

(Isaiah) the Words of a Worshipper

by David Guzik

The sermon emphasizes the importance of praising and worshiping the Lord with joy, recognizing God's salvation and strength, and drawing water from the wells of salvation.

Duration: 46:05

Scripture: Isaiah 12:1-2, Isaiah 13:1, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Worship And Praise", "Spiritual Transformation"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher begins by encouraging listeners to find encouragement in the midst of a wicked world. He emphasizes the importance of not being conformed to the ways of the world but being transformed by renewing the mind. The preacher then highlights the temporary nature of worldly things and questions why one would invest time and energy in something that will pass away. The sermon also focuses on the exhortation to praise and worship the Lord, emphasizing that God deserves more praise than we can give. The preacher uses vivid imagery to depict God's unrelenting judgment upon Babylon and the world. The sermon concludes with the call to sing and declare the excellent deeds of the Lord, emphasizing that the Lord should be our strength and song.

Transcript

Now, I love how the transition just comes so smoothly into chapter 12. Again, remember the context, speaking of the glorious redemption and salvation of God brought to his people, brought to the whole earth in the time of the millennium. And then it says, chapter 12, verse 1, In that day you will say, O Lord, I will praise you.

Though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away and you comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid.

For Yah, the Lord, is my strength and my song. He also has become my salvation. Therefore, with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

And in that day you will say, Praise the Lord. Call upon his name. Declare his deeds among the peoples.

Make mention that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord. For he has done excellent things.

This is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion. For great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst.

Isn't that just plain beautiful and spectacular? Six verses. You know, you probably spent a half hour. You could say you could memorize a whole chapter of the Bible right there.

Isaiah chapter 12. I can't think of much more precious passage for you to memorize this glorious song of these words from a worshiper. Now, it begins in verse one with praise to the Lord after his anger has passed.

Notice it says in verse one, And in that day you will say, Isaiah chapter 11 spoke powerfully of the reign of the Messiah as king over all the earth. And this brief chapter of praise comes from the heart of one who surrendered to the Messiah as king and enjoys the benefits of his reign. You don't have to wait to the millennium to sing this.

If Jesus Christ is your king, if you're enjoying the benefits of his reign, you can sing this song tonight. You can say, look at verse one. Oh, Lord, I will praise you, though you were angry with me.

The worshiper here decides to praise the Lord, even though he has felt the Lord's anger against him. Notice he says, I will praise you. I will.

Even though at one time he felt that the anger of the Lord was against him. Now, friends, let me ask you a question here. Under the new covenant, in light of what Jesus has done on the cross for us, does God get angry with us? Well, there is a sense in which all the anger, all the wrath of God was that was against us, was poured out upon the Son of God on the cross.

In this sense, there is no more anger from God towards us because his anger has been exhausted. But if you've walked with the Lord for any amount of time, you know that there's also a sense in which we receive chastening or discipline. That sure feels like the Lord's anger, doesn't it? You know, you can think of a child about ready to get a spanking.

And the father administering the spanking, he's cool about it. You know, he just knows, look, my son disobeyed. I need to train him.

I need to raise him up. I need to show him the consequence of his wrong. I need to give him a spanking.

Here we go. Well, that spanking still smarts, even though the father isn't angry. And the son feels like the father's angry.

Chastening feels unpleasant, but it really shows the fatherly love of God instead of his hatred. It's as though you were angry with me. But then he says, notice here in verse one, your anger is turned away.

Now, listen, if we recognize that it's a wonderful gift from God when he chastens us, when he disciplines us. Yet can I say it's a glorious thing when his anger is turned away? It's a beautiful thing when the spanking is stopped and we can we can stop with that and we can move on. And I want you to see this in two senses.

First of all, in the sense of the discipline of the Lord, right? You feel like you're being disciplined from the Lord right now. It's not going to last forever. It's not.

God's purpose in disciplining isn't to see how much suffering you can bear. It isn't to kind of torture you and get some kind of secret out of you, like some, you know, weird interrogation or something. He's training you.

He's disciplining you. It's not going to last. His anger is going to turn away.

