

# God's Promised New World

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[ 0 : 00 ] And really we're directed here, these words really then are directed toward the people that have been taken away into exile. To a place called Babylon, written for a people suffering the punishment for their sin.

And yet ironically perhaps you might remember that in some ways these are much more positive chapters. They begin chapter 40, comfort, comfort my people, says your God. God promising that despite the people's sin, God has not forgotten his people.

That he will rescue and restore them again. That he will deal with that sin. And then act 3 of Isaiah chapter 56 right through to the end where we are this morning is really aimed at the people.

Here Isaiah is speaking well into the future from his perspective. But aimed at the people, the remnant who God has brought back from the exile as he's promised.

And yet for these people things are tough. Things are certainly not yet perfect. There's a temptation for these people to be disheartened. And actually we see in history that that is exactly what happened.

[ 1 : 13 ] God did bring a remnant back to their homeland. And yet things never hit those kind of giddy heights of previous eras where King David or King Solomon had reigned.

In so many ways the glory days never returned after the exile. And the people find it hard to deal with that. Is this it? And so God speaks through Isaiah to these rescued but struggling people to say this is not it.

And to encourage them with all that is still to come. And so in some ways it's in these final chapters we see the message of Isaiah most directly corresponds to us.

If you're a Christian here this morning, if you trust in Jesus, then we are a rescued people by God's grace in the gospel. Through Jesus we have been saved from the punishment that our sin deserved.

We've been brought home from exile as it were just as the Israelites had been. We've been restored to God. And yet we too, as we've just said, we look around us and it's so tempting to say, well is this it?

[ 2 : 25 ] If Jesus is the fulfillment of all the promises of God. If Christianity is such good news, is this as good as the restoration the Bible promises gets?

Our world which as we've said is so flawed, so broken in so many different ways. Is this all we have to hope for? And so it's into that context, into our context that Isaiah speaks.

And the Bible says, no, no, this is not all we have to hope for. But there is better still to come. That Jesus will return and God will put all of this right.

We're told this message, this promise about the future. This final peak, as it were, on the horizon of Isaiah's prophecy. To help us keep on going in the difficult times that we all face in the present.

In 1964, Sam Cooke, the black singer-songwriter, wrote what has been called one of, if not the greatest song of the civil rights movement, A Change Is Gonna Come.

[ 3 : 33 ] It's a song I'm sure you'd recognize if you heard it. It's a song that is inspired by and speaking about the suffering that the black Americans went through. But it finishes with this final verse.

There have been times that I thought I couldn't last for long. But now I think I'm able to carry on. It's been a long, a long time coming. But I know a change is gonna come.

Oh yes, it will. It was looking forward to that change that was going to come. That change that hadn't arrived and yet was on the horizon that enabled Sam Cooke and others like him to keep on going in the present.

And that is the message of God's promised new world. That is why passages like this are in our Bible from beginning right through to the end. It's not wishful thinking.

It's not pie in the sky. It's not escapism. It's not to make us feel worse about things because by comparing them to how they could or should be. I know this is a message for suffering people, for God's suffering Christians to keep on going because God has promised something better to come.

[ 4 : 46 ] Perhaps some of us especially then need to hear that this morning. I know when life is hard, relentless, tiring, when things haven't worked out as we'd hoped or had expected.

When we're walking with Jesus and yet still suffering and hardship comes. The Bible says don't give up on being God's people.

Don't be tempted to walk away. Instead it gives us this picture of certain hope to look forward to and to keep us going with God in the present.

For God's people we are not home. There is something far better promised. And so stick with him is one of the closing messages of this book of Isaiah.

So God's promised new world. That's the why. Why we are reminded of this promise. Why we want to keep on coming back to it as a church, as God's people. Why we are not home.

[ 5 : 44 ] We are casting our minds forwards to keep us going in the present. And so then really getting stuck into these verses that we've just read. What is it that we're looking forward to specifically?

This is one of those passages I think where however well I try and describe it, I'll never be able to present as good a picture as that which the Bible itself paints.

But let me just pick up on a few things these verses promise in this new world. And the first one is this, and I hope this came across. I think it did as James read it. It's just simply joy.

Verse 18. It's an amazing promise that in what God promises there is joy because sadness has gone.

Why has sadness gone? Well, it's because sad things have gone. Verse 20. It goes on to say this. No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days.

[ 7 : 03 ] Death, the greatest sadness. Death, the last enemy, is no more in what God promises. Could there be anything sadder in our world than the sorrow of an infant who lives but a few days, as Isaiah speaks about?

One of those situations in which our hearts just desperately know that there is something wrong with the world in which we live. And some people in this room will know that sorrow.

And that will be a sorrow that will not go away in this life. But in the new world, we are promised that new world that God will create, that God is renewing. Sad things such as this will be no more.

So we can look forward to joy. I don't know if anyone has seen the film Inside Out. Inside Out 2 is coming this summer. My kids are very excited.

