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Isaiah 31

(2019)

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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 31.

Topics.

- Woe to those who trust in Egypt and not the Holy One of Israel.
- The LORD is wise and brings disaster; He does not call back His words.
- The helper and he who, is helped will fall and all will perish together.
- A lion that growls over its prey is not terrified by shouting of shepherds.
- Like birds hovering, the LORD will protect and deliver Jerusalem.
- Everyone shall cast away their idols of gold which they sinfully made.
- Assyria shall fall and be devoured by a sword that is not of man.
- The LORD'S, fire is in Zion, and His furnace is in Jerusalem.

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.

ISAIAH 31:1

Woe to those who Trust in Egypt and Not the Holy One of Israel.

2

- **Isaiah 31:1:** Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help, and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD!

At this particular time the armies of Assyria had not only laid the land of Samaria waste and taken the ten tribes of Israel captive, but had also invaded the land of Judah and destroyed all their fortified cities and are now approaching the city of Jerusalem. Those within the walls of the city are in great fear for the following two reasons:

1. They know that they are not strong enough to stand against the armies of Assyria.
2. They have absolutely no trust in the LORD their God to protect and save them.

From this fear the rulers of Jerusalem are sending ambassadors to Pharaoh of Egypt to seek the help and protection of his armies. Previous chapters have pictured this convoy of ambassadors travelling to Egypt with precious gifts on the backs of camels and donkeys to secure and alliance with the king of Egypt.

They do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD:

(v1) their fear is understandable since they would have been fully aware that Assyria had laid waste both the land of Israel and the land of Judah and therefore believed that the gods of Assyria were far more powerful than the God of Israel. What they didn't understand was that God was using Assyria to bring His judgement upon the nation of Israel, because they had set their hearts diamond hard against the word of God that the prophets brought to them and were steeped in gross wickedness and idol worship. Had they heeded the word of God, humbled themselves, turned to the LORD their God and forsaken their pagan gods and wickedness God would have fought for them instead of against them.

The LORD Brings Disaster; He does Not Call Back His Words.

- **Isaiah 31:2:** And yet he is wise and brings disaster; he does not call back his words, but will arise against the house of the evildoers and against the helpers of those who work iniquity.

The prophets had constantly been warning Judah that doom would come upon them if they did not turn from their rebellion. Following is a list of sins that permeated the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem throughout their generations. Unrestrained these sins eventually became like a contagious virus running rampant throughout the land of Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. They defiled God's Holy name and their own land by their lifestyle, deeds and actions. They committed gross idolatry and Baal altars were set up throughout their land. They worshipped the goddess of love and fertility (her worship was sexually indecent). Worse than this they worshipped Moloch and sacrificed their sons to him in the Hinnom valley. They worshipped a golden calf at a religious centre at Dan and at a religious centre at Bethel. Altars were set up in the temple court for planetary worship and the worship of the host of heaven (i.e., the sun, moon and stars) and worship of idols and altars had been built under shady trees on their hills throughout their land. Added to this innocent people were killed and cheated out of justice, leaders oppressed others for their own selfish gain and drunkenness, violence, robbery and gross sensuality was rampant. The rich cheated the innocent out of justice, and showed no sense of responsibility towards the poor and instead of relieving their economic distress they devised new means of depriving them of their property. Is it any wonder the LORD compares Israel's ways to the uncleanness of a woman in her menstrual impurity? (Ezek. 36:17) and poured out His wrath upon Judah, Israel and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

The lesson for today: by wicked behaviour Israel defiled the name of God which resulted in the surrounding nations mocking and despising God. This shines a light on the following truth: the behaviour of everyone who confesses the name of God and Christ His Son will determine to some extent whether outsiders are drawn to God or to despise Him. We are not witnesses to the Lord only when we are sharing our faith with another person our entire life is a witness to our faith and of God it can be a good witness or a bad witness.

The LORD does not call back His words: (v2) means that the doom that the prophets said would come upon the people of Israel will come to pass. Other than God Himself, the only other thing that had the power to prevent such devastation was the people themselves. Had they turned from their rebellion and their idols to the LORD their God and worshipped Him only, God would have stayed His hand of judgment. Had this happened it would not have meant that God's word was not always certain since the prophets very clearly told the people if they did what was right before the LORD, He would be for them and not against them. Rather than trust in the LORD the inhabitants of Jerusalem were putting their trust in the might of Egypt's armies and their vast number of chariots and horses. They put their trust in man rather than in God and thereby brought His judgment and wrath upon themselves.

The Helper and He who is Helped will all will Perish Together.

