

06.02.2021 PLAYING GOD

Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation. Isaiah 25:9

This week we start studying the prophecies of Isaiah against other nations; the entire section is from Isaiah chapters 13-34. They are prophecies of condemnation and judgment. Condemnation and judgment in the Bible must always be seen in the context of an Omnipotent loving God, who so loved the world that He sent His Son to redeem the world.

For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. John 3:17

God has given man free-will, therefore since the beginning of the history of mankind, every human being has the choice of choosing between God, love, righteousness and eternal life or Satan, sin and death.

And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hates the light, neither comes to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. John 3:19, 20

Chapters 13 and 14 are judgments against Babylon and the mastermind (Satan) behind all those who rebel and exalt themselves without fearing God.

Doom on the Nations

The burden against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw...

God has pronounced judgment on Assyria. Now He sends a message of judgment on Babylon, a super power that would arise nearly a 100 years after Isaiah's ministry. Though it was a powerful nation in Isaiah's time, it was not the superpower of the time. Yet God informs His people that judgment will come to Babylon in the future. We who live in the 21st century can confirm how accurately these judgments were fulfilled.

These messages of judgment were not sent to Babylon. They were sent to God's people through His prophet. Here we see the compassion God has for His people. Even though they had rebelled and God would have to discipline them for their sin, God assures them that the nations that conquer them would be punished. In this message of judgment against Israel's enemies, God reveals to His people that He remains faithful to them.

The Late Great City of Babylon: Isaiah 13:2-22

This passage has both a near fulfilment (the day of judgment against the Babylonian Empire), and an ultimate fulfilment (the final day of judgment at the return of Jesus).

Whenever God arises to defend His people, He describes Himself as the 'Lord of hosts', the Lord of the armies of heaven; He comes with his angels, His 'sanctified ones'.

"I have commanded My sanctified ones; I have 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 kingdoms of nations gathered together! The Lord of hosts musters the army for battle. They come from a far country, from the end of heaven— the Lord and His weapons of indignation, to destroy the whole land. Isaiah 13:3-5

The Lord of hosts prepares His army for battle to bring judgment upon the Babylonians. This is the nearer fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah. But there is also an ultimate fulfilment connected to the Second coming of Christ. The day of the LORD is an important phrase, used some 26 times in the Bible. It speaks not only of a single day of judgment, but of the seasons of judgment throughout history when the LORD has chastised people and nations. Ultimately, the Day of the Lord is His Second coming. To those who have followed God, it will be a Day of salvation, but to the rebellious it will be a Day of Judgment.

“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.

Behold, the day of the Lord comes, cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate; and He will destroy its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations will not give their light; the sun will be darkened in its 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 (tyrants).” Isaiah 13:6-11

Babylon is a symbol of the world system run by Satan that sets itself against God. In Revelation, the conflict is between God’s Kingdom and the kingdoms of this world, typified by Babylon. Babylon is the ‘Great city’; Jerusalem is the ‘Holy city’.

‘Babylon is mentioned 287 times in the Scriptures, more than any other city except Jerusalem. Babylon was a literal city on the Euphrates River right after the flood (Genesis 11:1-10), Babylon “was the seat of the civilization that expressed organized hostility to God.” Babylon was later the capitol of the empire that cruelly conquered Judah. “Babylon, to them (the Jews), was the essence of all evil, the embodiment of cruelty, the foe of God’s people, and the lasting type of sin, carnality, lust and greed.” To those familiar with the Old Testament, the name Babylon is associated with organized idolatry, blasphemy and the persecution of God’s people. In the New Testament, the world system of the last days is characterized both religiously and commercially as Babylon (Revelation 17 and 18). Therefore, Babylon is a “suitable representation... of the idolatrous, pagan world-system in opposition to God.” *D. Guzik Commentary*

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... Isaiah 13:19, 20

This prophecy came true. Babylon, after it was defeated by the Medes was never established as a city again. It fell into decay. Isaiah gives the prophecy of its fall to the Medes in this chapter – still more than 150 years in the future.

Fall of the Mountain “King”: Isaiah 14

For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will still choose Israel...It shall come to pass in the day the Lord gives you rest from your sorrow, and from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve, 4 that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say: “How the oppressor has ceased, the golden city ceased!...” Isaiah 14:1, 3, 4

Isaiah now describes the fate of the mind behind Babylon –Lucifer, the fallen angel, who was the covering cherub by the throne of God (Ezekiel 28:12-15). The mind behind all the kingdoms of the world is Satan. While nations like Assyria and Babylon were arrogant and rebellious and wanted to ‘play God’, Satan wanted to ‘be God’; to take the place of God.

How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer (Daystar), son of the morning!

How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations!

