

EXPOSITORY NOTES ON THE PROPHET ISAIAH

by

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ISAIAH CHAPTER FORTY-EIGHT

GOD'S CONTROVERSY WITH ISRAEL

“Hear ye this, O house of Jacob, which are called by the name of Israel, and are come forth out of the waters of Judah, which swear by the name of the Lord, and make mention of the God of Israel, but not in truth, nor in righteousness. For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay themselves upon the God of Israel; The Lord of hosts is his name” (verses 1, 2).

THIS chapter covers God's dealings with the children of Israel. No other nation has suffered like them, yet they remain nationally intact to this day, and will do so to the very end. When at last they have passed through all the afflictions and tribulations and troubles, they will understand the meaning of verse 10. God will refine Israel by their troubles and tribulations, eventually to be to the praise of His glory, a royal diadem upon His brow, throughout the generations to come.

“Behold, I have refined thee, but not with silver; I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction . . . Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go. O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea . . . Go ye forth of Babylon, flee ye from the Chaldeans, with a voice of singing declare ye, tell this, utter it even to the end of the earth; say ye, The Lord hath redeemed his servant Jacob. . . And they thirsted not when he led them through the deserts: he caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them: he clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out. There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked” (verses 10, 17, 18, 20-22).

Just as in the past God has undertaken for Israel, so He will do also in the days to come. It is He who will refine them by their very sorrows. And those who turn to Him, in repentance, those who receive the Saviour He has provided will be brought into fullness of blessing.

The section ends with the solemn words: **“There is no peace, saith the Lord, to the wicked.”** Here it is **“the Lord,”** JEHOVAH, for He speaks to His people whose peace might have been as a river (verse 18) if they had been obedient.

“The Lord” stands out in vivid contrast with the idols to whom they have turned for succor and help, and who have failed them utterly. At the end of the next section it is “**my God,**” for all who are of a contrite and humble heart are included in the promise, “**Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near**” (chapter 57:19).

The promise and the warning there come to all the hearers, whether of Israel or not.

Now we come to a very precious and important part of the book of Isaiah. The Apostle Peter speaks of “**exceeding great and precious promises.**” Everything in God’s Word is precious, even though at first sight it may not always seem so. And it is all important, for “**All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable,**” but certain parts of God’s Word speak to us more loudly, perhaps, than others. And the portion upon which we now enter has a very loud voice for all those who know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, because it brings Him personally before us in such a clear, definite way. We have concluded the first subdivision of the last half of Isaiah.

In this great third division of the book are three subdivisions. First, as we have already had, the Lord’s controversy with Israel concerning their idolatry, in chapters 40-48, ending, “**There is no peace, saith the Lord, to the wicked.**”

The Lord’s controversy with Israel concerning their treatment of the Messiah begins with chapter forty-nine and ends with chapter fifty-seven, concluding with the words, “**There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.**” See how aptly these endings come in. There is no peace to the one who substitutes anything else for the One True and Living God. When one turns to any substitute for the true God he can never find peace. Then on the other hand, there is no peace for the one who rejects the Saviour whom God has provided. “**There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.**”

~ end of chapter 48 ~

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