

SEPTEMBER 16

Isaiah 22-24

So much of Isaiah has been about the coming invasion by Assyria. In chapter 36 we have the actual story of how God saved Jerusalem in one night. Until then, God uses the coming invasion as a test of the hearts of the people and He uses the present events to tell about the future Tribulation of the entire world. Ultimately God will work for the salvation of Zion and His people and bring the plan of redemption for mankind to fulfillment.

Keep in mind as you read this that the plan of God in the harvest is always being reflected. Sin brings judgment, but woven into everything is the offer of forgiveness. As chaotic as it may get on earth, Christ will reign, tears will be wiped away, and we will live forever with God.

Isaiah 22

Vs. 1-4 This is a vision against Jerusalem itself. The *valley of vision* is referring to Jerusalem. Apparently from Jerusalem's location, it commands a view of the valley through which the Assyrians would advance.

V. 4 Isaiah was moved to tears by the vision of the areas around Jerusalem (Bethlehem, etc...) being ransacked and people being killed and led away.

Vs. 5-8 The Assyrians brought all of their relatives to fight, including *Elam* and *Kir*, the Medes and Persians. These people would fill the valley and be at the gate of the city. The *covering* was removed because of the sins of the people.

Vs. 8-14 These were the actions of the leaders as the threat of war came. The idea here is that the leaders and people didn't put their hearts into seeking God. Notice that Paul quoted v. 13 in 1 Corinthians 15:32. You can make a list of what they did in preparation. Verses 12-13 have a contrast. God wanted one thing; they decided to do something else. God wasn't happy. It was only Hezekiah who led them to seek God, and then, only at the end. Ironically, one of the things they did in preparation was to hide the springs outside of Jerusalem and divert the water under the city. Hezekiah's tunnel was a feat of ancient engineering. This is only ironic in the sense that it really didn't amount to anything. God destroyed the Assyrians. The tunnel had no effect in keeping the people safe or secure. They could have saved all this preparation and trusted the Lord. A century later the Babylonians would destroy Jerusalem and that tunnel would be no help. As we see in The Psalms, if the Lord is not our help and our hope, we are just keeping ourselves busy. Only He can save.

Vs. 15-24 Now we have two leaders of the people who represented Jerusalem and the Lord in talks with the Assyrians. Both of these men are found at the great confrontation in 2 Kings 18:18 and Isaiah 36:3.

Vs. 15-19 Shebna represented the king in talks with the Assyrians. It is thought that his influence led to the loss of hope and the presence of a godless attitude in the city. Apparently he had a t-shirt that said, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

Vs. 20-24 Eliakim, on the other hand, was a godly man with a godly influence on the people. God would use him as a solid testimony in the city.

V. 25 This is a very interesting picture of leadership. God placed Eliakim as a nail in a wall, and apparently they placed a lot of weight on him. He was a godly influence. God allowed him to break as a punishment on the people. During the 54 years of Manasseh, there was hardly a man of godly influence who wasn't killed by Manasseh, who, God says, filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. Eliakim was probably one of those men who donated his blood to the judgment of Jerusalem.

Isaiah 23

Vs. 1-12 This vision is against Tyre and Sidon. What is interesting is the description of their pride and their influence in the world. Assyria's attacks against T&S hampered trade for 70 years, but it was Nebuchadnezzar who destroyed these cities. Their pride and destruction is foretold in Ezekiel; and in that description, there is the second passage in the OT that suddenly turns into a description of the pride and actions of Satan. This kind of pride and influence of the world was seen in Tyre.

V. 13 If even early Babylon was wasted by Assyria, what hope would Tyre have?

V. 14 The *ships of Tarshish* were trade ships from Spain. Tyre was their haven at the end of their journey.

Vs. 15-18 This description of the recovery of Tyre sounds very much like the description in Revelation 18 of the nation or city which is called "Babylon the whore." These are very interesting parallels.

Isaiah 24

And then from the apocalyptic note of the destruction of this nation that influenced the world, we have a very clear prophecy of the Tribulation.

Vs. 1-13 There are lots of things to observe here. Notice that this is a judgment of the entire earth. Note that in v. 6, few people are left on the earth. Also, in v. 13, this action of God on earth is likened to a harvest.

Vs. 14-16a The followers of Christ on earth will understand that this is the judgment of the Lamb on the earth. They will know that the kingdom is coming and that the days of tragedy for mankind are coming to an end. The *Righteous One* is coming.

Vs. 16b-20 Not everyone will be happy. In Revelation it says that when all this breaks loose and the earth and heavens are shaken, people will know it is God and still shake their fists at Him. In Matthew 24:10 Jesus said, *And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another.*

Vs. 21-22 You have the judgment of Satan and the kings of the earth and Satan being locked up for a thousand years during the Millennium, followed by the Great White Throne judgment of God and the lake of fire.

V. 23 During the Tribulation, as the Lord comes, the power of the sun will be altered. Now you have the beginning of the new heavens and earth without sun or moon with Christ reigning in Zion. Notice again the importance of Jerusalem. This has been a major theme thus far in Isaiah.

