord in Isaiah 2:1-5:

¹The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

**²It shall come to pass in the latter days
that the mountain of the house of the Lord
shall be established as the highest**

of the mountains,
and shall be lifted up above the hills;
and all the nations shall flow to it,
³ and many peoples shall come, and say:
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,
and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.
⁴ He shall judge between the nations,
and shall decide disputes for many
peoples;
and they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war anymore.
⁵ O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the Lord. (Isaiah 2:1-5)

Introduction

Alexis de Tocqueville is well-known for his book, *Democracy in America*, which was published after his travels in our country in 1835. It is an early study of the behavior of American society.

Let's imagine that someone from another country visited us today and also wrote about he saw. And let's imagine that he had not been exposed to any media or information about America. What would he say about America today?

Well, he would say that America has many admirable qualities. And yet, there are also areas of concern. For example, he would note that true, biblical faith is declining as a growing number of people embrace non-biblical views about God and his world. Worship of the living God is becoming increasingly syncretistic. In fact, idolatry is on the rise in this country, and many people have

simply rebelled against God. People also care less and less about social justice. And, lurking in the background is the ever-growing threat of terrorism and war.

This description of our country is in fact not dissimilar to the description of Judah in the days of the prophet Isaiah. By the time of Isaiah, the nation of Israel had already divided into Israel (in the north) and Judah (in the south). That division took place in 931 B.C., and Israel was eventually conquered and taken into captivity by Assyria in 722 B.C., never to return again. Isaiah began his prophetic ministry “in the year that King Uzziah died” (Isaiah 6:1) in 740 B.C. and he ministered until the death of Sennacherib (37:48) in 681 B.C. The people in Isaiah’s day no longer trusted in the promises of God. The descendants of Abraham increasingly aligned themselves with the false promises of their world. Biblical faith was declining as a growing number of people embraced non-biblical views about God and his world. Worship of the living God had become increasingly syncretistic as the people embraced pagan gods. Idolatry was on the rise, and many people had rebelled against God. People also cared less and less about social justice. And, lurking in the background was the ever-growing threat of an Assyrian invasion.

So, although God was eventually going to judge them for their sin, he also gave them hope of a glorious future.

Lesson

The analysis of the concept of hope as set forth in Isaiah 2:1-5 shows us a glorious future.

Let’s use the following outline:

1. The Identity of the Prophet (2:1)
2. The Vision of the Prophet (2:2-4)
3. The Exhortation of the Prophet (2:5)

I. The Identity of the Prophet (2:1)

First, let's look at the identity of the prophet.

Isaiah said in verse 1, **“The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.”** We know very little about **Isaiah**. Isaiah 6 records his call to the ministry, and some of his innermost thoughts on that occasion. **Isaiah** gives a few glimpses into his public ministry in chapters 7-8, 20, and 37-39. He was a married man, and a father (7:3; 8:3, 18). It seems that he was a resident of Jerusalem (7:3). The New Testament testifies to his prophetic foresight (John 12:37-41) and boldness (Romans 10:20). There is a tradition that Isaiah died, perhaps by being sawn in two (Hebrews 11:37), under the persecution of Manasseh, king of Judah (687-642 B.C.). That is about all we know of the Prophet **Isaiah**. His primary interest seems to have been the message he received from God, which is summed up in the meaning of his name: “Yahweh is salvation.”

Isaiah was **the son of Amoz**, and that is all we know about him. Jewish tradition claims that **Amoz** was a brother of Amaziah, king of Judah (796-767 B.C.), putting Isaiah into the royal family.

Did the wording of verse 1 strike you as odd? Isaiah said, **“The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw. . .”** (2:1a). That is Isaiah's way of saying that God revealed to him a vision, which he then wrote down for the people to read.

And this vision that Isaiah saw centered on **Judah and Jerusalem**. In chapter 1 Isaiah wrote about Judah's present sinful condition. In chapter 2:6-22 Isaiah wrote about God's impending judgment against Judah. But before he wrote about the judgment, Isaiah gave a vision of a glorious future in verses 2-4.