For you have said in your heart: ‘I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.’ Isaiah 14:12-14

The pride, the grasping selfish ambition, the self-will of Lucifer is powerfully expressed in five “I will” statements.

In seeking to be equal with God, Lucifer was responsible for his own downfall.

Yet you shall be brought down to Sheol, to the lowest depths of the Pit. “Those who see you will gaze at you, And consider you, saying: ‘Is this the man who made the earth tremble, Who shook kingdoms, Who made the world as a wilderness And destroyed its cities, Who did not open the house of his prisoners?’ “All the kings of the nations, All of them, sleep in glory, Everyone in his own house; But you are cast out of your grave Like an abominable branch, Like the garment of those who are slain, Thrust through with a sword, Who go down to the stones of the pit, Like a corpse trodden underfoot. Isaiah 14:15-19

'Satan is the liar behind all liars and produces the lie of all lies-that the creature can be equal with God. This was his own point of rebellion against his Creator, God. Every other lie is only an extension of this one. And this is who the devil is- he the originator of "The Lie": *Francis Schaeffer*

Heaven's Gate

The whole world-system is under the control of Satan. John writes that *'the whole world lies in the evil one'* 1 John 5:19 i.e. the race of fallen men, alienated from God and hostile to Him. This world system and those that are part of it have the same spirit as Satan.

God has always taken the initiative in seeking for man. In the dream of Jacob, the ladder he saw originated in heaven and represented Christ who came to seek and save that which was lost. In contrast, worldly systems beginning with Babel and continuing through Babylon and Rome and end-time Babylon (with its religious, political and economic dimensions) seek glory for themselves and ultimately seek to destroy Christ and His kingdom.

As individuals, all who seek self-exaltation have the spirit of Satan, the original anti-Christ; they proclaim themselves adversaries of Christ, or claim the exalted place of Christ. This may be manifest in institutions, in philosophies and ideologies. It can also be seen in any person whose highest priority is himself. Not for nothing is our generation called the 'I' or the 'Me' generation.

End time Babylon (literal Babylon does not exist today) in Revelation refers to spiritual Babylon. Spiritual Babylon is also worldwide: the spirit of Babylon is found wherever persons or institutions give glory to themselves instead of giving glory to God. The spirit of Babylon will be manifested in religion (Revelation 13), in politics (Revelation 17) and in business (Revelation 18).

Whenever Babylon offers a gospel, it is a false gospel of salvation by works. Apostate Christianity and any religion that does not acknowledge the saving work of Christ by grace alone, through faith alone, are preaching a false salvation. In politics and business, the Christian ethic of self-giving love and service is rarely seen; instead men pursue the lust of the flesh and the pride of life.

In Isaiah 24:5 we are told that one of the reasons for God's judgment is that 'they have broken the everlasting covenant' – God's covenant of grace.

"Is it by conditions that we receive salvation?—Never by conditions that we come to Christ. And if we come to Christ, then what is the condition? The condition is that by living faith we lay hold wholly and entirely upon the merits of the blood of a crucified and risen Saviour. When we do that, then we work the works of righteousness. But when God is calling the sinner in our world, and inviting him, there is no condition there; he draws by the invitation of Christ, and it is not, Now you have got to respond in order to come to God. The sinner comes, and as he comes and views Christ elevated upon that cross of Calvary, which God impresses upon his mind, there is a love beyond anything that is imagined that he has taken hold of." — Ellen G. White, Manuscript Releases, vol. 6, p. 32.

The Final Triumph of Zion: Isaiah 24-27

Spiritual Babylon will fall!

And look, here comes a chariot of men with a pair of horsemen!" Then he answered and said, "Babylon is fallen, is fallen! And all the carved images of her gods He has broken to the ground." Isaiah 21:9

"Babylon is fallen, is fallen, that great city, because she has made all nations drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication." Revelation 14:8

"Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, and has become a dwelling place of demons, a prison for every foul spirit, and a cage for every unclean and hated bird!" Revelation 18:2

For the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His elders, gloriously. Isaiah 24:13

And in this mountain the Lord of hosts will make for all people a feast of choice pieces, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of well-refined wines on the lees. And He will destroy on this mountain the surface of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; the rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; for the Lord has spoken. Isaiah 25:6-8

Ultimately, the victory that Christ gained over Satan at Calvary will be consummated at His Second Coming. All enemies will be under His feet, including sin and death. The capital of His kingdom will be the New Jerusalem.

When the Lord reigns gloriously in Jerusalem and Mt Zion, His people will rejoice and say:

“We have a strong city; God will appoint salvation for walls and bulwarks. Open the gates, that the righteous nation which keeps the truth may enter in. You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You. Trust in the Lord forever, for in Yah, the Lord, is everlasting strength.” Isaiah 26:1-4

“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for Him; we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” Isaiah 25:9
