

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 97

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Christ Leaving the Praetorium by Gustave Dore Cir. 1876–1883

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

Message Ninety-Seven

GOD DECLARES HIS SERVANTS ISRAEL BLIND AND DEAF

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Isaiah 42:18–25

¹⁸Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. ¹⁹Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send? who is blind as he that is at peace with me, and blind as Jehovah's servant? ²⁰Thou seest many things, but thou observest not; his ears are open, but he heareth not. ²¹It pleased Jehovah, for his righteousness' sake, to magnify the law, and make it honorable. ²²But this is a people robbed and plundered; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore.

²³Who is there among you that will give ear to this? that will hearken and hear for the time to come? ²⁴Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not Jehovah? he against whom we have sinned, and in whose ways they would not walk, neither were they obedient unto his law. ²⁵Therefore he poured upon him the fierceness of his anger, and the strength of battle; and it set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart (ASV, 1901).

GOD WANTS THE SPIRITUALLY BLIND AND DEAF TO SEE AND HEAR

Isaiah 42:18–19

¹⁸Hear, ye deaf; and look, ye blind, that ye may see. ¹⁹Who is blind, but my servant? or deaf, as my messenger that I send? who is blind as he that is at peace with me, and blind as Jehovah's servant (ASV, 1901)?

The Lord has chosen many servants. Some of them are the prophets as He clearly states in Amos 3:7. When He Himself came to earth as the Messiah this was another of His servants. Genuine believers who do His work are another group with that title. This iteration of the “Servant” is speaking of the chosen people Israel. Although Israel had been chosen of God to become His messenger to the world, they had not fully carried out this in obedience to God's plan. The word for *messenger* represents the Hebrew word which may also be translated as angel. That is to say, biblical Hebrew uses the one word for both heavenly and earthly messengers.

Asking a rhetorical question, God says to Israel why should He call the Gentiles blind and deaf, when Israel with all the blessings and advantages of knowing God, refused to see or hear Him?

Isaiah 43:10

¹⁰Ye are my witnesses, saith Jehovah, and my servant whom I have chosen; that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me (ASV, 1901).

By choosing Israel as His people, God elected the nation, be the missionary vehicle through which the prophets would record God's Word, our Bible, and Jesus would arrive as the promised Messiah. The very people whose mission and vocation it was to make the Gentiles see and hear, seemed to emulate their pagan despicable practices instead.

The Bible teaches that Israel's relationship with God is conditional. If they obey God, they will be blessed but if they disobey, they will be punished and scattered throughout the world.

Deuteronomy 28:1–2

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of Jehovah thy God, to observe to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that Jehovah thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth: ²and all these blessings shall come upon thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of Jehovah thy God (ASV, 1901).

Deuteronomy 28:15–19

¹⁵But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of Jehovah thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day, that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee. ¹⁶Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. ¹⁷Cursed shall be thy basket and thy kneading-trough. ¹⁸Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, the increase of thy cattle, and the young of thy flock. ¹⁹Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out (ASV, 1901).

So, the consequence for disobeying God was to be a scattering across the face of the earth. The very fact that this happened is a sign that we can trust the Bible. Consider the ancient history:

714 BC – Assyrian scattered 10 tribes of the north

586 BC – Babylon took Jerusalem and Judah into captivity

516 BC – The Jews taken to Babylon returned after 70 years

AD 70 – Romans scatter Jews across the whole face of the earth and destroy Jerusalem and the Temple

So, Israel were scattered because of their disobedience. However, they still remain God's people. The Mosaic Law and the New Testament confirm that God still cares for His people and has not disowned them.

Leviticus 26:44:45

⁴⁴And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am Jehovah their God; ⁴⁵but I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their

ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am Jehovah (ASV, 1901).

Romans 11:1–5

¹I say then, Did God cast off his people? God forbid. For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin. ²God did not cast off his people which he foreknew. Or know ye not what the scripture saith of Elijah? how he pleadeth with God against Israel: ³Lord, they have killed thy prophets, they have digged down thine altars; and I am left alone, and they seek my life. ⁴But what saith the answer of God unto him? I have left for myself seven thousand men, who have not bowed the knee to Baal. ⁵Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace (ASV, 1901).

SUFFERING BECAUSE OF DISOBEDIENCE

Isaiah 42:20–22

²⁰Thou seest many things, but thou observest not; his ears are open, but he heareth not. ²¹It pleased Jehovah, for his righteousness' sake, to magnify the law, and make it honorable. ²²But this is a people robbed and plundered; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in prison-houses: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore (ASV, 1901).

The text here is directed at Israel (Thou) and in the singular Jacob (He), whose name was changed to Israel (Genesis 32:28). These are interchangeable references to the nation Israel. There is so much that I have given you to see, but you do not take heed to discern it says Isaiah speaking for God. My deeds and understand why you undergo so much suffering and repent. I sent you My prophets to open ears, but you do not listen. God desired that the Torah (His Law) be made great and glorious. Because God wanted Israel to earn great merit, He gave them the Torah that includes 613 commandments. Israel earns merit by performing the Torah's commandments.

