

EXPOSITORY NOTES ON THE PROPHET ISAIAH

by

Harry A. Ironside, Litt.D.

Copyright @ 1952

ISAIAH CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

ISRAEL'S DELIVERANCE

WE CONTINUE to enter into the joyous experiences of the remnant of Israel as they praise the Lord because of the fulfillment of His promises, resulting in their deliverance from the power of the oppressor and their spiritual enrichment under Messiah's righteous rule.

It should surely be a joy to us, who through grace belong to the heavenly company, as we reflect upon what God has in store for His earthly people when, in accordance with His promise to Abraham, they enter upon the full possession of the land which He declared should be theirs forever.

Their deliverance is a twofold one. First, from the power of their enemies who, for so many centuries, have oppressed them, and secondly, from their sins, when they enter into the true meaning of the great day of atonement and see in Christ Jesus the true Sin Offering. In that day they will sing the Song of Moses and the Lamb, whether they be among those slain as martyrs during the reign of the Beast and the Antichrist, as seen in Revelation 15:2, 3, or whether they are saved alive out of the time of Jacob's trouble and so are prepared to enter into the kingdom when the Lord Himself appears.

We, today, look forward to the time when we shall sing the new song as gathered round the throne in glory, but that has nothing to do with the overthrow of earthly powers or our deliverance from them. But with Israel it will be otherwise.

As of old, when God delivered them out of Egypt, they sang with Moses the song of triumph over their enemies, so in the coming day will they rejoice when every oppressor has been destroyed; but with this will be the Song of the Lamb, that of redemption through His precious atoning blood.

We, today, can enter into everything spiritual that this song brings before us for we have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. While it is not the Christian attitude to rejoice in the destruction of evil-doers, we can well sympathize with the earthly people as we reflect on what the overthrow of their enemies is going to mean to them. Let us look then at their song, verse by verse.

“In that day shall this song be sung in the land of Judah; We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks. Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (verses 1-3).

Surely in these opening words the remnant speak of the city in a spiritual rather than a material sense. While they look forward to the establishment of Jerusalem as a great center of blessing to the whole earth and a fortress never again to be destroyed by their foes, they sing in anticipation, recognizing in the Lord Himself their strong city and rejoicing in the assurance that their foes will never again be able to overcome them. But they are also contemplating the actual rebuilding of the literal Jerusalem as they cry, **“Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in.”**

Of Israel in that day God has said, **“They shall be all righteous.”** Their iniquities will be purged, their hearts cleansed by the washing of the water by the Word, according to the promise given in Ezekiel: **“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:25,26).**

The veil taken away from their eyes, they will be delivered from unbelief and will find an all-sufficient Saviour in Jesus, their once-rejected Messiah.

The third verse may well apply, not only to the remnant in that coming day, but to every trustful believer in all dispensations. Perfect peace, rest of heart and mind, and freedom from worry and anxiety, are found only as we learn to commit all our ways to the Lord and trust Him implicitly to undertake for us.

It is as we give heed to the admonition of Philippians 4:5, 6 that the peace of God which passes all understanding keeps our hearts as with a military garrison. Peace with God every believer has through the blood of the Cross, as we read in Romans 5:1, **“Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

But the peace of God, this perfect peace of which Isaiah speaks, is something more. It is that quiet assurance that all is well, no matter what adverse circumstances the soul has to face, because we realize that our Father is ordering everything for blessing. What untold comfort has come to myriads through meditation upon and faith in such a verse as Romans 8:28, **“All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.”**

“Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah: is everlasting strength: for he bringeth down them that dwell on high; the lofty city, he layeth it low; he layeth it low, even to the ground; he bringeth it even to the dust. The foot shall tread it down, even the feet of the poor, and the steps of the needy” (verses 4-6).

Faith, trust, and confidence, are synonymous terms. He who confidently looks up to the Lord, committing everything to Him, is lifted above all that might otherwise cause distress or anxiety. We, today, know God as our Father and rejoice in the fact that **“Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him”** (Psalm 103:13).

To Israel He is known by the covenant name the Lord, a Hebrew compound meaning literally, *“the ever-living,”* or as we have it in the New Testament, “He which is, and which was, and which is to come.” Aptly, in the French translations, the word *L’ Eternel* is used and well expresses the true meaning of Him who declared Himself of old to be the Lord, the I Am. Here the name is, as it were, doubled. The Lord the Lord is literally, JAH, JEHOVAH; the name JAH speaking again of His eternity of Being, while the full name tells of His covenant relations to His people. It is to Him they ascribe their complete deliverance, and so they will praise Him because of the way in which He shall have dealt with their proud and cruel persecutors, the great Gentile powers that have sought their destruction.