- **Isaiah 31:3:** The Egyptians are man, and not God, and their horses are flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD stretches out his hand, the helper will stumble, and he who is helped will fall, and they will all perish together.

Isaiah highlights the truth that the Egyptians and their horses are mortal creatures in contrast to God who is eternal. Though this is an obvious reality Isaiah is using it to magnify their foolishness in trusting in Egypt rather than trusting in God.

ISAIAH 31:4

A Growling Lion is Not Terrified by Shepherds Shouting.

- **Isaiah 31:4:** For thus the LORD said to me, "As a lion or a young lion growls over his prey, and when a band of shepherds is called out against him is not terrified by their shouting or daunted at their noise, so the LORD of hosts will come down to fight on Mount Zion and on its hill.

Zion comes from the Hebrew word (*Tsiyown*) and refers to the mountain the city of Jerusalem is built upon. It carries the idea of a permanent capital mountain of Jerusalem in the sense of being readily seen and easily visible and noticed as an important sign (i.e., a significant and historic sign and guiding pillar). It is called God's Holy Mountain because Jerusalem God's Holy City sits on it. Though Mount Zion is not distinguished for its elevation or grandeur and though it had nothing in itself to claim attention or to excite wonder, it was the most exalted and honoured above all mountains because it was selected as the place where God was to be worshipped and the place where God's city and God's temple is built and God's worship was established. Even though Mount Sinai had all the awesome glory of the Almighty God descend upon it and the law came from there, Mount Zion excels in excellence over it. This is because from Mount Zion came the Messiah the Christ attended by a multitude of angels celebrating his birth and on Mount Zion the Messiah the Christ came into his own temple as Malachi in the following verse prophesied concerning him.

- Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. (Mal. 3:1).

Added to all this royal glory, multitudes of angels ministered to the Lord in his temptation, at his resurrection and accompanied him in his ascension all from Mount Zion.

- Mount Sinai is the mountain of the Old Covenant of Law in contrast Mount Zion is the mountain of the New Covenant of Grace.
- Mount Sinai's glory of the law pales when stood before Mount Zion's grace and Christ's death and resurrection upon it.

Neither Mount Sinai nor Mount Zion can glory and boast in themselves for the following reasons. Mount Sinai is not famous or respected as a holy mountain and a mountain of God because of any majesty of itself, but because it was upon this mountain God descended and gave the Ten Commandments. It is this awesome and holy event that exalts Mount Sinai and not the mountain itself. Likewise, Mount Zion has no fame or glory of itself, its glory comes from being the honoured mountain God chose to build His Holy city upon and is the mountain that the Messiah the Christ the Saviour of the world died and rose again from. The real strength is not in Mount Zion itself, but in the LORD, who is the head of the thousands of chariots and the heavenly host surrounding it and as such is the protector of his chosen dwelling-place. Zion is sometimes used as an ancient name for Jerusalem itself and because it is often used in poetic and prophetic passages it can refer to:

- The hill the city of Jerusalem is built on.
- The city of Jerusalem.
- The temple and by extension Judah and the people of God.

A lion and its prey: the picture here is of a lion feasting on a sheep it has captured and of a band of shepherds shouting in the hope the lion will flee, but it is not daunted by their shouts. The idea here is of God being like the lion with the armies of Assyria shouting against Him, but to no avail. Isaiah is basically saying compared to God Assyria is like the dead carcase of a sheep. The picture of Assyria shouting at God is a perfect fit, since this is exactly what they did. Sennacherib the king of Assyria sent his Rabshakeh to speak on his behalf to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The Rabshakeh told them not to trust in Egypt or the LORD their God and boasted that Assyria's gods had laid waste all the nations Assyria's armies had gone to war against (including the ten tribes of Israel in the land of Samaria and all the cities of Judah). He used these facts to prove (according to Assyria) that their gods were far more powerful than Israel's God and to mock Israel's God and mock the people for trusting in their God. (2 Kings 18:13-35). Added to this when Sennacherib did come before the wall of Jerusalem, he waved his fist against the city in an act of defiance.

- This very day he (the Assyrians) will halt at Nob; he will shake his fist at the mount of the daughter of Zion, the hill of Jerusalem. (Isaiah 10:32).

The Rabshakeh stood and called out to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in a loud voice, "Hear the word of Sennacherib the great king, the king of Assyria," and then went on to say:

- The men sitting on the wall, are doomed with you to eat their own dung and to drink their own urine? (2 Kings 18:27).
- Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you out of my hand. (2 Kings 18:29).
- Do not let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD by saying, "The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city will not be given into the king of Assyria." (2 Kings 18:30).
- Do not listen to Hezekiah king of Judah, make your peace with me then each one will eat of their own vine and fig tree. (2 Kings 18:31).
- Do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you by saying, "The LORD will deliver us." (2 Kings 18:32).
- Has any of the gods of the nation's ever delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? (2 Kings 18:33).
- Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? (2 Kings 18:34).
- Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand? (2 Kings 18:35).

