The End from the Beginning

Isa 46:9-10  "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me; 10 Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:

Chekov's Gun

The Russian playwright Anton Chekhov once taught the importance of foreshadowing to aspiring playwrights by admonishing them not to place a gun on the stage in one scene if they didn’t intend for the gun to be fired in a subsequent scene.

- In Anton Chekhov's world a gun as a prop in any scene would always serve the purpose of foreshadowing a shooting that would take place in a coming scene.
- This act of inserting clues into a story, along the way, that point to later events in the story is a well-known literary device called foreshadowing.
  - It is a skill that has been practiced by all of the literary masters over the ages.
    - Subtle hints and clues are dropped into the narrative of a tale that give insight into the ending of the tale.
  - However, these foresights are often overlooked in an initial reading of the story.
- On may not first notice the slight little inferences that craftily inserted into the story the first time through
  - but upon a second reading or with closer inspection,
  - once the reader is aware of the ending,
  - the foreshadowing becomes glaringly obvious.
- This is the reason that the works of the Literary Masters are still studied in classrooms to this day,
  - even now, a fresh reading of the tale may reveal some previously unnoticed clue that is tucked away within the narrative of the story.

The authors are able to do this because they know the ending before they start writing the beginning.

- The story is already planned, the plot has already been mapped.
  - The author is in complete control of the narrative and knows exactly where the story is going.
- Because of this he can twist the plot, intentionally leading the reader in the wrong direction
  - while dropping little understated clues all along the way that,
  - if understood, would point the reader back to the truth.
- These subtle little hints, like hidden surprises are casually tucked away into the story only to be discovered by the careful and observant reader.
The ability to do this belongs to the author alone because he is the only one that knows the end of the story from the moment that he begins to tell it.

- He knows who did it before it’s even done!
- So he has the ability to foreshadow things that are yet to come long before they become reality.

The Author
The writer of Hebrews refers to God as “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb 12:2)
- and Isaiah, in our text, tells us that God declares the end from the beginning.
  - God alone is the author of all that is.
    - He spoke the worlds into existence and He, in his infinite wisdom, conceived of everything that is before anything ever was.
  - Just like an author writing a great book he saw creation from it’s beginning to it’s ending before he ever began to set it into motion.
    - That’s why Peter under divine anointing referred to the Lamb of God as being “foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Peter 1:20).
      - Because, before God laid the foundations of the world, He conceived the cross in his mind and He envisioned himself, robed in flesh, as the savior of the world.
    - When he created man he created man in his own image.
      - Where did God get an image?
      - God is a spirit but in the incarnation God added to himself a body of flesh and blood and,
      - at the very beginning, when he formed Adam from the dust of the earth,
      - he did it with the image of Jesus because He already knew what the body that he would create for himself was going to look like – so He made man in that image.
    - Before God reached into space and, according to Job, “hung the earth upon nothing” (Job 26:7)
      - he was already aware of all that was about to happen and exactly how the earth would be formed.
      - He knows the end from the beginning.

That, in and of itself, is almost too incredible to comprehend.
- However, that’s only the beginning of God’s knowledge.
  - God doesn’t just know the end of all things, he doesn’t just know how the events of this world will play out –
    - the Bible tells us in Acts 15:18 that “He knows all his works from the beginning of the world.”
  - He knew, from the beginning of the world, every work that he would do.
He doesn’t just know the beginning, he doesn’t just know the ending. He knows everything that he’s going to do in between.
- He knew before you were born, how many times that he would bless you.
- You knew before you ever felt your first fever how many times that he would heal your body.
- You knew before you ever fell under sins power how many times he would set you free.
- He already knows every work that He is going to do.

- He’s not just aware of your troubles and your trials,
  - He isn’t just aware of your worries and your weaknesses –
    - He already knows how he’s going to encourage you,
    - he already know how he’s going to strengthen you.
    - He already knows how he’s going to bring you through!
- He knows that because He is the author and the finisher of your faith!

Prophecy
As we watch events that are currently unfolding around the world we cannot help but begin to think about Bible prophecy.
- Things are happening in our world, today, that were foretold thousands of years ago.
- Throughout His word, God reveals things to us before they occur.
  - Because of His foreknowledge, God alone possess the ability to foretell the events of the world much like the author foreshadows events in the telling of a story.
- One of the things that must be understood about prophecy is that prophecy is not a prediction.
  - God isn’t guessing.
    - Weathermen predict the weather, sometimes they are right sometimes they are wrong.
    - God doesn’t forecast, he simply declares!
  - He speaks of things that are not, as though they were – because He, alone, already knows what will be.
- For instance, The fall of Adam was the beginning of sin in the world and when God dealt with the very first sin,
  - right there in the very beginning, God declared the end of sin’s reign over humanity.
    - In other words in the middle of Satan’s first victory, God declares his final defeat.
  - Speaking the end from the beginning God pronounced the end of sin’s hold on man at the beginning of it’s reign of terror.
- He wasn’t guessing, it wasn’t just a prediction, He already knew that there would be a cross!
God establishes many times over that He alone knows the ending from the beginning.