“The way of the just is uprightness: thou, most upright, dost weigh the path of the just. Yea, in the way of thy Judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early: for when thy Judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness. Let favour be shewed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when thy hand is lifted up, they will not see: but they shall see, and be ashamed for their envy at the people; yea, the fire of thine enemies shall devour them” (verses 7-11).

Throughout these verses we have the contrast between the just and the unjust. We learn from the prophet Habakkuk that the just shall live by faith, therefore the just who walk in the path of uprightness are those in Israel who have learned to put their trust in the Lord and so to endure as seeing Him who is invisible. The unjust who know no shame are those who turn away from the living God, acting in independence of Him and persecuting those who seek to do His will.

Although He showers His favors upon them, making His sun to shine and His rain to fall on the just and unjust alike, yet these evil-doers fail to be moved by His goodness or drawn to Him by His grace. They only become hardened because of the favors bestowed upon them. At last they will have to learn the importance of righteousness in the hard way, when His judgments fall upon them, and all the nations are made to know His wrath because of their sin and rebellion. In that day of the Lord’s power, the inhabitants of the world who are spared after the judgments are fallen, will learn righteousness and will, with Israel, enter into the blessedness of Messiah’s reign.

“Lord, thou wilt ordain peace for us: for thou also hast wrought all our works in us. O Lord our God; other lords beside thee have had dominion over us: but by thee only will we make mention of thy name. They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise: therefore hast thou visited and destroyed them, and made all their memory to perish.

“Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, thou hast increased the nation; thou art glorified: thou hadst removed it far unto all the ends of the earth. Lord, in trouble have they visited thee, they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen” (verses 12-18).

At long last the people of Israel will have learned the lesson that peace, not only from conflict, but peace in regard to the sin question, is found alone in Christ, He who made peace by the blood of His Cross. In vain had God called upon them to take hold of Him in faith and thus make their peace with Him. They had never responded until now; after centuries of unbelief they have learned that peace is found in a person and that Person, the Lord Jesus Christ - He who is our peace.

We know the blessedness of this peace. They will know it in that coming day, following their grievous travail of soul as they pass through the anguish of the great tribulation. There had, indeed, been what looked like travail-pains, or birth-pangs, throughout the centuries of their dispersion and their suffering under Gentile domination, but all ended in disappointment.

Christ was not yet born so far as their apprehension was concerned. But in that day they will be able to enter into the full meaning of the prophecy, **“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.”** Then, in their own consciousness, they will recognize in Jesus the Man-child who is to rule the nations with a rod of iron.

The next verse has occasioned much controversy among prophetic students, some taking it to refer to the literal resurrection of the body at the return of the Lord and others to the national and spiritual resurrection of the remnant of Israel who, like men long dead, will come up out of their graves among the Gentiles to enter into the enjoyment of the coming kingdom.

“Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead” (verse 19).

It seems clear that the reference here is not to physical resurrection, but is rather to be linked with the vision in Ezekiel, as recorded in his thirty-seventh chapter. There he saw a valley full of dry bones, which were declared to be the whole house of Israel. These bones were seen coming together, bone to his bone, then flesh came upon them, and eventually breath entered into them. The meaning is made clear as the Spirit of God Himself interprets it.

They are the whole house of Israel, that is, the remnant of the last days, who will stand for all Israel - those referred to in Romans 11:26. Daniel 12:2 speaks, if I mistake not, of this same resurrection of the nation, but includes not only the righteous but the unrighteous. Even today we see Israel once more a nation in the land, but we know from other scriptures that the great separation between the righteous and the unrighteous is yet to take place.

The last two verses of the chapter need not be considered as part of the song. Rather we have here a special prophetic message, telling of the provision that the Lord will make to preserve the remnant who are to be saved out of the time of trouble and who will thus be able to sing the song we have just been considering.

“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain” (verses 20, 21).

Some have thought that these words referred to some special hiding-place where the remnant will find shelter from the Beast and the Antichrist, as, perhaps, in the ruined cities of Petra, but it seems rather that the Lord, Himself, is to be their Protector, hiding them away in the **“wilderness of the people”** (Ezekiel 20:35). I take it that this means that when the abomination of desolation is set up in the holy place, as predicted both by Daniel and our blessed Lord, that this remnant will flee to the far-off heathen nations who will not be fully under the actual domination of the Beast and who will give shelter to these outcasts for the truth’s sake.

Blessed it is for all who even now realize the truth of the word, **“The name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe”** (Proverbs 18:10).

Abiding under the shadow of the Almighty, all His people are protected from the power of the enemy.

~ end of chapter 26 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
