

ISAIAH_23
THE KINGDOM AND THE GLORY II

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Isaiah 1:2-3 – “Listen, O heavens! Pay attention, earth! This is what the Lord says: “The children I raised and cared for have rebelled against me. Even an ox knows its owner, and a donkey recognizes its master’s care— but Israel doesn’t know its master. My people don’t recognize my care for them.” (NLT)

The nation of Israel was established in a covenant relationship with God, but the people had forgotten their divinely appointed heritage and over time had grown ignorant of their covenant with God. Due to the corruption of its inhabitants, the city of Jerusalem was referred to by the prophets as “Sodom” and “Gomorrhah.” However, someday it will again be called “the city of righteousness, the faithful city.”

Throughout the book of Isaiah two primary themes are presented. One is the judgments of God against the sins of Israel, as well as the surrounding nations. And the other, is the salvation of mankind through the grace and mercy of the Messiah who initially suffers and dies bearing our sins, but ultimately reigns over the whole earth (Isa. 53).

Isaiah gives us the Lord’s promise to create a new earth as the home of righteousness. But judgment precedes salvation, as again Israel is pictured as obstinate and sinful. Yet, God preserves a remnant while punishing the rebels who mock His Word.

In chapter 63, Isaiah tells us the Redeemer will be stained with blood from the terrible judgments he metes out on the earth. But when the necessary judgments are past, it is God’s kindness and mercy which will be celebrated.

Now, in chapter 64, he returns to the perspective of an exiled Israel, suffering in the days of her rejection. Yearning for her Redeemer, Israel longs for the day God will come to release her from her sufferings.

I. Isaiah’s Cry for God to Come Down

Isaiah 64:1-12 – “Oh, that you would burst from the heavens and come down! How the mountains would quake in your presence! As fire causes wood to burn and water to boil, your coming would make the nations tremble. Then your enemies would learn the reason for your fame! When you came down long ago, you did awesome deeds beyond our highest expectations. And oh, how the mountains quaked! For since the world began, no ear has heard, and no eye has seen a God like you, who works for those who wait for him! You welcome those who gladly do good, who follow godly ways. But you have been very angry with us, for we are not godly. We are constant sinners; how can people like us be saved? We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall, and our sins sweep us away like the wind. Yet no one calls on your name or pleads with you for mercy. Therefore, you have turned away from us and turned us over to our sins. And yet, O LORD, you are our Father. We are the clay, and you are the potter. We all are formed by your hand. Don’t be so angry with us, LORD. Please don’t remember our sins forever. Look at us, we pray, and see that we are all your people. Your holy cities are destroyed. Zion is a wilderness; yes, Jerusalem is a desolate ruin. The holy and beautiful Temple where our ancestors praised you has been burned down, and all the things of beauty are destroyed. After all this, LORD, must you still refuse to help us? Will you continue to be silent and punish us?” (NLT)

In chapter 63, Isaiah calls for the Lord to “look down” from heaven and show forth mercy and have compassion on His people; but here in chapter 64, the plea is for God to not wait any longer

instead, Isaiah's desire is for God to burst on the scene with power and great glory causing the mountains to shake and the nations to tremble in fear.

He confesses and acknowledges their sinful independence and lack of prayer, but pleads for the Lord to not be angry because the cities lie in ruins and the Temple is destroyed. Isaiah wonders about God's silence in light of this situation. Then God replies:

II. God's Response

Isaiah 65:1-2 – “The LORD says, ‘I was ready to respond, but no one asked for help. I was ready to be found, but no one was looking for me. I said, ‘Here I am, here I am!’ to a nation that did not call on my name. All day long I opened my arms to a rebellious people. But they follow their own evil paths and their own crooked schemes.’” (NLT)

Romans 10:19-20 – “But I ask, did the people of Israel really understand? Yes, they did, for even in the time of Moses, God said, ‘I will rouse your jealousy through people who are not even a nation. I will provoke your anger through the foolish Gentiles.’ And later Isaiah spoke boldly for God, saying, ‘I was found by people who were not looking for me. I showed myself to those who were not asking for me.’ But regarding Israel, God said, ‘All day long I opened my arms to them, but they were disobedient and rebellious.’” (NLT)

Israel didn't want to know God better or walk in His ways, so He chose to reveal Himself to the Gentiles. Do you feel like you're pressing into God? Are you praying more? Loving His Word?