- Over 6,000 times in the Bible God reveals what is going to happen before it occurs.
  - In a premeditated measure God establishes in the pages of His word that He alone knows the end from the beginning.
- I firmly believe that we are in a state of preparation as God sets the stage for The Revelation of Jesus Christ.
  - In the coming weeks, months and, possibly, years the prophecies of the word of God are going to become more and more critical to us.
- We are going to start seeing more and more things come to pass that were foretold by God through John and Daniel.
  - The prophetic utterances of scripture are going to be fulfilled before our very eyes.
- We may very well find ourselves preaching and teaching about prophetic events as they unfold for all the world to see.
  - As I have pondered the events unfolding right now and their possible implications in prophecy I found my mind going back to the purpose of prophecy.
- I want to speak to you, for just a few short moments this evening on the purpose of prophecy.

First:
Sometimes God pulls back the veil that shrouds the future from us and allows us, through the words of a prophet, to catch a glimpse of what is to come.

- God does this for a variety of reasons.
  - One purpose of prophecy is to allow God to make himself manifest to men.
- By revealing the knowledge that is singularly His, God establishes his credentials, even with the unbeliever.
  - This is the principle that we find on display in Isaiah.
- The prophet Isaiah, speaking as the mouthpiece of God, challenged the idol gods of his day to prove their validity by producing prophecy.
  - It is the test by which deity is measured...

Isa 41:21-23 21 Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. 22 Let them bring them forth, and shew us what shall happen: let them shew the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. 23 Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods:

The evidence of deity is the ability to declare things that are to come hereafter.

- So Isaiah challenges the false Gods, show me the former prophecies that have been fulfilled.
• Show me the things that you have spoken that have come to pass or show me the future that has not yet become reality.

• Prove that you are gods.
  o Prophecy is the test of deity and it’s a test that only God can pass!
• God, alone, has the ability to speak the end from the beginning.
  o By his prophetic word, God declares himself to people of all generations throughout the ages.
• By the word of his prophecy he exposes the inability of false gods.
  o He establishes the fact that he indeed and he alone is the author of all that is!
• By doing so he announces to all of humanity that he is the way, the truth and the life – that’s part of the purpose behind prophecy.
  o Over 6,000 times God declared the end from the beginning and not once has he been wrong.
• When the evidence is considered, it removes any doubt that He is, indeed, God.

Secondly:
Another reason that God reveals the future is for the express purpose of preserving his people.

• This aspect of God’s foreknowledge is an outgrowth of his providence.
  o God declares events to his people before they occur so that they will be prepared when they occur.
• For example, God revealed to Joseph the weather pattern for the next 14 years, expressly to preserve the seed of Abraham.
  o That knowledge elevated Joseph to a place of power that enabled him to preserve God’s elect.
• Throughout the Bible God declares events that will happen, before they happen so that you and I can be aware of and prepared for events that are yet to come.
  o As we watch events unfold in our world we become aware that the end of time is upon us.
• We should have an ever-increasing awareness that the Lord is returning soon for His church.

This is an aspect of Bible Prophecy that even Hell understands.

• I believe Satan studies every utterance of God looking for clues to the plan and timing of God.
  o I believe the devil studied for ages the promise of God in the Garden but never understood it until it was too late.

1 Cor 2:7-8 7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: 8 Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
After the fact, the devil realized he had made a mistake.

- If he had understood, the scripture says, then they wouldn’t have crucified the Lord.
  - Thank God the devil didn’t understand!
- He didn’t understand then and he still doesn’t understand now.
  - Relentlessly, Satan studies the word of God trying to gain insight into what’s going to happen.
- He knows that the keys to the future are revealed there.
  - And so he studies the word diligently.

Another indication of this is found in Rev 12:12, “Woe to the inhabitors of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.”

- He (the devil) knows, how does he know?
  - He doesn’t have any foreknowledge.
- He’s not the author.
  - He knows the same way we know, the scripture tells us enough about the end time to clue us in to the fact that he indeed only has a short time.
- Even Hell sets its priorities and lays out its course of action based on the prophecies of God.
  - However, as the church, we must understand that those prophecies were not spoken for Hell’s benefit.
- The prophecies are given for the church.
  - It is we who should labor all the harder becoming consumed with the knowledge that we have but a short time.
- This is one of the reason’s that God reveals what has yet to happen, so that the urgency of the hour may grip our hearts.
  - That the work of God may be carried out with passion and zeal.
- We are the church, this is our hour; it is our time!