But I want you to see that there's another sense in which we can see this. In a larger sense, his anger is turned away because of what Jesus did on the cross. Jesus put himself in between us and the anger of the Lord.

And he received that anger in himself. He turned away God's anger. You can sing this tonight.

If you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you can say, though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away, not because of anything I've done, but because of what Jesus did to stand in my place. And then he goes on, verse one, and you comfort me. God disciplines us as a perfect parent, knowing perfectly how to comfort us after we've been chastened.

You know, sometimes we're like rebellious children, aren't we? Sometimes a rebellious child will receive a spanking and he's hurting, he's crying. And the father reaches out to comfort his child and the son pushes it away. I don't want it.

No. That's childish, isn't it? It's immature. Sometimes we're just like that.

We refuse the comfort of God. How many here tonight, God is reaching out, trying to comfort you and you're refusing it. You're pushing it away.

You're like that silly, rebellious child. You've been spanked. The Lord's trying to comfort you now.

You won't receive it. Receive it. Let him comfort you.

Let him soothe your heart. It's important that you receive that comfort, because Satan wants to push you away from God and drive you to despair. He wants you to think that that anger, that that discipline is going to go on forever.

You're always going to be in God's doghouse. Well, you're not in God's doghouse at all. You don't spank the dog.

You don't do that. You train and discipline a son. You're not in the doghouse.

You're in God's house. Verse two. Now he's on higher ground.

The anger is past. Verse two. Behold, God is my salvation.

I will trust and not be afraid. For Yah, the Lord, is my strength and my song. He also has become my salvation.

I love the first word of that verse. Behold, the worshipper here wants other people to see what he said is true. He's grabbing you by the lapels.

He's saying, behold, look at this. Look, look, look at what the Lord's done for me. Look at it.

And then he declares, God is my salvation. My friends, this is salvation. If you can't say tonight, God is my salvation, then you don't have salvation at all.

What else are you going to say? You are your salvation. Your good works are your salvation. Your good intentions are your salvation.

Your good thoughts are your salvation. None of that is true. God is your salvation.

Many people don't even ever feel the need for salvation. Instead, they think their lives are fine and they come to God for a little bit of help when they feel like they need it. Well, I feel like I need a little help.

Let me go to God. But they never see themselves in need of salvation. You know what salvation is? Salvation is recognizing you are a drowning man in need of rescue.

That you're a hell-destined sinner in need of salvation. Then you can say, the Lord is my salvation. God is my salvation.

The worshipper here is so immersed in this idea that he repeats it in the same verse. He says, God is my salvation. He also, at the end of the verse, has become my salvation.

Then he says, verse two, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. Isn't that beautiful? How many of you tonight, you need to hear that? Maybe that's the only reason why you came here tonight.

You needed to hear that from the Lord. You needed to hear a worshipper come to you and say, you know what? I will trust and not be afraid. The peace and security comes into our life.

It comes to our life when we know that God is our salvation. If you're your salvation, what security is there in that, my friends? Tomorrow's tax day, right? You can't even hold on to your own money. What, are you going to hold on to your own salvation here? You can't hold on to anything.

But if God is your salvation, that's peace. That's security. When we're our own salvation, we can't trust and not be afraid.

If my salvation depended on me, if it was in me, oh, I wouldn't trust. I'd be afraid all the time. But when God is our salvation, we can trust and not be afraid.

Paul said the same thing. I think either Isaiah was reading Paul or Paul was reading Isaiah. I don't know which.

Romans 5 says, therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. The place of peace and trust and no fear comes only from seeing our salvation in God and not in ourselves. Did you see what he says there? Verse two, look at it again.

I will trust and not be afraid. That's a confident statement reflecting the will of the worshiper. He is deciding to trust and not be afraid.

Let me make a distinction here. There are feelings of trust, right? And then there is a decision to trust. They're not one and the same thing.

You know what? If tonight you're going to wait to trust in God until you feel like trusting Him, you're going to put yourself through a lot of misery. I'm telling you tonight, I don't care if you feel like it or not. Trust in God.

