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Isaiah 21

(2019)

Bible House of Grace contains an easy to read New and Old Testament commentary full of spiritual treasures and pearls, complete with an insightful resource guide illuminating God's love and grace.



Although I believe my aim is pure and God's will perfect this document is still the product of a human man, as to such I neither claim perfect knowledge or perfect understanding.

Isaiah 21.

Topics.

- Whirlwinds come, the destroyer destroys, so I will bring to an end.
- Fallen, fallen, is Babylon, all her images God has cast to the ground.
- Watchman, what time of the night? Morning comes, and also the night.
- Fugitives led from the swords, from the bow, from the press of battle.
- The commonwealth of Israel.
- The glory of the spiritual temple God is building in Christ.

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 TO THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

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. 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).

3. 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.
4. 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.

THE ORACLE CONCERNING THE WILDERNESS OF THE SEA

ISAIAH 21:1-4

Whirlwinds come, the Destroyer Destroys, I will Bring to an End.

- **Isaiah 21:1-4:** As whirlwinds in the Negeb sweep on, it comes from the wilderness, from a terrible land. ²A stern vision is told to me; the traitor betrays, and the destroyer destroys. Go up, O Elam; lay siege, O Media; all the sighing she has caused I bring to an end. ³Therefore my loins are filled with anguish; pangs have seized me, like the pangs of a woman in labor; I am bowed down so that I cannot hear; I am dismayed so that I cannot see. ⁴My heart staggers; horror has appalled me; the twilight I longed for has been turned for me into trembling.

The whirlwinds: refers to the armies of Media Persia a country of central Asia.

The sighing she has caused: refers to Babylon (v9).

Negeb: refers to a desert region lying to the south of Judea.

Elam: refers to a country situated opposite Babylon, north east of the Persian Gulf in modern Iran. Elam joined the Assyrian army against Judah and was one of the nations forced to drink the cup of God's wrath and doomed to judgment (Jer. 25:25) (Jer. 49:34-39).

The twilight I longed for: (v9) means that war, horror and death, is coming instead of the good and the peace that Isaiah had longed and hoped for.

A stern vision is told to me: (v2) implies that this vision will involve much suffering and major events. Isaiah speaks as the voice and Spirit of the LORD saying that He is grieved as He looks from heaven and hears the multitude of lies and deceptions and sees the many idols and gods the Babylonians worshipped and the cruel way in which they oppressed His people, so much so that he does not even want to hear what they are saying, or see what they are doing. The good (the twilight) the LORD had hoped would come has not appeared, instead there is grief and sorrow. God is appalled and horrified at what he sees and hears and is therefore

going to use the armies of Media to punish Babylon for the way they have treated His people (Israel and Judah) during their seventy-year captivity in Babylon. This is a principle throughout the Old Testament, when Israel and Judah turned from the LORD and rebelled against Him and perverted justice and oppressed the poor and needy, God would use pagan nations to punish them and turn them back to Him and what is right and just for all. When Israel repented and turned to the LORD and His ways then God would judge the nations, He had used to discipline His people especially if they had brutally oppressed and cruelly abused His people while in captivity. God would then use another pagan nation to destroy them as Isaiah in this vision is seeing Him do here by bringing Media against Babylon to lay them waste. Because Israel and Judah rebelled against the LORD (they were even sacrificing their own children to pagan Gods) God used Babylon as His army to take Israel and Judah into captivity for seventy years. But Babylon brutally oppressed the LORD'S people so God is now about to use Media to conquer Babylon.

ISAIAH 21:5-10

Fallen, Fallen, is Babylon, God has Cast Her Images to the Ground.

- **Isaiah 21:5-10:** They prepare the table, they spread the rugs, they eat, they drink. Arise, O princes; oil the shield! ⁶For thus the Lord said to me: "Go, set a watchman; let him announce what he sees. ⁷When he sees riders, horsemen in pairs, riders on donkeys, riders on camels, let him listen diligently, very diligently." ⁸Then he who saw cried out: "Upon a watchtower I stand, O Lord, continually by day, and at my post I am stationed whole nights. ⁹And behold, here come riders, horsemen in pairs!" And he answered, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon; and all the carved images of her gods he has shattered to the ground." ¹⁰O my threshed and winnowed one, what I have heard from the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, I announce to you.

Horsemen in pairs, riders on donkeys and on camels: (v7) (a chariot with a couple of horsemen, a chariot of asses, and a chariot of camels in KJV) the idea is a troop of warriors, horses and chariots of war and asses and camels which were commonly used in armies to carry weapons of war, provisions needed for camp and supplies needed for food while armies were marching to be battleground.

The pairs of riders most likely signify:

1. Cyrus and Darius leading the Medes and Persians.
2. The army Medes and the army of the Persians.

The meaning is that the watchman saw the whole army of the Medes and Persians with their cavalcade of horse, asses and camels moving toward Babylon. Because of the corruption of Babylon God is calling the princes of Media and Persia to prepare themselves for war against Babylon (oil their shields) while Babylon is feasting and indulging in excessive luxury. Isaiah in this vision sees in vivid clarity the impending doom to fall upon Babylon and her gods by the armies of Media Persia.

