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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Isaiah 34.

(2015)

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But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

Teach it, don't demand it.

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Isaiah 34.

Topics.

- Nations, hear, God is enraged He has devoted nations to destruction.
- All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll.
- The LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, a great slaughter in the land of Edom.
- Wild oxen (unicorns) shall fall and their land shall drink its fill of blood.
- The LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for Zion.
- The land of Eden will be covered with wild birds, animals and weeds.
- The LORD'S spoken word against Edom is certain, He has commanded it.

FOR INFORMATION: concerning people, places and the meaning of words see the title: "Map Locations and People of the Bible," and the title: "Bible Dictionary" on Website Menu.

INTRODUCTION: Isaiah is the exciting story of the Old Testament and the New Testament compacted into one book. It covers the wonder and splendour of Bible prophecy and echoes of the Lord Jesus Christ resound throughout Isaiah's visions and his messages. It teaches history as it affects God's people and constantly points to a future age when righteousness, justice, joy and peace will be established on earth. Isaiah prophesied about 740–700 B.C. He lived during the decline of Israel in the shadow of the powerful Assyrian Empire. He spoke the word of God to a people who were "deaf and blind" (Isaiah 6:10) who refused to listen to his warnings of looming disaster.

Isaiah warned the people of Judah's that their sin would bring God's judgment (i.e., seventy-years captivity) and declared that God is sovereign and would use Cyrus the Persian to return the people from exile. He spoke also of a servant and man of sorrows who would be wounded for our transgressions faithfully accomplishing God's purposes of salvation (Isaiah 52:13 to 53:12). The final chapters give a beautiful description of a new creation in which Christ will rule as King, judging the wicked and establishing God's Kingdom on earth.

Following are four points that will help the reader understand the book of Isaiah as they travel through it: -

1. The history of Israel and Judah. At this time in the story Assyria has taken the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria into captivity and marched up to Jerusalem (the two tribes of Judah) to destroy it, but failed. Later in the story Babylon attacks Jerusalem and conquers the city and takes the people of Judah into captivity. After this victory Babylon conquers Assyria which resulted in Israel and Judah being brought under the submission of Babylonian rule and the tribes being brought together during the seventy year Babylonian captivity.
2. Many of Isaiah's visions are written as though they have already taken place, but a majority of these visions are predicting future events that are about to happen during Isaiah's generation while others will come to pass in a future age. Though these visions are of future events Isaiah speaks them in the present tense, because he spoke them as they came to his mind and as he saw the events unfolding before him.
3. They are often spoken in this manner because of the certainty of it and because God had ordained them and revealed them to his prophets who spoke them to His people so they must come to pass, because God cannot lie.(Titus 1:2).

4. Though Isaiah is primarily speaking to Judah (the two tribes at Jerusalem) much of what he says applies to Israel (the ten tribes in Samaria) because both Judah and Israel are in the same corrupt spiritual condition.
5. All the promises to Israel are now in Christ. God's promises to Israel now include the Jews and the Gentiles. This is because under the New Covenant God is building an entirely new nation made up of Jews and Gentiles of which Christ is the head. In this new nation that God is creating in the Lord Jesus Christ Jews have no advantage over Gentiles since all are one in Christ Jesus.

The apostle Paul wrote: Gentiles were separated from Christ, alienated from the Commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus they have been brought to God by the blood of Christ. Jesus has made Jews and Gentiles both one by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances so that Jesus might create in himself one new man (i.e., one nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles). In Jesus both Jews and Gentiles are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:1-22). The practical application of what this means, is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel through Isaiah also apply to Gentiles who by faith belong to Christ.

Judgment and destruction on Edom

O Nations, Hear, God is Enraged He has Devoted Nations to Destruction.

Isaiah 34:1-2 ----- ¹Draw near, O nations, to hear, and give attention, O peoples! Let the earth hear, and all that fills it; the world, and all that comes from it. ²For the LORD is enraged against all the nations, and furious against all their host; he has devoted them to destruction, has given them over for slaughter.

Isaiah calls all the inhabitants of the world to listen to what he is about to say concerning the nations He has devoted for destruction. The following verses show that the primary nation in focus in this chapter is Edom.

- My sword descends for judgment upon Edom for destruction. (v5).
- The LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, a slaughter in Edom. (v5).
- The land of Edom shall become burning pitch. (v9).

