

Send Them A Saviour

Today we are in for a pleasant surprise. Egypt, the original ‘auld enemy’ of the Jewish people is next in line for Isaiah’s burdensome prophecy but the end of the matter is not at all what we might expect. True, the Lord’s servant does bring a series of dire warnings of what is about to happen in Egypt but then, unexpectedly, he concludes with a magnificent promise of widespread salvation and gospel blessing, not for Israel only but also for Egypt and Assyria.

The God of all grace

Let us never forget that the Lord delights to show mercy. It pleases God to be gracious to His covenant people and erstwhile enemies. Christ died for our sins while we were yet sinners. Egypt had long been at enmity with God. Pharaoh had hurt God’s people and tortured His elect. As a consequence Egypt’s people, land and wealth had suffered greatly under devastating plagues.

Yet Isaiah has a message of victory for God’s remnant people, a message of surprising grace. Soon the Messiah will come and together with Judah and Israel, the Gentiles also will be gathered into His kingdom. In that gospel-day Egypt shall have a Saviour and Assyria will yield up her people.

The Lord rides swiftly

It is interesting to note how Isaiah gradually intensifies the burden of Egypt’s woes. The prophet depicts the Lord, with beautiful imagery, moving swiftly in judgment with troubles unfolding blow by blow. No aspect of Egyptian life and culture is left untouched; rulers and artisans suffer alike, farming and commerce will fail on land and sea, false religion will be exposed, foolish advisors will be ashamed and the country ruined by civil war. Cruel masters and natural calamity will combine to bring Egypt to its knees.

The city of destruction

Then Isaiah introduces another gradual change with the coming of a Saviour and the glory that should follow. Egypt, humbled and chastened, shall fear the Lord with growing spiritual awareness. A city fit for destruction becomes a city fitted for deliverance. This is conversion. Five cities are said to speak the language of Canaan and swear allegiance to God. An altar and a pillar is set up in the land indicating a desire to worship the God of Israel who will ‘send them a saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them’.

Smite and heal

Here is a wonderful comfort for all God’s elect. Isaiah tells us in the day of Messiah-Christ, when the Saviour is revealed to His waiting people, ‘the LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it’. This smiting and healing is a spiritual work of grace in the heart of God’s elect. It is that work of grace and divine love that refuses to leave men and women dead in their sins but quickens and gathers God’s chosen vessels into His house.

Union in Christ’s kingdom

We see how external trials are used to instigate internal change in God’s elect. Hard hearts are softened and spiritual healing granted where once only conviction and sentence was feared. When we view these descriptions spiritually, with gospel understanding, we see God’s power in the preaching of grace as it breaks down the most obdurate of foes – the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and the Jews themselves, and binds them together in a triform of triumph.

The gospel without borders

Our union in the Lord Jesus Christ with brothers and sisters from all over the world is a lasting testimony to God’s transforming grace. The Lord has fulfilled this prophecy by making Israel a blessing to the whole world. Our Saviour sent forth the apostles and evangelists from Jerusalem and Judea to the ends of the earth carrying the message of forgiveness from sin and everlasting life.

In such a way the prophet’s words were fulfilled, ‘And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:3).

Comforting the saints

Once again we learn from Isaiah’s message that these promises of victory were supplied to God’s remnant elect to give

them hope in the midst of their own troubles and keep them faithful. They looked forward by faith to the coming of Christ, their Messiah, and the glorious power of His life and death to accomplish salvation and build His kingdom.

Amen

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