

EXPECT GOD'S PROMISED KINGDOM

Pastor Colin Rieke ~ November 27, 2016



This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: ²In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. ³Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. ⁵Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD. (Isaiah 2:1-5)

Dear Christians on this advent journey, let us walk in the light of the Lord,

The last time I went back to Africa before my parents returned to the States was during spring break my senior year of high-school. It was a memorable time, and not just because it was my last time visiting the continent. It was memorable for another reason as well. A hydroelectric power-plant which produced a large percentage of the country's power had just flooded. This meant that there were rolling "brown-outs" all throughout the country. Since they didn't have enough power, the electric company would only power certain areas of the country for a certain amount of time, and this would rotate so that everyone could at least have some power.

The schedule for these rolling brown-outs (which lasted for the two weeks I was there) was printed in the newspaper each day. For instance on Monday, we might have power from 6am-12pm and then again from 6pm-12am. On Tuesday, we might have power from 12pm to 6pm, and 12am to 6am. You might say this was the promise of the power company to give you power at the allocated time. As you might expect, sometimes they kept their promise, and sometimes they didn't. Sometimes you received more power than they said you would have, and sometimes you would have less. But it was something you had to live with.

This is just one example of broken promises. I'm sure you have experienced a broken promise, I'm pretty sure you experienced more than one broken promise. Perhaps you were the recipient of a broken promise, perhaps you were the breaker of a promise. I think it is common enough now that while we may be sad about a broken promise, it's not too surprising. Whether it's a simple promise to give you a call next week, or a significant promise of marriage. We're not all that surprised when a promise is broken.

Unfortunately, I think that can carry over into the church as well. Certainly fallible people in the church have made promises that haven't kept. But sometimes I think when we have an expectation that a promise could be broken we make that expectation of all promises. Which is

really quite sad, isn't it? Over the next couple weeks before Christmas, in a season we call Advent, we will take a look at several promises of God about the Savior. These were promises he made several hundred years before the Savior would come. And as with all the promises of God, we learn how we can throw out the possibility of him breaking his promise, and expect that when he makes a promise, he will keep it. The promise of God we ponder today is to EXPECT GOD'S PROMISED KINGDOM.

1. In you now
2. In heaven later

(1)

Over the next few weeks we will take a look at the promises from the perspective of one of God's most famous prophets, a man by the name of Isaiah. Isaiah lived several hundred years before Jesus walked on this earth, and his book is filled with so many pictures and promises about the Savior to come, that many people have referred to him as the 5th gospel writer.

Isaiah had a perfect perspective from which to write. He wrote during a time where outwardly there was peace in the land of Israel and Judah. Some may recall that after the reign of King Solomon, the nation of Israel had split in two – Israel and Judah, and while there were some squabbles between these two sister-nations, generally speaking they were able to coexist with one another. But this peace that Israel and Judah enjoyed was always in danger of vanishing into thin air. That's because they found themselves in between two very powerful empires – Assyria in the East and Egypt in the West. And like politics today, Israel sought to be on the more powerful side of the eventual standoff.

And so Isaiah was able to use the tension that must have hung over the people of Israel as an opportunity to remind them about the Lord, to remind them about his law. While so many Israelites were focused on the outward political ramifications of being on the Assyrian or Egyptian side, Isaiah pointed to the heart, and how God's people had abandoned their hope in God. Isaiah would go on to predict that because they had abandoned him, God would punish them. Isaiah predicted that Israel would be swept off into captivity in Assyria. Isaiah even predicted how Jerusalem would be destroyed and Judah would be taken into captivity in Babylon a century later.

But in the midst of this doom and gloom prophecy (which really wasn't God being mean as much as he was being just), Isaiah painted a picture of not only what God's kingdom should be like, but what it would be like. And just imagine what it would have sounded like to a people that lived in constant tension about the future of their nation (Not unlike what we're dealing with now). **"In the last days, the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains, it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it."** God would make his kingdom as chief among kingdoms, as the highest and strongest, so that people from all around would want to come to it.

Unfortunately, this led many Jews, and even many Christians today to see a different kind of kingdom than what God through Isaiah meant. Many Jews still are awaiting and expecting a time when God will restore Israel to prominence in the world. Many Christians are still expecting the same thing, when God's kingdom will be established on this earth. They connect these verses with verses from Revelation which they say describe when Christ will reign on this earth and we will have no more

problems. But is that really what God promised? Is that really what Isaiah meant when he wrote these words?