Trust and say to your own soul, I will trust and not be afraid. We can say to our will, I will trust and not be afraid. Charles Spurgeon really spoke to this eloquently.

You know he did. Listen to these couple of quotes here from the Prince of Preachers. He says, hearken, O unbeliever, you who have said, I cannot believe.

But it would be more honest if you had said, I will not believe. The mischief lies there. Your unbelief is your fault.

It is not your misfortune. It is a disease, but it is also a crime. It's a terrible source of misery to you.

But justly so, because it is an atrocious offense against the God of truth. And he goes on to say the talk about trying to believe is a mere pretense. But whether a pretense or not, let me remind you that there is no text in the Bible which says try and believe, but it says believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

He is the Son of God. He's proved it by his miracles. He died to save sinners.

Therefore, trust him. He deserves your implicit and childlike confidence. Will you refuse him these? Then you have maligned his character and called him a liar.

I'm not telling you to try to believe. I'm not telling you to feel to believe. I'm telling you to say to your own soul tonight, I will trust and not be afraid.

And he goes on to say for Yah the Lord is my strength and my song. Now, that may catch your eye right there. It says for Yah the Lord and say, well, I've never really seen that before.

And, you know, what's that construction? And I'll just say it is a very curious construction. Very curious. What it just has is the word Yah is the first couple of letters of the longer name Yahweh.

And Yahweh is represented there in your New King James Bible by the word Lord written in the small capitals. It's almost like saying for Yah, Yahweh is my strength and my song. That's exactly what he's saying there.

Now, you say, well, why does he kind of just give the first couple of letters and abbreviate? What's up with that? Well, it's tough to say. One commentator believes that it was probably a mistake arising from a custom of the Jewish scribes who when they found that a lot. You know how on your computer now when you're printing something up, you want those justified margins, right? You want it nice and clean.

Well, when you're writing the Jewish scribes like their margins justified, too. And so when they got to the end of a line, if it didn't fill the whole line, they would just write whatever letters they could go to the next line and then write the whole word where you could see how a scribe would write, you know, for Yah begin the name Yahweh. Oh, I don't have the room to finish it.

I want my line to be justified there. My margin go down the next line and then write Yahweh. And maybe that was the explanation.

Or maybe it's just a particular phrasing that Isaiah used. We really don't know for certain, but the meaning is clear, isn't it? The Lord is my strength and my song. Friends, the Lord is not only the worshipper's salvation.

He's also his strength and his song. Now, tonight you may be, well, of course, the Lord's my salvation. I got my fire insurance policy, right? Insured from the fires of hell right here in my pocket.

I know I'm not going to hell. He's my salvation. Yes, I'm saved.

Is he your strength? Is he your song? Some people find it a lot easier to consider the Lord their salvation in a very distant by-and-by kind of way than to take him today as their strength in a song. Now, when the Lord is your strength, it means that he's your resource, your refuge. By the way, did you notice here? He didn't say that the Lord is part of your strength or that he helps you with your strength.

He is your complete strength. He is my strength and my song. That means he's your joy.

He's your happiness. You find your purpose in life in him, and he never disappoints you. Come on now, do you ever sing to the Lord when you're not here in this room? I hope so.

If you don't, there's something just missing in your Christian life. There you are, come on. You're driving in the car.

You're remembering that song from the worship team that last Sunday. You're all alone in the car. You just start belting it out.

Nobody else can hear you. It's OK. Sing it in the shower, wherever.

It's sing to the Lord. He should be your song. And look here, verse three, the result, it goes.

Therefore, with joy, you will draw water from the wells of salvation. And again, either Isaiah was listening to Jesus or Jesus was listening to Isaiah. I mean, you know, you just see there's no wonder here, isn't it? That sometimes Isaiah is called the fifth gospel.

Jesus said, whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life. There you have it right there.

Verse three. Therefore, with joy, you will draw water from the wells of salvation. We come to Jesus and draw water from the wells of salvation.

And friends, when you remember the semi-arid climate of Israel, you see what a beautiful picture it is of the wells of salvation. When water is rare, water is life. And to have a place, a well where you can continually come and draw forth to meet your need, it's a precious gift.

