

Alton Baptist Church e-Service 29th November 2020

God's plan prophesied

Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You that whether we are in the church building together or thinking about You alone, You are with us and hear our prayers. Help us to spend time each day singing your praises, reading and contemplating Your Word, praying for one another and those issues You bring to our attention. Amen

Song God is great –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bm9kkg3oydM>

Prayers - In your own words just praise and thank the Lord, for who He is, for what He is, for what He has done. Confess your need of forgiveness.

Song God forgave my sin –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OHcyrLTayOM>

Prayers of Praise, Thanks and Intercession

Pray as you feel led. Finish with the Lord's Prayer.

Song From heaven You came (The Servant King) -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrQiLEO4D5s>

Reading Isaiah *The servant of the LORD*

42 'Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will bring justice to the nations.

² He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.

³ A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smouldering wick he will not snuff out.

In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

⁴ he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.

In his teaching the islands will put their hope.'

⁵This is what God the LORD says –
the Creator of the heavens, who stretches them out,
who spreads out the earth with all that springs from it,
who gives breath to its people,
and life to those who walk on it:
⁶'I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness;
I will take hold of your hand.
I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people
and a light for the Gentiles,
⁷to open eyes that are blind,
to free captives from prison
and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.
⁸'I am the LORD; that is my name!
I will not yield my glory to another
or my praise to idols.
⁹See, the former things have taken place,
and new things I declare;
before they spring into being
I announce them to you.'

Some thoughts

God's plan prophesied

Our title is 'God's plan prophesied' and we are challenged to see what we can learn by studying this short passage from Isaiah.

Let's start at the end, with verse 9, where God actually states that "former things have taken place" and "new things I declare; before they spring into being I announce them to you."

So God is telling us that He announces future events before they occur. We know that He does this through His word, the Bible. How do we know this?

We know this because we have the benefit of hindsight. We can see that events prophesied in the Bible have come to pass. Many of these relate to Jesus' first coming, including the passage we are studying.

How do we know it is God stating this? We know because in verse 5 He says who He is –'God the Lord, the Creator of the heavens'. Just in case we don't fully appreciate this, he reminds us that 'He stretches out the heavens, spreads out the earth with all that springs from it, gives breath to its people and life to those who walk on it'.

Although it is not our topic today, this is a reminder that we did not evolve, we were created by a Creator God. Life did not evolve from a big bang, God stretched out the heavens and gives breath and life to its inhabitants. Evolution and divine creation are incompatible. God makes it clear where He stands on this issue.

Scientists are discovering more and more about the amazing complexity of living cells; very complex, incredibly miniature factories, built by tiny protein machines and controlled by a complex software code, (the genome), stored in the DNA molecule present in the nucleus of each of the cells in every living organism. Writing software (Genetic code) requires intelligence. Forward looking intelligence that can predict what will happen. The information contained in the software code of the genome cannot come from nowhere. (I write this as an ex-computer programmer).

In verse 8 God reminds us that He is the LORD; He will not yield His glory to another or His praise to idols. This is a précis of the first two commandments. (You shall have no other Gods, you shall not make or bow down to or worship an idol). When we substitute evolution or 'Mother Nature' for our Creator God we break both of these commands.

But to return to our main topic on prophecy – in verses 1 to 4 God, through Isaiah is making some forward looking statements about a future servant on whom He will put His Spirit.

With the benefit of hindsight we believe this prophecy is referring to Jesus Christ. It is most unlikely that anyone at the time, 700 years BC, would have known who it was referring to or the implications thereof. In fact even when Jesus walked the earth, not many, if any would have connected this prophecy with Him.

Yet with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can see it now. Some of this prophecy has yet to pass, justice has not been established, but many on this Island of Britain put their hope in Him and His teaching. (verse 4)

Something else that wasn't understood and if it was, would not have gone down well, is in verse 6 where God declares His servant will be a light for the Gentiles. From the time of Isaiah to the time of Jesus and beyond, the Jews did not think of the Gentiles as having the same relationship with God that they enjoyed. Let alone a closer relationship through Jesus.

But praise the LORD, through Jesus and the Holy Spirit our eyes have been opened, we have been set free from sin and come out of the darkness into the glorious light of Christ. (verse 7)

God has a lot to say in these nine verses. Things that have happened in the past, things that will happen in the future. At this season we remember the first coming of Jesus. Last week Alan's topic was the second coming of Christ. We are on a journey through time to that event. Various prophecies have been fulfilled, others are yet to be fulfilled and many remain beyond our current level of knowledge and understanding.

One widely prophesied event on the prophetic timeline has been recently fulfilled in our lifetimes. Namely the return of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland and the creation of the State of Israel in 1948. Of course this is not completely fulfilled, as there are still many Jews outside Israel. It is a work in progress.

As God said in verse 9, He announced it to us before it happened. We would be well advised to keep reading God's word and watching what happens in the world as we await the imminent second coming of Jesus.

Song Surely Christ is coming -

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KuN3nMM_ZGE

Grace

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the Love of God,
and the Fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with us now and always.

AMEN

Robin