

EXPOSITORY NOTES ON THE PROPHET ISAIAH

by

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ISAIAH CHAPTER SIXTY-FIVE

NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH

“I am sought of them that asked not after me; I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name. I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts: A people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face; that sacrificeth in gardens, and burneth incense upon altars of brick; Which remain among the graves, and lodge in the monuments, which eat swine’s flesh, and broth of abominable things is in their vessels; Which say, Stand by thyself, come not near to me; for I am holier than thou. These are a smoke in my nose, a fire that burneth all the day” (verses 1-5).

God is explaining - if I may use the word, since God does not have to explain; but He does here - thus meeting the remnant in grace and making clear to them why these judgments have been upon the people, because of all these sins - some open, some hidden. They had set aside His own holy law, and brought in the practices of the heathen round about them; dwelling **“among the graves”** for an Israelite was an unclean thing. It pictures the uncleanness into which the people had fallen. Because of all this, God’s face was averted; He could not deal with them as otherwise He would have desired. The Lord calls upon His people today to separation from the evils around them, **“Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing”** (II Corinthians 6:17). And speaking of the unequal yoke: **“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship . . . hath light with darkness? . . . Christ with Belial? or . . . he that believeth with an infidel?”** (II Corinthians 6:14, 15).

It is a call to complete separation from fellowship with those who are walking in avowed disobedience to His Word. This done He immediately says, **“And I will be a Father unto you . . . saith the Lord Almighty.”** Surely God is the Father of all His people, but He is not always free to be a father unto us in the way He desires. A loving father delights to give his children one manifestation after another of his loving interest in them, and God, our Father, wants to do that. That is implied in being a Father unto us. He is a Father of every one of us, but if we walk in disobedience the holiness of His own nature hinders Him from doing the things for which His heart yearns.

Israel of old had become contaminated by their association with the nations and like the heathen around them, and “**evil communications corrupt good manners.**” The reason that God calls upon His people to come out from the world and be separate is because they cannot go on with the world and maintain their Christian testimony.

Many think that the way to win the world is to be “hail-fellow-well-met” with them. It is like the boys who caught two baby linnets and made little cages for them, and as the linnets grew they meant to teach them to sing. They had a canary which sang very beautifully, so they put the linnets’ cages on each side of that of the canary, thinking that never having heard others and listening only to the canary’s sweet notes they would learn to sing like it. For some time there were no results. And then one day they said, “Oh, listen, our canary is cheeping like a linnet!” Instead of the linnets learning the canary’s long-cherished lovely song it was cheeping like them.

That is the result when God’s people have fellowship with the ungodly. Instead of the ungodly learning the ways of Christ, the children of God soon follow the ways of-the ungodly.

Separation certainly involves the marriage relation; Scripture has made it very clear that a child of God and an unsaved person should not contemplate marriage. An old Puritan quaintly said, “If you are a child of God and you marry a child of the devil, you can expect to have trouble with your father-in-law.”

Then, too, how many a Christian, hoping to make more money, has gone into partnership with an unsaved man in some business venture, soon to find that he has put himself under an unequal yoke? That unsaved man feels perfectly free to do many things in business that a conscientious Christian cannot. He either has to stand against his partner or go with him, and if he does the latter he will lose his Christian testimony.

The same thing occurs in connection with association with all kinds of societies. Two scriptures should keep us out of them all. The first is this: Jesus said “**In secret have I said nothing.**” Therefore He could not have been a member of any secret society or lodge.

The other scripture, that already referred to, is: “**Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.**” In these Orders there are saved and unsaved people, and if we want to have a bright testimony for Christ, we must walk apart from that unequal yoke. Paul’s reference is to that Old Testament scripture: “**Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass [yoked] together.**” The ox was a clean beast and could be offered to God in sacrifice. The ass was looked upon as ceremonially unclean, and the two were not to be yoked together.

When Israel in disobedience mingled with the nations and began to practice their evil doings, God had to pour out His judgment upon them. But when they turned back to Him, confessing their sins, God in His infinite grace was ready to give deliverance.

Thus saith the Lord, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants’ sakes, that I may not destroy them all.

“And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall dwell there. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me” (verses 8-10).

As all that one might see in a vineyard is one large bunch of grapes which seems good for nothing, yet God says: **“Destroy it not . . . a blessing is in it.”** He will not destroy His people completely, but take out of them a nucleus of the coming nation, the restored nation, in the last days.

He will make the valley of Achor a means of blessing to them. That was the place where Achan and his family were stoned to death, because of their sin when the people first entered the land. Achor, meaning *“trouble,”* speaks of the troubles that we bring upon ourselves by our own willfulness, yet God can so work in grace that He can make those very sorrows an eventual means of blessing for us.

