Isaiah 35:4 Tell those who have a fearful heart, “Be strong. Do not be afraid. With God’s own retribution he will come and save you.”

We have talked of this before but hearing something again is never bad for us. I am talking about how we are to view and understand some of the prophecies that are found in the Scripture. We have before us a great example of why this information is so important.

When it comes to prophecy note that it is considered that there are three kinds found. The first is “rectilinear” prophecy. That’s the type of prophecy where something is said and there is a direct fulfillment in the life of Jesus and nowhere else. Examples of this type of prophecy are for instance found In Psalm 22. In Psalm 22 verse 18 we hear how the clothes of the one dying would be divided by the casting of lots. Remember this is the Psalm that starts with the words: **“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me,”** the very words Jesus uttered from the cross. So it is clear these words apply to Jesus and only to Jesus and then think of how the soldiers did indeed cast lots for his clothing as predicted 700 years before hand.

Then there is what is called “typical” prophecy. Typical prophecy is where a person or event happens that is really a foreshadowing of the life of Jesus. Think of how Moses, prophet of God and spokesman for God was a type of Christ. For that matter Scripture makes clear that someone like Moses but greater than him would be coming. That would be Jesus. Or Jonah, three days in the great fish and then Jesus three days in the tomb…typical prophecy. How about Abraham called to show his love for God by sacrificing his son, his only son! Of course, the Lord put a halt to that sacrifice and supplies a substitute for Abraham. Yet we realize that this was a type of Christ. How God gave his one and only Son to show his love for us. There are quite a few examples of typical prophecy that could be mentioned.

Then there is “intermediately fulfilled” prophecy. That’s where a prophet tells what is going to be in the future. Then an event takes place that partially fulfills the prophecy but the complete fulfillment is found in Jesus. Take for instance Samuel prophesying that a “seed” of David would build the house of the Lord. This is first fulfilled in Solomon and his building the Temple and it is completely fulfilled in Jesus and his building the Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints. Another example of this type of prophecy is how David was betrayed by Ahithophel, close friend and advisor. After the betrayal Ahithophel ends up hanging himself. This is fully fulfilled in the history of Jesus and Judas. Judas who betrays and then ends up hanging himself.

Now add to all of this another element and you begin to see why prophecy can be a challenge. Take the fact that certain types of prophecy, mostly the “rectilinear” type can have two periods of fulfillment. That’s what we have today. Some of the words of prophecy today concern the days of Jesus when he first came to this world to be our Savior and some of the words pertain to Jesus when he will come again the second time to create a new heaven and earth that is once again holy and perfect. Understanding that can be a real challenge but of course a challenge made easier because of the revelations of the New Testament.

With all that being said, let’s then turn our attention to the words before us, words that are “rectilinear” prophecy and words that also have two periods of fulfillment in connection to Jesus. Our theme will be: **A TRUE ADVENT PROPHECY.**

The reason I call this a “true advent prophecy” is because of what you already know about Advent. Advent is that season of the church year when we are preparing for the coming celebration of the birth of the Lord Jesus, in other words the first coming of the Lord AND Advent is also that season where we are to look forward to the promises of God that Jesus will return and that this world will end but a new heaven and a new earth will be created where we will live and dwell with God in total perfection forever. It is as you study these words that you can easily see the division. Here is the first coming…and here is the second coming. Yep, the purposes and facts of Advent in one awesome and wonderful text.

For our purposes today we will begin by focusing on those verses and words that highlight the first coming of Jesus and see how they were fulfilled and then we will turn our attention to the verses concerning the second coming of Jesus.

Which verses speak of the first coming of Jesus? Without a doubt it is verses 3-6. Verse 3 starts focusing on the first coming and note that verse 3 is also a kind of transitional verse. It said: **“Strengthen the weak hands, and make feeble knees firm.”** I call this a transitional verse because it is moving our thoughts from one aspect to the other, from the second coming into the first. It does that by pointing to the need for faith. For a faith that is going to trust and cling to the promises and marvels of God. At the time these words were written, none of this was fulfilled and none would be fulfilled for well over 700 years. This verse reminds us to have faith, to trust what God has revealed and foretold even if you have to wait. Now think of how John the Baptist came to prepare the way for Jesus. The last of the O.T. prophets who had come to do exactly what is said here, to strengthen knees, to make paths straight to prepare for the coming of the Lord. John came to be a harbinger of faith and to point to the Christ of God as happening right then and there in his day. In truth, every time we see that God’s Word has come or is coming true our faith is made all the more sure and confident. It is the marvel of God’s Word.

