

SEPTEMBER 15

Isaiah 19-21

Isaiah 19

This is the coming war against Egypt. Everyone went to Egypt for help, but the truth is that Egypt never attained the power they had before they mistreated Israel and God broke them through Moses. They couldn't help.

Vs. 1-4 God is giving them over to a fierce king. I don't know what Assyria did to Egypt, but after Nebuchadnezzar was done with them they were pretty much like what we see of Egypt today.

Vs. 5-10 Their confidence and economy was in their water and fertility, and the gods thereof.

Vs. 11-15 Their pride in their wisdom and leadership would also fail.

Vs. 16-25 Now tell me you're not amazed at this. I have a couple of thoughts. First, immediately after these pronouncements of judgment, God shows how His grace will overflow for Egypt. Second, who is this written for? Did Egypt actually read this? Do they know about this today? Maybe, but primarily it was for Israel to know not to depend on Egypt in this war with Assyria, and then to know that God would still show faithfulness and blessing for the "cup of water" they gave to Israel long ago. When Jesus says that a person who lends aid will by no means lose his reward, He really means it.

Notice the repetition of *in that day*. These are very obvious predictions for the time of Jesus' 1000-year reign on earth. Often we get hung on the Israel-church comparison regarding the end times, some people thinking that there will be no 1000-year reign because Israel failed and the church was given their blessings. Not only is that a poor understanding of the church and Israel, but it also fails to consider prophecies like these that are linked to Israel being blessed for those 1000 years and having its neighbors receive God's blessing.

Notice too that Assyria will be blessed. I have no clue why this is. The only thing that comes to mind is that the garden, the first home of mankind, if you will, was where the Euphrates and Tigris were close together. That would be the region of Assyria. That entire section of country, from the headwaters of these rivers down to Babylon, has been important in most of the Bible. At the birth of Jesus, this region is where the wise men came from. Anyway, who knows, but God says Assyria (Iraq) will be blessed by God. (Nineveh was the capital of Assyria and is in northern Iraq near the city of Mosul. The ruins of Babylon are also in Iraq.)

Isaiah 20

Not too many people know about this chapter. It is an object lesson to teach Israel not to depend on Egypt for saving help. When Assyria took Ashdod, a city directly west of Jerusalem on the coast, the people were probably thinking that Egypt would rise up and run up the coast and help.

Isaiah was ordered by God to walk around bottomless for three years, as a shocking sign to the people that as Isaiah was walking naked, they would see Egyptian captives being led up the coastal highway naked and humiliated by the Assyrians as a sign to others not to stand against Assyria.

Years later the people following kings Jehoiakim and Zedekiah would make the same mistake in depending on the Egyptians against the Babylonians. Egypt was defeated again.

So much for the glamour of being an important prophet in God's work. I'm sure this passage was well known to Paul as he yielded his life to Christ to follow Him in the harvest. And God did "humiliate" Paul often, but for His glory and to bear much fruit. As disciples in the harvest we

have to be willing to yield up our lives too. And sometimes God uses us for His glory by allowing us to be humiliated.

Isaiah 21

V. 1 These visions have to do with the nations east of Jerusalem.

Vs. 2-10 Now Assyria did capture Babylon, but there is something strange in this vision. The Medes/Persians were the ones who captured Babylon in Daniel 5. Verse 4 would seem like the drunken party that was going on the night Babylon was taken. But the words *fallen, fallen is Babylon*, in v. 9 are repeated twice in Revelation 14:8 and 18:2. I think this vision sounds a little apocalyptic.

Vs. 11-12 Dumah is apparently Edom, the descendants of Esau.

Vs. 13-17 This is a warning to the clans of nomads living in Arabia. No one would be safe from Assyria except those who were living in Zion. That's the point of all of this. The place to have found shelter in this storm was in the presence of God. Ironically, Jerusalem didn't seem like a good place to hide. If you didn't like Israel you wouldn't want to go there. And if you were in a city under siege, you were trapped. The Assyrians thought they were threatening a walled city, but they were challenging the God, who at that time, was dwelling in Zion among the godly.

Ironically, during the final drama on earth, the safest place to be will be following Jesus, even though the wrath of man and hell will be directed at the followers of Christ. It is because Jesus is Immanuel, God with us. That is a great message and comfort as we go forward in the harvest.

Galatians 2:1-16

Vs. 1-2 This visit wasn't the Jerusalem council of Acts 15, but the famine visit mentioned in Acts 11:27-30. Imagine - fourteen years happened in there somewhere.