EXPECTING GOD'S PROMISED KINGDOM is not about waiting for a time in the distant future with no problems in this world, but is something that is in you now. GOD'S PROMISED KINGDOM is found in Jesus when he entered into this world 2,000 years ago. He is the mountain of the Lord's temple that is established as chief among the mountains, there is no one who can compare to what Jesus brought to this earth. It is as the angels sang at his birth "**Peace on earth and good will to men.**" The angels were not talking about some earthly peace between nations, but a peace that would result because of Jesus – a peace between God and man. All nations streaming to this mountain is something the writer of the book of Hebrews confirms when he writes, "**But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, to the city of the living God.**"

Those who are drawn to this kingdom, they will be from all nations. We are a testament to that, since many of us don't have Jewish blood running through our veins. And those people from all nations they will live in peace. They will not only enjoy a peace that was won for them by Christ, but they will enjoy peace with one another. For "**the word of the Lord will judge between people and settle disputes.**" As Christians we see this, don't we? As Christians we are always striving to conform our lives to the word of God, having the Word of God to be our guide. And it is the word of God by which we determine if our actions have been right or wrong.

This is GOD'S PROMISED KINGDOM that he promises is in you right now. It was planted in you at your baptism, it was planted in you when the Holy Spirit cleaned out your heart and made you believe the wonderful news that Jesus came to bring peace with God. What more do you need? Well, if we're honest with ourselves, we usually want much more, don't we? How often do we wish that GOD'S PROMISED KINGDOM would come in a more dramatic way, or in a more defining way, or in a way that shows others that we're not crazy or dumb? In short, we're often not satisfied with God's kingdom just living in our hearts.

What a strong deceit of the devil. A strong deceit that leads us to look for more – either more in Scripture that we twist to fit with our self-centered views, or more in other places and people that will tell us what we want to hear. This strong deceit ends up removing peace in our soul as we turn to alternate hopes outside of GOD'S PROMISED KINGDOM living in us. But Christ coming for us, is the exact remedy for our wandering. He is the one who says, "Do not doubt" and "do not worry" he is the one who picks us up when we are weak, and brings us back when we are wandering. Back to the simple truth that GOD'S PROMISED KINGDOM is in you, just as he is in you.

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But while GOD'S PROMISED KINGDOM is in you now, we are waiting for something more, just not a millennial kingdom here on this earth. GOD'S PROMISED KINGDOM living in our heart right now, is only a precursor to what God's kingdom is going to be like in heaven later.

It will be in God's heavenly kingdom that Mt Zion will be raised as the chief of all mountains for all to see, peoples from all nations will stream to it, and there will be no more war, but only peace. For at that time, not only will the enemies of God have been vanquished, but believers will live in perfect unity with God, not having a sinful nature to contend with which pulls us away from God. This

is GOD'S PROMISED KINGDOM which will be in heaven later. And it is because we have God's kingdom living in us now that we can even believe and trust in GOD'S PROMISED KINGDOM in heaven later.

Imagery that is often associated with this kingdom is light. We call Jesus the “light of the world.” During the season of Advent we light candles to remind us that light dispels the darkness. We have our children sing songs like “This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine.” And it’s important that we don’t pass over this imagery too lightly, because light is one of the most powerful pictures we have of Jesus and the gospel. Imagine what it would be like if your power went out at night, would that be something you would look forward to having happen? I don’t think so. In a situation like that, we would rather have light than darkness.

In fact, I think, unless you’re trying to hide something you’re doing (or just sleeping), generally speaking we would rather be in the light, rather than the darkness. And isn’t that the way we should treat God’s Word – that we would rather be in God’s Word, rather than out of it? That’s what the last verse from Isaiah is really talking about. **“Let us walk in the light of the Lord.”** We walk in the light of the Lord when we listen to and follow his Word. We walk in the light of the Lord when we refrain from going down the dark paths of our own desires. We walk in the light of the Lord, when we, as the song says, “let our light shine.”

Sometimes though, it’s only when the light is taken away from us that we begin to appreciate how valuable light is. Those brown-outs we had during my last two weeks in Africa were a reminder of how much I valued having light and electricity. I hope that how much you value physical light may be a reminder of the wonderful spiritual light you have in Christ and his promises. For this promise from God lights our hearts, it lights heaven, and is a light we can share. Amen.