Cyrus the king of Persia: God used Cyrus king of Media Persia to bring the Empire of Babylon to ruin and set the people of Israel free from the bondage and captivity of Babylon. The following verses of the prophet Isaiah show that God not only called Cyrus (the secular king of Persia) His anointed shepherd and called him by name, but also show that God said He would equip Cyrus and take him by the right hand and go before him. They picture God holding Cyrus by the right hand and opening all doors that no man can shut while Cyrus the king of Persia subdues all nations.

- Thus, says the LORD to *his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand* I have grasped, to subdue nations before him and to loose the belts of kings, to open doors before him that gates may not be closed. (Isaiah 45:1).

- I (*the LORD*) will go before you (*Cyrus king of Persia*) and level the exalted places, I will break in pieces the doors of bronze and cut through the bars of iron, ³I will give you the treasures of darkness and the hoards in secret places, that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, *who call you (Cyrus) by your name.* ⁴For the sake of my servant Jacob, and Israel my chosen, *I call you by your name, I name you,* though you do not know me. (Isaiah 45:2-3).
- I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; *I equip you (Cyrus) though you do not know me,* ⁶that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, there is none besides me; I am the LORD, there is no other. (Isaiah 45:5-6).
- Thus says the LORD: "The wealth of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and the Sabeans, *men of stature, shall come over to you (Cyrus)* and be yours; they shall follow you; they shall come over in chains and bow down to you. They will plead with you, saying: '*Surely God is in you,* and there is no other, no god besides him.' (Isaiah 45:14).

At this time Isaiah is speaking to Israel who is held captive in Babylon. God used Cyrus King of Persia as His anointed shepherd to set His people free. Cyrus after Conquering the mighty Empire of Babylon gave Israel written permission to return to their beloved city and rebuild the Temple of God. But, Isaiah's message transcends the era of Isaiah and Cyrus and echoes a future King who the LORD also calls His anointed shepherd, and his name is not Cyrus, but the Lord Jesus Christ, in who God at this present time is also building a Temple made up of Jews and Gentiles (also called a new nation or new creation in Christ). For further information concerning the spiritual temple God is building in Christ at this present time, see the title:

- The Commonwealth of Israel (at end of this Chapter).

THE ORACLE CONCERNING DUMAH

ISAIAH 21:11-12

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Watchman, what Time of the Night? Morning comes, and the Night.

- **Isaiah 21:11-12:** The oracle concerning Dumah, One is calling to me from Seir, "Watchman, what time of the night? Watchman, what time of the night?" ¹²The watchman says: "Morning comes, and also the night. If you will inquire, inquire; come back again."

Dumah: was one of the twelve sons of Ishmael and progenitor of a tribe of Ishmael it is also a place though unknown, but connected with Seir or Edom, its designation may be symbolic, applying to all Edom and indicating it's coming destruction.

Seir: is one of the mountains of Edom, it is among the Jordanian Mountains in the land of Edom.

Isaiah in his vision: sees someone from the mountains of Edom asking him, when will the vision take place? (How late in the night is it?). Isaiah tells him, as certain as morning and night comes this vision will take place, but Isaiah does not give him a timeframe, he simply says, come and ask again at a later date.

THE ORACLE CONCERNING ARABIA

ISAIAH 21:13-17

Fugitives have Fled from the Swords, the Bow, the Press of Battle.

- **Isaiah 21:13-17:** The oracle concerning Arabia. In the thickets in Arabia you will lodge, O caravans of Dedanites. ¹⁴To the thirsty bring water; meet the fugitive with bread, O inhabitants of the land of Tema. ¹⁵For they have fled from the swords, from the drawn

sword, from the bent bow, and from the press of battle. ¹⁶For thus the LORD said to me, "Within a year, according to the years of a hired worker, all the glory of Kedar. will come to an end. ¹⁷And the remainder of the archers of the mighty men of the sons of Kedar will be few, for the LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken."

Arabia: is a large peninsula in south west Asia, predominantly occupied by Saudi Arabia, the inhabitants are Arabs it can also refer to the whole or part of the Arabian Peninsula

Dedanites: Arabian people, they descended directly from Noah.

Tema: is at the northern edge of the Arabian Desert and the name of one of the twelve sons of Ishmael and progenitor of a tribe of Ishmael.

Kedar: the northern part of the Arabian Desert and the name of one of the twelve sons of Ishmael, son of Abram by Hagar. These sons were called princes and helped originate the Arab peoples. The "doom of Kedar" declared in (Jeremiah 49:28-33) tells us something of their desert civilization and also of their terror when they learned that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon was coming against them.

Kedar destroyed in battle: through Isaiah's vision the LORD tells Arabia in in one years-time Kedar will be destroyed in battle and tells the people of Arabia when this happens, they are to feed shelter and take care of the fugitives that flee from the battle and the cities of Kedar.

