

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #49

Isaiah 34:1-17

I want to begin by reading something that was written back in the 1930s by F. C. Jennings, who was a tremendous Biblical scholar and close friend of Arno Gaebelein: “Many modern pulpits preach now that God is too loving to be severe, and that the moral Governor of the universe is so weak that He will permit His own laws to be defied forever! But who can deny that He has given evidence of His power in the past? Did He not sweep the whole race away by the flood, with the sole exception of one family?” God’s judgment surely lies in the future and “we believe in the near future” (*Studies in Isaiah*, p. 405).

There are those who tend to shy away from a book like Isaiah because it is too threatening. But when you look at **Isaiah 34:1**, it becomes very clear that God calls “all” the nations in the world to carefully listen to and understand the book of Isaiah. In this text, God transports the entire world into the future and gives them a glimpse of what will take place.

There is a famous battle described in Revelation, called the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 19:11-21), in which God totally demolishes all world powers who have dared come against Israel. That very battle is seen here by Isaiah. H. A. Ironside said, “This prophecy is in perfect harmony with Revelation 19:19-21. ... It coincides also very closely with the first part of the 14th chapter of the book of Zechariah” (*Isaiah*, p. 212).

We may dogmatically state, based on the full authority of God’s Word, that one day God is going to pour out His wrath on this world and His reason will be “Zion’s cause” (**verse 8**). Most nations of the world could care less about Israel today, but the Gentile powers are going to be repaid for what they have done against Israel and Joel predicts God will wipe them out (Joel 3:1-17).

ALL NATIONS OF THE WORLD NEED TO KNOW THAT GOD WILL FULFILL EVERY PROPHECY FROM HIS WORD WHICH WILL INCLUDE HIS FEROCIOUS VENGEANCE ON ALL THE SINFUL AND EVIL NATIONS WHO HAVE DONE NEGATIVE THINGS AGAINST ISRAEL.

There are three parts to this prophecy:

PART #1 – God invites all the nations to listen to His Word. **34:1**

This is something you cannot overlook. God doesn’t just call Israel to hear this or Assyria or Babylonia or Egypt, He summons the entire world. As F. C. Jennings said, it is “the whole prophetic earth that is in view” (*Studies in Isaiah*, p. 404).

God calls all people of all nations of the world to listen to His Word. The nations better take notice because what He wants these nations to hear is terrifying. Notice He calls “all.” This literally means that God has called all people, all nations, all states, all cities, all churches to carefully understand a book like Isaiah.

The most important reality in existence is the written Word of God and what nations ought to do is get together to hear it and learn it. These are not empty words in this book, these are God's words. This book should be put back into schools and teachers should know it and teach it because I promise you this, when what is predicted in this chapter hits, no social studies, or math sciences, or biology courses will cut it. All the formal education that people thought so highly about won't amount to a hill of beans. God calls us to understand His Word. The Bible is the most important book in the entire world.

We are living in a world that lumps the Bible in with every other religious book. Politicians just say if you want some religious book, that is okay or if you don't, that is also okay. But Isaiah says there is only one book you better take real seriously and it is the Word of God. This book has something very serious to say to the nations.

When nations get together today, it is for some kind of summit to discuss problems. What they ought to do is get together to carefully hear God's Word. This message needs to be understood in Washington D.C., because the United States is part of the nations that comprise the world. So if I were a politician, I would be very interested in what Isaiah has to say.

Now it is my conclusion that for the most part all the nations of the world don't really have much concern for Israel. Most nations do not really support Israel or are interested in defending her. But God has something to say to the nations and that is this - He, Himself, will defend her and He will wipe out all the nations of the world. Nations had better take notice of God's Word, because God is taking notice of them.

PART #2 – God warns that He is going to pour His wrath out on the nations. **34:2-4**

God calls nations to hear that He is a God of indignation. He is a God who is angry and mad. This world of ours has had its share of calamities and hardships, but it has never experienced anything like what is described here.

Isaiah begins with a picture of military powers on earth up against the LORD'S indignation (**verse 2**). This will be a no-win situation for the powers on the earth. Earthly powers are going to be slaughtered by God and there is no defense weapon they can devise to stop it. The only chance any has to escape God's wrath is Jesus Christ, for all judgmental authority and power is in His hands. What God promises to do to the nations is scary. It is not pretty. There are four promises He makes:

Promise #1 - He will destroy all nations. **34:2b**

There are many different Hebrew words translated "destroy." The one used here (charam) is one that means God has made a contract with Himself to totally, utterly and completely destroy the nations of the world. He has a sacred, consecrated plan that He will devote Himself to and that plan is the total and complete destruction of the nations (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, pp. 305-306).

Promise #2 - He will slaughter all people. **34:2c**

The word “slaughter” (tabach) is one that means God is going to target the nations for capital punishment, which means He is going to literally kill, slay and execute the people (*Ibid.*, p. 317). God makes a judicial decision to give the nations over to execution and then He executes them. The literal, physical death penalty will be pronounced on all of the nations of the world.

Promise #3 - He will turn people into stinking corpses . **34:3**

God is going to slaughter the nations to the point that the land will be drenched with blood and the dead bodies that are killed will be left unburied to rot and smell. The number of dead people will be so great that it is not even possible to bury them. Funeral homes will be out of business and if one happens to be a funeral director without Jesus Christ, he’ll be one of the dead bodies or corpses.