That stream might run dry. That cistern might become emptied. But a well, hey, the well is going to be supplied.

And I want you to notice what it says there in verse three. The Lord's resources are not limited. There isn't one well of salvation.

There are many wells of salvation. This doesn't mean that there's many ways to be saved. But the well draws forth, all of the wells, I should say, draw forth from the same reservoir of salvation.

You know how it can be? You can have one big water table underground. You've got a lot of different wells drawing from it. Listen, the Lord is our salvation.

But here's a well, there's a well. He scatters them abroad so that there's plenty of supply. Now, it doesn't mean that there's nothing for you to do.

Of course, there's something for you to do. You've got to draw the water. God doesn't meet our needs as we sit in passive inactivity.

You've got to reach out and draw forth what he's provided. At the same time, let's not forget it's his water. It's his well.

It's his rope. And it's his bucket that we draw with. But he says you draw it up.

Therefore, he says, verse three, therefore, with joy, you will draw water from the wells of salvation. Because it's all of the Lord, we draw water from the wells of salvation with joy. Friends, there should be no somber faces at the Lord's well of salvation.

You're gathered around there to take a drink. You should have some joy. There it is.

You just go out and get it. It's joy. That's where the Lord wants your Christian life to be.

Verse four. And in that day, you will say, praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his deeds among the peoples, make mention that his name is exalted. Now, this is an exhortation to praise and encouragement to worship the Lord and trust in him.

The worshiper has received from the wells of salvation. And now that living water is flowing out of him. And so he encourages other people to trust in the Lord.

That's what he said. And he says, praise the Lord and call upon his name. It's almost as if the job of praising God is too big for this man.

It's too big for the world. God deserves more praise than I can get him. You got to help me.

Come on, you help me praise the Lord. It's too big of a job. Let's declare his praises together.

And so he says, declare his deeds among the peoples, make mention that his name is exalted. The worshiper can't stop talking about God's greatness and the great things that the Lord has done. It says in verse five, sing to the Lord, for he's done excellent things.

This is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, for great is the holy one of Israel in your midst. I love it.

First, the Lord was the song of the worshiper, right? The Lord is my strength and my song. First, the Lord was your song. Now he sings this song of the Lord to whoever will listen.

The Lord's my song. Let me sing him to you. If the Lord has become your song, then sing it.

That's what he says there in verse five. Sing to the Lord. Then he says, cry out and shout.

Can I just say that this is excited praise? Now, we should all hate. We should all abhor the Let's whip them up into a manufactured enthusiasm kind of worship. I think that just stinks before God.

Friends, let me say this on the flip side. If your worship will never cry out and shout, as Isaiah says, there's something lacking in it. There something is.

I mean, aren't you excited about the salvation that the Lord's given you? Spurgeon said we ought not to worship God in a half-hearted sort of way, as if it were now our duty to bless God. But we felt it to be a weary business and to get through it as quickly as we could and have done with it. And the sooner the better.

No, no. All that is within me bless his holy name. Come, my heart, wake up and summon all the powers which wait upon me.

Mechanical worship is easy but worthless. Come, rouse yourself, my brother. Rouse thyself, oh, my soul.

Come and shout. Cry out and shout. Why? Check it out.

Verse six. Cry out and shout. Oh, inhabitant of Zion, for great is the holy one of Israel in your midst.

Now, this gives two reasons for this great shouting kind of praise. First, it's because of who God is. He's the holy one of Israel.

Praise the Lord. Secondly, it's not just who he is. It's where he is.

He's in your midst. He's right there among you. And each of these gives every person a reason.

Who God is hasn't changed lately, friends. You can praise him. Where God is hasn't changed lately.

You can praise him. Chapter 13. I almost wish we could have done 13 first and then come to chapter 12.

Now we get in kind of a downer. Isaiah chapter 13 begins a section that ends with the end of Isaiah chapter 23, where Isaiah prophesies against the nations. Now, it's fitting for judgment to begin at the house of the Lord.

That's what it says in first Peter. And so the Lord has already spoken words of judgment against the southern kingdom of Judah and the northern kingdom of Israel. But now the Lord speaks against the nations.

