

EXPOSITORY NOTES ON THE PROPHET ISAIAH

by

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ISAIAH CHAPTER THIRTY-TWO

PREPARATIONS FOR THE COMING KINGDOM

BEFORE uttering the sixth woe, which is a proclamation of judgment upon Assyria, we have here a message of hope and comfort for the afflicted people of God, setting before them the glorious Messianic kingdom to be ushered in at the second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ. He Himself is brought definitely before us in the opening verses:

“Behold, a king shall reign in righteousness, and princes shall rule in judgment. And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (verses 1, 2).

We have no difficulty in identifying the righteous King here spoken of. He can be none other than God’s Anointed, who was rejected when He came to Israel telling of the kingdom then at hand. Refused by those He came to deliver, He has gone into the far country to receive for Himself a kingdom from the Father’s hand and to return in due time (Luke 19:12). David foresaw His glorious reign as he exclaimed, **“He that ruleth over men must be just; ruling in the fear of God”** (II Samuel 23:3).

When He returns to take over the reins of government He will associate with Himself as princes and judges certain ones taken from among those who have been faithful to Him in the time of His rejection.

He comes before us here, not only as a KING but as a Saviour. Beautiful are the figures used by the prophet as he declares, **“a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest.”** It is Christ Himself bearing the brunt of the storm of judgment in order to provide shelter for all who flee to Him for refuge. Elsewhere we have seen Him as the Rock of Ages, in whose cleft the troubled soul can find a hiding place. He is pictured, too, as a rock in a desert land, giving shelter from the fierce heat of the sun; another lovely illustration of that salvation which He provides so freely for all who put their trust in Him.

“And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear shall hearken. The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly” (verses 3, 4).

Those who find in Christ an all-sufficient Saviour obtain their instruction through His Word whereby they grow in grace and knowledge and are kept from the path of the destroyer. No matter how simple or untaught one may be when he first comes to Christ, nor how unaccustomed he may have been to receiving instruction and help through another, he will find all needed knowledge and wisdom in Him who delights to open up the truth to those who seek to be subject to His Word.

“The vile person shall be no more called liberal, nor the churl said to be bountiful. For the vile person will speak villany, and his heart will work iniquity, to practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord, to make empty the soul of the hungry, and he will cause the drink of the thirsty to fail. The instruments also of the churl are evil: he deviseth wicked devices to destroy the poor with lying words, even when the needy speaketh right. But the liberal deviseth liberal things; and by liberal things shall he stand” (verses 5-8).

On the other hand, the churl, that is, *the crafty one*, who plays fast and loose with divine truth, need not expect to find spiritual illumination as he pursues his self-chosen way. In the day of the Lord’s power, all such persons will be dealt with in judgment and will no longer be acknowledged as teachers or directors of others. Their true character will be fully manifested and they will be judged accordingly.

These haughty despisers will no longer be permitted to mislead, whereas those who have learned of God the way of righteousness and found delight in walking in it will be honored of Him and find their place in His kingdom, there to be rewarded in accordance with the manner in which they have dispensed to others that which God has bestowed upon them. Our Lord has said, **“freely ye have received, freely give.”**

“Rise up, ye women that are at ease; hear my voice, ye careless daughters; give ear unto my speech. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women: for the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. Tremble, ye women that are at ease; be troubled, ye careless ones: strip you, and make you bare, and gird sackcloth upon your loins. They shall lament for the teats, for the pleasant fields, for the fruitful vine” (verses 9-12).

In the third chapter the Lord had sternly rebuked the daughters of Zion who lived in vanity and frivolity, despising the Lord and thinking only of self-gratification. Now He speaks again to those whose consciences should have been active and who ought, therefore, to have guided others in the way of righteousness but who failed to realize that the judgments of God were soon to fall upon them and who lived only for the present moment, surrounding themselves with every luxury, and delighting themselves in worldly follies of every description.

The day was soon to come when poverty would rob them of all these things which had ministered to their selfish desires, and they would realize at last the folly of forgetting God and thinking only of carnal pleasure and self-indulgence. When the fields and vineyards should be destroyed by invading armies and other means of sustenance come to an end, they would realize too late how foolish they had been in forgetting their responsibility to glorify God.

“Upon the land of my people shall come up thorns and briers; yea, upon all the houses of joy in the joyous city: because the palaces shall be forsaken; the multitude of the city shall be left; the forts and towers shall be for dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks” (verses 13, 14).

Again we have a prophecy which was not fulfilled in Isaiah’s day but looked beyond to the siege and fall of Jerusalem under Nebuchadnezzar, and even later yet, to the grievous woes of the great tribulation. Jerusalem means, “*Founded in peace*,” but this city has suffered more from war and strife than perhaps any other single city in the history of the world, and still greater horrors are in store for it in the future, immediately before the return of the Lord to reign as King on Mount Zion. It will never know lasting peace until that day.

“Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness be a fruitful field, and the fruitful field be counted for a forest. Then Judgment shall dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness remain in the fruitful field. And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places; when it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place” (verses 15-19).

Scripture not only teaches a first and second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; it also predicts a first and second coming of the Holy Spirit. His first coming, to baptize believers into one body and empower them to carry His gospel throughout the world, occurred at Pentecost.

Peter applied the words of Joel 2 to what then took place, not as indicating that the prophecy was exhausted by that outpouring, but that it was of the same character as what was yet to come when Israel shall be brought back to God and the Spirit poured out upon them from on high and all the spared nations be blessed accordingly. It is of this the present passage speaks.

What a time of blessing it will be for this poor world when war and strife have come to an end; sickness and sorrow flee away; poverty and distress disappear; and men will enjoy the loving favor of the Lord and find every need met in abundance. So fruitful will the earth be at that time that a garden of herbs will become as a forest and the wilderness, as we are told elsewhere, will blossom as the rose. It is a great mistake to try to spiritualize all this and deny a coming literal fulfillment. There will, indeed, be great spiritual blessings at that time, but linked with the spiritual will be the literal fulfillment of this and other prophecies. The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will be the portion of those who enter the kingdom and enjoy the blessings of Messiah’s reign, but we may be sure that the promise that they shall dwell in a peaceable habitation is to be taken in absolute literalness. There will be protection from every ill when Messiah takes over the reins of government.

“Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass” (verse 20).

Until these promises of future blessing are all fulfilled, it is the responsibility of those who look for such things in faith to continue patiently sowing the seed of the Word of God and looking to Him to give an abundant harvest.

This last verse of the chapter may well be taken to heart by all of God's servants in the present dispensation, for the blessing is for us today as truly as for the remnant of Israel in the time of Jacob's trouble, as we go forth weeping, bearing precious seed, assured that we shall come again with rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us.

~ end of chapter 32 ~

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