

## The Earth Turned Upside Down

After foretelling a series of calamities on named nations and cities such as Assyria, Babylon, and Tyre, Isaiah now a prophesies of dire troubles that should come on the whole world and its inhabitants because of sin. It is said by the prophet that these disasters will be the work of the Sovereign Lord and an emptying of the world. By disease, wars and natural causes God will turn the earth upside down. Isaiah prefixes a 'Behold' because the events will be both remarkable and marvellous.

### **The way of the world**

These events do not all occur together but in the history of nations there will be catastrophes and tragedies that will bring ruin and destruction so as to shake the very foundations of social order. Just as Assyria fell to Babylon and Babylon to the Medes and Persians; just as Tyre fell to the Chaldeans so the ambitions of military strength will falter. Trade, commerce and invention will not be stable for long. 'In the city is left desolation, and the gate is smitten with destruction', says the prophet.

### **The wages of sin**

Isaiah wants us to be clear that this constant flux and insecurity is the result of sin. He writes, 'therefore hath the curse devoured the earth'. This is the great curse of Genesis 3 that accompanied the Fall and attended mankind's rebellion against God. God cursed the serpent and the earth for man's sake so that the earth groans, fallen men and women do what is right in their own eyes and sinners ever bring down upon themselves the indignation of the holy Lord God.

### **A remnant shall remain – always**

This has been Isaiah's message all along in his 'burdens'. Now the prophet again returns to his message of hope by referring to the preservation of God's elect people and His love and mercy. Even in the worst of times, there will be a remnant according to the election of grace. It is as though the prophets says, 'despite the universal nature of sin and the certain coming of judgment, the Lord will protect His people, safeguard His Beloved and deliver His elect'.

### **The gleaning grapes**

The 'shaking' of an olive tree and the 'gleaning grapes' when the vintage is done are references to God's remnant whom He has chosen, redeemed, delivered and preserves. 'They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing for the majesty of the LORD, they shall cry aloud from the sea' (v.14). Despite the wickedness of sin and the promise of judgment the Lord will not forget His people or fail to preserve them through the midst of the fires that will afflict the earth and all who dwell in it.

### **O my leanness!**

This is not to say the experience of the Lord's redeemed people will be easy. On the contrary, the Lord's people live through the most dire judgments and see, taste and feel all the damage caused by sin. For the elect this is not divine punishment but it can be a bitter trial. Furthermore, the hopeless and careless state of the wicked saddens our hearts to cry, 'My leanness, my leanness, woe unto me! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously'. Judgment distresses the souls of God's elect when the terror of the law is at work.

### **Our brighter Star**

As we have come to expect, Isaiah does not leave the church bereft of gospel comfort. We shall see the Lord when He visits His people in His power and glory to save their souls. The Lord came to set the captive free and 'after many days shall they be visited'. When Christ visits He reigns in glory in His church, in the hearts of His people and in the affections of His Bride. His glory puts to shame even the brightness of the moon and the splendour of the sun.

### **We are going home**

What blessed encouragement the Lord's people are given in this fallen world full of sin and death. Every generation bears its own burden, as we shall, but the Lord preserves His remnant people so that the testimony of grace and the work of the gospel will continue to benefit the generation following. We shall endure the trials of our own age and we shall persevere to the end knowing the Lord will soon visit us to take us to our mansion or gather His church in its final glory.

Amen

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