II. The Vision of the Prophet (2:2-4)

Second, let's examine the vision of the prophet.

Isaiah's vision in verses 2-4 is almost identical to the message delivered by the prophet Micah (in Micah 4:1-3), who happened to be Isaiah's contemporary in Jerusalem. Commentators wonder if Micah copied Isaiah, or if Isaiah copied Micah. It is likely, however, that they both quoted an existing song, which would explain some of the minor word changes.

The vision of the prophet Isaiah shows us three pictures.

A. *God Rules (2:2)*

First, the prophet saw that God rules.

Isaiah began by saying in verse 2a, **“It shall come to pass in the latter days. . . .”** Some believe that **“the latter days”** always refers to the Second Coming of Christ. However, that is not always the case. For example, in Genesis 49:1 Jacob called his sons and said, “Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you what shall happen to you in *days to come*.” The Hebrew words used in Genesis 49:1 are the same Hebrew words as used in Isaiah 2:2a. Jacob was not speaking to his sons about what was going to happen at the Second Coming of Christ. Still less was he telling them about what was going to happen in the twenty-first century! In fact, he told his son Judah what was going to happen regarding the First Coming of Christ (see Genesis 49:10). Most of what Jacob said had to do with what was going to happen in the near future.

So, when did **“the latter days”** begin for Isaiah? The New Testament writers believed that they were living in “the last days.”

The apostle Peter believed they were living in the last days. On the Day of Pentecost, he quoted a prophecy from the prophet Joel in Acts 2:17, “And in *the last days* it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.”

The writer to the Hebrews believed that they were living in

the last days. He wrote in Hebrews 1:2, “But in *these last days* he [God] has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.” Note how he indicated that the last days included Christ’s teaching ministry.

The apostle John believed they were living in the last days. In fact, he called it “the last hour” in 1 John 2:18, where he wrote, “Children, it is *the last hour*, and as you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is *the last hour*.”

So, what Isaiah saw in **the latter days** was God’s rule beginning with the *first* advent of Christ. This is how he expressed in the rest of verse 2, “It shall come to pass in the latter days **that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it.**” In ancient days, people worshiped their gods on the highest mountains they could find. They believed that the higher they got, the closer they would get to their false god. But, the true God rules supremely and sovereignly over all the gods of this earth. That is why Isaiah said “**that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills.**” As commentator Derek Thomas said, “A time will come when the God who has revealed himself in Jerusalem will be shown to be far greater than any other ‘god’ currently worshipped elsewhere. The God of Israel is not just some local deity. He is the God of the whole earth.”¹

Also, note the interesting expression at the end of verse 2, where Isaiah said, “**And all the nations shall flow to it** [the mountain of the Lord].” What is interesting is the picture of a river flowing *uphill*. Commentator Alex Motyer said, “The incongruity of a *stream* flowing upwards to earth’s highest point is intentional;

¹ Derek Thomas, *God Delivers: Isaiah Simply Explained*, Welwyn Commentary Series (Darlington, England: Evangelical Press, 1991), 36.

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a supernatural magnetism is at work.”²

So, first, the prophet saw that God rules.

B. *God Saves (2:3)*

Second, the prophet saw that God saves.

Many people think that the Old Testament is about the salvation of the Jews, and the New Testament is about the salvation of the Gentiles. However, that is wrong. As far back as Genesis 12:3b God said to Abram, “. . . and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” God’s intention has always been international. He has always wanted “a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, [to stand] before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’” (Revelation 7:9-10).

So, Isaiah saw a day when **“many peoples shall come, and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem”** (2:3). The number of people who came to genuine saving faith in the Old Testament was small. God’s people had not been zealous in sharing the good news of God’s saving grace with the nations. So, it is fascinating to note that on the Day of Pentecost, fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, Luke recorded that there were people from all nations who came to the mountain of the Lord and received the message of salvation. Luke said in Acts 2:9-11 that “Parthians and Medes and Elamites and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia,

² J. A. Motyer, *The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 54.

Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians – [who heard] them telling in [their] own tongues the mighty works of God.”

