

## Isaiah 60 The coming King (2)

You'll remember, we're usually told, your *first* day of doing something new. My first day here at Tuckingmill was technically the 1st January 2005, but, being New Year's Day, I didn't properly start work until the 2nd January. To be quite honest, I remember very little of the services in the chapel that day, but I do remember that it was Jenny's 50th birthday.

Going way further back, I really don't remember at all my first day at primary school, but I do have some memories of starting at my secondary school, which was over at **Truro**.

The first day is a bit of a blur. I only really remember being rather lost around what seemed to me, on that occasion, to be a vast area of random corridors and curiously-shaped open spaces. But fortunately, at the end of the day, someone had been appointed to walk with me across the town, to make sure that I got to **Truro Station** and the right train home to **Redruth**.

I really hadn't had much experience with trains up until that point in my life. It was soon to become just part of the daily routine for the next few years. I don't remember much about that first trip home, on that first day in the new school. What I really remember most was the *second* day, and the trip home.

On that second day, I was much more on my own. I managed to follow the crowd across town and get to the station, and I got onto what I *thought* was the right train. Ah, but ... was it?

So the train pulled out of the station, and through that short tunnel that leads under the road at the top of the hill. I thought I remembered that. And on the other side of the tunnel, there was what was then called **New County Hall** to the left - and it was still new then, just a few years new. I thought I had remembered that, too.

But then the train proceeded on, down past what I now realise is down the hill beyond Threemilestone, and then winding back towards Chacewater. And yes, there was an old **station platform** there, too, I thought I remembered that, too. But I was becoming less and less sure about things. That's just a disused station ... was I sure it was the one I *thought* I had remembered from the previous day? I was definitely getting a bit worried by then. Had I got onto the wrong train, going in totally the wrong direction? The other kids that I should have been traveling with didn't seem to be around. Where am I? Where am I going?

The countryside just seemed to blur more and more as the train sped up along what I now know is the level straight bit on this side of Scorrier. But I had no real idea where I was. Eventually - only a few minutes later, really, but it seemed like an *eventually* to me at the time, the train started to slow. There was a bridge over what might have been *Drump Road*. Yes! I think I really might have been Drump Road, that I used to walk up and down on my way to East End school when I was little. And shortly after that, the long, dark, curved **tunnel** underneath Redruth

Wesley, and the train came to a halt at ... *yes it WAS!!* ... **Redruth Station**. Finally I had my bearings again. I knew where I was. Home ... well, after a little walk across town.

Strangely enough, reading through Isaiah 60 put me in mind of that train journey from half a century back. We start off knowing at least roughly where we are in God's scheme of things, just from the context of the book. And then there are those curious little bits that might well stick in your mind, too. When you see

***A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.***

(Isaiah 60:6)

surely you immediately think Christmas ... even if you wonder what happened to the myrrh. But as the passage proceeds, I would quite understand if you feel you have lost your bearings. It's like trees and valleys and a little stream down there as you go over a viaduct all whizz past, and you're not at all sure what to make of them.

***The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the plane, and the pine, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious.***

(Isaiah 60:13)

*What's that all about?* I think I might hear you say. I didn't even read it out a moment ago, just because so much of this central section of the chapter can quickly start to blur together.

But finally, things that you might start to recognise start to appear again.

***The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.***

(Isaiah 60:19)

That sounds to start like Revelation, the last book of the Bible ... but ... how did we get there? Actually, precisely how we get there is not the biggest deal to work out. We just need to be encouraged that God's journey down through history, just like the train journey I told you about, stayed on track the whole way.

Isaiah 60 starts with a possible hint of Christmas, when we think about

***"... he who has been born king of the Jews ..."***

(Matthew 2:2)

And it ends up securely at the time and place when we see this Jesus enthroned as

**... King of kings and Lord of lords.**

(Revelation 19:16)

Even if the journey today will remain in your minds as a bit of a blur, would you like to travel with me?

