

EXPOSITORY NOTES ON THE PROPHET ISAIAH

by

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ISAIAH CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

JEHOVAH'S VINEYARD RESTORED

ONCE again we have a song of the vineyard, but it depicts entirely different conditions from those set forth in the previous song recorded in chapter five. We saw the Lord looking for grapes and finding only wild grapes, for Israel after the flesh bore no fruit for God. Now all is changed, and we see vines loaded with luscious grapes, thus giving satisfaction to the heart of the Owner. In this way the Spirit of God tells us of the joy which the Lord will find in His people when Israel shall be restored to Himself and shall blossom and bud and fill the face of the world with fruit. The first verse, however, has no connection with the song, as such. It might have been better had the chapter divisions occurred after this verse, rather than to separate it from those that have gone before. It tells of the judgment to be meted out to that old serpent which is the devil and Satan, who is to be bound and cast into the bottomless pit for a thousand years when the kingdom of God is established in power and glory over all this earth where for so long the adversary has exercised his control over the hearts and minds of men.

In that day the Lord with his sore and great and strong sword shall publish leviathan the piercing serpent, even leviathan that crooked serpent; and he shall slay the dragon that is in the sea. (verse 1).

The great dragon having thus been dealt with, we now hear the voice of the Lord Himself, lifted up in song as He rejoices over His delivered people.

“In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine. I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment: lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day” (verses 2, 3).

Wine, in Scripture, is a symbol of joy. We read in Judges 9:18 that wine cheereth God and man. In Psalm 104:15, we have a similar expression. Because of its exhilarating effect when used in moderation, it expresses that which cheers the spirit and gladdens the heart. The Lord Himself will find occasion for rejoicing when Israel shall return to Him in penitence and self-judgment after the long years of rebellion and self-will. Then will their lives be fruitful with the graces of the Holy Spirit, and God will rejoice over them as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride (Isaiah 62:5).

No longer will the Lord's vineyard be let out to unfaithful husbandmen, but He will watch over it Himself, protecting from everything that would tend to make it unfruitful or destroy it.

“Fury is not in me: who would set the briers and thorns against me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together. Or let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me. He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit” (verses 4-6).

No more will the Lord manifest His indignation against the people who are called by His name, because of their waywardness. His Spirit will be quieted toward them, and on their part it would be folly indeed for any again to rise up against Him. To do so would be to meet such immediate destruction as a fire consuming thorns and briers. By returning to God in contrition and confession they make peace with Him whose wrath would otherwise have been poured out upon them.

This is the only place in the Scriptures where we have a suggestion of man making peace with God, and it is well to note that it does not have to do with eternal things but with submission to the government of God in this world. When it comes to the settlement of the sin question there is no man who, by any effort of his own, can make his peace with God.

The glorious truth of the gospel is that Christ has made peace by the blood of His Cross and that peace becomes ours the moment we put our trust in Him. **“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ”** (Romans 5:1). He, Himself, is our peace. We are reconciled to God through the death of His Son.

Where it is a question of the divine government, man is called upon to submit himself to the will of God, recognizing the folly of rebelling against divine law. To this Israel will be brought in the coming day. Then, instead of being a curse among the nations (Jeremiah 29:18) and the Name of the Lord being blasphemed by the Gentiles because of Israel's perversity, they will be a means of blessing to the whole earth as God has intended from the beginning a nation of priests, through whom God will make known His salvation to the ends of the earth.

“Hath he smitten him, as he smote those that smote him? or is he slain according to the slaughter of them that are slain by him? In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind. By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin: when he maketh all the stones of the altar as chalkstones that are beaten in sunder, the groves and images shall not stand up” (verses 7-9).

Elsewhere, the Lord declared concerning Israel, **“You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities”** (Amos 3:2). Even as He permitted the Gentile powers to chastise Israel and then, in turn, destroyed the very nations that had been His rod for the correction of His people, so others will be dealt with in the day of the Lord, but Israel will be preserved and after their time of affliction has passed will be restored to the divine favor.

Then they will abhor themselves because of the idolatries and abominations to which they have given themselves in times past, but every evidence of these follies will be destroyed utterly and the Lord's Name alone will be exalted in the day of their recovery and repentance.

“Yet the defenced city shall be desolate, and the habitation forsaken, and left like a wilderness: there shall the calf feed, and there shall he lie down, and consume the branches thereof. When the boughs thereof are withered, they shall be broken off: the women come, and set them on fire: for it is a people of no understanding: therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will shew them no favour” (verses 10, 11).

These words may refer not only to the cities of the nations, but to the apostate part of Israel. When God arises in His wrath to deal with man's defiance of His authority He will not cease to exercise His vengeance until all who continue to resist Him shall be blotted out. Sin, of whatever character, is an insanity. It is a manifestation of a disordered mind. In the parable of the prodigal, in Luke 15, our Lord tells us that it was when the young man came to himself that he said, **“I will arise and go to my father.”**

Men may think of themselves as too wise or learned to accept the Word of God at its face value, but they little realize that their very unbelief and arrogance only make manifest the fact that they are a people of no understanding. It was thus with Israel when they turned away from God. It is thus with all men everywhere who refuse submission to His holy will.

“And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat off from the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown. and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem” (verses 12, 13).

At the second advent of the Lord Jesus, when He comes as the Son of Man to set up the kingdom of God on earth, the great trumpet will be blown (Joel 2:15, 16) in order to summon the outcasts of Israel to return to Zion and be gathered unto their long-looked-for Messiah and to rejoice in His favor. Compare these two verses with Matthew 24:31. It is vain to say that this prophecy of Isaiah's concerning the regathering of Israel had its fulfillment in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah when a remnant returned to Palestine to rebuild the city and temple at Jerusalem. The Lord has declared, as we have already seen (chapter 11:11), that He will gather them a second time, and it is to this future gathering that these verses refer.

~ end of chapter 27 ~

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