

EXPOSITORY NOTES ON THE PROPHET ISAIAH

by

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ISAIAH CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

THE DAY OF JEHOVAH'S VENGEANCE

THIS chapter, and that which follows, link very closely with what we have already considered, the one setting forth the judgment that is to fall upon the enemies of God and His chosen people, Israel, and the other telling of the blessing which this long despised people shall enjoy under Messiah's benevolent despotism. We cannot read chapter thirty-four without thinking of many other passages of Scripture which clearly tell us of the same stupendous events. First, we have the doom of all the nations that shall come against Judah and Jerusalem in the last days.

“Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the Lord is upon all nations, and his fury upon all their armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come up out of their carcases, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood” (verses 1-3).

This prophecy is in perfect harmony with Revelation 19:19-21. In fact, these words of Isaiah might be looked upon as a commentary on, and explanation of, the vision found in the Revelation. It coincides also very closely with the first part of the 14th chapter of the book of Zechariah. When all nations shall be gathered together against Jerusalem, the Lord will go forth and fight against them, we are told, as when He fought in the day of battle. In that day, the feet of our blessed Lord will stand upon the Mount of Olives when He returns to deliver His earthly people and to vindicate the promises of God made to them by all the prophets of old.

“And all the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll: and all their host shall fall down, as the leaf falleth off from the vine, and as a falling fig from the fig tree” (verse 4).

This, in turn, links with the judgment under the sixth seal in the book of Revelation, and also carries our minds on to the end of time, as predicted in Psalm 102:26 and Hebrews 1:11. It would seem as though the first fulfillment must be taken in a poetic or symbolic sense, that is, we are to understand by the heavens, the sun, and the stars, not the literal heavenly bodies but rather the ruling Gentile civil and ecclesiastical powers of the last days.

Whereas the other two passages would seem clearly to point to the passing away of present conditions entirely, in order to bring in the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

One need have no difficulty in regard to this double application, for we have the same thing elsewhere in Scripture and that in a number of places. God often uses symbolic language to describe certain events which may later have a literal fulfillment.

For Instance, our Lord tells us of great earthquakes which will prevail immediately before His second advent. In the book of Revelation we read of such great earthquakes, but there, in accordance with the symbolic character of the book, they have to do with the shaking and breaking down of existing institutions, the destruction of civilization as we now know it.

The following verses deal particularly with the judgment which is to fall upon Idumea, a judgment that has never yet taken place but we may be assured will be fulfilled literally in the end days.

“For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, it shall come down upon Idumea, and upon the people of my curse, to judgment. The sword of the Lord is filled with blood, it is made fat with fatness, and with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams: for the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Idumea. And the unicorns shall come down with them, and the bullocks with the bulls; and their land shall be soaked with blood, and their dust made fat with fatness. For it is the day of the Lord’s vengeance, and the year of recompences for the controversy of Zion” (verses 5-8).

God declared that He would cut off the people of Edom (Obadiah 18); and in the last days there will be a people in the land of Idumea where once the Dukes of Edom reigned, whose envy of and hatred toward the sons of Jacob will be as great as that of the Edomites of old. Upon these, unsparing judgment will fall. The sword of the Lord will be drawn out from its sheath and will not be returned to the scabbard until all the enemies of Israel will be blotted out.

This will be the day of the Lord’s recompense for all the sufferings that have fallen upon Zion and the people represented by that city throughout the centuries that have gone since they were scattered among the Gentiles, because they knew not the time of their visitation.

Next are described the desolations of the land of Edom, which apparently will continue throughout the entire millennial age as a reminder of the judgment of God meted out to a rebellious people, and thus as a warning to any who, even in the day of the Lord’s power, might contemplate turning away in rebellion against the King reigning in Zion.

“And the streams thereof shall be turned into pitch, and the dust thereof into brimstone, and the land thereof shall become burning pitch. It shall not be quenched night nor day; the smoke thereof shall go up for ever; from generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it for ever and ever.

“But the cormorant and the bittern shall possess it; the owl also and the raven shall dwell in it; and he shall stretch out upon it the line of confusion, and the stones of emptiness. They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be an habitation of dragons, and a court for owls. The wild beasts of the desert shall also meet with the wild beasts of the island, and the satyr shall cry to his fellow; the screech owl also shall rest there, and find for herself a place of rest. There shall the great owl make her nest, and lay, and hatch, and gather under her shadow: there shall the vultures also be gathered, every one with her mate” (verses 9-15).

It is difficult to identify with certainty all of the beasts, birds, and reptiles here mentioned. Scholars are not agreed as to the exact meaning of each of the Hebrew words employed, but even though we may not understand each term used, we can see the full meaning of the passage, namely, that the land of Edom, once a flourishing kingdom, will become utterly desolate and an habitation only for wild creatures of the wilderness.

“Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them. And he hath cast the lot for them, and his hand hath divided it unto them by line: they shall possess it for ever, from generation to generation shall they dwell therein” (verses 16, 17).

The Lord’s word is absolutely sure. No prophecy of the Scriptures will fail of final and complete fulfillment. Just as type and antitype agree in connection with the truth of our Lord’s Person and redemptive work, so prophecy and fulfillment will be in perfect harmony. Nothing that God has spoken will prove to be unreliable. He will never go back on His word whether it have to do with judgment or with grace.

~ end of chapter 34 ~

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