Edom; the LORD promised Rebekah two Nations, Esau and Jacob. Isaac and Rebekah gave birth to the two promised nations Esau and Jacob his brother. Esau is the father of Edom, (the people are called Edomites). The LORD says in (Malachi 1:2-5), He has hated Jacob's brother Esau, laid waste his hill country, left Edom's heritage to jackals of the desert and if they try to rebuild it He will tear it down. The LORD goes on to say, Edom will be called 'the wicked country, and he will be angry with them forever.

All the Host of Heaven shall Rot Away, and the Skies Roll up like a Scroll.

Isaiah 34:3-5 ----- ³Their slain shall be cast out, and the stench of their corpses shall rise; the mountains shall flow with their blood. ⁴All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree. ⁵For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction.

All the host of heaven in this context applies to all of Edom. They are called the host of heaven because they are from Esau the brother of Jacob who became Israel.

Jewish Idioms: all the host of heaven shall rot away means all the dead bodies of the people of Edom's will rot away.

The skies roll up like a scroll means, the nation of Edom will be destroyed. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine means; those of Edom who have great authority will lose their power. The fact these are Jewish idioms is supported by verse five which says that the LORD'S sword descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people the LORD has devoted to destruction, showing that Isaiah is using biblical lofty speech and poetical language to highlight what he is saying. For further information concerning biblical lofty language, see the title: -

- Lofty and Figurative Language in the Bible.

In, Various Topics (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The LORD has a Sacrifice in Bozrah, a Great Slaughter in the Land of Edom.

Isaiah 34:6 -----⁶The LORD has a sword; it is sated with blood (filled with blood in KJV); it is gorged with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the LORD has a sacrifice in Bozrah, a great slaughter in the land of Edom. (Idumea in KJV).

Bozrah: was an important city of Edom, it is especially mentioned in (Amos 1:12) where we read of its palaces. The blood of lambs and goats and the fat of the kidneys of rams is referring to the animal sacrifices spoken of in Leviticus and that the people offered to the LORD, Isaiah is likening Edom to these sacrifices, Edom is pictured as the one that is about to be sacrificed.

Idumea: the name Idumea was used to refer to a smaller area in the same region as Edom which was occupied by him. Edom was the elder twin-brother of Jacob and is sometimes referred to as Esau (Malachi 1:3), Idumea (Isaiah 34:5) and Mount Seir (Ezek. 35:3). All of these names are interchangeable, referring to the same nation, Edom. (Israel and Edom were constantly at odds). In early periods like most ancient people the Edomites dwelt in tents, but they were not a roving and wandering people, but a people of fixed boundaries.

Elsewhere they are called Idumea as the offspring of Esau. Idumea was south of Palestine. The name Idumea was used to refer to a smaller area in the same region as Edom which was occupied by him. Edom was the elder twin-brother of Jacob and is sometimes referred to as Esau (Malachi 1:3), Idumea (Isaiah 34:5) and Mount Seir (Ezek. 35:3). All of these names are interchangeable, referring to the same nation, Edom. (Israel and Edom were constantly at odds).

For further information concerning Idumea, see the title, "Esau, Idumea, Edom and the Edomites," in Articles (ON WEBSITE MENU).

The LORD has a sword; it is sated with blood: (v6) (filled with blood in KJV) the picture painted in these verses is taken from the heads of Israel preparing one of their great feasts held during their festival days at which time it is necessary for the priests to slay a great multitude of lambs, rams, and fatted animals, so that the knife may be said to be saturated with the blood and the fat of the slain.

Wild Oxen (Unicorns) shall fall and their Land shall Drink its Fill of Blood.

Isaiah 34:7 -----⁷Wild oxen (unicorns in KJV) shall fall with them, and young steers with the mighty bulls. Their land shall drink its fill of blood, and their soil shall be gorged with fat.

Unicorns: comes from the Hebrew word (*r'ēm*) it literally means to rise up and carries the idea of attracting special attention and being easily seen noticed and readily visible. It is impossible to determine precisely what sort of creature is meant, various commentators have suggested a wild bull, a buffalo, a large and fierce species of the antelope; the gazelle, wild goats, a rhinoceros or some other wild beast.

However if we look at various Scriptures that use the Hebrew word unicorn we do get some clarity.