The gods of Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah: were gods of these cities situated somewhere in Syria. The armies of Assyria conquered these cities and destroyed their temples and their statues and carried off their idols. When the Rabshakeh on behalf of Sennacherib king of Assyria called out to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and said:

- Has any of the gods of the nation's ever delivered his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? ³⁴Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria out of my hand? ³⁵Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their lands out of my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" (2 Kings 18:33-34).

Since all nations believed in individual and national gods Rabshakeh's reasoning was that Assyria's gods were far more powerful than the gods of these nation since their armies had conquered them. He is endeavouring to persuade the inhabitants of Jerusalem that it would be wise for them to deliver up their city to him, because their God like all the gods of these defeated nations would not be able to save Judah from Assyria's armies. It should be mentioned when the Rabshakeh said, "Who

among all the gods of the lands have delivered their nations out of his hand," (2 Kings 18:35) he did not mean that Sennacherib had conquered all of the nations mentioned but that kings of Assyria had. He is speaking of Sennacherib as if he were one with the kings that had gone before him.

ISAIAH 31:5

Like Birds Hovering, the LORD will Protect and Deliver Jerusalem.

- **Isaiah 31:5:** Like birds hovering, so the LORD of hosts will protect Jerusalem; he will protect and deliver it; he will spare and rescue it."

The picture here is of birds hovering over the nests of their young ready to attack any creature that would attempt to invade the nest. The symbolism of course is of God hovering over the city of Jerusalem ready to destroy any nation that would come up against it (the following verses speak of this deliverance).

ISAIAH 31:6-7

Everyone shall Cast Away their Idols of Gold which they Made.

- **Isaiah 31:6-7:** Turn to him from whom people have deeply revolted, O children of Israel.
⁷For in that day everyone shall cast away his idols of silver and his idols of gold, which your hands have sinfully made for you.

In that day: (v5) refers to the day that the people of Jerusalem who have greatly sinned against the LORD turn to Him. In that day of great repentance, they will utterly destroy their idols and worship the LORD their God only. True repentance is evidenced by outward actions; here it was evidenced by the casting away of their idols. Today it would be casting away anything that is offensive to God and forsaking speech and behaviour that dishonours Him and brings a bad testimony to the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith.

Idols of silver and gold: when speaking of idols the Living Bible says, "O foolish man you chop down a tree and use some of the wood to build your homes, some to cook your food, some to warm your hands and some you carve into an idol and bow down before it to worship it, can't you see it's just a block of wood. The service of idols is so absurd and illogical that it is enormously difficult for a person with a sane mind to understand how anyone in their right mind chooses the service of idols before the service of God. It is common for cultic religions to be heavily laden with ritualism. This is because a heavy focus and adherence to outward ritual and ceremony gives the worshipper a sense of reverence and a close connection and adoration to their god. These rituals may involve candles, occultist symbols, mystical rites, drinking the blood of bull, chicken-beheading, prayers, songs and such like things, but the most seductive is sexual ritual that involves all sorts of sexual immorality since this type of ritual appeals to the lowest level of the flesh (i.e., the lower nature of mankind). One of the reasons people do choose a false faith is because idols and false gods do not put demands upon their outward lifestyle, as long as the believer adheres to their ceremonial rituals and outward religious practises they are accepted by their god and free to live as they please.

ISAIAH 31:8

Assyria shall Fall and Be Devoured by a Sword that is Not of Man.

- **Isaiah 31:8:** "And the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of man; and a sword, not of man, shall devour him; and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be put to forced labor.

The Assyrian shall be defeated, but not with human hands, this is exactly what happened. Jerusalem was surrounded by the mighty armies of Sennacherib king of Assyria, the people of Jerusalem were no match for his army their defeat and overthrow was certain, but God sent an angel into the camp of the Assyrian army and the angel struck down 185,000 soldiers when Sennacherib rose in the morning and saw the dead bodies he and those who had survived left Jerusalem and returned home.

- That night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians and when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.
³⁶Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh. (2 Kings 19:35-36).