Israel, the unfaithful servant, has seen many things, many tokens of God's grace and goodness, but does not observe them (Deuteronomy 4:3; Isaiah 1:3; Jeremiah 6:10; Ezekiel 12:2; 14:3; Romans 2:21). *Israel's ears were open, but he heareth not* (Isaiah 6:10). His unbelief had divested him of all spiritual sensitivity. It was the Lord's plan through His servant Israel to make the law, the Lord's revelation of salvation for lost mankind and the obedience for the behavior He demanded according to the morality He insisted upon. Through them it would then be extending to all nations.

The Scribes and Pharisees saw Christ in the flesh and they saw the miracles he did, they saw the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers cleansed, the deaf hear, and the dead raised. Never the less they did not acquiesce to these things, and keep them in their minds, and regard them as clear proofs of his being the Messiah: *opening the ears, but he heareth not*; they heard John Baptist preach, the forerunner of Christ, and the testimony he bore of Him. They heard and saw Christ himself and his apostles. They sometimes opened their ears, and seemed to listen and hear with attention, and wonder at what they heard, and some would own, that never man spoke

like Jesus. However, they refused to understand Him and hardened their hearts against him. they saw many things with their bodily eyes, but perceived them not with the eyes of their understandings; they heard with their ears, but understood not in their hearts, because their eyes were shut and their ears heavy. This apostasy of Israel is only temporary, until the fullness of the Gentiles come in to God's commonwealth (Romans 16b–24).

But His plan has been delayed temporarily by Israel's apostasy. They generally denied their Messiah-Servant. He will, at the Second Coming make His Law glorious to all nations through the nation Israel, who will believe and receive God's righteousness.

The Jewish people, shut their eyes against the clear light of the Gospel, and turned a deaf ear to Christ, rejecting Him, and persecuted the early believers. The result was these were robbed and plundered by the Roman soldiers of all their riches and treasures, when the city of Jerusalem was taken: *they are all of them snared in holes; such of them as escaped and hid themselves in holes, and caverns, and dens of the earth, were laid in wait for and taken, and dragged out, as beasts are taken in a pit, and with a snare.*

Josephus says The Romans slew some of them, some they carried captives, and others they made search for underground, and when they found where they were, they broke up the ground and slew all they met with. (430) There were also found slain there above two thousand persons, partly by their own hands, and partly by one another, but chiefly destroyed by the famine. *and they are hid in prison-houses; being taken by their enemies out of their holes, they were put in prisons, some of them, and there lay confined, out of which they could not deliver themselves: and they are for a prey, and none delivereth; as when they were taken by the Babylonians.*¹

WILL ANYONE LISTEN AND PAY ATTENTION?

Isaiah 42:23–25

²³Who is there among you that will give ear to this? that will hearken and hear for the time to come? ²⁴Who gave Jacob for a spoil, and Israel to the robbers? did not Jehovah? he against whom we have sinned, and in whose ways they would not walk, neither were they obedient unto his law. ²⁵Therefore he poured upon him the fierceness of his anger, and the strength of battle; and it set him on fire round about, yet he knew not; and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart (ASV, 1901).

Isaiah now asks the nation Israel, “*Who is there among you that will give ear to this?*” Who is there in the nation that will be so warned by the judgments of God, that he will pay attention to the lessons that God wants to teach, and reform you, and return to Him in loving admiration and obedience? It is asserted by these questions that Israel ought to listen to these admonitions and obey. However, Isaiah also by implication seems to realize that they were so lost and had abandoned God that they would not do it. These judgments were a loud call on the nation to turn to God, to avoid the sins which had made it necessary for Him to judge them harshly. This was what they were to bear in mind, that is, what they suffered was ordained of God and on account of

¹ Josephus, Flavius, William Whiston translator; *The Works of Josephus New Updated Edition*, published by Hendrickson, Peabody, MA, The wars, book 6, chapter 9, sect 4, page 749

their sins. They had to come to grips with this, that it was their fault for God’s judgment falling upon them.

Who gave Israel into the hand of those who looted and plundered them? Was this just a freak accident, a political misjudgment that backfired, the wrong military strategy by some general, bad luck, poor timing, or did their covenant with God have something to do with this defeat (the curses of the covenant, Leviticus 26:14–33)? With a bold rhetorical question that implies a positive answer, the prophet answered his question by affirming that God Himself did this to them. They have failed to recognize what God was about in calling them, and they have failed to learn the lessons that their experiences with God should have taught them.

God judges nations for their sins—just as He still judges individuals. You may be sure that your sin will find you out. The Bible is clear:

Numbers 32:23

²³But if ye will not do so, behold, ye have sinned against Jehovah; and be sure your sin will find you out (ASV, 1901).

After all, God hasn’t changed over the centuries; He is holy and pure, and whenever we scorn Him, we run the risk of incurring His judgment. Sin is an offense to Him—and the reason is because sin is a deliberate denial of God and His will for our lives. When we sin, we deliberately turn our backs on God and say our way is better than His. But we are wrong—and eventually we will pay the price. The Bible warns that “*the wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23).

