

Isaiah and Jerusalem

by A.B. Simpson

Isaiah's message to Judah and Jerusalem is a mix of judgment and warning, but also hope and deliverance for the chosen people.

Scripture: Isaiah 1:25-28, Isaiah 2:2-4, Isaiah 22:2, Isaiah 31:1-3, Isaiah 35, Isaiah 37:33-36, Isaiah 44:28 - 45:4, Isaiah 53:3, Isaiah 59:20, Isaiah 61:1

Topics: "Hope in Prophecy", "Judgment and Redemption"

Description

A.B. Simpson explores the profound messages of the prophet Isaiah, emphasizing his dual focus on sin and judgment for Jerusalem, alongside a hopeful vision of redemption and restoration. Isaiah's messages reveal the consequences of rebellion against God, yet they also highlight the promise of future glory and deliverance for Judah and Jerusalem. The sermon illustrates how God's faithfulness prevails despite human disobedience, culminating in the prophetic foresight of the coming Messiah and the eventual restoration of Israel. Simpson underscores the importance of recognizing God's sovereignty and the ultimate hope found in His promises, even amidst trials and tribulations.

Transcript

While the great prophet surveys the whole world-wide horizon and has a message for all the nations, yet his special message is to Judah and Jerusalem and he looks at every other question from the standpoint of the chosen people.

I. His first message to his own people is a vision of sin and judgment. This occupies the first chapter and is a fearful indictment to the sinful nation, closing with the solemn announcement of judgment which is surely coming. "I will turn my hand upon you and purely purge away your dross and take away all your tin. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed." (Is. 1: 25, 27, 28.)

1. This is followed in the second chapter by a glorious vision of Judah and Jerusalem in the last days. "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke

many people; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." (Is. 2: 2-4.) The vision of faith does not rest long upon the dark shadows of sin and judgment, but looks onward to the glory of the latter days, for "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance," and Jehovah will not suffer even Judah's sins to frustrate His purpose of blessing.

3. The prophet's vision next returns to the approaching judgment which is about to fall upon Jerusalem on account of her rebellion and disobedience. This is described in chapter 22: 1-12. This message is called "the burden of the valley of vision" and is a vivid picture of the siege of the city by the Assyrians. "You that are full of stirs, a tumultuous city, a joyous city; your slain men are not slain with the sword nor dead in battle. Therefore said I, look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labor not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people. For it is a day of trouble, and of treading down, and of perplexity by the Lord God of hosts in the valley of vision, breaking down the walls, and of crying to the mountains." (Is 22: 2, 4, 5.) The vision is repeated in chapter 29: 1-8, where Jerusalem is represented under the name of Ariel; that is, the Lion of God. "And the multitude of all the nations that fight against her and her munition, and that distress her, shall be as a dream of a night vision." (Is. 29: 7.)

4. Next we have the warning of Isaiah against the Egyptian alliance in chapter 31: 1-3. The prophet foretells the humiliation of Egypt and the confession of the foolish politicians that had leaned on this broken reed, instead of trusting in the Lord. "Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion. For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose : therefore have I cried concerning this, their strength is to sit still." (Is. 30: 3, 7.)

"Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One of Israel, neither seek the Lord. Yet He also is wise, and will bring evil, and will not call back His words; but will arise against the house of the evildoers, and against the help of them that work iniquity. Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the Lord shall stretch out His hand, both he that helps shall fall, and he that is helped shall fall down, and they all shall fall together." (Is. 31: 1-3.)

5. But now the vision changes from warning and judgment to help and deliverance. God sees His people in the distress which they have brought upon themselves and He flies to their relief. "For thus has the Lord spoken unto me, like as the lion and the young lion roaring on his prey, when a multitude of shepherds is called forth against him, he will not be afraid of their voice, nor abase himself for the noise of them; so shall the Lord of hosts come down to fight for Mount Zion, and for the hill thereof. As birds flying, so will the Lord of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also He will deliver it; and passing over He will preserve it." (Is. 31: 4, 5.) This, no doubt, refers to the sudden and glorious deliverance of Jerusalem from the army of Sennacherib. (Is. 37: 36.) This promise is repeated when the hour of danger comes, and like the answering echo, the word is answered by the deed and the record of promise and deliverance follow each other. "Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shields, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, says the Lord. For I will defend this city to save it for my own sake, and for my servant David's sake. Then the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians a hundred and four score and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses." (Is. 37: 33-36.)