His young men shall be put to forced labour: (v8) this came about some years after the angel had slayed the 185,000 Assyrian soldiers and some years after the death of Judah's two godly kings Hezekiah and Josiah. The people of Israel returned to their rebellious ways and sinful practises so God used Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon as His servant (Jer. 25:9) to bring His judgment upon them. The armies of Babylon burned the city of Jerusalem, pillaged the Temple of God of its gold and silver and sacred items and took the people of Jerusalem in chains to Babylon. They remain in captivity to Babylon and under their oppressive rule for seventy years. Around this time Babylon conquered Assyria and Isaiah's prophetic words, "Assyria's young men shall be put to forced labour," came to pass.

ISAIAH 31:9

The LORD'S, Fire is in Zion, and His Furnace is in Jerusalem.

- **Isaiah 31:9:** His (Assyria) rock shall pass away in terror, and his officers desert the standard in panic," declares the LORD, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem.

The King James Bible says:

- **Isaiah 31:9:** He shall pass over to his strong hold for fear, and his princes shall be afraid of the ensign, saith the LORD, whose fire *is* in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem.

His rock and stronghold shall pass away in terror: the rock and stronghold in the context of this chapter refer to Sennacherib's armies, his princes, commanders, men of valour and his great warriors that he put his confidence in. Isaiah is saying that those who survive the angels' visit would upon seeing the sudden destruction of their great army flee the land of Israel without stopping until they entered their own land for fear the angel would also strike them dead.

He shall be afraid of the ensign: an ensign is a banner or flag that signifies a country or nation. The statement that the princes (which would also embrace the nobles and commanders) of Sennacherib the king of Assyria would be afraid of the ensign, could carry the following two ideas:

1. The princes' nobles and commanders of Sennacherib would be afraid to march under the Assyrian flag for fear the angel would strike them dead.
2. The princes' nobles and commanders of Sennacherib would be afraid of the flag of Israel for fear the angel would strike them dead.

The LORD'S whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem: amongst commentators there are a variety of interpretations concerning these words, the following three are the most common:

1. It refers to the altar of the LORD that was in Zion and continually burning which signifies His presence and residence there. This was the city where sacrifices were offered up to God and therefore being the place of His worship, He would defend it.

2. It refers to the LORD who will appear to be in Zion, like a fire to consume their enemies and to His judgment and wrath against the enemies of His people and those who would think to attack Jerusalem and his power in defending the city.

- I will be to her (Jerusalem) a wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst. (Zech. 2:5).

There is no profit in debating over which of these two Isaiah had in his mind, since both of them are doctrinally correct, it is true that God will defend the city of Jerusalem (providing the inhabitants of it remain faithful) and it is true the Lord will literally appear in Jerusalem and be the glory in her midst when he returns in glory as, King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:11-16) to rule and reign from God's Holy City Jerusalem (on Mount Zion God's Holy Mountain) to destroy the antichrist and his kingdom and establish God's Kingdom on earth during his glorious millennial reign. At this glorious time the dead in Christ (Old and New Testament) and the faithful, who are alive, will be gathered together in the first resurrection (Rev. 20:4-6) to rule and reign as kings and priests with the Lord over those nations who are left outside the Holy City of God. Christ the King united with his people will not only bring peace to the Middle East, but establish God's Kingdom of steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, joy and peace throughout the world and the glory of God will cover the earth. Jesus will do justice to the poor and oppressed, he will be a faithful and compassionate King forever. He will not allow anyone to strike terror in the earth or use lies and deception to enlarge their own wealth and power. The land will abundantly produce and even the deserts will flourish. The animals will not feed on each other and even the lamb will be able to lie down with the wolf and everyone will eat of their own hands because all that they plant will produce (Isaiah 65:17-25). All nations the LORD has made will come and worship before the Lord Jesus Christ. They will glorify God's Name, proclaiming the LORD is great and does wondrous things and that He alone is God.

The book of Revelation states:

- Jesus Christ, the faithful witness who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father is coming in glory and every eye shall see him, and they also who pierced him and all kindreds of the earth (Revelation 1:5-7).

In Revelation chapter five we are told that:

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

The great prophet Isaiah wrote:

- They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. (Isaiah 11:9).

At the end of this glorious Kingdom age God descends to earth on a Great White Throne the sea, death and hades (the grave) give up the dead. They stand before God and are judged according to what is written in certain heavenly books according to what they have done. Death and those counted unworthy are cast into the Lake of Fire a symbol of eternal destruction (i.e., total extinction) (also called the, Second Death) (Rev. 20:11-15). Christ hands the Kingdom over to his heavenly Father and God is ALL in ALL and ETERNITY begins in all its fullness and majestic royal glory. For further information see titles:

- Kingdom of God (ON WEBSITE MENU).
- The Second Resurrection or Great White Throne Judgment.

In, Resurrection (ON WEBSITE MENU).

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.

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