The same is true of a nation that rejects God. When ancient Israel turned against God, the prophets warned that God’s judgment would eventually come upon them—and it did. But God also warned that the surrounding nations would be judged too because they had no regard for God—and they were. Sometimes it happens in one great catastrophe; sometimes it happens in a series of smaller disasters and defeats. But it happens.

This is a dire reminder of what happens when the people are not willing to listen to God’s *law*, do not confess their sins, and do not repent. God pours out his fierce anger on his servant in the form of a violent war, though no specific war is mentioned in this verse. This suffering, plundering, and burning happened in Judah, which led to their exile in Babylon. Unfortunately, the people did not seem to understand why they were consumed with the fire of God’s wrath. The people did not care to understand or recognize that their sinfulness was the cause of their defeat. God taught the lesson, but the Israelite did not take the lesson to heart and learn anything from the experience. This lack of responsiveness explains why God viewed His servant Israel as a blind and deaf servant. As the New Testament illustrates (Matthew 13:14–15), this spiritual blindness is not a characteristic that is limited to the ancient Israelites. In fact, the Old Testament is given to us in one sense to provide examples so we can see what is happening to us and why.

1 Corinthians 10:11–12

¹¹Now these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. ¹²Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (ASV, 1901).

God's wrath in judgment is a prevalent doctrine throughout the Bible. God is characterized by holiness, righteousness, and perfection (E.g. Psalm 93:5; 7:17; 19:7). It follows that any violation of those qualities demands judgment in a way similar to a human courtroom. The satisfaction of God's violated justice is said to be His judgment, or a manifestation of His wrath (Deuteronomy 9:7). Predicated by the fall, "*God is angry with the wicked every day*" states Psalm 7:11(KJV). Ephesians 5:6 states, "*for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.*" There are many judgments in the Scripture and the following are some of the general categories.

1. Eternal Wrath: The Lake of Fire
2. Eschatological Wrath: The Tribulation
3. Cataclysmic Wrath: The Flood, Sodom & Gomorrah
4. Forsaking Wrath: Removing Restraint
5. Consequential Wrath: Sowing & Reaping

We can look at number 4 which pertain particularly to Israel and appear to be happening to the United States today.

The forsaking wrath occurs when sinners are determined to pursue *what was right in his own eyes* (Judges 17:6). Another illustration is Psalm 81:11–12, wherein God speaks through the Psalmist: "*But My people did not listen to My voice, and Israel did not obey Me. So, I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, to walk in their own devices.*"

Romans 1:18 begins: "*For the wrath of God is revealed ...*" This depicts the main subject of the passage that follows. More specifically it ends with "*God gave them over.*" The phrase provides the outline that will identify, when forsaking wrath—the wrath of abandonment—is present. What follows then are biblical descriptors that serve to help us recognize when this kind of wrath is present.

Romans 1:18–22

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; ¹⁹ because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. ²⁰ For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: ²¹ because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools (KJV).

One aspect of this is that that people *suppress* meaning “to hold back” that which they know is the *truth*. It is not that the unregenerate don’t know there is a God and His Word—it is that they *suppress* these *truths* (Romans 2:15). There is a big difference. In the OT, David declared, *The fool has said (lied) in his heart, “There is no God”* (Psalm 14:1). The simple reason for this suppression is summarized by Jesus “*men loved the darkness rather than the light*” (John 3:19).

Also, in this passage suppressors *became futile in their speculations*. *Speculations* is perhaps better translated into the English understanding of argumentation or reasoning. The Greek sentence structure here carries the idea of the vanity that results from godless reasoning. Accordingly, *professing to be wise they became fools* (Greek *moraine*). It is not difficult to figure out the meaning of *moraine* given its English transliteration: moron. In summary, forsaking wrath is evidenced when a person or people *suppress the truth* which means their subsequent engagement ends in *futile* dialog and reasoning. Such communications are moronic, or roughly equivalent to an intellectual level of an immature child. A current illustration of this would be members who admit they have never viewed the videos that exposed the atrocities of Planned Parenthood, but then exclaim in another interview that all the videos were fabricated. Such is futile logic. This illustrated is the suppression of truth in one’s self.

Romans 1:26–32

²⁶ For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: ²⁷ and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one towards another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. ²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, ³⁰ backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: ³² who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them (KJV).

This is the result of homosexual behavior. God gives them up to a mind that cannot change. They are subject to eternal damnation. Those who persist in sin will be given over to the tyranny of it, and that God will forsake and remove restraining grace if they fail to repent. Even though this passage does not specifically mention nations it is important to see that it can pertain to a nation that sets laws endorsing the killing of God’s babies and homosexuality as well. Summarily, it is evident that God does judge unbelievers via the form of forsaking wrath during the Church Age.

Next message: GOD REDEEMS AND RESTORES ISRAEL

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