

"Seek and read from the book of the Lord; not one of these shall be missing; none shall be without her mate. For the Lord has commanded, and His Spirit has gathered them!" (Isaiah 34:16)

In our prior lesson on Isaiah 33, God through His prophet, Isaiah, pronounced His sixth and final "woe" of this section on "the destroyer," Sennacherib and his Assyrian army! The time had arrived, Isaiah 33:10 says, for God to arise and assert Himself in judgment against the oppressor (MacArthur notes) when his power had reached its zenith! Then God summoned "all those who are far away, and those who are near, to know and acknowledge His might"!

Ironically, verse 14 says that this miraculous deliverance of Judah also brought "fear and trembling to sinners in Zion"! And raised a basic theological question about who could live with the "consuming fire" of the Holy One of Israel! (Interestingly, Pastor Ryan Francis raised the same basic question in his Sunday sermon just two days before our MOB session--taken from Malachi 3:2, "Who can endure the day of His coming?" Only the "righteous"! Those with "imputed" righteousness!)

And so we concluded that, just like the children of Israel, we too have much to fear if we're trusting in our own righteousness (rather than in the imputed righteousness of Christ) to escape God's judgment for sin!

And that sets the scene for our lesson this past Tuesday on Isaiah 34, which continues the theme of God's judgment for sin and His "wrath against the nations"!

Isaiah begins the chapter with these words: "Draw near, O nations, to hear; and listen, O peoples! Let the earth and all it contains hear, and the world and all that springs from it, for the Lord's indignation is against all nations!"

God obviously wanted the world then to hear, and listen (and to repent and turn to Him!) just like He wants the whole world today to hear, and to respond to, the message of "the day coming" when God will come to judge the nations, and all people! When the armies of the nations will be utterly destroyed, when the "mountains will be drenched with their blood, and the host of heaven worn away, and the sky rolled back as a scroll"!

The coming "day of the Lord"--or the Tribulation! Isaiah calls it the "Lord's day of vengeance," and "a year of recompense for the cause of Zion"!

And Isaiah singles out the nation of Edom, as representative of the rest of the nations of the world! Edom, from the vintage of Esau, whom the Old Testament consistently treats as the antithesis of Israel! It was Edom (the Edomites!) who refused to allow the children of Israel to pass through their land on the way out of their captivity in Egypt (Numbers 20:21), and who would later assist Nebuchadnezzar in seizing Jerusalem and carrying off the people of Jerusalem into Babylonian captivity!

Edom's overthrow and judgment was (or will be) reminiscent of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah (in Genesis 19:24-25) but, according to Constable, pictures a judgment far beyond one nation's future, with devastation that describes what the whole world will look like at the end of the Tribulation, just before Christ returns (consistent with the account in the book of the Revelation)!

Human leaders "will be no more" (according to verse 12), and only thorns and thistles, and wild animals of all types will fill and occupy the land! Not even "the heavens" will escape the effects of God's wrath! And, Isaiah says (in verse 11) that the Lord will "stretch over the earth the line of desolation, and the

plumb line of emptiness"! Constable says that "the Lord has a standard by which He will evaluate its inhabitants and the distribution of the land"!

Motyer notes that "it is the Lord who determines when the story comes to an end and closes up the books with all the host of heaven involved and the sky rolled up like a scroll"!

Isaiah ends his prophecy here with a charge for his readers (and that would include us!) to "seek and read from the book of the Lord," and find that "none of these will be missing"! MacArthur notes that "the prophecies against the nations (in verses 1-15) are just as certain as God's sovereign command through His prophet"!

While, as Motyer notes, "these passages of God's wrath and judgment are hard to take, the message of Scripture is clear"! Yet, "the day will come, praise God, when the company of the saved will be innumerable"! (Just so happened that, in his sermon on this very morning, Pastor Ryan Francis--who seems to be tracking our study of Isaiah--spoke from Malachi 4, noting that "the day is coming" when God will come not only to "judge the wicked" but to "bring healing on His wings" (salvation) for those who "fear (revere) His name"!)

Stay tuned for Isaiah's "good news" in Isaiah 35!

Seek and read His Word!

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