

Notes on Isaiah 24—35

by Grant Thorpe

available at

<http://www.corobaptist.org.au>

The following notes may be copied and distributed freely if they are acknowledged and not used for profit.

Chapters 24–25

All nations have covenant responsibilities to God. God's covenant with Noah encompassed all peoples. God's covenants with Abraham, Israel and David were with a view to the blessing of all nations, and a curse would come to those who did not acknowledge what God had revealed to them. Nations had not done this and so suffered the curses that came to covenant breakers. Heavenly powers would also be punished.

Even so, the few (24:6) and the gleanings (24:13) could sing of the victory of God. His judgments were with a view to bringing the nations to give true praise to their Creator.

Perhaps, in the next chapter, we hear that song of praise from those who anticipate the end of these trials. Strong and ruthless cities will not just be subdued but be brought to true worship. (Compare Paul's approach to bringing the nations to obey Jesus Christ in II Corinthians 10:1–5.) God will shade them, and they will feast sumptuously on the good things of God. This is focused on Jerusalem (25:7), the city from which all salvation was to come. Jesus affirmed this again when he said to a Samaritan woman that salvation was from the Jews, and from himself in particular (John 4). He would destroy the death shroud that hung over all nations (I Cor. 15:54–55; Rev. 21:4). On that day, they would be glad that they had waited for God's salvation.

Prayer

Father, you have destroyed the pall of death that hangs over the nations by raising up your Son from the dead. Thanks be to you for this victory. We still see strife and treachery across the nations and even among peoples that have heard your word. Surely Lord, you are steadfast in bringing down all that stands in the way of knowing you and your Son. Father, by the sure hope you have given to us through Christ, grant that we may wait in expectation of the day when all sorrow and crying shall be finished, for the sake of your Son our Lord. Amen.

Chapters 26–27

Israel was given a song to sing on the day that the shroud of death would be destroyed (25:7–8), a song which can be shared by all who believe that God raised Jesus from the dead.

Israel's safety was Jerusalem, but its walls were God's saving deeds, not bricks and mortar. To such a city they would come and be at peace because they trusted God. They had been poor and needy but now trampled over the ruin to which God had

brought all other powers. Their peace had come to them in the way of righteousness. The Upright One himself had revealed his judgments and majesty in bringing salvation to his people. Now, they knew that all they had was from God. Though they had despaired like a mother unable to give birth, they would not only live but also bring a message of life from the dead. So, to them, the gates of God's city were wide open, but, for the moment, they would have to wait behind closed doors until God had finished dealing with an unrepentant world.

Israel never forgot the curse on the serpent in Eden, nor the promise that it would, one day, be crushed. Such thoughts came to mind now. Israel had been planted as God's vineyard, but it had produced wild grapes. Though Adam had not kept the Garden of Eden, God would keep his garden by teaching his people to cling to him. There would be a wonderful crop. However, there would first be an expiation of their guilt. Though God never treated Israel as he treated other nations, he would utterly destroy their idol worship. Then, there would be a gathering of them from all the nations where they had been scattered.

Prayer

Holy Father, keep me mindful of your diligence in removing idolatry from among us, lest I become careless in the favour you have shown. Remind me also, and often, of your diligence in keeping us for yourself, working in us so that we wholly trust in you. I thank you, that we do not live under the threat of death but that your Son has stood in the path of your judgments, felt the chastisements that have brought healing to us and been raised from the dead. I bless you that in this present day, and while the world still strives against you, you have chosen that we may know your peace. All this you have given us in your Son, in whose name I pray. Amen.

Chapters 28–29

Does a drunkard have reason to be proud? Clearly not, but pride and sensuality had blinded Samaria to her true state. Perhaps she gloried in her shame (Phil. 3:19). Her leaders were no better than her people. Therefore, simple teaching (which perhaps Isaiah had given them) would be replaced with instruction in a foreign language, that is, from their captors. Samaria thought a foreign alliance (which was lies anyway) would provide peace, but because they did not trust in God, any alliance was a covenant with death.

In all this desperate human activity, God would still build his own future for his people, a foundation stone in Zion. Northern tribes had rejected the Davidic kingship, but the blessing of God would come to humanity through this throne. Nothing else would come to anything. This is what has happened in the coming of Christ (Rom. 9:33; I Peter 2:6). No other foundation stone can provide a future for the people of God or for the world. Judgment may appear to be a work alien to a God whose nature it is to bless, but it was and is essential to his purposes and to our need. Like a farmer, God knows how long to plough before he sows his crop.