Chapter 13 through 23 speaks to the nation's beginning with Babylon. Verse one. The burden against Babylon, which Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saw.

Now it says burden in your Bible. It might say Oracle or word of the Lord or whatever. A burden is a heavy message of weighty importance in the sense that it produces sorrow or grief.

There's dispute among Hebrew scholars. Well, does the original Hebrew word. Does it mean Oracle or does it mean burden? Listen, after you read this chapter, you're going to know it means burden.

And who is it against? Look at verse one. It's against Babylon. Now, let me clarify something for you about timing.

OK, Isaiah finished his prophetic career in 685 B.C. This was almost 100 years before Judah finally fell before the Babylonian Empire. That was 586 B.C. At the time of this prophecy, Babylon was a significant nation, yet they were definitely behind the Assyrian Empire in status. Now, check about this out.

Just think if you were to prophesy right now about the fall of the mighty, world-dominating empire of Canada. People would scratch their heads and say, what? Don't you know that, you know, United States of America, you know, we're the superpower. Canada, nice folks.

Great. They got a great thing going up there. Good for them.

But, you know, the world doesn't exactly stand or fall by what's happening from the capital of Canada, wherever it is. Ontario, I don't know, something. You get the point, don't you? Now, at that time, Babylon was a significant nation, right? It wasn't some little backwater nation.

It was like Canada, a significant nation. But it was nothing like a superpower. You know what Isaiah does? He prophesies about the fall of a superpower, Babylon.

That's what he's doing far before the time that they were even lifted up to superpower status. Now, this is going to be exciting because this section talking about Babylon goes from chapter 13 to chapter 14. Chapter 14 is for next week.

You don't want to miss that. Isaiah chapter 14. You can see what the Lord has to say in a much bigger way.

But let me clarify one more thing before we go on to verse two. You could fairly ask the question, wait a minute, why is God prophesying to Babylon? Can I tell you something? This prophecy never made the front page or the opinion page of the Babylonian Morning Herald. This prophecy was probably never published in Babylon.

You know, they never heard it until the judgment had already come upon them. Then why did the Lord give it? It really wasn't a warning for Babylon, so what was the point of it? Sometimes God's predictions of judgments are warnings. But other times they're not.

Sometimes God's predictions of judgment are meant to help the people of God. And this prophecy against Babylon helped the people of God, the people of Israel and Judah in two ways. First of all, it showed them that God was indeed just and that he would judge the wicked nations around them.

I mean, after all, put yourself in the shoes of Judah and Israel. God's been spanking you, hasn't he? God's allowed these other nations to discipline you and you've been going through tough times and you can feel the hand of the Lord, the anger of the Lord against you. And then you stand around, you look at Babylon, you look at Assyria, you look at Syria and you go, man, they look fat and sassy.

Lord, this isn't fair. You're letting them get away with murder when look what you're doing to me. And the Lord's saying, my child, judgment begins at the house of God.

But don't you worry about Babylon. I'm going to take care of them. Let me tell you how.

You see what a comfort that is for the people of God? It assures them that God is just. It assures them that God will not fail in his purpose. But it's also that Babylon and these other nations had to come against Israel and Judah.

These were enemies. And God is showing his love to his people by announcing his vengeance against their enemies. Let's get into it.

Verse two, lift up a banner on the high mountain. Raise your voice to them. Wave your hand that they may enter the gates of the nobles.

I've commanded my sanctified ones. I've also called my mighty ones for my anger. Those who rejoice in my exaltation.

The noise of a multitude in the mountains like that of many people, a tumultuous noise of the kingdom of nations gathered together. The Lord of hosts musters the army for battle. They've come from a far country, from the end of the heavens.

Even the Lord and his weapons of indignation to destroy the whole land. Wail for the day of the Lord is at hand. It will come as destruction from the Almighty.

Therefore, all hands will be limp. Every man's heart will melt and they will be afraid. Pangs and sorrows will take hold of them.

They will be in pain as a woman in childbirth. They will be amazed at one another. Their faces will be like flames.

