

SEPTEMBER 18

Isaiah 28:14-30:11

One of the things that hit me this year reading Isaiah is how the first 39 chapters all revolve around the coming of the Assyrians to the gate of Jerusalem. We'll finally get to that event in chapters 36-39. These first 35 chapters are looking at where the people were going for hope and where they should have been going for hope. Now they had Hezekiah and Jerusalem. In the future they would have the Messiah and a new Jerusalem. When the Messiah would come that second time, once again, the city would be surrounded; but that generation of Jews would have their hearts turned to Him. Their hope would be rewarded, and the hopeless situation would give way to peace and fulfillment of the plan of redemption for all men. This is why we have the constant back and forth between their present situation and the future situation.

This is just to say that as you read your Bible year after year, unexpectedly, the Spirit will suddenly make sense of something you've read 100 times before.

Isaiah 28:14-29

Vs. 14-22 Now the "woe" from yesterday is directed to the leaders of Jerusalem who scoffed at Isaiah. Notice that vs. 14 and 22 both have "scoffing" in them, showing this is a unit of thought.

V. 15 In their arrogance, some leaders quipped that Jerusalem was impervious to attack because they had made an agreement with death. This was somewhat pagan and totally dumb.

V. 16 In contrast, God pronounces His power and His future blessing on Zion. They should have been hoping in Him. It is that hope and promised Savior that is the measure of men and a stone of testing. Isn't it interesting to see how the present problems were tied to future promises? Hope is future and is in God. Paul quotes this verse twice in Romans, at the end of chapter 9 and in Romans 10:11, one referring to the future blessing of Israel in Christ and the other talking about faith in Christ. So guess who that cornerstone is. Isn't it interesting to read the actual context in which some of these things said about Jesus were first mentioned?

Notice here it says, *Whoever believes will not be in haste*. In Romans it says not be *ashamed*. I think the idea here in Isaiah is to act shamefully, in haste, seeking help everywhere, but in the Lord.

V. 17 This is clearly talking about the future under the Messiah.

Vs. 18-22 This shows God's judgment on these leaders. There will be no rest, relief or comfort.

Vs. 23-29 After judgment will come restoration and blessing. Notice in v. 23 how insistent God is that they hear. It made me think of the charge against the people in Isaiah 6:9-10, that their ears were heavy and they chose not to understand. And then Isaiah 53 begins, *Who has believed what he has heard from us?* Just as things are sown, reaped and prepared differently, God will work judgment and restoration according to His plans and procedures.

V. 28 means there will be a remnant that will be preserved.

V. 29 sounds like Paul speaking about the same subject in Romans 11:33, *O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!*

Isaiah 29

Vs. 1-8 The *Ah* is really "Woe." *Ariel* is another word for Jerusalem or Zion (v. 8). The gist here is that in the near future for the readers, and in the distant future for a special generation of Jews, Jerusalem will be hopelessly confronted by foes. Then, like a bad dream, they will be gone. This happened when the Assyrians came against Jerusalem. The next morning they were gone. At the

end of the Tribulation, the nations will invade Israel; and Jerusalem will be ready to be destroyed, when suddenly, "Hey did you see that strange lightning, and that cloud, and what's that coming down from the cloud?" And it will all be over, that quickly.

Vs. 9-16 This passage is full of references used in the NT regarding Israel's blindness and the illustration with the potter. They have blinded themselves through disobedience and rebellion; and so, as a result, God has laid upon them a spirit of stupor, reminiscent of Romans 1:24. This is all in Romans 9-11.

V. 14 This reminds me of the warning for intentional ignorance and disobedience mentioned by Jesus in Luke 8:18, *Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away.*

V. 16 This sounds like Paul in Romans 11:8-10, but Paul put a different twist on it.

Notice the progression from v. 11 to v. 16. They say they are blind, and then the reason is given. First it is seen in their heart toward God and then in their actions. In v. 15 the desire they were hiding was to seek help from Egypt rather than from the Lord.

Vs. 17-24 Here comes hope and restoration again. Notice *in that day* in v. 18 and opened eyes. Notice too that it is the promise to Abraham that is in focus, not the law.

Isaiah 30

Vs. 1-5 *Ah* is really, "Woe." This is their lack of trust in the Lord and going to Egypt for help. Remember Isaiah 21 and what his nakedness symbolized?

Vs. 6-7 In order to get from Jerusalem to Egypt you had to go through the southern desert, the Negeb. This is basically saying it is useless to get help from Egypt. Rahab is a "monster" that rivaled the Leviathan. In Job, this would have been the Behemoth. Now, a thousand years later, this "monster" is not that variety of super hippo, but from the description of its inactivity, a run-of-the-mill-float-in-the-water-and-do-nothing hippo.

Vs. 8-11 Again, this is Jerusalem, seeking their own will rather than the Lord's. In vs. 10 and 11, notice the words of Jerusalem. I don't know if these were actual words and/or an attitude of heart, but the Lord heard this and He definitely wasn't happy. Sometimes God gives you what you want. During this time that the church is working in the harvest, Israel is under the blindness they have called upon themselves.

Galatians 3:23-4:31

The Galatians were not Jews; they were Gentiles. When these Jewish Christians came to them, they had no way to refute what must have sounded like a very smooth connection between rites from the Law of Moses and following Christ. In this section, Paul (and the Spirit) calls on all of his creativity to show the Galatians that the law and faith do not mix in Christ.