The attention moved to Jerusalem, called 'Ariel' which means the hearth of an altar. The temple altar was the place that assured Israel of her access to God, and also the place that spoke of death to sin. So how do a people fare who have access to God but have turned their religion into a remembered performance. God had helped David win Jerusalem, but would now send a 'David' against it. The judgment would quickly be forgotten (29:7–8), but for the moment, Jerusalem would be without any word

from God to guide them. They had treated God as though they were his maker rather than a pot being formed by him. Without warning or reason, God's word tells us that God would yet make blind eyes see. There would be joy and true worship and righteousness. It is the God who 'redeemed Abraham' who can bring something out of nothing. Israel, in that day, would confess that her children were God's work and not their own.

Prayer

Father, forgive our pride of heart. We think we actually make things and create things, when it is you who have given us every thing we have. Praise be to you Father, for your true King, Jesus Christ, whom you have established among us and on whom you build all your works. May my faith rest fully on him, for his name's sake. Amen.

Chapters 30–31

Again, God's people are called rebellious children (as in 1:2, 4). They did not want the gracious word of God and preferred to get help from a notoriously inactive Egypt. 'Don't tell us about our Holy God' they said to their prophets. So God did speak to them! They could have returned to God and had rest and strength, but because they wanted a human strength, God would terrorise them with another stronger human power. But still he waited to be gracious; waited for them to wait on him. Even yet, he would be their gentle teacher. Even yet, their land would have good rains to bring an abundant harvest from their labour. Even yet, Israel would sing in worship and the Assyrians would be no more.

God will war against the powers his people falsely trust, so that both fall together. Israel, and we who have come to faith in God through Christ, should trust God and not man, spirit and not flesh. Yet, like a lion who does not fear, and like birds that protect their young, God will protect his true people. 'Turn to me' God says to them. 'Your enemies will soon be vanquished!'

Prayer

Father, remove from me the fear of those who are strong in this world. They are not God. They cannot, ultimately, cause me any harm; nor can they, nor do they desire to, give me any protection. Lord, I return to you, to rest in you and your Son, and so am saved. According to your promise, teach me your ways, give me songs of praise, and may the work of my hands prosper, for your glory. Amen.

Chapters 32–33

The future welfare of Israel would rely on God giving them his chosen king (chapters 9 and 11 and here). Under such a king, righteousness would yield justice in action and true wisdom would flow on to the people. But all this stood in contrast to the present. Folly, villainy, and complacency remained among God's people. Nothing but a disastrous judgment, including the emptying of the palace, and then, the outpouring of God's Spirit, would heal the nation. The King to come would be Christ, and the Spirit the Spirit of the Father and Son. When the good news of their reign was proclaimed, righteousness, peace and rest would be established.

When Assyria's work was done, she would experience treachery like her own, but first, her treachery had brought Jerusalem to the end of herself. The best plans she

could conceive and bring to birth were chaff, stubble to be ignited by the breath of her own mouth. Those who had not learned to trust in God thought that God's dealings with them were unendurable. However, people near and far away should acknowledge that the Lord alone can bring stability. They should turn from their bribery and bloodshed by which they hoped to establish themselves. They will see their King! They will see Jerusalem rejoicing in God!

Prayer

Father, it is your Spirit and your Son, the King, who have established all our good. Of ourselves, we have sought our own benefit alone and folly ruled our actions. We bless you for the coming of your Son and for his reign in righteousness. We thank you that we have died with Christ and that the judgment against us has been rightly executed. If, for the present, we feel your chastening, keep our eyes on your Son and not on the instrument you use for our good. Our Father, pour out your Spirit upon the church that the truth of Christ may be our delight and his victory be proclaimed across the land. Hear our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Chapters 34–35

Hearing Isaiah speak of terrible judgment against all the nations is like hearing Peter speak of the present heavens and earth dissolving (II Peter 3:7, 10). We cannot forget that God has enduring enmity with the nations that ignore him. Edom was a nation that had implacable hatred of Israel (they were descended from Esau). Only David had ever subdued them. Here they are made an illustration: God would reduce their kingdom to chaos and emptiness and solemnly appoint it as the inheritance of wild animals and birds.

The future and hope of God's people is so different: they shall see the glory of God. To see God's glory is to be changed by that sight, for his glory is to be everything to his people, so that, in Jesus Christ, they are the fullness of his glory. Therefore, 'be strong. Here is your God!' The prophecies that follow were fulfilled as Jesus walked this earth and as his church proclaims his lordship over all nations (Luke 4:18; 7:20–23). The glory of God in the gospel of his Son is that even fools don't go astray and those redeemed by God from judgment have everlasting joy.

Prayer

Lord, you have restored confidence and joy to those who have felt the sharpness of your chastening. You will never forsake those in whom you have purposed to display your glory. But if we must feel your brief judgments, what of those who do not regard you and who oppose your people? Father, we are in awe of your majesty, and rest our souls in your salvation, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.