So, Isaiah told about the result of the first advent of Christ. The good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ was born, lived, and died so that God could save people from all nations.

So, first, the prophet saw that God rules. Second, God saves.

C. *God Reconciles (2:4)*

And third, the prophet saw that God reconciles.

Isaiah said in verse 4, **“He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.”**

These words are actually engraved in large letters on the wall opposite the United Nations headquarters in New York City. But it is a misunderstanding of the spiritual nature of Isaiah’s statement. There is a deep desire within every human heart for peace. However, unbelievers think that people are basically good, and if somehow people can just express that goodness, we will be able to have peace in this world. However, there will never be world peace apart from God.

God is concerned for peace too. But peace will only come to this world when people are first reconciled to God. God is so concerned about peace that he sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to bring about peace during his first advent. In fact, Jesus is called the “Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6; cf. 11:6-10). Actually, reconciliation has been God’s purpose since the Fall in the Garden of Eden. Restoring sinful men and women into a relationship of peace with God is what the good news of the gospel is all about. Paul said in

Romans 5:1, “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Having been reconciled to God, we are then, and only then, in a position to be reconciled with one another. This is what Isaiah saw.

So, first, the prophet saw that God rules. Second, God saves. And third, God reconciles.

III. The Exhortation of the Prophet (2:5)

Third, notice the exhortation of the prophet.

In view of the truth that God rules, saves, and reconciles, Isaiah said in verse 5, **“O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.”** Actually, this really was a rebuke to the people in Isaiah’s day. They had the presence of the Temple, with all of its beauty and splendor. But the people had no delight in God’s word. And they were not telling others the good news about God’s saving grace.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed the concept of hope as set forth in Isaiah 2:1-5, we must walk in the light of the Lord.

One weekend, author Paul Tripp gave his teenage son permission to spend the weekend at a friend’s house. But during the weekend Paul received a call from the friend’s mother, informing him that Paul’s son was not at her home. (Her son had felt guilty about covering for Paul’s son and confessed to his mom.) After Paul told his wife about their son’s deception, Paul said, “Luella could feel my anger, and she said, ‘I think you need to pray.’ I said, ‘I don’t think I can pray for him right now.’ She said, ‘I didn’t mean for you to pray for him; I think you need to pray for you.’”

Paul writes:

I went to my bedroom to pray for God’s help, and it hit me

that, because of his love, God had already begun a work of rescue in my son's life. God was the one who pressed in on the conscience of my son's friend, causing him to confess to his mom. God was the one who gave her the courage to make that difficult call to me. And God was the one giving me time to get a hold of myself before my son came home. Now, rather than wanting to rip into my son, I wanted to be part of what this God of grace was doing in this moment of rebellion, deception, hurt, and disappointment.

After giving his son a couple of hours to relax upon his return, Paul asked him if they could talk.

"Do you ever think about how much God loves you?" Paul asked his son.

"Sometimes," he answered.

"Do you ever think how much God's grace operates in your life every day?"

His son looked up but didn't speak.

"Do you know how much God's grace was working in your life even this weekend?"

"Who told you?" his son asked.

Paul said, "You have lived your life in the light. You've made good choices. You've been an easy son to parent, but this weekend you took a step toward the darkness. You can live in the darkness if you want. You can learn to lie and deceive. You can use your friends as your cover ... You can step over God's boundaries. Or you can determine to live in God's light. I'm pleading with you: don't live in the darkness; live in the light."

"As I turned to walk away," Paul wrote, "I heard his voice from behind me saying, 'Dad, don't go.' As I turned around, with tears in his eyes, he said, 'Dad, I want to live in the light, but it's so hard. Will you help me?'"³

This is Isaiah's message. Let us live in the light too. Amen.

³ Paul David Tripp, *Forever: Why You Can't Live Without It* (Zondervan, 2011), 151-153.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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PRAYER:

Our Father, thank you for the message of Isaiah. Thank you for the vision of Isaiah in which he saw that you rule, save, and reconcile. And you do this through your Son, Jesus Christ, who came 2,000 years ago at his first advent. Help each one of us to walk in the light of the Lord.

And for all of this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!