

Isaiah 1:19-31

- 19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:**
20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

Deut. 30:19-20

There is a dual focus of both this passage in Deuteronomy and our passage in Isaiah. The promise is to Israel as a nation and to the individuals within the nation.

- 19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land:**

THE NATION OF ISRAEL

The understanding of this verse (and others such as Deut. 30:19-20) is unique to Israel. No other nation can claim a unique relationship with God as Israel.

- Called by God - Deut. 7:6-8
- Unique relationship with God - Amos 3:1-2

John Adams, second president of the United States from a letter to F.A. Van der Kemp, 1806, Pennsylvania Historical Society , wrote:

"In spite of Bolingbroke and Voltaire, I will insist that the Hebrews have done more to civilize men than any other nation. If I were an atheist and believed in blind eternal fate, I should still believe that fate had ordained the Jews to be the most essential instrument for civilizing the nations. If I were an atheist of the other sect, who believe or pretend to believe that all is ordained by chance, I should believe that chance had ordered the Jews to preserve and propagate to all mankind the doctrine of a Supreme, Intelligent, Wise, Almighty Sovereign of the universe, which I believe to be the great essential principle of all morality, and consequently of all civilization.

"I have read this last fall half a dozen volumes of this last wonderful genius's ribaldry against the Bible. How is it possible this old fellow should represent the Hebrews in such contemptible light? They are the most glorious Nation that ever inhabited this Earth. The Romans and their empire were but a bauble in comparison to the Jews. They have given religion to three quarters of the Globe and have influenced the affairs of Mankind more, and more happily than any other nation, ancient or modern.

"Israel is an eternal nation that cannot separate itself from G-d, for Israel is a nation of G-d, Created by G-d, and Ruled by the Almighty Ruler of the universe. Israel cannot hide from G-d, because G-d Rules Israel and Judges the Jewish people. The Hebrews can rebel and Jewish people can lead themselves astray, but Israel will always remain."

- Divine protection by God - Jeremiah 30:7-11; Isa 41:8-13
- Everlasting love of God for Israel - Jeremiah 31:1-3

The promise here is true for the nation of Israel. Obedience brings blessing. (Deut. 28:1-13)

THE INDIVIDUALS IN ISRAEL

The forgiveness of sins mentioned in verse 18 is addressed to the individuals in the nation. Although there is truth to the need of national repentance (Matt. 23:37-39; Romans 11:26-27; Zechariah 12:10 - 13:1) this is only brought about through individual repentance.

Willingness and obedience is not talking about a works salvation but the acceptance and belief of what God commands in the Scripture (willingness) and the act of responding as God commands (obedience).

The individual who responds to God's message, verse 18 (and developed throughout this book; i.e. Isaiah 53:1ff) will be blessed with an everlasting relationship with God.

20 But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

THE NATION OF ISRAEL

The rejection of God (refuse) and sinful lifestyles (rebel) will bring judgment upon Israel in their removal from the land.

Deut. 28:15ff (see vs. 25,36-37,64-68); Lev. 26

THE INDIVIDUALS IN ISRAEL

To reject God's plea will bring physical destruction but primarily eternal judgment. The theme of individual judgment, although not in great detail, is addressed in this book. Isaiah 38:18 (see 14:15); 66:22-24

The Bible develops eternal judgment upon sinners in great detail (John 8:24; Acts 4:12; Heb. 10:26-27; Rev. 20:14-15)

- 21 How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it; but now murderers.**
- 22 Thy silver is become dross, thy wine mixed with water:**
- 23 Thy princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves: every one loveth gifts, and followeth after rewards: they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them.**

Nations come and go. Faithful nations become the harlot. The demise of Israel is instructive to us and a warning that the U.S. may be following the same destructive path. Austin L. Sorenson in his book, Is America Committing Suicide, published in 1994, asks, "Is the greatest nation in the world destined for the ash heap? Is it inevitable? Are we hastening that demise? Is the United States of America committing suicide?" (Pg. 12). He answers, in part, on page 249-250:

"A.W. Tozer penned, 'Future historians will record that we of the 20th century had intelligence to create a great civilization but not the moral wisdom to preserve it.' Solzhenitsyn, with years of experience in a Siberian Gulag, wrote, 'To destroy a country you must first cut its roots. America's roots have, in a large measure, been severed.' A nation that doesn't fear God doesn't have a chance (Rom. 3:18). 'The deadliest of sins is the consciousness of no sin.' (Thomas Carlyle). How can we be so blind!