Galatians 3:23-29

Vs. 23-25 The *law* was a strict *guardian*. Even though people couldn't be saved by it (although many found salvation through faith in it if they focused on the promise to Abraham), it protected those who followed it from the paganism of the surrounding world. When we read of the very sexually oriented worship of Baal and Asherah in the OT and the worship of Molech, it shows what God was trying to protect the people from. It will get worse when we get into Ezekiel and see what the leaders were worshipping. This protection was a part of the purpose of the law and that didn't even work in the OT. This guardian was there until the coming of salvation through faith in Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit.

Vs. 26-29 This would have been a major problem for these legalistic Jewish Christians. The baptism in the Holy Spirit creates an equality before God that destroys earthly designations. We

still have these differences on earth, but not before God as He sees us in Christ. The message then is that in Christ you don't have to be a Jew or act like one.

Galatians 4:1-31

Vs. 1-11 This illustration is a little different than the one above. As before, until the heir "comes of age," the heir must be ruled by a guardian (the law). The elementary principles, we'll see, have to do with following religious superstition or practice to appease the supreme being or beings. Somewhere in this illustration, I think, is also an illustration of why Satan has power over mankind. Since mankind sinned, I think his service to mankind became this kind of guardianship. When Jesus died and was raised, God proved that forgiveness and salvation were available, proving Satan wrong. Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit came, one of the things He would convict the world of was that *the ruler of this world is judged (John 16:11)*. The children have come of age through Christ.

Vs. 4-7 These verses have freed a lot of people. Paul says in Romans 2 and 3, that all of humanity is under the law, even the law written on their hearts. That the Gentiles could be equal sons of God was hard for these Jewish Christian teachers to swallow.

Vs. 8-11 Now, Paul comes out of the illustration into the present situation. The *elementary principles* mentioned in vs. 8- 9 are explained in v. 10. The gods could not be known so you tried to make them happy by doing stuff, hoping you were doing the right amount of the right routines. Knowing God is much different. Notice that the Galatians were beginning to follow Jewish holy days hoping to make points with God.

Vs. 12-20 This is a very personal section.

V. 12 Paul had been freed from the law as a Jew, so he could reach the Gentiles. Paul became like them. Now Paul is asking the Galatians to become like him, free from the law and alive to Christ.

V. 15 Some think that the thorn in the flesh was some degree of blindness.

Vs. 17-20 Notice that the false teachers wanted to shut the door of freedom in Christ to make the Galatians dependent on them as teachers. The focus of Paul's ministry was to lead them to love Christ, not him.

Vs. 21-31 This allegory stays very close to the physical circumstances and compares the two wives and the two sons.

V. 23 Hagar's son was naturally conceived and his birth was not according to the *promise*. Sarah's son was a miracle from conception to birth, all according to the promise.

Vs. 25-26 Hagar represents *Mount Sinai* where the law was given. Sarah represents the future *Jerusalem*. Since we're reading Isaiah, we're hearing of the promises that are aimed at Zion that have yet to be fulfilled.

Vs. 28-31 Paul is telling them to get rid of the influence of the law, just as Abraham and Sarah had to get rid of Hagar and Ishmael because of Ishmael's animosity and ridicule of Isaac. The law is hostile to grace. Law causes our sin to react against God, but grace is moved to respond in gratitude and love to the love we have been shown in Christ.

To think, this book helped launch the Reformation. What did this letter really do? It showed that the church of Luther's day had bound itself to the law. The church had lost Christ and found ways to earn God's favor. Galatians opened Luther's eyes and brought him to faith in Christ alone. Galatians brought freedom for generations of people who were in bondage to sin and to religion and made them alive to Christ. As you read this, remember, it's all about freedom from sin found in the love of our Lord.

Psalm 62

As you read this, your heart will latch onto the verses that speak to you. Verses 1 & 5, which mention silence before God, mean something to me. When we hope on the Lord in very hard situations, we cannot defend faith in following. We simply follow regardless of what others think. We set our hope on God and wait and trust Him and hide in Him. Read Isaiah 30:15.

Vs. 1-2 Just like our reading in Isaiah, our hope and salvation can only be in God. Waiting on Him steadies our hearts and keeps us from shameful decisions.

Vs. 3-4 These are the enemies. They may have been religious too, because it says they blessed with their mouths but cursed inwardly.

Vs. 5-7 What a declaration of David's hope in God.

V. 8 And here is David teaching the people. This is why the people loved David.

Vs. 9-10 seem to say that being of high or low estate come from the God of power. Those who pursued David might have been seeking his former position, or they wanted favor and position by lying and political posturing.

Vs. 11-12 David's sight, in all of this suffering and confusion, was set on God, His *steadfast love* and His justice.

Proverbs 23:19-21

On the one hand, you might look at this and say that anyone who has their eating under control and doesn't get drunk is in good shape. But I think the idea here is that the comforts of life can put you to sleep. There are plenty of things here that could also be put into these verses, like TV and computers, social networking, games, shopping, etc.

V. 19 says to *direct your heart in the way*. That sounds like following God, being intentional, being focused, knowing what you are supposed to be doing and where you are going. Knowing *the way* is important and plays an important role in living before God on this planet.

For us as disciples in the harvest, following Christ in this world, we can still enjoy what the Lord gives us; but we know why we need to live intentionally and to stay alert. We know the Way, the Truth and the Life and we are left here to tell others of Him.