III. God Shows Mercy in the Midst of Judgment

Isaiah 65:3-16 – All day long they insult me to my face by worshiping idols in their sacred gardens. They burn incense on pagan altars. At night they go out among the graves, worshiping the dead. They eat the flesh of pigs and make stews with other forbidden foods. Yet they say to each other, ‘Don't come too close or you will defile me! I am holier than you!’ These people are a stench in my nostrils, an acrid smell that never goes away. “Look, my decree is written out in front of me: I will not stand silent; I will repay them in full! Yes, I will repay them—both for their own sins and for those of their ancestors,” says the LORD. “For they also burned incense on the mountains and insulted me on the hills. I will pay them back in full!” “But I will not destroy them all,” says the LORD. “For just as good grapes are found among a cluster of bad ones (and someone will say, ‘Don't throw them all away—some of those grapes are good!’), so I will not destroy all Israel. For I still have true servants there. I will preserve a remnant of the people of Israel and of Judah to possess my land. Those I choose will inherit it, and my servants will live there. The plain of Sharon will again be filled with flocks for my people who have searched for me, and the valley of Achor will be a place to pasture herds. But because the rest of you have forsaken the LORD and have forgotten his Temple, and because you have prepared feasts to honor the god of Fate and have offered mixed wine to the god of Destiny, now I will ‘destine’ you for the sword. All of you will bow down before the executioner. For when I called, you did not answer. When I spoke, you did not listen. You deliberately sinned—before my very eyes—and chose to do what you know I despise.” Therefore, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “My servants will eat, but you will starve. My servants will drink, but you will be thirsty. My servants will rejoice, but you will be sad and ashamed. My servants will sing for joy, but you will cry in sorrow and despair. Your name will be a curse word among my people, for **the Sovereign LORD** will destroy you and **will call his true servants by another name**. All who invoke a blessing or take an oath will do so by the God of truth. For I will put aside my anger and forget the evil of earlier days.” (NLT)

It was the sins of the people that kept God from answering their prayers. They resisted His grace and His loving appeals and simply chose to walk in wickedness; worshipping false gods and believing the lies of demons. But in love, God refused to let them go undisciplined.

In these verses the Lord contrasts those who reject the Truth as revealed in Creation and in His Holy Word with His faithful servants who chose to believe God's Word. And in the end, God will give new names or transformed character to those who have submitted their lives to Christ.

Every person in the Old Testament or the New Testament who received a new name from God, i.e. Jacob renamed Israel and Saul renamed Paul, they also experienced character transformation.

Acts 28:23-27 – So a time was set, and on that day a large number of people came to Paul's lodging. He explained and testified about the Kingdom of God and tried to persuade them about Jesus from the Scriptures. Using the law of Moses and the books of the prophets, he spoke to them from morning until evening. Some were persuaded by the things he said, but others did not believe. And after they had argued back and forth among themselves, they left with this final word from Paul: "The Holy Spirit was right when he said to your ancestors through Isaiah the prophet, 'Go and say to this people: When you hear what I say, you will not understand. When you see what I do, you will not comprehend. For the hearts of these people are hardened, and their ears cannot hear, and they have closed their eyes—so their eyes cannot see, and their ears cannot hear, and their hearts cannot understand, and they cannot turn to me and let me heal them.'" (NLT)

Even though we may have strayed from the Lord, the Almighty is a God of love and compassion who wants us to return to Him so He can heal us. His ultimate goal is to share His character with us through our union with Jesus Christ.