"While the Ship of State is sinking, we are as busy as beavers arranging the chairs on deck. The ecclesiastical leaders of our day warn against being 'negative' and with syrup-like demeanor insist that 'everything is wonderful.' This is no time for naivety or neutrality. Tragically, 'There are some who are so neutral that they don't even have a blood type.' Chiang Kai-Shek remarked, 'No nation can ruin us, unless we ruin ourselves.' We have traveled far down that precarious road. 'Responsibility involves accountability.' Will we be remembered as a nation that sold its soul for a saturnalia of 'wine, women, and song'? What have we done with our greatness? John Dryden wrote, 'Beware the fury of a patient man.' God's patience is about to come to an end. He is about to lay bare His arm in terrible judgment!"

As mentioned in the beginning of this study one of the recurring themes we will see is the parallels between Israel of Isaiah's day and the United States of America today. Are we a nation on the precipice of God's judgment?

The downfall of a just, righteous society:

Vs. 21 "How is the faithful city become an harlot! it was full of judgment; righteousness lodged in it;"

The main characteristics of a "godly" society is faithfulness, justice and righteousness. At one time these characteristics "lodged" in Israel.

These characteristics are those of the Messiah's reign and kingdom:

Psalms 89:14

"Justice and judgment *are* the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face."

Isaiah 11:4-5

"But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. ⁵ And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins."

Jeremiah 23:5

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth."

Five sins were prevalent in Israel

- 1) Lawlessness (murders) - **Vs. 21** **"...but now murderers."**
- 2) Rebellious leaders - **Vs. 23** **"Thy princes *are* rebellious"**

Isaiah 9:8-16

God is waiting for repentance in the midst of His judgment - vs. 12,17,21

- 3) Bad companions - **Vs. 23** **"...companions of thieves"**
Proverbs 11:19 "As righteousness *tendeth* to life: so he that pursueth evil *pursueth it* to his own death."
- 4) Greed - **vs. 23** **"...every one loveth gifts [bribes], and followeth after rewards"**

Isaiah 5:22-23

"However in this sixth woe the prophet deals with one particular aspect of alcoholism; its perverting effect upon the rulers and the judges of a people. Alcoholism undermines their sense of justice and fairness. It makes them an easy mark for bribery and corruption."

Victor Buksbazen, The Prophet Isaiah, page 133

- 5) Lack of concern for the downtrodden of society - **vs. 23** **"...they judge not the fatherless, neither doth the cause of the widow come unto them."**

Exodus 22:22-24

"What made the American experiment unique in the first place was the fact that men and women here had the right to succeed or to fail on their own, without the complicity of government. Charity, public assistance, and aid to the needy were available from the churches or from private organizations. The aim of assistance was not to foster dependency but to provide the means for a fresh start. In a free society, the goal is to keep people honest and productive.

"Unfortunately, that is not what Washington offers the disadvantaged today. Government paternalism has robbed people of all classes of their initiative and self-respect. It has bound millions of Americans in self-imposed slavery. Failed social programs that have shackled poor people for more than thirty years can be traced, almost without exception, to Lyndon Johnson's "Great Society" schemes. Based on the belief that some people are inferior or unable to compete in society, welfare doctrine patronizes the poor and the weak, paid them off, took large numbers out of the workforce, and, by rewarding an subsidizing bad habits, actually encouraged the worse kinds of behavior."
When Nations Die, pg. 243

Proverbs 14:34 " Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin *is* a reproach to any people."

"Great is the regard which a righteous God has for righteousness. The virtue even of heathen nations has been rewarded with prosperity and their vices have brought reproach and ruin on them. Righteousness, such as heathens could practice, made Greece and Rome to flourish, and exalted them to glory. But the last of these nations, after it was advanced to the highest pitch of worldly grandeur, was soon brought to extreme misery, and debased to the most wretched servitude, when corruption and wickedness, in opposition to the dictates of natural light, was become common in it."

