

"O Lord, You are my God; I will praise Your name, for You have worked wonders, plans formed long ago with perfect faithfulness!" (Isaiah 15:1)

Remember last week's lesson on Isaiah 24? When we began a new series of chapters where Isaiah saw "the day" when God would pour out His judgment on the whole world! The "day of the Lord," beginning a 7-year period of time known as the "Tribulation," described further in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Revelation 6-19--ending with the return of Christ to set up His millennial reign on the earth!

Isaiah described a world laid waste and devastated--war-torn and polluted by the inhabitants who "transgressed God's law, violated His statutes, and broke the everlasting covenant!" Committing sin, which Motyer describes as the supreme environmental threat to the world, turning peoples' joy to gloom, and bringing "a curse which would cause the earth to reel to and fro...shake like a shack and fall, never to rise again!" So it would happen that God will judge the world!

And yet Isaiah hears other people (a godly remnant)--in the coastlands of the sea and from the ends of the earth--raising their voices and singing and shouting for joy at the majesty of the Lord! Preparing for the Lord of hosts to reign on Mount Zion!

And that sets the stage for our lesson last night on Isaiah 25-27--where Isaiah apparently sees himself as being part of the resurrected saints who will "one day" return to join those saved survivors who have made it through the tribulation, to sing praises to God for His "wondrous work," as the glorious millennial reign of Christ begins on this earth!

And, in Isaiah 25:1, Isaiah bursts forth in what seems to his very own "psalm of praise" to the "God of all wonders"! "O Lord, You are my God; I will exalt you, I will give thanks to Your name; for You have worked wonders, plans formed long ago, with perfect faithfulness!" Wow!

We're reminded of similar tributes throughout the Bible that continue to magnify our God:

- Psalm 100--"Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth...Come before His with joyful singing...Know that the Lord Himself is God! It is He who has made us...Enter into His gates with thanksgiving and into His courts with praise...!"
- Psalm 98:1--"O sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done wonderful things...!"
- Jeremiah 32:17--"Ah, Lord God! Behold, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and Your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you!"
- Matthew 6:9-13--"Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name! Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...!"
- Ephesians 1:3--"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessings in the heavenly places...!"
- I Corinthians 15:37--"But thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

And think too of so many songs of praise which would fit this setting, including "Joy to the World" (which, as Jim Battle pointed out, is all about the coming "kingdom of God" and "the earth receiving her king")! And how about the one that goes: "O the wonder of it all, the wonder that thrills my soul, just to think that God loves me...! (Have at it! These and more!)

Well, Isaiah is obviously caught up in "wonder" as he envisions the future millennium. But the terrible tribulation is also fresh on his mind as he writes these three chapters, and we see him "blending" (a term Jim introduced) "snapshots" of the coming millennium (and beyond) with "look-backs" at the tribulation, along with "lessons for living" which are highly applicable for us today (or for any future day)!

Isaiah foresees a "tale of two cities"--the "fortified" city which will be brought to total ruin (Babylon, in Isaiah 25:2), and the "strong city" of the "New Jerusalem," cited in Isaiah 26, but displayed in much greater detail in Revelation 21:10-22:5, where John writes that it will be "coming down out of heaven from God...when there will be no need of the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God will illuminate it and its lamp is the Lamb...(where) a river of life, clear as a crystal, will come from the throne of God...and on either side the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit..." (and more)!

"In that day," Isaiah says, "the Lord of hosts will prepare a lavish banquet for all peoples on the mountain...and He will swallow up death for all time...and wipe tears away from all faces...and remove the reproach of His people from all the earth!"

Jesus said (in Matthew 8:11) that "many will come, from the east and the west, and recline at the banquet table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven"! (Wiersbe notes that the people He was speaking to knew He was speaking of the "coming kingdom"!)

MacArthur notes that the promise in Isaiah 26:10 that "the dead will live; their corpses will rise..." speaks of the raising of the corporate Israel to participate in the great future banquet"! While the apostle Paul notes (in I Corinthians 15:57) that the reference to "the swallowing up of death" represents the fulfillment of the promise of the resurrection of believers. And he frames it this way: "But when this perishable will put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory! O death, where is your victory... Thanks be to God who gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!"

Isaiah also "blends in" some promises for those who trust in the Lord, including the classic verse for many, in Isaiah 26:3 (KJV): "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee!"

Followed by verse 4, which challenges us to "Trust in the Lord forever, for in God the Lord, we have an everlasting Rock!" The Rock of Ages! (Both of these promises are the basis for great hymns of the faith, which continue to offer great hope and comfort for us as believers: "Like a river glorious is God's perfect peace...Stayed upon Jehovah, hearts are fully blessed...!" And "Rock of ages, cleft for me; let me hide myself in Thee...!" And on they go! Sing along!)

There's lots more in these chapters! Including "in that day" references:

- To the "vineyard" of Israel that (in the millennium) will "blossom and sprout, and fill the whole world with its fruit"--in contrast with the vineyard (in Isaiah 5:1-7) that "produced only worthless grapes...and would be laid waste"!
- "When the Lord will start His threshing (at the harvest)...and regathering (His people) one by one" (!) as they return to the land promised for them!

- And, finally, when "the great trumpet will be blown and those perishing in the land of Assyria and scattered in the land of Egypt will come and worship the Lord in the holy mountain of Jerusalem"!

All of which, while not stated, fulfills both the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, where God promised Abraham that through his descendant "all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3), and where God promised David that He would "raise up his descendant after him...and establish a kingdom...and a throne of his kingdom forever" (II Samuel 7:9-16)!

O the wonder of it all!

Lowell