

August 8

Scriptures: Read Isaiah 24, 25 & 26

Key Verse: “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.” (Isaiah 26:3)

Overview

The judgments of the Lord that have been proclaimed upon the particular nations, cities, and peoples that neighbour Israel (chapters 13-23) now expand to envelop the whole world (chapters 24-27). Many of these prophecies of Isaiah are to be understood eschatologically, finding ultimate fulfillment at the time of the final divine judgment upon the earth. The reasons for the wrath of God upon the earth are: (1) the people transgressed the Law of God - going far beyond the limits God had set; (2) they twisted and corrupted God’s ordinances which are to govern society; and (3) they broke the everlasting covenant, likely referring to the Noachian covenant which God had made with all mankind. This covenant guarded the sanctity of human life (Gen. 9:1-17; note verses 5 and 6) and recognized the Lord God as the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, who is to be respected and obeyed. The people, however, were haughty and did not humble themselves and fear the Lord. They did not fulfill their responsibility in having dominion over the earth; rather, they defiled the ground with their iniquity and the shedding of innocent blood (24:4-5; cf. Gen. 9:5-6; Num. 35:33-34; Ps. 106:38; Lev. 18:24-26).

During this period of tribulation, the judgment of God will come upon all the earth’s inhabitants, regardless of class, rank, or condition (24:2). The things in which the sinful people take pleasure will be taken from them, and strong drink will be consumed out of despair in an attempt to forget their horrible afflictions and distress (24:7-11). For the sinner, there will be no escaping the wrath of God (24:17-18), and the population of the earth will be greatly depleted (24:3), likely caused by violent earthquakes (24:18b). The Lord will imprison the satanic and wicked earthly forces to await the final judgment (24:21; comp. Rev. 20:1-10). The end result will be the destruction of the majority and the deliverance and salvation of only a righteous remnant (24:3, 6, 13).

After going through much persecution from the “treacherous dealers” (24:16b), the faithful remnant will rejoice at the Lord’s intervention upon the earth, and from the east to the west (the meaning of verse 15) and all over the earth they will sing praises to God and glorify Him (24:14-16a). The glorious Light that radiates from the Messiah King Jesus when He reigns in the New Jerusalem will outshine the sun and moon, and His elders will bask in His presence, singing a new song and glorifying Him (24:23; Rev. 4:4; 7:11; 14:3).

In continuation, Isaiah gives expression to the adoration that the righteous remnant will give to the Lord for His powerful intervention, sovereignty, and providence in the affairs of mankind (chapter 25). The Lord is extolled for bringing all nations under His authority. The wicked cities of mankind have been destroyed and proud nations have been humbled and taught to fear the Lord. The righteous remnant, the “strong people” (25:3) who remained faithful to the Lord during the times of tribulation, have been protected by Him as a refuge in the storm of the terrible judgments He brought upon the earth (25:4, 9; 26:20-21). To celebrate the victory of the Lord, “all people” who serve Jesus, be they Jew or Gentile, will be invited to Mount Zion (the

New Jerusalem) for a glorious feast. Isaiah may have envisioned the “marriage supper of the Lamb” for the Bride of Christ, the Church (Rev. 19:7-9).

As the Messiah begins to reign, He will swallow up the veil of spiritual blindness and death which hangs over the earth (cf. 1 Cor. 15:54; 2 Tim. 1:9-10). Graciously condescending as a loving Father, He will wipe away the tears of His people and take away their shame (cf. Rev. 7:13-17; 21:4). They will be lifted up, but the unbelieving world (“Moab”) will be destroyed in the final judgment.

Chapter 26 describes further the joyous reign of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. The gates of the New Jerusalem will be opened so that “the righteous nation” (spiritual Israel), those clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ, may enter and enjoy the Lord’s “perfect peace” (26:2-3), literally “peace peace” (Hebrew — shalom shalom). This means the ultimate peace that is available for the redeemed of the Lord who trust fully in Him and who, with the strength of the Lord, have conquered their foes together with Him (26:4-6). The upright are quick to acknowledge that all they have done and their salvation is the result of His work in them (26:12). They confess that in the past “other masters” (idols, lusts) have had dominion over them, but they are gone and forgotten, since they now serve only the Lord and mention His Name (26:13-14). That Name is Jesus, for there is power in the Name of Jesus! Isaiah foresees that the Lord Himself has “increased the nation”, and “expanded all the borders”, which no doubt refers to the inclusion of believing Gentiles into the blessings of the true Israel through the Lord Jesus. God had chosen the people of Israel to be a light to the Gentiles, that they might come to know and serve Him. But Isaiah confesses that they did not fulfill their duty; they gave birth to “wind” (26:17-18). Despite their failure, the Lord’s plan of redemption for the Gentiles was accomplished through Jesus. Also through Jesus, “Your dead shall live”. Here Isaiah gives the most explicit Old Testament prediction of the bodily resurrection of believers (26:19; cf. Dan. 12:2; 1 Thess. 4:16).

Prayer

Thank ‘You, Lord, for the realistic optimism of faith in ‘You. Grant that our minds will be stayed on You. Your peace and joy is ours. Help us to give this away constantly to others.