As we recognize the approach of the coming of the Lord urgency should grip our hearts – we have but a short time to reach this city.

- We have but a short time to share this gospel.
  - We have but a short time to reach our loved ones.
- The days are numbered and the day is quickly approaching when the Lord of Glory will step out on a cloud and call his children home!

Finally:
The third and final reason that God reveals his foreknowledge, is to affirm to you that he has a purpose for your life.

- This is really the point that I want to bring home tonight.
  - This is the very personal purpose of prophesy – to cause you to realize that God is intimately aware of your life.
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- The psalmist, in Ps 37:23, declares that the steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD.
- I want you to know, tonight, that your life is not an accident.
  - The same God that knows what tomorrow holds has his eye on you!

Ps 139:1-4  ESV  
1 O Lord, you have searched me and known me! 2 You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. 3 You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. 4 Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.

He went on to say: Ps 139:13-16  ESV  
13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. 15 My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. 16 Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.

I want you to know tonight that God has a purpose for your life.
- If you learn anything from prophesy, first learn this – the same God that planned the end of the world from the beginning has planned all of your tomorrows.
  - He has a plan and a purpose for you.
- You are not the product of random chance!

The Lord said of the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 1:5 ESV) "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

God knows your end from your beginning!
- All the days ordained for you were written before you ever came into being.
  - From your mother's womb, he called you and He is aware of your life!
- Before it ever began he established its purpose.
  - Before you ever started, he fashioned a plan.

That's why we can take comfort in scriptures like Matt 6:8 which says: “for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”
- God knows what you need tonight!
  - He knows where you are tonight!
- He knows what you've been going through.
  - He knows what all of your yesterdays have held and he knows what all of your tomorrows will bring!
- He doesn’t just already know, he's already prepared “times of refreshing” places of refuge, moments of strengthening.
In this house, this evening, He's already spread a table for you in the presence of your enemies!

- There is rest and refreshing here, there is a fresh purpose and a renewed confidence waiting for you in this house.

Because the God that is intimately familiar with the affairs of our world is also aware of every aspect of your life!

- He knows what you need.
  - You may not know the time or the season of your life – but God does.
- You may not know why you are where you are – but God does.
  - You may not understand why things have to be the way they are – but God does.
- And the beauty of that knowledge is that God is in charge of your life.
  - He sees the big picture, he is aware of the end from the beginning.
- We have only to trust him, to rely upon him and to receive from him the help and encouragement that he has prepared for us!
  - The same God that can tell us what tomorrow holds has already prepared your tomorrows for you.
- You can rest assured that your life is in his hands and he is well able to take care of that which is committed to his hand.

Close
Some time ago I read the story of a man that attempted to end his life by flinging himself over the Niagra Falls.

- Apparently this is a mode of suicide that has been chosen by hundreds of people over the years.
  - However, what makes his case stand out is that he quickly became the first person in history to survive a plunge over the falls without any type of safety device.
- As a matter of fact he walked away from the incident virtually unharmed.

I read an interview with him and was struck by something he said.

- He said that, after hitting the falls, he suddenly realized that life really wasn't as bad as he thought it was.
  - As a matter of fact, just as he was preparing to die, he realized that he really wanted to live.
- Then he said, after it was all over and he was still alive he began to think that maybe he was saved for a reason.
  - Maybe his life has a purpose and grand scheme that is bigger than he first understood.
- Maybe there exists some thing that must be done that only he can do.

Can I tell you tonight that it doesn’t take a plunge over Niagra falls in order for you to know that your life has a purpose.
• You were saved for a reason.
  o God has a plan for your life.
• The same God that declares the end from the beginning knows the purpose for your life.
  o The one that planned the course of the world has already charted the course for your life.
• He has a purpose for you.
  o He has a plan for you.

What I desire this evening is for someone to come to a place of prayer and surrender your life – once again – fully to his master plan.
• We weren’t made to drift aimlessly thru this life.
  o Neither were we made to order our own footsteps.
• We were created by God and saved by His blood for His purpose.
  o Why don’t you place yourself in the center of His will tonight.
• Why don’t you turn your life over to him and let him have his way with it?
  o He has a purpose for every life... even yours.
• Why don’t you quite trying to direct your life and turn it over to him?
  o Let him order your footsteps.
• Why don’t you place your life in his hands today?