

Swords Into Plowshares

When Isaiah wrote his prophecy the coming of the Lord Jesus was still many centuries away. Isaiah prophesied about 'the last days' when Messiah would appear, and when Christ would be revealed to the world. He comforted the Lord's people of his own age and the ages following as they waited and watched for the fulfilment of God's promise of redemption and salvation.

In scripture 'the last days' refers to the period of time in which we now live, it has already extended over two thousand years! The last days began with the first coming of the Lord Jesus and shall continue until the Lord's return.

A house established

Isaiah mentions the establishment of the Lord's house. As in chapter one he is speaking of Judah and Jerusalem, typifying the church and people of God. His vision concerning God's elect is delightfully couched in language of peace, prosperity and exaltation. But there is a solemn and darker message, too. The prophet speaks of idolatry, pride and judgment upon those who Peter describes as 'scoffers, walking after their own lusts'. The 'last days' are days during which Christ's church is enlarged and exalted, and the wicked are diminished and shamed.

A kingdom exalted

Often we do not see matters in quite this way. As Isaiah looked from a long way off He saw the strength and energy of the Lord's work, the redemption of the saints, and the gathering of the church. He saw the redeemed of all nations flowing into Zion and the elevation of Christ and His kingdom. He saw it 'established in the top of the mountains, and ... exalted above the hills' showing that Christ's kingdom was superior, enduring and dominant over the little hill-forts of this world.

Zion enlarged

We, on the other hand, living in these 'last days' become preoccupied with the waywardness of the wicked rather than the establishment of the elect. Remember, Isaiah was portraying our days to his generation as testimony of Christ's victory, the winning of souls and the building of the church through the preaching of the gospel of grace. Sure, there are setbacks but from his perspective Isaiah saw the trend was upward and the ending glorious. Today we are watching Isaiah's vision emerge in real time. We are witnessing the establishment of Zion and this fulfilment ought to encourage us as much as its promise encouraged our brothers and sisters in the Lord almost three thousand years ago.

Let us go up hence

In tomorrow's service we shall be reminded we are they who say, 'Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob'. We shall see that Isaiah describes you and me saying to each another, 'Come, let us go to the Lord, come, let us dwell in His presence'. The prophet depicts us seeking the Lord's guidance, 'He will teach us'. Isaiah sees us walking in the paths of righteousness, and following in our Saviour's steps. This was his divinely inspired vision of the last days, our days, these days in which we live.

Peace with God fosters goodwill to men

The prophet's reference to the end of war cannot mean the absolute absence of violence for there will be wars and rumours of war to the end of time. Yet, there is a peace instilled in the hearts of those reconciled to God and dedicated to His service. We who serve in the ranks of the Lord do not fight with the weapons we once employed to the destruction of our own souls but minister with gifts and graces designed to build, bless and nurture those around us with gospel truth and life.

Study war no more

Swords into plowshares and spears into pruninghooks is a beautiful image of believers laying down their weapons of war and taking up a message of hope, in the service of the King of Peace, for the good of their fellow man. Micah and Isaiah, and perhaps Joel, all foresaw a time when peace would reign in the lives of God's people, and when the Lord Himself would silence our enemies, suppress our oppressors, and bind the power of Satan.

Comfort ye my people

We are tempted to be discouraged and depressed at widespread wickedness in the world but should we not see this evil as God visiting judgment upon His enemies rather than the kingdom of Christ being overcome? Every time a sinner is saved, every time a believer is discovered, a victory is won and Christ's kingdom is established and exalted. If Isaiah comforted God's people with this prophecy foretold, we should be comforted with its promise fulfilled.

Amen

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