You will notice in Paul's writing that there is a tension regarding the authority in Jerusalem. I don't think Paul had a problem with Peter and the boys, as much as the false teaching that was coming from the circumcision party of the church in Jerusalem. This faction claimed that the "authorities," the Twelve, encouraged circumcision and other practices. It could be that Paul is also resisting an attempt by some Christians to create a church hierarchy of authority with heroes, bosses, costumes and action figures.

V. 2 Paul did submit his teaching for review by the disciples/apostles.

V. 3 This was telling. Titus was an uncircumcised full-blooded Greek, and no pressure was put on him to be circumcised. By the way, the reason Paul circumcised Timothy, and not Titus, was that Paul did a lot of evangelistic work in synagogues. Timothy had a Jewish mother and would be allowed into a synagogue, but Titus was fully Greek and would never have been allowed in a synagogue. Paul circumcised Timothy in order not to give offense to unbelieving Jews in synagogues and therefore to have an open door for the gospel. (1 Cor. 9:19ff)

Vs. 4-5 Here was the conflict. There were false brothers and there were the true brothers, who included Paul, Barnabas, Titus and the Twelve. The "we" means the other apostles were also against these legalistic Christians.

Vs. 6-10 Paul and Barnabas got the seal of approval, even though Paul didn't feel like he needed it, having gotten everything from Jesus. Humbling himself like this was a good way for Paul to build unity and peace.

Even though Paul had been a Pharisee and persecutor of the church, these apostles who were of the Twelve who had followed Jesus accepted Paul. What leveled the playing field wasn't just genuine faith. By this time Paul was a very scarred and battered follower of Christ. By this time Paul already had received several of those 40 lashes minus one and he had had some of those

shipwrecks. Paul didn't look like a rich, prissy Pharisee anymore. He looked like a veteran, battle-worn follower of Christ.

Vs. 11-16 We definitely don't have this in Acts. It probably happened sometime just after Paul and Barnabas were in Jerusalem, and therefore, before the Jerusalem council in Acts 15. I've read that this might not have happened at once, but over the space of a few days. These men from Jerusalem brought fear and pressure with them, and eventually Peter and Barnabas were lured into separating themselves from the Gentile believers.

Notice that above all of this action, God supervised the situation into existence. He taught Peter and Barnabas; He exposed the political pressures and the men who came from James, and God gave us an amazing passage of Scripture that probably knocked Martin Luther right out of his sandals. The record of this event, even of Paul's courage, was a world changer if you consider the reformation a world-changing event.

I feel bad for Peter in this, but Peter was now an even humbler guy. I'll bet he smiled knowing that Jesus had put him in this position. As disciples, we need to have a quick response to our failures. We know that the Lord knew about them and allowed us to stumble and to learn from them. That is how we realize how much we need Him. And the Lord keeps working behind the scenes, doing all sorts of stuff we might not even know about. We need to learn the lesson, learn humility, then just chuckle at the fun Jesus just had with us and get back into the harvest.

Psalm 59

This could have been subtitled, "Howling like dogs." I like the German, "Howling like the hounds."

The event was when Saul sent to get David at his house and kill him. The soldiers must have been prowling in the shadows. What is interesting to me, knowing the story, is that David was very scared and did some really desperate stuff, from lying to the priests and getting them killed, to going to Gath for refuge where he did the crazy man act to get away. This is written some time later and David can see, in retrospect, that God had saved him, not he himself.

Vs. 1-2 David cried out for help against the evil and violence of these enemies.

Vs. 3-5 David pleaded his innocence and asked for God to rouse Himself and punish them.

Vs. 6-7 David must have seen them outside his house, watching and waiting, night after night.

Vs. 8-10 These are great verses to hold on to.

Vs. 11-13 David didn't want them killed, but to be used as an example to the people that God judges. As these evil men suffered in the sight of the people, the people would learn to trust and follow the Lord.

Vs. 14-15 Here is that refrain again.

Vs. 16-17 Here you have the hallmarks of David's faith. He is singing, taking refuge in the Lord and he is resting in the *steadfast love* of the Lord. David had been running blind. When David came to his senses, his heart settled on the one thing that would guide him all of his life: The steadfast, unfailing love of the Lord.

Proverbs 23:13-14

V. 14 reads slightly different in my German Bible and has a kind of ironic contrast to it. It's like, "you hit him with that piece of wood, but you'll save his soul from hell." It's interesting that the Father struck the Son "with" a piece of wood to save our souls from hell.