It's all about the different emotions. It's a film all about a cartoon. All about the different emotions going on inside a child's head. So if you can imagine how confusing and colourful that might be.

[ 8 : 11 ] But joy, who is one of the emotions, she's kind of relentlessly cheerful. A bit over the top, if you ask me. But she just cannot understand sadness. This other emotion who kind of mopes around crying all the time.

And joy spends a chunk of the film trying to kind of squash sadness out and kind of cover sadness up and just repress her slightly before realising actually that sadness is needed because there are things to be sad about.

Because life is tough as this child goes up going through difficult situations. It's great to recognise here that Isaiah here is not talking about a time when we'll simply be able to repress our sorrow and our sadness.

As I was talking about a time when there will be nothing to be sorrowful for. When those things that cause an ache in our hearts will no longer have a place in the new world that God promises.

So there is joy. There's also emphasised here, I think what we could call sort of stability or just a certain confidence in the future. Verse 21 and 22.

[ 9 : 22 ] They shall not build and another inhabit. They shall not plant and another eat. For like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be. And my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

And this idea that the worries about our future that we have, that actually we'll truly be able to rest from those and put them down. The worries we have about our children can be put down as well.

Verse 22. They shall not labour in vain or bear children for calamity. For they shall be the offspring of the blessed of the Lord and their descendants with them. Well, here we don't know what tomorrow brings.

We don't know what the future holds in store for our kids if we have them. There we are promised this generational, eternal certainty, confidence and stability.

And all of this then wrapped up in the perfect presence of God that brings perfect peace in this perfect new creation. Before they call, I will answer.

[ 10 : 27 ] While they are yet speaking, I will hear, God says. The wolf and the lamb shall graze together. The lion shall eat straw like the ox. And dust shall be the serpent's food.

They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain. And this amazing picture here of being kind of immediately in God's presence, enjoying all the blessings that he gives.

This picture of real harmony. And so it's an incredible picture kind of laid out in these verses. That incredible writing that kind of moves our hearts, stirs us to look forward to what God has promised.

But it's good to think, well, what are we supposed to do with this? We said we're given this great look forward to help us keep going in the present. How does that help us in the present?

I think two things on this whole idea. Firstly, is to see and to recognize how what we're promised here is everything that we want. All the desires that we have for our lives and for our world.

[ 11 : 35 ] Joy, security, peace, harmony. The Bible affirms all of those things. It encourages us to keep on yearning for them and keep on going.

Because one day we will receive those. And this passage is making it clear that that will not come about through human efforts. But that will be God's work in the world that God recreates.

That God is the way to these things. Coming ultimately to Jesus. Following him. Trusting in him. Having him as king. Accepting his sacrifice in our place.

Trusting that message of good news to the spiritually poor like us. That Jesus brings. All of these things that are announced and prophesied throughout Isaiah.

And are fulfilled in Christ. Ultimately, Jesus is the only way to receive all that we're longing for. And so number one is we read these great passages here in Isaiah and elsewhere in the Bible as well.

[ 12 : 38 ] We see all those things are there for us. All the things that we long for in God's promised new world that he recreates. And we have a place in that through accepting Jesus as king.

So again, we keep on going with Jesus. Even when things are hard. Because of what's to come. But secondly, I think as we look forward to these verses in the future.

It helps us be realistic about the present. The reason that these things are promised in the world to come. Is because we will not fully have them here and now.

We can spend our whole lives being disappointed because we're not being realistic. We're expecting perhaps to be spared from any sadness in our lives.

We're expecting God to show us what's going to happen next week. Next month. Next year and beyond. Expecting things always just to kind of work out and fall in line. Perhaps on a bigger scale we can be tempted to think if we just elect the right people.

[ 13 : 40 ] Or if politicians just made the right decisions. Then international conflict or suffering would come to an end. And yet part of the Bible's teaching about the promised world to come.

Is a call for us to get real about the present world in which we live. Which is this. That we'll never get all we want here and now. The Bible's encouragement to keep on going.

Lifts our eyes to something far higher than that. To something far more certain than that. Because it is God's work. And not dependent on us.

Or any other human authority. It is what God is going to do. And he has promised he will do that. And so we look forward to that. What is to come.

As we continue in this life in the present. And that is God's promised new world. The renewing of creation for a renewed people. The great climax of all that Isaiah is looking ahead to.

[ 14 : 41 ] And the hope that the Bible offers. Something that we need to keep on looking ahead to. With gratitude and joy. And that we can keep on looking ahead to. Because God will bring about what he has promised.

So there's God's promised new world. Why we're told about that. Just what it is that we're anticipating. A message to keep us going. A message to give us joy.

And what I'd like us to do then. As we come to the close of this great book of Isaiah. Is just to turn over the page. From chapter 55. To the end of chapter 66. And I'm going to read the final seven verses of this book.

From chapter 66 verse 18. And I want to do that not just for the sake of completeness. So we can say well we started at the beginning. And we got right through to the very end. But I want to read them.

