

FEAST LIKE KINGS

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The end of a calendar year is a customary time to reflect on our progress, or lack of it, and resolve to change, to improve, in the coming year. Of course, in order to improve, we must first examine ourselves honestly, and without preconceptions.

As Christians, we have the spotlight of God's Word and the searchlight of the Holy Spirit to help us in this cause.

But what will we find? Are we willing to see ourselves plainly? What will we do with what we are shown?

Prophetic insight can be a scary thing. But, if we don't object to a little scare, it will also be encouraging, because God's diagnosis of our present condition always includes a prognosis for our future recovery. Always.

God has destined us to become a nation of kings and priests before the Lord. For that to happen, we need first to be freed from the mindset of an unholy, insignificant, barely-get-by, never-amount-to-anything pauper. Help us, Lord!

A Prophet Arises

Isaiah lived during the decline of the children of Israel, under the growing shadow of the Assyrian empire. He prophesied (spoke the word of God) to a people who were, by God's own diagnosis, "deaf and blind" (see 6:10), who refused to listen to his repeated warnings of looming disaster.

Isaiah warned that the sin of the people of Judah (the southern state, the House of David) would bring God's judgment, yet he also declared that God, in His sovereignty, would use Cyrus, a king of Persia, to return the people from exile.

The book speaks of a "servant," a "man of sorrows," who would be "pierced for our transgressions," accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (52:13–53:12). No other Old Testament prophet so clearly predicted the arrival of Messiah.

The final chapters of the Book of Isaiah give a beautiful description of a new creation in which God will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing eternal peace.