So all of Israel’s waywardness of the past will be used of God to correct and bless them, even as Jeremiah said, **“Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee.”** God overrules even the failures of His people when they turn in heart to Him and thus learn lessons which can be of help and blessing to them in the days to come.

“For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying” (verses 17-19).

Then comes the fulfillment of the promises to the obedient in the land, promised for such obedience under the law.

“There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed. And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build, and another inhabit; they shall not plant, and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands. They shall not labour in vain, nor bring forth for trouble; for they are the seed of the blessed of the Lord, and their offspring with them. And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent’s meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord” (verses 20-25).

Yes, God will undertake, and He brings before us here this glimpse of the new heavens and the new earth. There is no description of this, no instruction given as to what will take place at that time.

He simply says, **“I will create new heavens and a new earth,”** and then He adds, As surely as I do this, I will **“create Jerusalem”** a place of rejoicing. Just as surely as He brings in new heavens and a new earth, so He will fulfill every promise made to Israel, and make Jerusalem a center of joy and blessing to the whole world.

Again the rebellious were warned because when God called they did not answer, when He spoke they did not hear; but with those in millennial days God has promised that before they call He will answer, while they are yet speaking He will hear. This is a promise that abides. God’s people can claim it today because it has to do with that which is spiritual. Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, we can appropriate and act upon everything spiritual in the Old Testament, but we are not at liberty to take over the promises that have to do simply with temporal things.

Chapter sixty-five gives the Lord’s answer. His indignation has been aroused against many because of their idolatry, the abominations they have committed, and their unreality. But He also assures the faithful remnant, those who truly turn to Him, that He is about to intervene on their behalf.

Chapter sixty-six again brings before the rebellious part of the nation the sins that have moved God’s heart and caused Him to turn them over to the power of the enemy, and again assures those who trust in Him, that not one of His promises will fail, He will bring them into fullness of blessing.

We have compared the Old Testament prophet to a man looking upon a mountain range, upon one great peak, and then the clouds rise and a higher peak is seen beyond. In chapters 65 and 66 the prophet lifts his telescope a little higher, and looks beyond that second great peak and gets a momentary glimpse of what God has in store for His people for all eternity.

He sees the new heavens and the new earth. These two passages are referred to by the Apostle Peter when he speaks of the passing of the day of the Lord and the bringing in of the day of God, when everything that man has been building up through the years will collapse and the heavens and the earth will melt with fervent heat.

“Nevertheless,” the apostle says, **“we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness”** (II Peter 3:13). That promise is given here through Isaiah in chapters 65 and 66 and nowhere else.

In the book of Revelation, John in vision looks beyond the millennial glory and says, **“I saw a new heaven and a new earth . . . and there was no more sea . . . former things are passed away.”** The new creation would have come in absolute perfection and he gives us some description of the blessedness of the redeemed in the eternal state.

We are not told in so many words that the eternal abode of the redeemed of Israel who have been with the Lord in millennial glory will be upon the new earth, but as we consider what is said in these two chapters we naturally come to that conclusion.

The Church, the Body of Christ, with all Old Testament saints and those who will have died down through the centuries, right up to the beginning of the millennium will have their place in the new heavens, and there will be a wonderful intimate link between the two groups; heaven and earth as it were will be as one. Scripture seems to suggest that distinction - the Church as the bride and the friends of the bridegroom will be the heavenly saints with Christ above, while renewed Israel are with Christ here upon the new earth.

When that day comes, we may all find that we have had very imperfect conceptions of things.

We have the guidance of the Spirit of God in the direct statements He has given us, but we are prone to misunderstand. If before the Lord came the first time one had tried to get clearly in mind the succession of events in connection with His advent, perhaps one would have been much perplexed and confused and probably have come to very wrong conclusions.

But when the Lord actually came, and one event after another took place as predicted, it would be seen that the prophets had foretold all these things, but might have misunderstood the order of their occurrence. The prophets themselves, we are told, after writing, **“searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ that was in them did prophesy, when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories which should follow.”**

In studying Isaiah the prophet, did you ever think that Isaiah studied Isaiah the prophet?

After he had written what God gave him by divine inspiration, he sat down over his own scrolls and studied carefully what God had inspired him to write, that he might try to see clearly the succession of events, the order in which things would take place, and then it was revealed to him, as to the other prophets, that it was not yet the time for a full understanding, that much of this was to be reserved for a future day, and they learned that not unto themselves but unto us they made these things known. And now they are opened up by the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven (I Peter 1:10-12). So of those things which are still unfulfilled, still in the future, we should not speak too dogmatically.

~ end of chapter 65 ~

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