

A Glorious Vision

Isaiah 2:1-5

Focus: The presence of God gives the church a glorious life

Function: To help the hearers walk in the light provided by God's presence.

Introduction: When Israel desired a king to be like other nations, they did not envision a future that would lead to centuries of bloodshed and warfare. Nothing faintly resembling justice and righteousness has been true of them. The lesson which never seemed to have reached their collective consciousness is that Zion's ultimate purpose has nothing to do with either Israel's or Judah's nationalistic dreams. In the purge of chapter 1:28-31, Zion reflects neither the ambitions of Joshua nor those of David. In this text the prophet Isaiah saw a word from the Lord concerning Jerusalem and Judah. It is a word about Zion. It is a word concerning the last days. It is a messianic word, a word that pertains to the Christian era, it is a word for the church and about the church. It is a word for today. Isaiah had a different view of Zion's destiny. All the prophets and poets of Israel knew that the important thing about Zion is her reputation as Yahweh's dwelling place. Allow me to lift three aspects of this glorious vision of the city to our listening hearts tonight.

1. The Attraction of the city

What makes the city attractive is that it will be redeemed. The mountain of the Lord's house – that is Zion will be elevated and exalted v. 2. Of course the prophet is using metaphorical language to describe not a literal city or temple, but the people of God.

It is attractive because it will realize what Yahweh's purpose has been throughout Israel's revealed tradition. For example: Abraham was called to be a blessing to all the nations of the earth (Gen. 12:3b). Israel was called to be a kingdom of priests (Exo.19:6c), but they had not succeeded. In this vision God moves to take matters into his own hands. He will do what is necessary to establish the city and judge the nations. He will remove all the elements from the population that do not fit his mode of operation.

The city is attractive because the city is centered in Yahweh himself. The city is the place where he lives. His attraction is so great they "flow" from uphill to the summit of the mountain to learn from the God of Jacob lessons to which Israel and Judah turned deaf ears.

I say to you tonight that the church is attractive not because of its leaders, programs, and magnificent buildings. It is attractive because of the presence of its wonderful Lord. "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth," "For of his fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace." (John1:14 and 16).

"He is the image of the invisible God, the first born of all creation. For by him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church..." (Col. 1:15-18a)

Not only will the city be attractive it will be filled with activities.

2. The Activities in the city

There will be a pilgrimage of all peoples to the holy mountain. vv. 2c-3a

There will be a call to worship that expresses their reason for coming, namely that God would teach them his ways v. 3b. He would instruct them in torah (law). There we will learn his ways and go forth with his word. The missionary activities are inescapable. God is a missionary God, the *missio dei* is realized in the advent of Christ.

Zion is portrayed as a temple city, the greatest and most popular pilgrimage city in the world. It holds this distinction because it is the place of Yahweh's dwelling. He will be sought out as a teacher of individuals and as a judge who brings peace and order among nations.

The activities will include God as judge. He will settle disputes between nations – they will turn their instruments of war into farming tools – inaugurating a permanent sign of peace.

In light of all the activities that flow from this glorious vision of God's reign, there is a call to respond to this good news.

3. The Appeal from the city v. 5.

“Come house of Jacob let us walk in the light of the Lord”

Come church of the living God let us walk in the light of the Lord. This grand and glorious vision is for us today. The last days began when God in Christ came and the announcement of

good news echoed from the Judean hills. The sign was a baby wrapped in swaddling cloth. The sign was the middle cross on a hill called mount Calvary. The sign was the empty tomb. The sign was the sound of a mighty rushing wind in the upper room on the day of Pentecost. The appeal is truly a call to worship in the presence of Christ. **But you may wonder:**

Conclusion:

In an era of military conflict, nationalism and international mistrust, simply to write off such an announcement as unrealistic or as applying only to an era only beyond history and not within it; is probably unrealistic to expect peace among nations in the very near future. Should we then just capitulate to such harsh realities? But this text, like so much of the Bible, confronts our resignation with the assurance that God will one day reign – and in peace. Tonight, leaders of several Middle Eastern nations have been meeting near Washington to try to get peace talks back on track between Israel and the Palestinians. I am here to tell you tonight that this passage brings home to all who hear it the power of expectation, and it also kindles hope. This passage is such clear and evocative poetry, its content so significant, perhaps it should simply speak for itself.

It is indeed a glorious vision of the redeemed people of God, it is attractive, active and its appeal is a call to worship. The angels sang this glorious vision, echoing over the Judean hills a melody so pure and sweet – “peace on earth, good will to men.”