- God brings them out of Egypt and is for them like the horns of the wild ox (unicorn *r'ēm* in KJV). (Num. 23:22).

Here the unicorn is a symbol of the people of Israel.

- God brings him (the tents of Jacob and camps of Israel) out of Egypt and is for him like the horns of the wild ox (unicorn *r^e'em* in KJV); he shall eat up the nations, his adversaries, and shall break their bones in pieces and pierce them through with his arrows. (Num. 24:8).

Here the unicorn is a symbol of the nation of Israel.

- A firstborn bullock (*showr*) (*as a traveller*) he has majesty, and his horns are the horns of a wild ox (unicorn *r^e'em* in KJV) with them he shall gore the peoples, all of them, to the ends of the earth; they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh. (Deut. 33:17).

Here the unicorn is a symbol of the tribe of Ephraim.

- Is the wild ox (unicorn *r^e'em* in KJV) willing to serve you? Will he spend the night at your manger? ¹⁰Can you bind him in the furrow with ropes, or will he harrow the valleys after you? (Job 39:9-10).

Here the unicorn is a wild ox

- Save me from the mouth of the lion! (*'ariy*) (in the sense of *violence*) You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen! (unicorn *r^e'em* in KJV) (Psalm 22:21).

Here the unicorn is a wild ox

- He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf (*'egel*) (as frisking round) and Sirion (*S^erayah*) (Jah has prevailed) like a young wild ox (unicorn *r^e'em* in KJV) (Psalm 29:6).

Here God is symbolised as a wild ox.

- You (the LORD) have exalted my (the author of the Psalm) horn like that of the wild ox (unicorn *r^e'em* in KJV); you have poured over me fresh oil. (Psalm 92:10).

Here the unicorn is a symbol of the strength of a godly man.

Summary of the unicorn: these verses show that the unicorn is used as a symbol of the following things: -

- God; the people or nation of Israel; the tribe of Ephraim and a godly man.
- A wild ox which because of its strength is used to symbolise kings, emperors, princes, nobles, captains, rulers, leaders, and mighty men.
- Loftiness, the mighty the rich and those who have power and pre-eminence over others.

Wild oxen (unicorns in KJV), young steers and bulls: (v7) in this verse the wild oxen (unicorns) refers to the king and nobles, the rulers and leaders of Edom while the young steers and mighty bulls refer to the soldiers, workers and common folk. The idea is that it matters not if one is a king, prince, noble or rich or lowly and poor all will die in the same way, none will escape the looming judgment Isaiah is prophesying is coming upon the land of Edom.

Their land shall drink its fill of blood: (v7) better being bathed in blood, it means that when their enemies invade their land there will be such a vast multitude of their inhabitants that will be slaughtered that it will be as though the blood of those slaughtered covers their entire land.

Their soil shall be gorged with fat: (v7) the allusion here is taken from sacrifices being burned on the altar and the melting fat of the animal flowing over the altar and mingling with the blood so that the altar is covered with the fat and blood of the animal. It is a very graphic picture of the horror of the widespread bloodshed that will cover the land of Edom during these battles and wars. As this vision passes through Isaiah's mind (i.e., much like a dream) or before his eyes (similar to a

hologram) he sees the whole land of Edom suffering such enormous bloodshed (i.e., by war) that it covers their land as fat covers the altar when a sacrificial animal is being burned in the fire.

The LORD has a Day of Vengeance, a Year of Recompense for Zion.

Isaiah 34:8-10 ----- ⁸For the LORD has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion. ⁹And the streams of Edom shall be turned into pitch, and her soil (dust in KJV) into sulphur (brimstone in KJV); her land shall become burning pitch. ¹⁰Night and day it shall not be quenched; its smoke shall go up forever. From generation to generation it shall lie waste; none shall pass through it forever and ever.

The LORD has a day of vengeance, for Zion: (v8) this does not mean that the LORD predestined such a day, but that such a day is coming upon Edom because they not only afflicted Israel and constantly acted against them, but also sided with Babylon against Israel and mocked and scorned the inhabitants of Jerusalem when they were taken in chains into captivity.

Pitch: comes from the Hebrew word (*zepheth*) literally means to liquefy as asphalt from its tendency to soften in the sun.