IV. The Blessing of a New Creation

Isaiah 65:17-25 – "Look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth, and no one will even think about the old ones anymore. Be glad; rejoice forever in my creation! And look! I will create Jerusalem as a place of happiness. Her people will be a source of joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and delight in my people. And the sound of weeping and crying will be heard in it no more. No longer will babies die when only a few days old. No longer will adults die before they have lived a full life. No longer will people be considered old at one hundred! Only the cursed will die that young! In those days people will live in the houses they build and eat the fruit of their own vineyards. Unlike the past, invaders will not take their houses and confiscate their vineyards. For my people will live as long as trees, and my chosen ones will have time to enjoy their hard-won gains. They will not work in vain, and their children will not be doomed to misfortune. For they are people blessed by the LORD, and their children, too, will be blessed. I will answer them before they even call to me. While they are still talking about their needs, I will go ahead and answer their prayers! The wolf and the lamb will feed together. The lion will eat hay like a cow. But the snakes will eat dust. In those days no one will be hurt or destroyed on my holy mountain. I, the LORD, have spoken!" (NLT)

Isaiah's description here is of the millennial reign of Christ on the earth. It is not a description of the eternal state as described by John in the Revelation he received on Patmos. Because in the eternal state, people will not get old or die, nor will they be in any danger from invaders.

However, during the millennial reign of Christ, people will work, and God will bless their labors. People will pray, and God will answer their prayers. All of nature will live in peace because the curse will have been lifted.

V. The Birth of Israel in a Day

Isaiah 66:1-24 – This is what the LORD says: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you build me a temple as good as that? Could you build me such a resting place? My hands have made both heaven and earth; they and everything in them are mine.” I, the LORD, have spoken! “I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word. But those who choose their own ways—delighting in their detestable sins—will not have their offerings accepted. When such people sacrifice a bull, it is no more acceptable than a human sacrifice. When they sacrifice a lamb, it’s as though they had sacrificed a dog! When they bring an offering of grain, they might as well offer the blood of a pig. When they burn frankincense, it’s as if they had blessed an idol. I will send them great trouble—all the things they feared. For when I called, they did not answer. When I spoke, they did not listen. They deliberately sinned before my very eyes and chose to do what they know I despise.” Hear this message from the LORD, all you who tremble at his words: “Your own people hate you and throw you out for being loyal to my name. ‘Let the LORD be honored!’ they scoff. ‘Be joyful in him!’ But they will be put to shame. What is all the commotion in the city? What is that terrible noise from the Temple? It is the voice of the LORD taking vengeance against his enemies. “Before the birth pains even begin, Jerusalem gives birth to a son. Who has ever seen anything as strange as this? Who ever heard of such a thing? Has a nation ever been born in a single day? Has a country ever come forth in a mere moment? But by the time Jerusalem’s birth pains begin, her children will be born. Would I ever bring this nation to the point of birth and then not deliver it?” asks the LORD. “No! I would never keep this nation from being born,” says your God. “Rejoice with Jerusalem! Be glad with her, all you who love her and all you who mourn for her. Drink deeply of her glory even as an infant drinks at its mother’s comforting breasts.” This is what the LORD says: “I will give Jerusalem a river of peace and prosperity. The wealth of the nations will flow to her. Her children will be nursed at her breasts, carried in her arms, and held on her lap. I will comfort you there in Jerusalem as a mother comforts her child.” When you see these things, your heart will rejoice. You will flourish like the grass! Everyone will see the LORD’s hand of blessing on his servants—and his anger against his enemies. See, the LORD is coming with fire, and his swift chariots roar like a whirlwind. He will bring punishment with the fury of his anger and the flaming fire of his hot rebuke. The LORD will punish the world by fire and by his sword. He will judge the earth, and many will be killed by him. “Those who ‘consecrate’ and ‘purify’ themselves in a sacred garden with its idol in the center—feasting on pork and rats and other detestable meats—will come to a terrible end,” says the LORD. “I can see what they are doing, and I know what they are thinking. So I will gather all nations and peoples together, and they will see my glory. I will perform a sign among them. And I will send those who survive to be messengers to the nations—to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (who are famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to all the lands beyond the sea that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. There they will declare my glory to the nations. They will bring the remnant of your people back from every nation. They will bring them to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD. They will ride on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels,” says the LORD. “And I will appoint some of them to be my priests and Levites.” I, the LORD, have spoken! “As surely as my new heavens and earth will remain, so will you always be my people, with a name that will never disappear,” says the LORD. “All humanity will come to worship me from week to week and from month to month. And as they go out, they will see the dead bodies of those who have rebelled against me. For the worms that devour them will never die, and the fire that burns them will never go out. All who pass by will view them with utter horror.” (NLT)

