

Sermon

St Peter's

Advent 1 2023

The truth about history

Today is the first Sunday in Advent. A time to remember, what God has done. A time to make straight, the sinfulness of the world. A time to remember, who and whose we are. A time to remember, our history.

Four millennia ago, God called Abraham, the father of the faith, saying to him:

‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you .. and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.’

Three thousand three hundred years ago, God called the nation of Israel, when he delivered them out of Egypt, from the hands of Pharoah, and into the land of Canaan, the promised land. God made them to be a great nation. God blessed them, and made their name great, so that they were a blessing. God blessed those who blessed them. Preparing them, for what was to come: the fulfilment of his promise, that in them, who were the offspring of Abraham, all the families of the earth will be blessed.

Three thousand years ago, God planted a seedbed of messianic hope within the nation of Israel, and on behalf of the whole world, when through the lips of the prophet Nathan, he made a large promise to king David, the then king of Israel:

‘I will raise up your offspring after you, he shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom...I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me.. Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.’

God’s large promise, of a future king, of an everlasting kingdom, at the hand, of a son of God, is the history behind Isaiah chapter 9, verses 2-7, read in churches throughout the world at Christmas:

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness—
on them light has shined.
You have multiplied the nation,
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest..
For a child has been born for us,
a son given to us;

Here again we see the decisive significance of this messiah: of this child, born for us, of this Son of God the Father, given to us:

Authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually,

and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.

He will establish and uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time onwards and for evermore.

By the future reign of the coming Messiah, a human king, from the line of David, will be very God. One with God. The Son of God. The eternal counterpart of God the Father. The eternal Son, who was there, with God, since before the world began. He is coming. To rule, and to reign, in human hearts. By his rule, in the hearts and minds of human beings throughout the world, all the families of the earth will be blessed.

And so it came to pass.

That first Christmas.

The eternal Son, stepped down from his eternal reign in heaven, to establish his eternal reign on earth. His eternal reign, in the hearts and minds of men and women, boys and girls, throughout the world today. In him, all the families of the earth, all the nations of the world, have been blessed.

The Kingdoms of this world
have become
the kingdom of our Lord
and of his Christ.

And he shall reign for ever and ever.

By his reign, that is the reign of God himself in the world, the world, the human race, the creation, is being fulfilled.

Joy to the world!

The Lord is come;

Let earth receive its king,

Let every heart prepare him

And heaven and nature sing.

Joy to the earth! The Saviour reigns;

Let us our songs employ

While fields and floods, rocks, hills and plains

Repeat the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace

And makes the nations prove

The glories of his righteousness,

And wonders of his love.