It is predicted in Revelation 14:20 that there is so much blood flowing that it will be up to the horses bridle for 200 miles. Obviously, according to **verse 4**, this will all happen when God does unique things in the sky, which is clearly predicted to happen in the Great Tribulation. The sky will be rolled back like a scroll and there will be cosmic disturbances the likes of which this world has never seen.

Promise #4 - He will cause the host of heaven to wither . **34:4**

The word “wither” means that the host of heaven will lose all of its strength, will fall down and fade into nothing (*Hebrew Grammar*, p. 28). I understand this to mean that God will cast all satanic and demonic forces out of heaven and confine them to the earth as part of His ferocious judgment (Revelation 12:7-10). God’s judgment will affect heaven and earth.

The whole world will be God’s target and He will destroy all in it.

PART #3 – God warns that He will pour out His wrath on nations hostile to Israel . **34:5-17**

There are about nine facts brought out in this text:

Fact #1 - God will pour out His wrath on Israel’s enemies . **34:5-6**

It is predicted in the book of Joel (3:1-17) that God is going to restore all fortunes to Israel by judging the nations of the world, and one target of God’s wrath will be those nations that literally surrounded Israel in the Promised Land (Joel 3:11-12). One specific target of His wrath is Edom.

Whenever you read prophetic news about what God intends to do to “Edom,” the news is not good (i.e. Obadiah). For example, it is predicted that Edom will become a “desolate wilderness” (Joel 3:19).

Edom was actually the name given to Esau after he sold his birthright to Jacob for some red stew (Genesis 25:30). The Edomites were descendants of Esau, Jacob's older brother. The particular spot where the Edomites settled is land south and east of the Dead Sea; land that slopes down into the Arabian desert and Saudi Arabia. Edom, for the most part, is present day Jordan.

Edom was a sister nation to Israel, but she hated Israel more than any other nation. All throughout history there has been a burning hatred between the Arabs and the Jews. These Arabs became a perpetual enemy of Israel (Ezekiel 35-36:5) and God says He is going to completely wipe them out. **Verse 8** is very clear to establish that God will do this for the cause of Israel and Jerusalem. God has kept the record of all of the terrible things the Arabs have done to Israel and He will settle all the scores.

Now obviously there is going to be some major slaughter at Bozrah (**verse 6**), which is modern-day Buseirah, located about 25 miles southeast of the Dead Sea. Bozrah was an important city in Edom, in fact, it was her capital city (**Isaiah 63:1-8**). The name means to "gather the grapes." God is going to pour out His wrath by gathering the nations together and squashing them and trampling them out.

The text is very clear to point out that God has devoted certain people to destruction. The description of what God will do is cause a great slaughter and sacrifice that will leave blood and dead bodies everywhere.

Now in the next verses we get even more of a graphic description of what will happen in the land:

Fact #2 - Animals and humans will die . **34:7**

The animals mentioned in **verses 6-7** were sacrificial animals that were used to atone for sin. The lambs, goats and rams were used in regard to the sacrifices of the common people. The wild oxen, young bulls and strong ones were used in regard to wealthy people of nobility. The point Isaiah makes is that not only will the animals be sacrificed, but so will all the people. All will suffer death. When God pours out His wrath, many religious people will perish.

Fact #3 - God will recompense Israel. **34:8**

All these nations will pay a price for what they have done to Israel. The nations have persecuted the Jews and sacrificed them so God will destroy them all. This is the point that all controversy that God has had with Israel ends. From this point on, He is on the side of Israel and against all nations of the world who were against her.

Fact #4 - Water will be polluted . **34:9a**

Now God paints a gloomy picture of Edom's land. Jordan will not be a pleasant place to be. Burning pitch is a tar like substance that smolders and seems to be unquenchable. It will almost be as if there is a visible display of the "lake of fire."

Fact #5 - Land shall be burned . **34:9b-10**

Just like when God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, so also He will destroy the land here. Tar will run like streams through the land and the dust will even smolder and burn. This whole area will become an unquenchable burning place of judgment.

Fact #6 - Land shall be an empty desolation . **34:11**

It is clearly stated in Isaiah 33:18 that one day God's people will meditate on terror. During the Millennium, there will be specific geographical places and spots that will be purposely left that will remind God's people of the ferocious judgment of God on the abominations of mankind and on the enemies of Him and His people. God will turn this part of the world into a vast empty wilderness.

Fact #7 - Leaders will be gone . **34:12**

Those world leaders who strutted around so arrogantly in their limousines and airplanes and the luxurious accommodations will be gone.

Fact #8 - Major cities will be abandoned . **34:13**

Some of the great cities of the world will be gone and overgrown with thorns and weeds.

Fact #9 - Animals will live with their kind in a protected environment. **34:14-17**

It is interesting that there are several predatory wild beasts which are mentioned who will inhabit this part of the world. Dead bodies will draw them there and they will eat their fill and then live there. Jackals, wolves, hawks, viper snakes, all will live in this part of the world.

In **verse 16**, Isaiah calls people to seek to understand the Bible.

It is interesting to see that God will have preserved some animals and some birds and they will be able to live in that Jordan area not ever disturbed by any thing or any one.

God's spirit will direct these animals to live there forever and ever.

Now there are two applications I want to make for us in the Grace Age:

- 1) As we near the end of the Church Age, many will fall away from the faith and give heed to seducing, demonic doctrines - I Timothy 4:1
- 2) Only Jesus Christ can keep one from experiencing the ferocious wrath of God.