Then comes verses 4-6a. They say, **“Tell those who have a fearful heart, ‘Be strong. Do not be afraid. With God’s own retribution he will come and save you.’ Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be cleared. The lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy.”** Who here cannot see the life and ministry of Jesus? Think of the angels who appeared to the shepherds. Their message: “**Don’t be afraid.”** Think of how many times Jesus would say to his disciples and others: **“Don’t be afraid.”** And then think of how these words literally came true. The miracles of Jesus are referenced here. In our Gospel reading Jesus references this prophecy of Isaiah to show he was the one. Note, the more spectacular miracles are mentioned, the lame walking, the deaf hearing, the mute speaking but there is no doubt this is telling us to look at all the wonders of Jesus because it is in those wonders and signs that we grasp that God’s promises, his prophesies are being fulfilled in what Jesus would be doing.

The most important verse is of course verse 4: **“With God’s own retribution he will come and save you.”** Such beautiful and compelling words. This verse tells us that in the midst of the wonders to be seen and the call for strong and fearless faith God is going to come. This is Jesus! Jesus is going to come, the Savior God will come. And doesn’t this verse tell us exactly what God is going to do when he comes? He is going to save us! But also notice that God is coming with retribution. The sense of the Hebrew is that God is coming in a hands on way to deliver vengeance and salvation. But it is more than that, God is coming to deal with the evil of the enemy but what God is going to do is also going to bring benefit. The phrase speaks of God coming to deal out justice, both to the good and the evil and God is going to do it in his own way.

Dear people, the way God deals with this is to put Jesus on the cross. There God deals with his enemies, with you and me, (that is what we are by nature, enemies of God, lost in sin, dead in trespass). Jesus came to take care of that. You know how. He lived the perfect life we could not and then in the wonder of all wonders, Jesus offered himself on the cross to pay for our sins. This payment for sin, this divine recompense, where God’s vengeance against sin is dealt with, this payment results in our eternal life and salvation. God, in Jesus, who is the fullness of the deity in human form, came to be our Savior and deliver us from sin. Here in this section of God’s Word, a prophecy of God’s messenger Isaiah, we have the complete revelation of what God intended to do. Jesus would come to deal with sin and Jesus as a result brings eternal life and salvation to all who believe. It is a verse like this that lead us to be filled with total awe and marvel at what our God has promised and done for us.

Then comes the end of verse 6. It says, **“Waters will flow in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.”** Here again is a transitional line. This verse applies to both periods of Jesus. It applies to the first coming of Jesus in a spiritual sense. Is not Jesus the water of life, come to those lost in the wilderness and dying of thirst in the desert? Isn’t Jesus the one who has changed everything so that we grasp the wonders and promises of God? Because of Jesus we have in our lost and dying lives the waters of forgiveness and eternal life. We have Jesus and what He has done to save.

Yet these words also speak to us of how the new heaven and earth will be different. Wilderness and desert will be lush with life and growth because the world will again have the perfection of creation restored to it. It is true, this world has been devastated by sin, that’s why all the problems of this world abound. It is sin that causes death, disease, sickness, catastrophes and all manner of problems and destructions on this world. Do you really think it is climate change that is happening or is it really this world, as God foretold, getting worse and worse, suffering more and more because of the destruction of sin? Wake up people. It is God and Jesus who will make the difference when Jesus returns the second time.

And now we can look at the words of what God says will be at the Second Advent of Jesus. Verses 1-2 and verse 6b-10 say: **“The wilderness and the dry land will be glad. The desert will rejoice and blossom like a rose. 2It will blossom abundantly, and there will be great joy and singing. Lebanon’s glory will be given to it, it will be excellent like Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God….Waters will flow in the wilderness, and streams in the desert. 7The burning sand will become a pool, and in the thirsty ground there will be springs of water. Grass, reeds, and rushes will be in the haunts where the jackals once lay. 8A highway will be there, a road, and it will be called The Holy Way. The unclean will not walk there. It will be for those who walk in that Way. Wicked fools will not wander onto it. 9No lion will be there, nor will any ravenous animal go up on it. They will not be found there, but the redeemed will walk there. 10Then those ransomed by the Lord will return, they will come singing to Zion, and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain happiness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”**

Here is the wonder of the new heaven and earth that God will bring about on the Great Day of Judgement. That’s the day that Jesus returns to bring the end to this world and bring into being the new world. There are so many places to hear of and read of this eternal kingdom of God and what it will be. I don’t know that we have a full grasp yet, of the wonder and marvel a true and perfect world can be but I will tell you it is coming because Jesus says so. And it will be awesome. And holy. And perfect. And total joy and wonder, forever and ever.

I will simply invite you to read over and contemplate the wonder of what God says will be. I think you will grasp the picture of complete harmony and goodness we have coming because of Jesus.

There is the most important part. It is all because of Jesus. What Jesus has done because he has come and brought his recompense. What Jesus will do as he establishes his earthly and forever kingdom for his children that will last forever. Yep, advent is about Jesus. Amen!