

The Future 2012
Isaiah 2:1-3
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I. The promises for the future

- A. The temple would be established as chief
- B. all nations will come to it.
- C. He will teach us his ways
(Pratney 1984:273). (Worldwide Photos Limited, Renewing Australia, June 1990, p. 38).
(Asian Report 197, Oct/Nov 1992, p. 9).
- D. We may walk in his paths
Psalm 145:17
- E. The word will go out from Jerusalem

II. What do we have to do to obtain this?

- A. We don't have to do anything
- B. We have to be in the right place.
Acts 2:17

Introduction

Can we start with a little fun?

Every decade is a little different...

If you remember the 60's you weren't there.

During the 70's people took LSD to make the world look weird

In the 90's people took Prozac to make the world look normal

But the 80's had their own characteristics.

I want to find out how many of you were really around during the 80's

We need everyone who lived during the 1980's to stand up....

You can sit down if you can answer any of these questions

whoever is left standing is the most un80ish

You may sit down if

1. You ever ended a sentence w/ the word "SIKE"
2. You watched Pound Puppies
3. You can sing the rap to "Fresh Prince of Bel Air"
4. You wore biker shorts under your skirts and felt stylish.
5. You yearned to be a member of the babysitters club and tried to start one.
6. You owned those lil Strawberry Shortcake pals scented dolls.
7. You remember when Mulletts were cool
8. You thought M.C.Hammer was cool.
9. You thought New Kids On the Block were cool
10. You had plastic streamers on your handle bars.
11. You can sing the entire theme song to "Duck Tales"
12. If you ever watched Fraggle Rock
13. You wore a ponytail on the side of your head
14. You saw "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles" on the big screen
15. You remember Rainbow Bright and My Lil Pony Tales
16. You had a clip that held your shirt in a knot at the side
17. You saw both Gremlin movies
18. You wore a Jordache jean jacket and you were proud of it
19. You wore anything that said L.A. Gear
20. You know all the characters on the ORIGINAL Saved by the Bell
21. You ever tried to whistle "Don't worry, Be happy!"
22. You know the profound meaning of "WAX ON, WAX OFF"
23. You wanted to be a Goonie

24. You had or attended a b-day party at Burger King and wore the paper crown
25. You can remember what Michael Jackson REALLY looked like
26. You ever wondered why Smurfette was the only female smurf
27. You took lunch pals to school
28. You remember the CRAZE, then the BANNING of slap bracelets
29. You've had the urge to say "NOT" after every sentence
30. You thought She-Ra and He-Man should hook up
31. You thought Doogie Howser was hot!
32. You thought Alf, from Melmac was hot
33. You exchanged friendship bracelets
34. You kept saying "I know you are but what am I"
35. You remember "I've fallen and I can't get up"
36. You remember skating before inline skates
37. You ever got seriously injured on a Slip-n-slide
38. You had a Skip-it

With all that crazy stuff in the past,
who knows what the future will bring?

Isn't that a good question on the day before we enter a new year?

Are any of you concerned about your children or grandchildren?

Do you wonder if they are going to grow up in or out of the faith?

Are any of you concerned about the future of this church / country?

We're going to pray for them later on today

but first I've got good news for you...

I. The promises for the future

This year you're probably going to hear a lot about the Mayan calendar.

The Maya lived in Central America and

were highly developed in mathematics and astronomy which enabled them to develop remarkably accurate calendars.

It doesn't look much like a calendar you would use because it's a cycle using symbols instead of letters and numbers.

Moderns who have learned to interpret the symbols realize the calendar only goes up to 2012.

Some people have interpreted that to mean the Maya knew the world would end on December 21 of this year.

Well, I've heard it before.

Last year Harold Camping gave us two dates for the end of the world, we're still here.

We survived the Y2K scare

George Orwell predicted a bunch of things for 1984 that never arrived.

I've heard so many gloom and doom prophets

I'm not sure what's going to kill me first:

an asteroid strike, global warming, or the return of polyester.

Aren't you ready for a little good news?

Every time I turn on the radio I'm hearing the economy is tanking,

The Iranians are getting the bomb,

there's some new scandal in DC,

or some good looking movie star can't find a happy marriage.

If the Bible doesn't have any good news about the future

we all need to start taking Prozac ... intravenously.

The most depressing thing I've been reading about regards the future of the church in USA.

I've read about the decline of Christianity across the country,

with Baby Boomers attending less than Seniors,

and Gen X'ers attending less than baby boomers, and

mosaics, the newest generation, hardly attending at all.

If the people who make these predictions are right,

we are all wasting our time because they claim that the next generation

will not continue what we've started, and if they are right --

if we cannot even extend the faith to our own children --

than all these predictions are worse than depressing and

we have to choose between believing the news

or believe the Bible.

Who knows what 2012 will bring?

Isaiah did.

He was a prophet in the land of Israel about 8 centuries before Jesus.

Contrary to most prophets,

Isaiah actually saw something good in the future.

Isaiah 2:1-3 _____

¹This 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,

In a time of great national upheaval and uncertainty

God gave Isaiah a vision of the future -- in the last days:

A. The temple would be established as chief

On the day Isaiah made this prediction

the temple stood where it had stood for 200 years and

there was no indication that it would ever do anything else.

