

SEPTEMBER 13

Isaiah 12-14

In Isaiah, it seems like every day we bump into a familiar, important passage of Scripture. Today is no exception. Hang on to your hat. The chapters we'll read today get interpreted differently by different men, so I'll suggest something that makes sense to me and seems to be in the mainstream.

Isaiah 12

Vs. 1-6 This is the celebration of God's salvation. When you think of how the Lord prunes us or disciplines us, the purpose is for our good. As a result of listening to Him and waiting on Him, He puts praise and testimony in our mouths and hearts. We don't have to "formulate" joy. He gives it in a memorable, real way.

I'm sure there was joy in Jerusalem as God destroyed the Assyrian army. There will also be joy in Jerusalem as Jesus returns in that crucial moment at the end of the Tribulation and establishes His kingdom on the earth. It is built into His eternal plan that He returns to Jerusalem, Zion. It is no accident that the nations will hate this city.

V. 4 Notice that *in that day* divides the chapter into two parts. So what is the difference in these sections?

Notice that there is a witness to the world in what happens here. God never loses sight that all this is being done for the salvation of mankind, Jew and Gentile.

V. 6 is a key verse. Two important things are mentioned here. First, Zion is focused upon. That will be important in the chapters that follow. Second, Zion is great only because of God's presence in it. You might know the song, "Glorious things of thee are spoken, Zion city of our God." Although the people of Jerusalem and Judah abused this reality, thinking they could sin and God would still protect them because He claimed Jerusalem as His city, Zion was, and still is, the city of God. Woe to the nation that threatens or destroys Zion. We have already seen what happened to Assyria when they threatened Jerusalem. Now we'll see what happens to another nation.

Isaiah 13

V. 1 It gives some commentators fits because Babylon is mentioned here. I would suggest that although the events were still future, Babylon is mentioned here because they are the ones who would finally destroy Jerusalem.

Vs. 2-13 This description of the coming judgment of God begins with God's future wrath in the end times, against the nations that come to destroy Jerusalem before the battle of Armageddon. Look for all the images that are very "last day." You'll be surprised what you find. You would think you were reading the Olivet Discourse or the book of Revelation. The seven years of *the day of the Lord* will make any distress we're experiencing on earth now look like a picnic. Financial worries? As the Larry Norman song says, "A piece of bread could buy a bag of gold." Wars and natural disasters will seem small when the very physics of the earth and universe are shaken.

V. 12 According to the book of Revelation (6:8, 8:7, 9:18), possibly two-thirds of the earth's population will be lost in all of the judgments. Today we have 7 billion people. It is hard to say that people would be rare if there were still two billion, but that might be a high estimate of how many will be left when the Lord returns. We only know of how many people die in a given catastrophic event, not in the aftermath. Jesus Himself said in Matthew 24:22 that at the close of the age before He returned, *And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be*

saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. It seems that at that time, those who are left will just be hanging on by their fingertips.

Vs. 14-16 seem to be aiming lower at Babylon itself. One important reference here that shows that this is the nation of Babylon that destroyed Jerusalem, and not some earlier version of Babylon that the Assyrians destroyed, is the reference to dashing the infants in pieces. The Babylonians did that when they destroyed Jerusalem. This punishment is foretold in Psalm 137:8-9, which at this point in Israel's history, is also still future.

Vs. 17-22 The Medes took ownership of the palace and city of Babylon. After Daniel 6, you seldom hear of the city. Over generations, the Medes let it die and it became a desert ruin, as it is today. It didn't happen immediately, but God's punishment on the city Babylon came true. It was poetic justice. They destroyed Jerusalem, and the city of Babylon boasted having one of the Seven Wonders of the World. Jerusalem still exists today; Babylon doesn't. One interesting note is to look at what Nebuchadnezzar was saying in Daniel 4:30, when God temporarily took the image of God from him.

V. 19 When it says that Babylon is the glory of kingdoms, we tend to pass that off as an idle boast. When you read the prophecy of the nations in Daniel 2:37-39, God Himself says that Nebuchadnezzar was the golden head and that all the empires that were to come after Babylon would be inferior to it (until you get to the Rock). God Himself thought highly of Babylon. (He also used Babylon greatly for His purposes.) God saved His people in Babylon. (Egypt also had a special place with God because they hosted Israel.) And, of all the rulers we get to know, it appears possible that Nebuchadnezzar might have become a worshipper of Yahweh.

Isaiah 14

Here we go.

Vs. 1-4 give the people hope for their future exile and enslavement in Babylon. This is one of the purposes of prophecy, allowing the people to know that the same God who ordained their punishment was promising their restoration.

A good question here is the identity of this king of Babylon in v. 4. There was a judgment against Nebuchadnezzar. God judged him for seven years. Belshazzar was the king of Babylon who was severely humbled and judged in Daniel 5. But as we know in Scripture and will see in v. 12, standing behind the pride and arrogance of this human government is another government and a being who says that human nations have all been delivered to him. So in the descriptions that follow, when the height of arrogance is described, Satan is described. What we are reading then will have an application to the human and spiritual kings of Babylon.

Vs. 5-11 I would say that these verses could and probably do apply to the earthly and spiritual rulers of Babylon. If so, this would also remove the misconception that Satan will rule in hell. He will be punished and helpless just like those he worked to corrupt.