6. The prediction of Judah's captivity was left for a later prophet, Jeremiah; but to Isaiah was given the distinguished honor of looking over the captivity and foretelling the glorious return of the captive bands from Babylon. Chapter 35: 1-10 is the exquisite panorama of this joyful procession. As they passed homeward "the wilderness and the solitary place were glad for them and the desert rejoiced and blossomed as the rose." This beautiful picture has become the panorama of the Pilgrim's Progress along the heavenly highway to the home above. What a beautiful return it was to the captives of Zion, we learn from the story of Ezra, as he tells us how the fathers that remembered the time when they had left Jerusalem led in chains, wept for joy when they looked once more upon the heights of Zion after the seventy years at Babylon.

In the vision of chapters 44: 28 through 45: 4 we have a more exact account of the principal circumstances connected with their return, at last, with the most important of these circumstances; namely, the fact that it was to come about through Cyrus, king of Persia. That Isaiah should be able to tell us the name of the very man that should be sitting upon the throne of Persia at that time, and that should send back the captives of Jerusalem is one of the miracles of prophecy. When we realize that this was nearly two hundred years before the event occurred, it is not wonderful that the higher critics, who cannot understand anything supernatural, should feel compelled to conclude that there must have been two Isaiahs, one in the days of Hezekiah and one in the days of Cyrus, who knew what he was talking about, because he was describing the history of his own times. How sublime the picture given of this mighty conqueror, like a pawn in the hands of Jehovah. "For Jacob, my servant's sake and Israel, my elect, I have even called you by your name; I have surnamed you, though you have not known Me." (45: 4.)

Many of the later visions of Isaiah are but echoes of this glad story of Israel's return from Babylon. To the prophet's imagination the vision came with no exact logical or chronological order, but with mingled lights and shades in which events overlapped, and often overleaped each other in sublime confusion, so that the same verse often describes the return of the captives from Babylon, and the restoration of Israel in the last days. As when we gaze at two mountains in perspective, they seem to blend as one mountain, although they may be miles apart; so the vision of the prophet often combines two events far removed in time and yet having common features of resemblance.

7. The next chapter in the history of Judah was the coming of Messiah and His rejection by the nation. The light which falls upon this vision in Isaiah is somewhat dim, and yet it is clear enough for us to recognize "the Man of Sorrows," "despised and rejected of men, with no form or comeliness; and when we shall see Him there is no beauty that we should desire Him: we hid as it were, our faces from Him: He was despised and we esteemed Him not." Still later we see Him "treading the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with Him." The apostle Paul quotes from Isaiah with reference to the rejection of Christ by Israel and says, "all day long have I stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people." The very chapter which most vividly describes the coming of the Messiah, Isaiah 53, begins with a wail of disappointment over the unbelief of the nation, "Lord, who has believed our report and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"

8. But there is a brighter vision in Isaiah, the restoration of the people at last through the coming of their Messiah once more and their repentance and return to Him. The apostle Paul quotes again, from Isaiah 59: 20, in his triumphant conclusion in Romans 11: 26, "and so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the deliverer, and he shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob." The last five chapters of Isaiah are bright with the promise of the glory of Jerusalem in the latter days. "Arise, shine, for your light is come and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you" (Is. 61: 1) is the call that summons Zion to

her restoration and glorious destiny. Her blessing is to overflow to all the nations "the gentiles shall see your righteousness and all kings your glory." "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy." As the apostle expresses it in his profound discussion of the whole question of Israel in Romans 9-11: "If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead?"

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