George Lawson commenting on Proverbs 14:34 in his Commentary on Proverbs

The sin of the nation (Israel) culminates in divine judgment. The judgment is not purely punitive but has a restorative motive as well. The promise is that the city and her inhabitants will be redeemed with righteousness and Jerusalem shall be called (eventually) the city of righteousness (see Isaiah 1:26). Since this has never been since the issuing of this prophecy it is best to understand this as speaking of the future reign of the Messiah and the establishment of righteousness in Israel and around the world.

24 Therefore saith the Lord, the LORD of hosts, the mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries, and avenge me of mine enemies:

In no other verse of the Bible are these three names of God marshaled together. These names speak of God's divine judgement and power to do as he promises.

- Jehovah - the master of all; can indicate the relationship of a slave to a master
- Jehovah Sabaoth - Used over 270 times in the Old Testament with the majority of uses in the prophets.
 - Amos 4:13 - sovereignty, omnipotent, omniscience
 - Isaiah 6:3 - holy
 - Isaiah 31:4-5 - protector
 - Isaiah 44:6 - Jesus is the Lord of hosts (see Rev. 22:13)
- Mighty One of Israel - speaks of His being all powerful

God judges His enemies

His enemies in this instance are the people of Israel who have rebelled against Him.

"The Jehovah Sabaoth describes Him as the Warrior who has all the angels as mighty soldiers at His disposal in the battle against the wicked. This is God's battle name and as a rule it signifies little good when He uses it in reference to His people, as is the case here. It usually implies that He considers and deals with His people as His enemies."

Harry Bultema, Commentary on Isaiah, pg. 47

"Any facile statement that God always hates the sin and loves the sinner needs to be countered by Isaiah's insistence that those who transgress are *my foes* and *my enemies*."

Alec Motyer, The Prophecy of Isaiah: An Introduction and Commentary, pg. 49

Although believers never become the enemy of God, He hates our sin and will take stern actions against us when we sin. If we continue in our rebellion against Him, as children, He will even kill us and take us home to heaven. I John 5:16-17 (see 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 11:27-30)

25 And I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin:

Zech. 13:7-9 "...I will turn my hand upon the little ones."

Psalms 110:3 "Thy people *shall be* willing in the day of thy power..."

26 And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city.

Isa 66:10-12 Jerusalem will be exalted
Ezek. 5:5 Jerusalem is the center of the world
2 Kings 21:4 God will put His name in Jerusalem
Jer. 33:10-17 The righteous King Messiah will reign in Jerusalem

27 Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness.

Jer. 33:6-9
Joel 3:16-21

The close of the first chapter of Isaiah brings us to the ultimate judgment and punishment a holy God will execute on transgressors and sinners. Sinners will be righteously punished.

28 And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners *shall be together*, and they that forsake the LORD shall be consumed.

1) GOD WILL PUNISH ALL TRANSGRESSORS.

"And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." (Hebrews 9:27)

2) HE IS JUST IN THE PUNISHMENT HE METES OUT

"Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.(Acts 17:31)

"Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23)

29 For they shall be ashamed of the oaks which ye have desired, and ye shall be confounded for the gardens that ye have chosen.

People who follow false gods will ultimately be ashamed and confounded - Isaiah 14:12-16

30 For ye shall be as an oak whose leaf fadeth, and as a garden that hath no water.

The result of following false gods is inevitable destruction.

31 And the strong shall be as tow, and the maker of it as a spark, and they shall both burn together, and none shall quench *them*.

Mark 12:40
Luke 12:47, 48
Revelation 20:11-14

On the matter of eternal punishment Dr. Edgar Y. Mullins says,
"As there are degrees in the rewards of the righteous, so also there are degrees in the punishment of the unrighteous. The Judge of all the earth will do right. We need have no misgivings as to this point It follows that not all the wicked will suffer the same degree of punishment. The doctrine of degrees in rewards and punishments is one of the most clearly revealed doctrines of Scripture." The Christian Religion In Its Doctrinal Expression, 1917.

The entire chapter is in many ways a prologue to the entire book. The themes of this chapter - the chosen people; sin, rebellion, and transgression; national destruction and dispersion; the remnant; religious hypocrisy; redemption; Messiah and His kingdom; and eternal punishment - are repeated and developed throughout this book.