THE COMMONWEALTH OF ISRAEL

It is important to understand that the promised seed of Abraham and David is Christ, all the promises to Israel are now fulfilled in Christ therefore they are not limited to Israel only, but extend and embrace all those who belong to Christ. This is because God is now creating one new nation in Christ made up of both Jew and Gentiles. (Gentiles are everyone who is not a Hebrew or Jew). This means that Jews and Gentiles become one new nation in Christ (also called a new man, a new creation, the church, the body of Christ and the Kingdom of God). The Apostle Paul said:

- Remember that at one time you Gentiles in the flesh, called "the uncircumcision" by what is called the circumcision (Jews), which is made in the flesh by hands— ¹²remember that you (Gentiles) were at that time 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. ¹³But now in Christ Jesus you (Gentiles) who once were far off (from God) have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴For he himself is our (Jews and Gentiles) peace, who has made us both *ONE* and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility ¹⁵by abolishing the law of commandments and ordinances, that he (Jesus) might create in himself *ONE NEW MAN* (or Nation) in place of the two (Jews and Gentiles), so making peace, ¹⁶and might reconcile us (Jews and Gentiles) both to God in *ONE BODY* through the cross, thereby killing the hostility (between the Jews and Gentiles). ¹⁷And he (Jesus) came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far off (from God) and peace to those who were near (Jews). ¹⁸For through him (Jesus) we both (Jews and Gentiles) have access in *ONE SPIRIT* to the Father. ¹⁹So then you (Gentiles) are *NO LONGER* strangers and aliens, but you are *FELLOW CITIZENS* with the *SAINTS* (the Jews) and members of the *HOUSEHOLD* of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone ²¹in whom the *WHOLE STRUCTURE* being joined together (Jews and Gentiles) grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you (Jews and Gentiles) also are being built together into a *DWELLING PLACE* for *GOD* by the Spirit (Ephes. 2:11-22).

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 (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. Christ is the head of this new nation and its Jewish and Gentile citizens are now equal in status before God since in Christ we are all brothers and sisters in the same eternal family that God is now establishing in the Lord Jesus Christ throughout all nations of the world. The practical application of what this means to those who belong to Christ is that all the future and eternal promises God made to Israel also apply to them. The book of Revelation states:

- When Christ returns in glory every eye will see him, even those who pierced him and all the tribes of the earth (Rev. 1:7).

And in Revelation chapter five we are told that:

- Christ was slain, and by his blood he ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation (i.e., Jews and Gentiles) and he has made them a kingdom and priests to God and they shall reign on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10).

THE GLORY OF THE SPIRITUAL TEMPLE GOD IS BUILDING IN CHRIST

Jews and Gentiles are being united together as one body in Christ to be a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. Believing Jews and Gentiles are being prepared by the prophets and apostles' teachings and by the influence of Christ and the Holy Spirit to become a majestic and glorious sacred temple in which God dwells for all eternity. When this majestic building is completed there will be nothing so worthy of reverence since God dwells in it; so ancient since the patriarchs and prophets laboured in building it; so solid since love cements it together; so closely united and indivisible since Christ is the corner stone; so exalted since it reaches as high as heaven and to God himself; so full of wisdom since its specifications are the word of God; so full of light since the Holy Spirit dispels every dark corner; so spacious since it is spread over the whole earth; so invincible and indestructible since it is being built by God, by Christ, by the Holy Spirit and by the influence of God's eternal word; so divine since it is a living, vibrant, dynamic temple inhabited by the Holy Spirit, and so universal since all its unique stones though spread throughout the world are compacted together in Christ.

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God is the master builder of this majestic and glorious temple; Christ is the corner stone; faithful believers are the proper materials; the prophets and apostles are its foundation and the Gospel and love its pillars. Christ is the door and faith is the entrance into it. It is a spiritual building and through, faith and grace this living building is growing into an eternal house fit for the most Holy God to dwell in. Its beauty and radiance will surpass all temples that have ever gone before it since it will be adorned with a vast variety of rich colour made up of Jews and Gentiles of every age, country, sex, and condition: the mightiest of kings, the most renowned lawgivers, the most profound philosophers, the most eminent scholars and all those of whom the world was not worthy have formed this building, (taken from the beautiful writings of a faithful, but unknown brother in Christ). Peter wrote:

- Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame (1 Pet. 2:6).

Every faithful brother and sister in Christ are represented as living stones that God is using to build this spiritual, majestic temple of eternal glory which will be manifested in splendour for all to see when:

- The Lord himself descends from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ are raised then we who are alive are caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thess. 4:15-18).

As the founder of Bible House of Grace, I would like to thank the many Christian scholars, commentators and theologians who have gone before me, and the many today, who have freely made available their works to enhance the knowledge of the Bible to all people worldwide. It is only with the help of these faithful writers that much of Bible House of Grace exists as it does today.

Bible House of Grace