With all we have read this year regarding suffering and waiting on the Lord, thanking God and learning through the small deliverances He gives us, I was touched by the thought of the people in vs. 14-16 above. They will be in the Tribulation with everyone else. They not only have to duck flying boulders and meteors like everyone else, but the hatred of mankind will be turned against them because they know Christ. Yet they still rejoice; they still follow, and people will still respond to their message in the harvest. Even in this Tribulation they still shout the praise of God to all directions and to all people. They must be filled with the joy and the love of Christ.

Galatians 2:17-3:9

Galatians 2:17-21

I found it hard to follow this reasoning, but here's what I came up with. So these are my thoughts.

In v. 16 I think Paul stopped talking to Peter, and now this is real time.

V. 17 The tension of following Christ against all they had been taught in Judaism caused this turmoil and sin on Peter's part. But, that didn't make following Christ wrong or the way of sin. There would definitely be some stumbling around here, sometimes being too restrictive, sometimes being too free, but it wasn't Jesus' fault.

V. 18 Back to Peter. If Peter built up again what he knew to be false, it showed he was sinning. If you boarded up a doorway that led to nowhere, so that in a fire people would have to choose the right door for escape, that would be good. But then, if in a fire, you reopened that other doorway causing confusion escaping the fire, that would be bad. In Peter walking over to the other side of the room, he was rebuilding what he had torn down, justification by works.

V. 19 The law said that everyone was dead. With this understanding given by the law, Paul and the others went to Christ, thus dying to the law through Christ, so that they could be alive to God.

V. 20 This is the declaration of every disciple. Tell me you already have this memorized. If not, sin no more and work on it. ☺

V. 21 This verse is easy to understand except in one thing. Paul and the Spirit understood Peter walking across the room as nullifying *the grace of God*. That is really powerful. After grasping this, it is no wonder that Martin Luther reacted so strongly to the teaching of the Catholic Church. If Peter's confused action meant nullifying the grace of God and making the death of Christ of no purpose, the works orientation of that church, or of any church, amounted to the same.

Galatians 3:1-9

Vs. 1-5 Take note of Paul's questions here and the given or implied answers.

Vs. 6-9 While the Jewish Christians of the circumcision party were focusing on the Law of Moses, Paul took the issue back further to Abraham and the redemptive purpose of God.

V. 6 This is Romans 4. Abraham was saved by faith *before* he was circumcised. The members of the circumcision party missed this.

V. 8 So, who or what preached to Abraham? This is a great verse. No wonder Luther loved this letter. Going back to the promise to Abraham, Paul not only showed that the law was inferior to *faith*, but he showed that God was always planning to include the Gentiles by *faith* alone.

V. 9 This shows that at the beginning of God's plan for Israel, as it began in Abraham, the focus was *faith* and the plan of redemption was for *all the nations*. Those who were trying to install pieces of the Law of Moses into Christianity showed they really didn't understand the OT or the heart of God.

As disciples in the harvest there is a kind of tension. We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus. That is it. In this salvation we are totally accepted and we do not have one more thing that we need to do, to be accepted or loved. We could just sit and do nothing and that would be fine; but we don't, we follow. We know that obeying Jesus, following Him, knowing Him as Lord, has a commission attached to it. How do you put all of this together and still have grace? The answer is in Galatians 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.* The love of Christ does not beget compulsive slavery, but rather, a grateful response of love by those who have been made alive by His sacrifice and death. And to think, we'll be raised as He was raised and live forever and ever and ever and ever and ever, with Him. I think that's pretty cool, and worth sharing with others.

Psalm 60

When we read this psalm we need to remember that from Joshua to David the nation fell into disunity and was preyed upon by its enemies. Even though there were judges, they were very

regional. The neighbors could rob any city they pleased, almost at will. As king of Israel, David, as a shepherd king, couldn't tolerate the flock being preyed upon. The neighbors either had to agree to peace with Israel, or David had to subdue them. Israel had had such weak leadership under Saul and a long 400-year history of being inept, why should anyone make peace with David? David was that rag-tag guy running around the country for 10 years living in caves. David had been trained by God to kill what preyed on the flock. David was anointed by God to do something no one had done before and God was with him.

The occasion for this psalm is that as David fought against the Syrians in the north, the Edomites in the south decided to go after Israel knowing that David was busy in the north. When they returned from fighting the Syrians, they had to serve justice on the Edomites.

Vs. 1-3 This is how Israel was as David began to reign. Israel had been easy prey and had seen tragedy after tragedy.

Vs. 4-5 This banner may be the promise to Abraham expressed in the Word. God's truth was their rallying point and salvation.

Vs. 6-8 God had already pronounced His ownership of the land and His judgment on all who would oppose Him.

Vs. 9-12 David felt that by God letting the Edomites do this, it was like rejecting Israel. David was humbled and still pursued the Lord. That was the last problem David had with the Edomites.

Proverbs 23:15-16

When I was reading this, I thought, "This is really true of how a parent responds to their kids following the Lord and saying what is honoring to God." Then I thought, "Hey, I'm somebody's kid too." And then, we have a heavenly Father, too, whom we need to honor.