Vs. 12-17 I think this is exclusively Satan. Although the description in vs. 12-14 is poetic, many people believe this is a description of Satan's actions and the pride that brought him into rebellion and judgment. Having been ordained to serve mankind, Lucifer saw himself as a ruler, wanting to be to mankind what God is to the realm of the angels. In 1 Timothy 3:6, Paul says conceit brought Satan into condemnation.

Vs. 18-21 This seems to say that this ruler will have a very "abnormal" reception into living death. The deceiver will be gloated at in his helplessness.

Vs. 22-25 Here, God declares that His wrath against Babylon and Assyria is totally certain.

Vs. 26-27 Notice here that now God is talking about the whole world and His purpose for the culmination of human history.

Vs. 28-32 The neighbors of Jerusalem would rejoice at the death of King Ahaz, as they would over the destruction of Jerusalem later. But God will pronounce judgment against the neighbors and raise Jerusalem from the rubble and bring His people back. Zion is still God's possession.

God is concerned for all people. Israel here is being shown in its disobedience. In a sense, they are representing all people, and we are being shown the power of sin in them resisting and rebelling against God. When you see all the effort God is making in Isaiah to warn and guide His people, we can imagine that God is doing that every day with people on this planet. As followers of Christ in this harvest, our job is to follow the Spirit's leading and be available to interact with people. We should anticipate that there are people we bump into every day with whom God is working and preparing to say "yes" to the offer of forgiveness in our Lord.

2 Corinthians 13

Our last day in 2 Corinthians.

Vs. 1-4 It appears that Paul was coming to Corinth to hold court. You sort of get the idea that some of the problems mentioned in 1 Corinthians were not yet taken care of.

V. 1 He reminds them that *two or three witnesses* are required to back up a charge against someone. Apparently there were some charges that might have to be made.

V. 3 *He is not weak in dealing with you* was evidenced by God actually removing people who had violated the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11. Paul knew that if he (Paul) needed to show spiritual power, God would allow him to do it.

V. 4 Paul shows that this principle of strength being shown first in *weakness* originated in Jesus Himself. I'll bet the super-apostles didn't like that illustration. After reading this and all of what Paul has said, I don't feel that bad about being beaten up in ministry.

Vs. 5-10 Paul asks them to honestly search their own hearts. This testing was also mentioned in 1 Corinthians 11, regarding Christians who were desecrating the Lord's Supper.

V. 5 I think the test is twofold here. Were they actually believers? And if so, were they following? While being saved is mandatory for knowing Christ, abiding in Him and following Him, with the intentional mindset that He is in us, is optional. Abiding in Christ is not optional for a disciple in love with Jesus, though it will always take work to allow this truth to control our minds. *Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. ⁴Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.* (John 15:3-4)

Vs. 6-8 The Corinthians were having a hard time realizing that Paul & Co. were dedicated to Christ and to making disciples. This wasn't about Paul proving himself, but having the Corinthians follow the Lord as lovers of Christ and as dedicated disciples.

Vs. 9-10 At this point, restoration was still necessary in Corinth between the people and God. Paul was hoping that this letter would spur them on to take care of their own problems. The good news is that it seems that the Corinthians, for a time, pulled things together. Paul wrote Romans on this future visit to Corinth some time before Acts 21, and in the letter Paul seems at peace. You get this sense of peace from chapter greetings he includes in Romans 16.

Vs. 11-14 Even in taking care of their internal problems, they were to aim at restoration and to live in the love and peace of God.

So, thinking about 2 Corinthians, what things come to mind when you think of Paul as a disciple? How does this letter to the Corinthians help refine and focus what it means for you to follow Christ in the harvest, reaching the lost and making disciples, who make disciples? One thing that hits me is that Paul's trials benefited him, the Corinthians, and us. I need to understand

that the things the Lord takes me through are not just for me; they are for others. And ultimately, God works things for good for His plan of redemption in the harvest.

Psalm 57

This looks like it would have been a beautiful song.

David was on the run. Notice the references to taking refuge in God and also the mentions of God's *steadfast love*.

Vs. 1-3 In all of this trial and crying out, David understood God had a purpose for him. That's a good thing to remember when you are faced with very dark times for a long time.

Vs. 4-5 Notice how David mentions the threat and then suddenly he mentions how high and *exalted* God is.

Vs. 6-11 This is the same kind of pattern as 4-5. Verse 6 is the challenge, but the rest of the verses are a declaration of David's faith, ending with a repeating of v. 5.

V. 9 In light of God's salvation, it is our privilege and duty to proclaim His deliverance. The word *nations* is the same word that means peoples or Gentiles. There is a redemptive message here, and a redemptive purpose in God putting David through all of this.

How much more should we, who know Christ, share the good news of His salvation with others?

Psalm 40:9-10 *I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD. ¹⁰I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart; I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation.*

But as David learned over and over, God kept him in his distress, giving him small deliverances over the ten years he ran from Saul. The storm went on, but God taught David to praise Him in the storm.

Proverbs 23:9-11

These are two separate "words" of wisdom.

V. 9 This is either trying to debate with a fool or casting your pearls before swine, or any degree in between.

Vs. 10-11 Moving a landmark was the same as stealing land, and it looks like this specific act of stealing was toward a poor person, a widow or orphans. God may not judge immediately, but He will judge.