So his prophecy made about as much sense then

as if today I predicted that in the future people will eat turkey and watch football on a day called "Thanksgiving."

I wouldn't have to be much of a prophet to come up with that!

What if I said - in the future the east coast of North America will

belong to the United States!

It's not that impressive of a prediction, since it's already true.

The people who heard this prophecy didn't know that

Babylon would destroy the temple in 586 BC,

that was 300 years into the future.

The people who heard this prophecy for the first time didn't know that

the rebuilt temple would be destroyed by the Romans in AD 70,

that was 800 years into the future.

So it seemed like an absurd promise because, as far as they knew,

what he was saying about the temple was already true.

But there's more to it.

The temple was more than just a building in the center of Jerusalem.

It was also the symbol of God's presence.

The people felt that as long as the temple was secure,

God's presence was for sure,

Isn't that good news -- for them?

To apply this message to us,

we have to invoke the **OT interpretation principal:**

What happens to them physically happens to us spiritually.

By predicting the survival of the physical temple

Isaiah is predicting that the worship of God

will be established as the chief religion in the world.

If we carry the OT interpretation principal even further,

This prophecy helps us in a time when Christianity is threatened by

competing religions because it is predicting

Islam will not take over,

New age religions will not take over

Not even paganism, the absence of any worship, will take over.

It is saying there is coming a day when the worship of God will

prevail over the other religions.

What does that tell us about 2012?

When he was saying to us the temple will not go away

he's saying to us –

God's presence will not fade in 12 BC, 12 AD, 2012 AD or 5012 AD!

B. all nations will come to it.

Furthermore, Isaiah says

Isaiah 2:1-3

all nations will stream to it.

³*Many peoples will come and say,*

“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,

to the house of the God of Jacob.

Again, he's not talking about the temple in Jerusalem alone
he's also talking about the church of today.

God does not live in a temple building in Israel,
he lives in us -- we are his temples.

So this is a great prediction.

He's saying that in the future people will be attracted to the gospel.

Not just a few people, but many,
not just white suburban United States,

Look at v. 2...

All nations will stream to it.

There was a time when the influx of people from different races
threatened the life of a church.

I remember when the community around the church I attended as a kid
changed color, so the church changed location.

Back then black and white could exist side by side on the keyboard,
but not so well in Sunday School classes and in the pews.

But Isaiah's promise is

the missionary work of the church will be effective and
there is coming a day when the power of the gospel will overcome
racial and national boundaries!

C. He will teach us his ways

The doomsayers are predicting the end of faith in the United States.

They consider a whole bunch of social-economic factors
which all point to the rise of secularism.

But they have not considered this -

If the church was important enough for God to send his son
to die to establish it,

he's not going to just let it fade away!

Just look at what God is doing around the world:

The Soviet Union repressed the church for 70 years but recently
acknowledged 90 million of its people confessed allegiance to a church

or religious community, and
 that was before the Soviet Union broke up!
 70,000 commitments to Christ were made in a 1991 crusade
 in Leningrad!

It's now estimated that one third of the Russian population is Christian.
 (Pratney 1984:273). (Worldwide Photos Limited, *Renewing Australia*, June 1990, p. 38).

Similarly, there used to be just 2,700 Christians in Iran
 now that number is 12,000!
 Since 1950 China has gone from 1 million evangelical Christians to an
 estimated 80 million.

(Asian Report 197, Oct/Nov 1992, p. 9).

Reports indicate that more Muslims have come to Christ in the past
 decade than in the previous thousand years.

So the evidence is that God is still at work,
 will continue to be at work,
 the Christian faith will continue -- however,
 it will not be business as usual for us.

The faith will continue, the church will go on but
 the places around the world where God is at work
 are those places where they clearly understand their mission.
 We are going to have to adjust some things in our own practice
 because they no longer accomplish the mission.

Yes, Isaiah is saying that Christianity will survive into the future,
 the church of Jesus Christ will endure but
 it will not be the same.

If it's going to survive your church will have to change so much
 you may not recognize it anymore
 and that scares some of you.

But Isaiah has good news...

Isaiah 2:3 ... He will teach us his ways,

God is not going to leave his people, his church, without a clue.

We will know how to function, you'll know how to survive because God has promised that he will teach us.

The world is changing, but God's word is still true.

The church has to change, but God's spirit will remain!

We're going to find better ways of doing ministry:

emphasis on program will be replaced

with an emphasis on relationships

attention to size will be replaced by attention to quality.

measurement by attendance will be replaced

by measurement of discipleship

yet God's ways will still work and he will teach us.

We don't know how the church will function in the future,

but we know who does know!

D. We may walk in his paths

Isaiah 2:1-3

He will teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths."

Notice the word path is in plural form.

Although there is one way, and only one way to God there will be many paths we can follow from that point.

The decisions we have to make all the time look **like this**.

Decisions are like the intersections of various paths,

some paths will take you to your destination

other paths take you further from your destination.

Did you read that recent sad story about the young family that got lost in a snow storm in the Oregon mountains?

