

SEPTEMBER 20

Isaiah 33:13-36:22

Today we have read more than half of Isaiah. Not only that, we are coming to the close of the first half of the book. The first half had to do with the coming attack by Assyria and how God would protect Zion. The Assyrians will be defeated tomorrow. The second half of Isaiah has to do with the coming of the Babylonians. They will eventually destroy Jerusalem and the temple. Through Isaiah, the Lord will be talking about this judgment of Israel. He will tell of the reasons for the judgment and how He will restore His people. That restoration will not only be at the end of the Babylonian exile, but Isaiah will look ahead to the final restoration when the Lord brings Israel back to Zion in the millennial, and eternal, kingdom of the Messiah.

Isaiah 33:13-24

V. 13 So, the day the people have been fearing for years is coming. Some have trusted the Lord; some have trusted political strategy, and some have been burning incense secretly and praying to a piece of wood coated with gold or silver.

V. 14 Guess which group this is? Notice the use of *who*. *Who* will be answered in the next verses.

Vs. 15-24 This is the blessing and these are the promises for those who fear and trust the Lord, now and in the future in Zion.

V. 23 This is an image of a wrecked ship, a picture of the Assyrian army after God takes care of them.

V. 24 These are the inhabitants of Jerusalem, looking to the near deliverance and to the future and final deliverance.

Isaiah 34

This is apocalyptic imagery regarding the final battle and flows into an eternal punishment. It is also a warning to the surrounding nations that might rejoice over the hardship of God's people and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Vs. 1-4 Notice how this points to the end times.

Vs. 5-17 So why this curse against Edom? I believe it is a future warning, both for Edom in the not-so-distant future and for all the nations present at the time of the Tribulation.

Zion would not be overthrown now, but it would in about 100 years. This was fair warning to Edom. After Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city and the temple, after the smoke cleared, the Edomites went up on the temple mount and held a drunken celebration. There was more, but this was the main stroke. The book of Obadiah (only 21 verses) and a chapter of Jeremiah are devoted to this future judgment of Edom. When you get to the book of Malachi, these actions by Edom are the explanation of *Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated*. God put both nations into exile because of their sins. Edom's sin was what they did in God's city. Jacob was loved, in that Israel returned and Jerusalem was restored. Esau was hated, in that the Edomites never returned and they ceased to be a people. Now imagine, those actions and judgments are still over 100 years away. You can't say they didn't see it coming. Regardless of how God judges His own, He still loves His people and His city and they will become a stumbling block for all nations who mistreat them.

Anyone who has ever visited Petra has seen that what God foretold has come to be. *If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of hosts says, "They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called 'the wicked country,' and 'the people with whom the LORD is angry forever.'"* (Malachi 1:4)

Vs. 16-17 are the restoration of Zion. You'll see this if you look at the end of Obadiah, v. 21.

Isaiah 35

This is a chapter of millennial blessing as God restores His people and Zion.

Vs. 1-2 This is the declaration of hope.

Vs. 3-4 Based on the hope that is promised, the people should be strengthened and be without fear. Notice how similar this is to Hebrews 12:12.

Vs. 5-7 I guess this is the blessing of health to the people and to the land. Notice how vs. 5-6 sound like Jesus' ministry as the Messiah. *And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them."* (Luke 7:22)

Vs. 8-10 The way of return to the Lord will be holy and safe, and the saints will be singing.

This ends the prophetic section of how God prepared the people and the city for the attack from Assyria.

Isaiah 36

This is the third time this event is mentioned. It must have been very important.

Vs. 1-3 Back in Isaiah 22:15-25, God spoke about both Shebna and Eliakim. One was a practical, political animal and the other was a man of God. The heart of Shebna is described in Isaiah 33:14. Eliakim is described in Isaiah 33:15-24.

Vs. 4-10 When I read these words of the Rabshakeh (officer), I can hear in the background Satan shaking Eve's confidence and trust in God. This is why we always need to stay in the Word and allow God and His love in Christ to be enough for us. Remember that last line of the Lord's Prayer, *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil* (NIV - the evil one). Since we never hear what this guy's name was, maybe he was inspired by Satan.

Vs. 8-9 Notice his boasting of the Assyrian army. God would strike him in this area of his pride.

Vs. 11-12 It is interesting that this guy spoke Hebrew. It is also interesting that he is offering the people a culinary choice between this and what he offers in vs. 16-17.

Vs. 13-20 The attack on Hezekiah and God is very strong and must have been emotionally overwhelming.

Vs. 21-22 It is amazing that the people obeyed Hezekiah. God was right. *For thus said the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and in trust shall be your strength."* (Is. 30:15)

As disciples we will eventually be called on to hear this kind of strong antagonism and arrogance. Our strength is not in having a good answer; it is in the Lord and His Word. *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.* (John 15:11)

Galatians 5:13-26

In Paul's letters he frequently had to address two extremes. We find some mention of both of these extremes in Galatians. We've already seen Christians becoming enslaved to religious works to gain discipline, guidance, approval, love and favor from God. The other extreme was to misuse their freedom in Christ. We saw this very clearly in 1 Corinthians. The Jewish teachers were trying to correct this "misuse" of grace by moving people back to the law. The false argument against grace was that if God's love was totally unconditional, you could do whatever you liked and still be forgiven. And apparently then, as today, some of the Galatians allowed their conduct to slip, using grace and forgiveness as a "get out of jail free" card. The real

response to the freedom of grace and love is the freedom to be grateful and lovingly obedient in following the Spirit.

Vs. 13-15 The key "directive" here is to love. Knowing the love of Christ, our primary response is to love God and our neighbor and use that love in following the Great Commission. In dealing with some who were trying to bring the law into the rebuilding of the church at Ephesus, Paul told Timothy in 1 Timothy 1:5 (RSV), "...*whereas* (in contrast to them) *the aim of our charge is love that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith.*"

Vs. 16-26 The phrase, *walk by the Spirit*, is the key to life as a Christian. We can understand following the impulses of the flesh, but what are the impulses of the Spirit? Walking by the Spirit is what we don't sense. It is not the same as walking by the thoughts of your head, just like following sinful desires isn't necessarily following your head. The sense of impulse and leading is important. We are pros at the one and very "kindergarten" regarding sensing or following the Spirit. Freedom in grace means following Christ and being able to respond to the Spirit in every situation. If we are exposing ourselves to the Word to learn the mind and heart of God, we have the maturity to ask Him to direct us and show us what He is doing. We don't have to live by following religious rules. Since Christ is in us, we follow Him as He leads. Jesus followed the Spirit as He led Him every day. Jesus didn't live guided by works or a religious routine. That isn't how we should walk in Christ either. We are free to know Him, surrender our hearts to seek Him and follow as the Spirit leads.

Psalm 64

Reading this I was caught by the opening requests to God: *Hear my voice, preserve my life, and hide me.* I guess that sums up what I need most days.

Vs. 1-6 This is a fairly long complaint at the beginning of this psalm. Apparently David was moved by the relentlessness of these people, thinking that God would not see.

Vs. 7-8 I was reminded of what Paul told the Romans in 12:19-21. Let God take care of it.

Vs. 9-10 David was already saying this before God had delivered him. He knew that God would judge in His time. For us, as disciples, we need to wait, but still be doing what Paul suggested in those verses in Romans.

Proverbs 23:23

It is interesting that we expect this stuff to just come to us as a consolation prize or byproduct of life. God is saying to make it our aim, and everything else becomes the consolation prize.