Isn't that powerful? Here it says that the Lord of hosts musters an army for battle. It's like the Lord's whistling and saying, Come on, bring me an army to come against Babylon. Come.

And he pointed to the Medes and the Persians and goes, You're the empire that's going to conquer the Babylonian empire. Come to battle. Raise up the banner and set out the standards.

It's time for judgment against Babylon. Now let it come. Then in verse eight, it even talks about they'll be amazed at one another.

You know, they were amazed. Do you know how Babylon fell? Babylon was one of the most secure cities of the ancient world. Amazing in its defenses.

And the night when the army of the Medes and the Persians surrounded the city of Babylon, you know what they did in the capital city? The king threw a big party. He did it in defiance. He said, look, we're surrounded by enemy armies, but our city is spectacular in its defenses.

Nobody can conquer us. We're going to throw a party. On the night when the armies are surrounding us.

Do you know what King Cyrus did? There was a river that flowed in and through the city of Babylon. It was their water supply. And they very carefully had iron gates extending down into the water of the river so that somebody couldn't just float down the river and get into the city.

The walls had their defenses, right? And the river opening had its defenses. You know what Cyrus did? He diverted the flow of the river and took his army in on the dry ground under the fence. It would have been buried underwater, but he diverted the river, lowered the thing and he went in and caught the city of Babylon totally by surprise.

And that night they were incredibly fearful. You want to read more about it? Daniel chapter five. Look it up yourself.

So they were amazed at one another. And then look, verse nine, it says, The day of the Lord comes cruel with both wrath and fierce anger to lay the land desolate, for he will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of the heaven and their constellations will not give their light.

The sun will be darkened and it's going forth and the moon will not cause its light to shine. I will punish the world for its evil and the wicked for their iniquity. I will halt the arrogance of the proud and will lay low the haughtiness of the terrible.

I will make a mortal more rare than fine gold, a man more than the golden wedge of Ophir. Therefore, I will shake the heavens and the earth will move out of her place in the wrath of the Lord of hosts. And in the day of his fierce anger, it shall be as a hunted gazelle and as a man that no man takes up and as a sheep that no man takes up.

Every man will turn to his own people and everyone will flee to his own land. Everyone who is found will be thrust through and everyone who is captured will fall by the sword. Their children also will be dashed to pieces before their eyes.

Their houses will be plundered and their wives ravished. Friends, you can't read that without being affected, can you? You read that and say, wow, God's really bringing judgment against Babylon. If you're like me, you read that and you go, sounds like something more is going on here, doesn't it? This sounds bigger than the overthrow of Babylon.

Friends, now we run into another one of those passages in the Old Testament, in the book of Isaiah, where he's using stereo vision in prophecy. One channel is looking close to a near fulfillment. One channel is looking far to a distant and ultimate fulfillment.

In a near sense, this was totally fulfilled when Babylon was conquered. In an ultimate sense, friends, if you notice there in verse 8 there, no, excuse me, in verse 9, when he says, Behold, the day of the Lord comes. That's an important phrase in the Scriptures used not of a single day.

It's not like you can mark on the calendar, this is the day of the Lord. No, the day of the Lord is the season of God's vengeance. It's like man's had his day.

Now the Lord's going to have his day. Day of the Lord. And did you notice it? Verse 10, the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light.

The sun will be darkened. You recall the several prophetic passages that describe the cosmic disturbances that will proceed and surround the return of Jesus. As a matter of fact, look at that carefully.

Look at verse 10 while I read to you what Jesus said in Matthew 24, 29. And don't you think that Jesus was paraphrasing this? Look at verse 10 while I read this to you. Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.

The stars will fall from heaven and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Don't you hear Jesus echoing this passage from Isaiah, which shows us something? Yes. Yes, it's true that this has a near fulfillment in the overthrow of Babylon.

I'm sure that if you were a Babylonian and the Medes and the Persians were wiping you out, you felt like the stars themselves had fallen from the heavens. But friends, there's going to come a day when it just

doesn't feel like it. There's going to come a day when it's going to happen.

Cosmic disturbances, sun, moon, stars, it'll all be shaken. These things that we think are so permanent, so everlasting. You know, it's funny.