Isaiah begins this chapter with a description of God’s transcendence. With heaven as His throne and the earth as His footstool, the question arises: “What kind of dwelling place is man able to build for the Lord?” The answer of course is that God alone can create a dwelling place that will

suit Him. And that eternal dwelling place is none other than the heart of the humble and contrite person who truly expresses reverential fear for the Word of God.

Political Israel was born on May 14th, 1948; but “the new Israel” will be “born in a day” when they believe in Jesus Christ. There will be a new Temple, but the ceremonies of worship will never take the place of a humble heart before God. God no longer resides in physical buildings, as such. He dwells in those who submit to Him in a faith walk.

In Isaiah’s day, the people were not trembling at God’s Word; instead, they opted to do their own thing. Instead of sacrificing their animals to God in worship of His holiness, they were murdering the animals to simply eat them. So, their offerings were as unclean things to the Lord.

They were simply conforming to the cultures around them. And everyone who chooses to conform to the cultures around them is really following the way of the world-system. And the World-system, including all false religious systems, is the result of the deceptive lies of Satan.

We like to think we’re in charge of our own lives and can intelligently make the right life decisions, but the reality is we are going to continue as slaves of our sinful nature making sinful decisions; or if we are redeemed through faith in Christ, we will get our minds renewed by God’s Word and become willing slaves to the Word of God.

We’re all slaves; it’s just a question of being slaves to what? To sin or to God!

Romans 7:14-25 – “So the trouble is not with the law, for it is spiritual and good. The trouble is with me, for I am all too human, a slave to sin. I don’t really understand myself, for I want to do what is right, but I don’t do it. Instead, I do what I hate. But if I know that what I am doing is wrong, this shows that I agree that the law is good. So I am not the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway. But if I do what I don’t want to do, I am not really the one doing wrong; it is sin living in me that does it. I have discovered this principle of life—that when I want to do what is right, I inevitably do what is wrong. I love God’s law with all my heart. But there is another power within me that is at war with my mind. This power makes me a slave to the sin that is still within me. Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin and death? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So you see how it is: In my mind I really want to obey God’s law, but because of my sinful nature I am a slave to sin.” (NLT)

Romans 12:2 – “Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God’s will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.” (NLT)

Galatians 2:19-20 – “For when I tried to keep the law, it condemned me. So I died to the law—I stopped trying to meet all its requirements—so that I might live for God. My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.” (NLT)

Colossians 3:3-6 – “For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. Your real life is Christ and when he appears, then you too will appear with him and share his glory! You must put to death, then, the earthly desires at work in you, such as sexual immorality, indecency, lust, evil passions, and greed (for greed is a form of idolatry). Because of such things God’s anger will come upon those who do not obey him.” (TEV)

Anyone who rejects the revelation of God in the Bible will come under the judgment of the Almighty.

Isaiah closes his book with a description of Israelites traveling to the ends of the earth to share about God's glory and majesty and what the Lord has done for Israel. And the result will be the conversion of people from every nation who then come to Israel to worship and glorify the Lord. And from those who visit and worship the Lord, some will be selected to serve the Lord in His presence.

What we need to take away from this message is that what God is going to create – a new heaven and a new earth – should be more real in our hearts and minds than the sorrows we have experienced in this life and still remember, but will soon forget.

And when you hear the foolish predictions of man that the polar ice caps are going to melt and destroy the earth because of greenhouse gases, do not fear. Remember that when Jesus spoke God's Word, He prefaced it by saying, "Verily, verily, or truly, truly, I say unto you."

God's Word is Rock Solid sure. God's Word is unshakable and it will prevail!!!!