Forever: comes from the Hebrew word (*netsach*) it literally means a goal, (i.e. a bright object some distance away that is travelled towards) it carries the idea of a continual period of time to the most distant point in view. It can also refer to a constant, perpetual or permanent period of time; an indefinite or unending period of time; a long duration of time or an unbroken age of time.

Day: comes from the Hebrew word (*yowm*) it literally means to be hot and refers to a day (i.e., the warm hours from sunrise to sunset or from one sunset to the next), but when used prophetically it is not limited to a single day, but can refer to a number of days, months, years or too seasons of time, periods of time or to a particular age of time.

Likewise the prophetic expression, "In that day," rarely refers to one day, in most contexts it embraces a series of events over a particular period of time that are working together to bring about a specific result or outcome. It is the context that it is used in that determines which of these it means.

Edom's streams shall be turned into pitch and her soil: (v9) (dust in KJV) which is the better translation since the idea is that the blood that will overflow their land will so deeply saturate the dry dust of the earth that it will turn to thick clods in the same way that dry ground saturated with heavy rain turns the dust of the land to solid clay. Isaiah is using graphic lofty language to highlight the utter devastation and slaughter the land of Edom will suffer. The prideful people of Edom will be brought down and humbled as beasts are when they are sacrificed.

Edom's soil will be turned into sulphur (brimstone in KJV): (v9) brimstone and sulphur come from the Hebrew word (*gophriyth*) it literally means cypress-resin and is likened to sulphur, because it is equally inflammable. In the Scriptures it is used to denote a fire of great intensity and utter destruction because such a fire destroys everything in its path.

The following verses show that the words brimstone and sulphur express the utter disdain of God toward those who such words are spoken against and carry the idea that there is no greater judgment or description of vengeance that can be pronounced upon a people or nation.

- Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur (brimstone in KJV) and fire from the LORD out of heaven. (Gen. 19:24) (Luke 17:29).
- The whole land burned out with brimstone and salt, nothing sown and nothing growing, where no plant can sprout, an overthrow like that of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboiim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger and wrath. (Deut. 29:23).
- Let him rain coals on the wicked; fire and sulfur (brimstone in KJV) and a scorching wind shall be the portion of their cup. (Psalm 11:6).

- For a burning place (Tophet in KJV) has long been prepared; indeed, for the king (of Assyria) it is made ready, its pyre made deep and wide, with fire and wood in abundance; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of sulphur (brimstone in KJV), kindles it. (Isaiah 30:33).
- With pestilence and bloodshed I will enter into judgment with him, and I will rain upon him (Gog who comes against the land of Israel) and his hordes and the many peoples who are with him torrential rains and hailstones, fire and sulfur (brimstone in KJV).
23So I will show my greatness and my holiness and make myself known in the eyes of many nations. Then they will know that I am the LORD. (Ezekiel 38:22-23).
- I saw the horses in my vision and those who rode them: they wore breastplates the colour of fire and of sapphire and of sulfur, (brimstone in KJV) and the heads of the horses were like lions' heads, and fire and smoke and sulfur (brimstone in KJV) came out of their mouths. 18By these three plagues a third of mankind was killed, by the fire and smoke and sulfur (brimstone in KJV) coming out of their mouths. (Rev. 9:17-18).
- The cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur (brimstone in KJV), which is the second death. (Rev. 21:8).

The statement, "the streams of Edom shall be turned sulphur (brimstone in KJV): (v9) means the full force of God's vengeance, wrath and judgment will fall upon the land of Edom.

NOTE: the second death is a symbol of total destruction (i.e., utter extinction). For further information concerning the second death see the title: "Lake of Fire," in Death (ON WEBSITE MENU).

From generation to generation Edom's land will lie waste: (v10) it is interesting to note that Edom's original offense was that they would not let the children of Israel pass peaceably through their land on their way to Canaan. As a punishment for this, God now says that their land shall not be passed through forever and ever meaning that it will not be a country through which travellers will be deemed safe to travel without protection and great difficulty since the land will be barren and no longer cultivated nor will any city or roads be built there.

- Edom shall become a horror. Everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss because of all its disasters. 18As when Sodom and Gomorrah and their neighbouring cities were overthrown, says the LORD, no man shall dwell there, no man shall sojourn in her. (Jer. 49:17-18).