When they ran out of food and fuel

the father struck out on foot to get help.

There was a hunting lodge, stocked with food and fuel,

just a mile from their car, but he took another path

and froze to death

Actually, it would be nice if the decisions we had to face looked like this.

More often they look like this...

or this...

So the question of God's will is probably the most frequent reason people consult me or other pastoral counselors.

People who are facing choices know some choices lead to prosperity, other choices lead to disaster and they want some help in discerning what God wants them to do.

Once the number of paths increase the average person is like the university student who was seen with a large "K" printed on his T- shirt.

When someone asked him what the "K" stood for, he said, "confused." "But," the questioner replied, "you don't spell "confused" with a "K." The student answered, "You don't know how confused I am!"

God promises to end our confusion by teaching us his ways. I don't have time today to elaborate on them but I can list them:

1. God teaches us by his spirit - if you know how to hear it.
2. God teaches us by his word - if you take time to get into it.
3. God teaches us through the Christian community - if you have one
4. God teaches us through circumstances, but the circumstances will lump you up.

It is much superior to learn by the first three because The LORD is righteous in all his ways and loving toward all he has made.

Psalm 145:17

E. The word will go out from Jerusalem

Isaiah has one more piece of good news about the future

Isaiah 2:3

The law will go out from Zion,
the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Again, Isaiah has used a couple of metaphors.
“The law,” and “the word” are the same thing,
Zion and Jerusalem are the same place.
But the emphasis here is not on where the word is,
but where it is going to.
Isaiah is telling us that our mission of giving the good news
will continue to happen.

From this point any church can figure out their future.
Churches concerned about their own survival will die.
Churches concerned about God’s mission will endure.
Failure to support missionary work is the kiss of death for any church.
But if we are able to continue to support missionary work,
God has a reason to sustain us

Isaiah goes on to give more good news
that has been quoted by every politician hopeful for the end of war...

He 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.

Isaiah 2:4

Good news?

II. What do we have to do to obtain this?

One day I was in a sporting goods store and I saw a DVD on
“Baseball’s Greatest Rivalries”
but there was no price on it.
When I asked the cashier what I had to do to get it,
she asked me if I had any idea how many other people

had asked the same question.

Then she said I had to fill out a credit application - NBD

They wanted me to give them all kinds of personal information - NBD.

I was ready to do whatever I could to get that DVD.

“What do I have to do to get this” is a normal question when you see something you want.

So it’s a natural question to ask of Isaiah.

Since he’s told us of a great future,

the question to ask on New Year’s Day 2011 is

“What do we have to do in order to obtain this?”

Are you ready for more good news?

Are you ready or are you just going to sit there, and nod?

Isaiah, what do we have to do to obtain this?

nothing

A. We don’t have to do anything

Do you understand the victory that Jesus won at his resurrection

was more than just the forgiveness of your past,

but also the provision for the future?

There’s nothing more we can add to what he’s already done!

Jesus has already done all that needs to be done in order obtain

the victory that God has promised... we don’t have to do anything!

Isn’t that good news?

Besides, haven’t you already heard me tell you that we do is not as important as what we be?

To obtain the victory that Isaiah predicts -- we don’t have to do anything,

but we do have to

B. Be in the right place.

I remember the day when Macy’s was having a huge warehouse

sale.

(For me to remember a sale, it had to be great.)

There were great prices on a number of things that I wanted.

But to get them I had to be in the right place - the ware house
and I had to be there at the right time - 5 AM.

I didn't have to do any work - the staff had already assembled
all the stuff in the warehouse,
they had already established the prices

I just had to get up at 4 AM, drive down to the ware house so I could be
where I could take advantage of it.

As far as your future goes do you realize that Jesus has already
arranged things, and established the prices?

Do you realize that he has already made things ready?

We don't have to do anything,

We just have to be in the right place at the right time.

By that I don't mean we have to be in the right physical place.

You can receive what God has to give no matter
where you are in the world, physically.

But it does matter where you be, spiritually.

To understand where you need to be spiritually, go back to v. 1...

¹This 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

“In the last days...”

The “last days” is a reference to a time when God's spirit
will be working overtime.

It's telling us that the place we need to be in order to receive
the benefits of what Isaiah is predicting is
under the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Do you remember what Peter said at the day of Pentecost,
when the Holy Spirit took control of the followers of Jesus?

Acts 2:17

““In the last days, (there’s that phrase again)

““In the last days, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,

your young men will see visions,

your old men will dream dreams.

The disciples gained all this because they were in the right place, spiritually, so that the Holy Spirit could take control of them, and fulfill all that God had promised, through Isaiah, that he would do through them.

Isaiah is saying that the future is bright for those who are following the lead of God’s spirit!

The future is hopeful for those who are filled with God’s spirit!

That’s good news, isn’t it?

For centuries the Christian church served these elements to remind people of what had been done for them in the past.

Today as we look into the future,

those same elements carry the same reminder...

our future is determined by an event in the past.

Jesus came to us, died for us so we could have a future.

Today we will be offering these elements again as a reminder of the past

and encouraging you to receive them as a way of saying

Because of what you did in the past,

I am trusting you for the future.