Listen to scientists and they talk about the stars and they say, well, you know, that star out there, it'll burn out in another two billion years. Friends, it's going to happen a lot sooner than two billion years. I'll tell you that right now.

God has a plan for that star, a plan to end its career, to make it fall from the heavens. It says simply, look at verse 11, I will punish the world for its evil. Now, there's another thing you need to know in these passages which speak of prophetic judgment against Babylon.

Babylon is the most mentioned city in the whole Bible except for Jerusalem. It's mentioned 287 times. Now, Babylon was a literal city on the Euphrates River.

And right after the flood, Genesis chapter 11, Babylon was the center of civilization that expressed hostility to God. Remember the Tower of Babel? Babylon was later the capital of the empire that cruelly conquered Judah. This is after the time of Isaiah.

Babylon to the Jews was the essence of evil. During the height of the Cold War, if you would have said the Russians are coming, that would have done something in the heart of an American, right? Well, to a Jew of that day, you said the Babylonians are coming. It does something to them.

It was their mortal enemies. The name Babylon is associated with organized idolatry, blasphemy and the persecution of God's people. And then when you come to the book of Revelation, chapters 17 and 18, you look and you find that the world system is expressed both in a commercial and in a religious sense as Babylon.

Babylon is a picture of the world. Jerusalem, the city of God. Babylon, the city of man, the world system.

You know what God says? Look at verse 11. I will punish the world for its evil. He's going to.

He did it to Babylon. He's going to do it to this world. Then he goes on and he says, all the way down there in verse 13, therefore, I will shake the heavens and the earth will move out of her place.

You think the ground you stand on is so firm, so unshaken. Even the heavens, it's not. It's not unshakable.

God will shake it. There's nothing you can trust in. Even the ground you stand on isn't as firm as Jesus Christ.

And if you notice here, this was a picture that really captured my mind. The Lord spoke through Isaiah so vividly. Look at verse 14.

It says, it shall be as the hunted gazelle. The picture of God's judgment upon both Babylon and the world in general is unrelenting. There's the hunted gazelle.

You know what I thought of? I thought those documentaries you see on TV, you know, the nature shows. There's the gazelle beautifully running through the open field in the African savannah. There it is.

And all of a sudden, here's the lion. The lion comes and it chases down the gazelle and it tackles it and it devours it. It's an ugly scene.

The lion's fury is unrelenting. The gazelle is utterly consumed. Friends, there is no escape from God's unrelenting judgment.

Now, tonight, if you take comfort in Jesus Christ, remember that this is the unrelenting judgment that was poured out on the cross. If you want to take this picture from Isaiah, Jesus was the hunted gazelle. And he willingly made himself soak to take your place.

And he received, perfectly paid for, the unrelenting judgment of God. Verse 17. Behold, I will stir up the meads against them who will not regard silver, and as for gold, they will not delight in it.

Also, their bowels will dash the young men to pieces, and they will have no pity on the fruit of the womb. Their eye will not spare children. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride, will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

It will never be inhabited, nor will it be settled from generation to generation, nor will the Arabian pitch tents there, nor will shepherds make their sheepfolds there. But wild beasts of the desert will lie there, and their houses will be full of owls. Ostriches will dwell there, and wild goats will caper there.

The hyenas will howl in their citadels and jackals in their pleasant places. Her time is near to come, and her days will not be prolonged. I find it interesting, in verse 17, that he says, I'll stir up the meads against them.

You know, if the Babylonians weren't yet a superpower when Isaiah prophesied this, the meads were even less so a superpower. You know, it's like saying one day Canada is going to be a superpower and God's going to judge them. And you know the superpower that God's going to use to judge Canada? Greenland.

Wow. That's what the Lord did. And then he says, it'll be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

Complete destruction. Completely overthrowing them. And then he says, it will never be inhabited.

Did you notice that there, in verse 20? The ancient city of Babylon, once conquered, will never be inhabited again. Now, what's interesting is when Cyrus conquered Babylon, he did not devastate the city. The walls were left standing until 518 BC, and the general desolation didn't set in, or destruction of the city didn't settle in for another 200 years after that.