The land of Edom will be irrecoverably ruined, and remain as a spectacle of God's vengeance to all following generations. There was a literal fulfilment of the prophecies against Edom to a considerable extent. Three hundred years after Isaiah, Malachi wrote: -

- Esau (Edom) I have hated. I have laid waste his hill country and left his heritage to jackals of the desert. (Malachi 1:3).
- If Edom says, "We are shattered but we will rebuild the ruins," the LORD of hosts says, "They may build, but I will tear down, and they will be called 'the wicked country,' and 'the people with whom the LORD is angry forever. (Malachi 1:4).

God used Babylon to bring the land of Edom to ruin and history records that Edom had to gradually yield to the superior power of Judaea and was eventually ruled by viceroys, whom the Maccabee princes nominated. One of these, Antipater, was the father of Herod the Great. From his time the land of Edom and Idumea languished until the seventh century after Christ when it was overrun and conquered by the Mohammedan Arabs. This completed Edom's ruin; it has been for over a thousand years and still is one of the most desolate tracts of land upon the earth's surface.

Edom and Idumea stand here as the representative of all the wicked nations and powers that are hostile to God's people universally and that God will destroy as soon as the cup of iniquity overflows with unbelief and wickedness.

The judgment of God upon Edom can be seen as a prelude to the judgment that will come upon heathen Rome made red with the blood of the faithful; the Papal system and all anti-Christ powers deceiving the populations of the world being destroyed at Armageddon also referred to as the great day of God Almighty. (Revelation 16:14).

- He called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! She has become a dwelling place for demons, a haunt for every unclean spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable beast. (Rev. 18:2).
- The kings of the earth, who committed sexual immorality and lived in luxury with her, will weep and wail over her when they see the smoke of her burning. Rev. 18:9
- Once more they cried out, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever. (Rev. 19:3).

All these terrible destructions are to prepare the way for the glorious millennial reign of the Lord Jesus Christ: -

- For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind. Isaiah 65:17
- For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain. Isaiah 66:22

Until, this New Age, comes the faithful are called to patiently wait and judge nothing before the time.

The Land of Eden will be covered with Wild Birds, Animals and Weeds.

Isaiah 34:11-15 ----- ¹¹But the hawk and the porcupine shall possess it, the owl and the raven shall dwell in it. He shall stretch the line of confusion over it, and the plumb line of emptiness. ¹²Its nobles—there is no one there to call it a kingdom, and all its princes shall be nothing. ¹³Thorns shall grow over its strongholds, nettles and thistles in its fortresses. It shall be the haunt of jackals, an abode for ostriches. ¹⁴And wild animals shall meet with hyenas; the wild goat shall cry to his fellow; indeed, there the night bird settles and finds for herself a resting place. ¹⁵There the owl nests and lays and hatches and gathers her young in her shadow; indeed, there the hawks are gathered, each one with her mate.

Thorns, nettles and thistles grow where there is no man or woman to cultivate the earth and all the birds and animals mentioned in these verses are animals and birds that dwell apart from mankind. The picture is of a land that is utterly devoid of humans. Isaiah is basically saying that the land of Edom its cities and fortresses will be so devoid of human life that only birds, animals and thorns and thistles will be found there. (v11)

The line and plumb line: (v11) Isaiah's prophetic words, "The LORD shall stretch the line of confusion over it and the plumb line of emptiness," (v11) means that God will bring about circumstances that throw the nobles, princes, leaders and rulers of Edom into such a lack of wisdom and confusion that they will bring their nation to ruin.

The chief men that the common folk of Edom looked up to and esteemed as their great nobles and wise princes led the nation to utter ruin.

The LORD'S spoken Word against Edom is Certain, He has Commanded It.

Isaiah 34:16-17 ----- ¹⁶Seek and read from the book of the LORD: Not one of these shall be missing; none shall be without her mate. For the mouth of the LORD has commanded, and his Spirit has gathered them. ¹⁷He has cast the lot for them; his hand has portioned it out to them with the line; they shall possess it forever; from generation to generation they shall dwell in it.

Seek and read from the book of the LORD means believe what Isaiah has spoken, all that he has said will come to pass, the LORD has commanded it.

Not one of these shall be missing is referring to the jackals, ostriches, wild animals, hyenas, the wild goats, the night bird, the owl and the hawks, all of them will dwell in the land of Edom and have their mates signifying that the land will be so lacking in human life that these animals and birds will multiply in the land (see (v11) for the meaning of forever).

End.