Leaving Truro  
Somewhere around Chacewater  
Approaching Redruth

- **Leaving Truro**

***Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.***

(Isaiah 60:1)

Think of that star of Bethlehem, maybe - though I'm probably thinking more of the **Christmas card version**, as we have no real idea whether it was an actual star or comet or planetary conjunction. But a light shining up there in a sky that is dark.

***For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples;***

(Isaiah 60:2)

That's the background in Isaiah 60, too. If you go back a chapter - after all, Isaiah composed and compiled all of this with this particular order to his writings - things are pretty grim.

***Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.***

(Isaiah 59:1-2)

***Justice is turned back, and righteousness stands far away; for truth has stumbled in the public squares, and uprightness cannot enter. Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. The LORD saw it, and it displeased him that there was no justice.***

(Isaiah 59:14-15)

And yet despite this theological bleak midwinter, there are preparations for Christmas.

***He saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no one to intercede; then his own arm brought him salvation, and his righteousness upheld him.***

(Isaiah 59:16)

And we're told something of what those preparations will yield:

***“And a Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression,” declares the LORD.***

(Isaiah 59:20)

And so the darkness will not have the final word.

***For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.***

(Isaiah 60:2)

If I remember right, those are some of the opening words in Handel's Messiah. There was some good theology behind that music! Takes me to John's Gospel, too:

***The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.***

(John 1:9)

The next verse in Isaiah is quite possibly what gave rise to the notion that those wise men, or magi, that travelled to Bethlehem, were actually royal visitors:

***And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.***

(Isaiah 60:3)

And if your eyes flit on down a couple of verses, well, I have to say this really does make us think of the gifts those guys brought.

***A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of the LORD.***

(Isaiah 60:6)

And “a multitude of camels” is more like it. We see the **Christmas cards** with just the three of them, but they would have had a substantial retinue, even if they weren't actual kings.

So yes, I think we have left Truro station, and glimpsed County Hall, but I think we're heading out into the wilds soon.

- **Somewhere around Chacewater**

You don't even have to go further on into the chapter. “A multitude of camels” is one thing, but right away you get this:

***Lift up your eyes all around, and see; they all gather together, they come to you; your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip.***

(Isaiah 60:4)

That sounds like substantial numbers of people coming, not just three magi plus their staff. “Daughters on the hip”? Wouldn’t that be *baby* daughters, still needing to be carried around by parents? So ... a substantial movement of *people*, is this? And then that would probably mean that our

***A multitude of camels ...***

(Isaiah 60:6)

... isn’t the means of transport for those wise men, but what would nowadays be **fleets of buses** bringing people, or maybe **container lorries** bringing supplies, as people by the thousands, maybe people by the tens or hundreds of thousands ... maybe more ... are on the move.

Suddenly we feel as if we’re on rather shaky ground, trying to work out what on earth is going on. It would certainly fit with the history we know about, Israel as a nation invaded, and huge numbers of people deported - what we call “the exile” in Babylon. And then God shakes up the world powers of that day, and a new monarch declares his new policy of repatriation. All of those people - or their descendants - can return to their national homelands.

Yes, that might fit what Isaiah is saying here - and it would fit in with other prophecies of that time, too.

***And the ransomed of the LORD shall return and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.***

(Isaiah 51:11)

But, just as with mention here of **everlasting** joy, just Israel returning to its own land doesn’t really seem a big enough fulfilment of this.

And people have wondered whether the reestablishment of an actual physical nation of Israel, after the Second World War ... is *that* something predicted in these verses too? It won’t be just land transport needed. We’re talking something international, perhaps inter-continental, maybe?

***For the coastlands shall hope for me, the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your children from afar, their silver and gold with them, for the name of the LORD your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he has made you beautiful.***

(Isaiah 60:9)

So is Isaiah talking about something close to his own time, say 500 BC? Or is he talking about something in his far distant future, 1948 AD, and still actively being fulfilled today? Do we see here the involvement of other nations in actively establishing a new, literal nation?

***Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in my wrath I struck you, but in my favour I have had mercy on you.***

(Isaiah 60:10)

Folks, I confess that at times, when I try to get my head around stuff like this, I can't really get it clear. I'm sceptical of many of the claims about this modern Israel, but I can see how it fits, to some extent. I also find it difficult to just insist that you must read something like this ...

***Then you shall see and be radiant; your heart shall thrill and exult, because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you, the wealth of the nations shall come to you.***

(Isaiah 60:5)

... to mean that there will be loads of Gentiles converted, and *that* is “the wealth of the nations” returning to Jerusalem.

In fact, I find it hard to pin down much of what I read in the middle of this chapter of Isaiah 60. I feel like I'm out there on the train, trees fields speeding by, but I'm really not sure whether I'm coming or going. But it turns out that it *must* have been the wilds or somewhere near Chacewater or maybe Scorrier, because as we read on, there are some signs that we must be ...

- **Approaching Redruth**

Or actually, coming even *more* home than we had ever realised. It really does feel a bit as if we go down into a dark tunnel, and then arrive at something really very different and unexpected. And actually immensely glorious. Even more so than Redruth Station with **Carn Brea** in the background.

Listen up! Can you hear hints of what is ahead?

***Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession.***

(Isaiah 60:11)

Have you read something like that somewhere else? A city where ...

***And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it, and its gates will never be shut by day — and there will be no night there.***

(Revelation 21:23-25)

So you turn to that chapter at the end of Revelation ... and the next verse, too, catches your eye. That sounds like where we were in Isaiah!

***They will bring into it the glory and the honour of the nations.***

(Revelation 21:26)

That stuff we read back in Isaiah, then ...

***The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the plane, and the pine, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious.***

(Isaiah 60:13)

That was Isaiah harking back even further, to when kings David and Solomon had been arranging the construction of the Temple in Jerusalem. This *new* Jerusalem, though, does the Temple *differently*. The place where you meet with God, and he meets with you, is no longer a place, but a *person*.

***And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.***

(Revelation 21:22)

Isaiah spoke about sun and moon before:

***The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the LORD will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended.***

(Isaiah 60:19-20)

And that's pretty much exactly what we've already read in Revelation, too. Not that there is no sun or moon, but no *need* of them, any more:

***And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.***

(Revelation 21:23)

Folks, do you see what has happened here, back in Isaiah 60? It looks to me as if Isaiah, in this prophecy, has managed to tunnel from his own times, giving us a glimpse of the coming King, with that mention, that little teaser, of gold and frankincense ...

But he has managed to tunnel through all of our history, past and future, to give us a glimpse of what it will be like when the coming King has actually *fully* arrived.

We've read that the Lamb is the light of heaven - still up on screen there. We've read that the Lamb is the *temple* in that new, heavenly version of Jerusalem. And it is the Lamb who sits on the throne in that new city, too. The final chapter of all:

***Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb***

(Revelation 22:1)

***No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.***

(Revelation 22:3)

That carol that will start off the famous service from **King's Chapel** has got it right. At this time of year we *do* look back to the coming King.

*Once in royal David's city ...*

... there did stand that lowly cattle shed - or whatever arrangement it actually was. Those details are a bit fuzzier than we sometimes realise. Those words for some mark the start of Christmas proper.

But the final words of that carol mark the end of history, proper, when the coming King has come again, and earth has finally received her King:

*Not in that poor lowly stable  
With the oxen standing by  
We shall see him, but in heaven  
Set at God's right hand on high*

And here is amazing grace. There is room there for us, because of him.

*Where like stars his children crowned  
All in white shall wait around*

Because of the coming King. Because of the King who will have finally come again, as King of kings, and Lord of lords. Because of Jesus.