Babylon gradually fell into decay. There were centuries where the only thing roaming the houses and the buildings of Babylon were wild animals, just as it says here in verses 21 and 22. Babylon became completely depopulated eventually, and today it lies deserted.

Now, what's interesting about this, this is quite a topic of interest and speculation among Bible scholars. You know who, well, first of all, you know in what country the ancient city of Babylon is today. The nation of Iraq.

And Saddam Hussein has very openly spoken about his desire to rebuild Babylon, I don't know, using oil money, maybe make it a theme park, you know, I don't know. He hasn't succeeded yet. Some people think he'll rebuild it.

And then you say, well, wait a minute here, how can this be? It says here, you know, it'll never be inhabited. Well, you know what? Maybe he won't succeed. And maybe the Scriptures will be shown to be true that way.

Then other people say, no, no, no. The reason why he says it'll never be inhabited is because Isaiah wants to make it clear that in this verse he's speaking of the ultimate fulfillment of this, not the mere fulfillment. Matter of fact, he's making a distinction.

He's saying the ultimate fulfillment. And friends, this is true in its ultimate fulfillment. When Jesus returns in glory and conquers this world system, he's going to rule the earth for a thousand years.

And when he does, there is going to be no more world system in opposition to God as we know it. Do you understand that? We look at the world system around us and it's like a web. It's like a spider's web covering everything.

The way people think, the way they act, the way they talk, the way they move. It's all in this environment of the corrupt world system. That's not going to last forever.

When Jesus Christ comes and returns to this earth, the day of the world system is over. It's going to rule and reign on this earth for a thousand years. With no world system anymore.

It's going to be the system of Jesus Christ is what it's going to be. And then after he rules and reigns for a thousand years, then you know what? He's just going to start it all up, make a new heavens and a new earth. No more world system.

In this sense, the world system in opposition to God will never be inhabited again. Friends, what good is this for us? Well, first of all, it should give encouragement to your heart. You get discouraged by the wickedness of the world system around you.

You get angry when you feel the world influencing you. You know, it's like, man, that stinks. You know, I don't want to be conformed to this world.

I want to be transformed by the renewing of my mind, as it says in the book of Romans. This world's days are numbered. You can count on it.

Secondly, why should we invest our energy and our time in something that's sure to pass away? You know, if I told you that your house was going to... I heard a word from God. Your house is going to burn down next week. Would you go in there and paint it? Man, no way.

Matter of fact, if I told you there might be rain next week, you might say, well, I'm not going to paint my house. Why do we spend time on something that's going to pass away? Thirdly, friends, when we take a look at the seriousness of God's judgment, it should make us stop and consider. It's for real.

What we're doing right now for this life, it really matters. And it really matters forever. How you talk to somebody, how you bring them Jesus Christ, it matters.

You could be saving somebody from this judgment that's going to come upon the world. It really matters. God has a purpose in warning us and telling us of this judgment that's going to come to the Babylon of this world, this world system.

And next week, wow, we get in Isaiah chapter 14, where the prophecy against Babylon continues. Friends, let your heart be encouraged tonight. Let each and every one of you leave here tonight saying, the Lord is my strength and my song and He has become my salvation.

You just can't be down. You just can't be depressed if you know those things about the Lord. Let's pray.

Father, we bring our hearts before you tonight. And we ask, Lord, that by your love, by your grace, you just pour out your spirit upon us. Help us to trust in you, Lord.

Help us to make that decision tonight to say, I will trust and not be afraid. Forgive us, Lord, for wanting to wait until we feel like trusting you. I want to forget about those feelings tonight, Lord, and just trust you.

I will trust and not be afraid. We love you, Lord. We thank you that you have become our salvation and have rescued us from the judgment that's going to come on this world.

Lord God, I pray that tonight, if there's anybody in this room who hasn't entered into that kind of relationship of love and trust in Jesus Christ, that tonight you just compel them to come to you right now in the quietness of their heart and get things right with you. They might know the joy of a right life and a right walk with you. We love you, Lord.

We praise you together tonight in Jesus' name, amen.

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