

Two futures review

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Preacher: Philip Wells and others

[0 : 00] Let's read in chapter 1 and we'll read, I'm sorry, yes, Isaiah chapter 1, Isaiah chapter 1.

Let's read from verse 18. Isaiah chapter 1 from verse 18.

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.

Though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land.

But if you resist and rebel, you will be eaten by the sword. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.

See how the faithful city has become a harlot.

[1 : 19] She once was full of justice. Righteousness used to dwell in her, but now murderers. Your silver has become dross.

Your choice wine is diluted with water. Your rulers are rebels, companions of thieves.

They all love bribes and chase after gifts. They do not defend the cause of the fatherless. The widow's case does not come before them.

Therefore, the Lord, the Lord Almighty, the mighty one of Israel declares, Ah, I will get relief from my foes and avenge myself on my enemies.

I will turn my hand against you. I will thoroughly purge away your dross and remove all your impurities.

[2 : 25] I will restore your judges as in days of old, your counselors as at the beginning. Afterwards, you will be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.

Zion will be redeemed with justice. Her penitent ones with righteousness. But rebels and sinners will both be broken, and those who forsake the Lord will perish.

You will be ashamed because of the sacred oaks in which you have delighted. You will be disgraced because of the gardens that you have chosen. You will be like an oak with fading leaves, like a garden without water.

The mighty man will become tinder, and his work a spark. Both will burn together with no one to quench the fire.

It ends up on that negative note, but it has within it the statement about the faithful city, verse 21, being restored as the faithful city, end of verse 26.

[3 : 43] Afterwards, you will be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Let's pray. Lord in heaven, please help us as we meditate in your word this evening.

Help us to encourage one another. For Jesus' sake, amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. All right.

We've got a few things to look at, and then I would like to suggest we do a little bit of discussing in small groups. So things to look at.

I updated my big history graphic. Northern Kingdom, Southern Kingdom. The kingdoms were split. And you get a timeline with the Northern Kingdom, where it gets invaded by Assyria. You get a timeline for the 13 kings there.

[4 : 46] You get a timeline for the Southern Kingdom, till they get invaded by Babylon. And the kings that Isaiah refers to, Isaiah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, are in that period there.

So that's an updated background graphic. We also updated the graphic of the geography. So somebody said, where was your map?

When I did the map the other day, it's that bit there. That's Europe. You recognize that? Yeah. So the bit, my special map was there.

So that is where, do you see? Yeah. Yeah. And, ooh, that was a funny big blob.

So Egypt is there. Jerusalem was the big blob, which appeared out of, that's not in the right place, is it? Something's gone wrong with that. That's where Jerusalem is.

[6 : 01] That was Egypt. Oh dear, oh dear. That's Assyria. All these blobs are in the wrong place. And that's Babylon. So I thought I'd improved on this, but actually, it's still not right, is it?

Okay. That's what we looked at this morning. The two futures. The one future of judgment, leading to the destroyed city, and the other future of blessing, with these components that were identified, the holy city, like this, the branch, like that, the child, sort of the idea of being pregnant with the child to come, the child who will be king, and the remnant who will return.

So those are the things that we looked at this morning. So those of you who were here, does that make sense? That's an accurate reflection. If you weren't here this morning, I hope that is a very, very quick update on what we looked at this morning.

So I'll just repeat again, in the chapters that we looked at, there were an extensive pronouncement of judgment. So that's that bit. And there were a number, I would identify, four particular promises, some of them are repeated, around the holy city, the branch that will rise up from the root of the family of David, the idea of a child who will be king, unto us a son is born, unto us a child is given, his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, et cetera, and a remnant will return.

So those were the things that Isaiah held out to us as promises. And I'm going to suggest that we do as we did last time.

[8 : 00] I think last time we were particularly blessed. Let's see whether we're blessed as much or in a different way as we think about these things this morning, this afternoon.

this evening, that's where I'm getting. So what I'd like to ask is, okay, we spent time talking about the heavenly city and we were singing about the heavenly city and to ask whether that is actually worth doing.

Is it any practical help to talk and sing about the heavenly city? So put it the other way around, wouldn't we, or perhaps even Isaiah, be better occupied in practical things like learning how to bring up children or how to resolve conflicts or evangelistic techniques or something like that?

Is there any, you know, what is the value of talking about the heavenly city at length? You could almost turn it back on Isaiah and say, why are you spending so much time talking about this?

Can't you talk about something more practical? I don't know, maybe you think, maybe you think that's a good question. Maybe you were thinking, why are we talking about the heavenly city all the time?

[9 : 22] And to answer that, I thought we would, oh yes, bring in this troubling figure. I'm sorry about the noises. The laughing rabbi.

this is a troubling figure who sits at the back of churches in the mind of the preacher and the laughing rabbi is saying, you were dealing with the Old Testament, I would have said exactly the same thing as you.

And the preacher's thinking, I hope I, I hope I wouldn't say exactly what the rabbi would say. I hope I'm saying something Christian.

Do you see the point? And the rabbis, this troubling figure who mocks the preacher and says, see, that wasn't Christian you were talking about.

I could have said that. So we'll try not to get too troubled by the laughing rabbi, but he's always, you know, knocking at the door. So let's ask the question, what difference does Jesus make to our looking at Isaiah?

[10 : 35] Why isn't what we're thinking the same as what the rabbi would be teaching in the synagogue? So again, I've got some texts that we can look at.

We don't have as much time as we had last week because we have got communion. I don't want to get in the way of that. So here's some texts that mention Jerusalem, which mention the city.

And what do these texts say about the heavenly city? What do these texts say about what difference Jesus makes?

So we've got John 4 verse 21, Hebrews 11, 10 and 16. Hebrews 12 Galatians 4, some texts from Luke, some texts from Revelation, and that is it.

Right, there we are. Oh! Oh! Right, mustn't click too far, otherwise it will stop.

[12 : 04] I think that was as far as I go. Yep. I'm sorry about all these noises. I don't know what I'm doing to cause that. Here's this one.

Should we do what we did last time? It seemed to work well last time. If you're, so we're going to break into groups of about four people to look at these texts to ask the question, what practical help or practical teaching is given in relation to the heavenly city and what difference does Jesus make to that?

Breaking into groups of about four people, if you're over here, start with A and work on down through the list. Might not get very far, but start with A.

if you're in the middle, start with B and work on through the list and if you're over here, start with C and see how far you get.

So as I say, we haven't got a huge amount of time. We'll, should we give ourselves about a quarter of an hour to do what we can with those texts?

[13 : 18] Okay, would you like to move into little groups and get straight on with that? Thank you.