And just speak very briefly about them. There's far much more here than we could say. But just to speak about them. And highlight them. Because Isaiah concludes his prophecy. By underscoring a theme.

- [ 15 : 43 ] That has been a huge one throughout this book. And I want to make sure that we hear that. As we finish Isaiah as well. We said at the very beginning of our time in Isaiah.
- That one of the big ideas that we wanted to grasp. One of the kind of the goals for looking through this book. Was to enlarge our picture of God. That we would see something more of God's holiness.
- His grandeur. That he really is the one who is worth. And who deserves us living our whole lives for. That we would truly worship him. That fact that as we've just seen.
- That he is the God. The only one who is able to recreate our broken world. Is part of that. Of God's holiness. His power. His majesty. But one thing for me.
- Which I think I knew was in Isaiah. But actually I've been struck by. It's a much bigger focus. Than I'd initially thought. Before we started working our way through this book.
- [ 16 : 39 ] Something that has come up repeatedly. As we've worked through these chapters. Is the idea of mission as well. The idea that God's people.
- Are sent out to tell about this holy God. And to invite others in. That this perfect world that we've just read of. Is not a kind of secret kingdom.
- For us to whisper about. Until we kind of finally scuttle off there secretly. But that incredibly God uses us to call others in. To be his heralds.
- That all people might know his glory. His holiness. Through what he has done. And might come and join in the worship of him. Let me read from verse 18 then.
- Of chapter 66. Chapter 66. Is this closing section of Isaiah. It says. For I know their works and their thoughts. And the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues.
- [ 17 : 36 ] And they shall come and shall see my glory. And I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations. To Tarshish. Pull.
- And Lud. Who draw the bow. To Jubal. And Javin. To the coastlands far away. Who have not heard my fame. Or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory.
- Among the nations. And they shall bring in your brothers. From all the nations. As an offering to the Lord. On horses. And in chariots. And in litters. And on mules. And on dromedaries.
- To my holy mountain Jerusalem. Says the Lord. Just as the Israelites bring their grain offering. In a clean vessel. To the house of the Lord. And some of them.
- I will. Also I will take for priests. And for Levites. Says the Lord. For as the new heavens. And the new earth. That I make. Shall remain before me. Says the Lord. So shall your offspring.
- [ 18 : 33 ] And your name remain. From new moon. To new moon. And from Sabbath. To Sabbath. All flesh. Shall come to worship. Before me. Declares the Lord. And they shall go out.
- And look on the dead bodies. Of the men. Who have rebelled against me. For their worms shall not die. Their fire shall not be quenched. And they shall be in abhorrence.
- To all flesh. Isaiah closes there. With these words. Entirely appropriately. With an image. Of God's transformed people.
- Bringing in people. From all the nations. This book finishes. With this great picture. Of people kind of flocking in. From different regions. On their camels. On their horses. In their chariots.
- On their litters. All sorts of things. People coming in. To be with God. And as they come in. They're enfolded into God's kingdom. As they come to recognize.
- [ 19 : 28 ] And worship him. As the king. And again. Part of that is this slightly. Uncomfortable. Perhaps. Final. Verse. Of Isaiah.

This probably is not how we would have. Finished up a book. If we just read. 66. We just written. 66 chapters of it. But actually. Part of God's glory. An essential part.

Of his glory. It is the defeat. Of those. Who refuse. To repent. And turn to him. Part of God's glory. Is seeing. His victory.

Over those. Who would oppose. And rebel against him. There's big change. That happens. Throughout Isaiah. In the people of God. But there is no change. In God himself.

He remains. The God. Who is holy. Holy. Holy. And the perfection. That he promises here. In chapter 65. Is possible. Only because.

[ 20 : 22 ] Those who reject. His rule. Are removed. And are judged. And yet. There is this shift. From beginning. To the close of this book. That God's people now.

Rather than being those. Who are rebellious. Rather than being those. Who are estranged from him. As they were in the opening. Chapters of the book. Are now there. Declaring his glory.

And gathering others. To him. And the message for us today. Is that if we have received. God's grace. If through God's work. In the gospel.

Of Jesus Christ. We have been brought in. To know him. The holy God. Despite our sin. Then as we read here. We have. Brothers in all the nations. To bring in.

Let us not be silent. About this incredible God. This incredible invitation. This incredible salvation. This incredible transformation. This incredible promise. Of a perfect.

[ 21 : 19 ] New world. But might we have. This big picture. Of a holy God. That we might. As this chapter calls us. To declare his glory.

Among the nations. That we might speak of him. At school. Or with our colleagues. And among our friends. That we might be eager. To share the greatness of God.

That others too. Might come to God. That they too might recognize his glory. And give him the glory. That he deserves. In anticipation. Joyful anticipation.

Of that perfect. New world. That he will create. And that incredible promise. That we can look forward to. In that perfected. New creation.

That all flesh. Shall come to worship before me. Declares the Lord. Let's pray together. models. Old meal.

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