

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #17

Isaiah 9:8-10:4

Did you know that the founders of the United States had a high and holy reverence and respect for the Word of God? **Thomas Jefferson** said: “A serious perusal of the sacred volume will make better citizens, better fellows, and better husbands.” **George Washington** said: “It is not possible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible.” **Andrew Jackson** said: “The Bible is the rock on which our republic rests.” **John Quincy Adams** said: “So great is my veneration for the Bible that the earlier my children begin to read it, the more confident will be my hopes that they will prove useful citizens to their country and respectable members of society.” **Abraham Lincoln** said: “I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible ... I believe that the Bible is the best gift God has given to man. All the good from the Savior of the world is communicated to us through the Book.” **Ulysses S. Grant** said: “Hold fast to the Bible as the sheet anchor of your liberties; write its precepts in your hearts, and practice them in your lives. To the influence of this book we are indebted for all the progress made in true civilization, and to this we must look as our guide in the future.” **Theodore Roosevelt** said: “I plead for a closer and wider and deeper study of the Bible, so that our people may be in fact as well as in theory ‘doers of the Word and not hearers only.’” **Woodrow Wilson** said, “When you have read the Bible, you will know it is the Word of God, because you will have found it the key to your own happiness and your own duty” (Roy B. Zuck, *The Speaker’s Quote Book*, pp. 31-33).

I want you to envision for a moment what would happen today if the President of the United States went on national television and said this: “If we as a people in the United States want God to bless us, we need to turn to the living God of the Bible. What we need to do is to turn away from every false religion, from Islam to Mormonism, from Buddhism to Christian Science. We need to turn away from the Occult, from Jehovah’s Witness, from Taoism, from Atheism, Agnosticism and Skepticism. What we need right now is for the entire nation to turn to the living God and ask for His forgiveness and grace, His help and His Mercy. To show God that we mean business, I, as the President of the United States, order that immediately Bible reading be brought back into the schools. I want every school to begin the day with prayer. We will get rid of any university professor who tries to destroy the precious faith in the only True God. We will get rid of any group that hates Israel for we are going to be her friend knowing she is God’s nation. We are going to apply Biblical principles to the society, to the schools, to the government and we demand that all churches carefully go to work on accurately understanding the Bible. If we will do these things, we will see the blessings of God brought back to the United States of America. So let’s get busy and turn this nation back to God.”

This is basically what Isaiah was telling Israel’s king Ahaz to do. But of course, we know Ahaz refused to listen to what Isaiah told him, so God says, “Fine, I have another message for you.” I want you to notice the first words of **verse 8 - God sends a message “against” His own people**. The Word of God is not designed to tickle ears, it is a Word that convicts and cuts and the message God sends to Israel here is not pretty, and frankly, it is the same message that is needed in the United States of America.

If God cannot bring a nation to repentance with His written and proclaimed Word, then He can break a nation down with His specific judgments. It was the writer of Hebrews who said to God's own people in the Grace Age, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

Just recently someone in this city said that they had a hard time believing in God because they look around the world and see war, starvation, devastation and disaster. As I read the comments, it was quite clear that this kind of person wants a God who just loves and tolerates everyone and anything. She wanted a God who will just bless and prosper all people, regardless of how they live their lives or regardless what they believe. However, when you look carefully into the Scriptures, we soon discover that this is not how God reveals Himself to be. God is not only a God of love, but He is also a God of wrath. He is a God who can grant amazing blessings or devastating cursing. Never is that more evident than in this passage.

After Isaiah had given a glorious picture of what life one day would be for Israel, a glorious Kingdom governed by a glorious Divine Glorious King, he gets back to the way life was for Israel at the time he prophesied. She was a long way from turning to God, just about as far as the United States of America.

You will notice as you look down through these verses in Isaiah that there is a phrase that occurs four times, that sets paragraphs apart - "**His hand is still stretched out**" (9:12, 17, 21; 10:4). When most people read this they think, this is so nice that God stretches out His hand to His people. What most don't realize is that this is not a positive thing here, it is a negative. **God's hand is not stretching out offering peace, it is stretched out bringing devastation.**

God stretches out His hand of grace to His people just so long and then the same hand that stretches out in grace can also stretch out in devastating judgment. Judah's trouble was not due to the might and power of Assyria, but due to the fact that God's hand was stretched out against her. The message is clear:

GOD'S SON, JESUS CHRIST, IS THE ONLY ONE ISRAEL NEEDS TO TURN TO FOR HER NATIONAL DELIVERENCE, BUT SINCE SHE PROUDLY AND ARROGANTLY REFUSES TO DO THIS BUT CONTINUES TO PERSIST IN HER EVIL REBELLION, GOD WILL STRETCH OUT HIS ANGRY HAND AGAINST HER TO HUMBLE HER TO THE POINT THAT SHE WILL FINALLY BE BROKEN.

You do not need to be a skilled theologian to realize that Israel right now does not have the blessings of God. She is surrounded by enemies who make her life miserable. The United States has always been her friend and we have been greatly blessed because of that but just recently even our friendship has been called into question. We seem to have those in high offices who think it is really a smart move to flatter Israel's Arab enemies. **The one thing Israel has not done to this point as a nation is to turn to the God who gave her this land.** She has not asked the Righteous One, Jesus Christ, to come and take care of her enemies and set up her kingdom. To this very hour, she refuses to turn to God. She relies on her military expertise, her political shrewdness and even her economic prosperity but she refuses to rely upon God.

One would think that Israel would look into the Scriptures and then look at the present day land boundaries that she fights for every second and say, “There seems to be a great disparity here of the land we are supposed to have in Scripture to the land we actually have.” One would think that the religious leaders of Israel would proclaim, “You know, we are supposed to have a Davidic King, sitting on a Davidic Throne in Jerusalem ruling the world. Maybe we ought to get back to the mindset of Moses, who brought us to this land, and turn to our God for His help.” But that is not what we see in our day and you can track this mindset right back to the days of Ahaz. All you presently see when you look at the Middle East is a political nightmare and one military disaster after another. **The reason for this is that God’s hand is stretched out against Israel and will continue to be until she humbles herself to Him.**

Now these verses break down nicely into five warnings:

WARNING #1 – God will judge Israel because of her pride and arrogance. **9:8-10**

The biggest war that Israel has ever had and the biggest war you will ever have is a war between your God and your pride. It is a pride that refuses to submit to God and His Word. This proud attitude was the very attitude that Israel had. She was so proud that she actually left God out of all of life. She wanted to run herself without God. Just like many of this country. It did not matter what God did to her, she would just get up, dust herself off and say ‘we’ll just fix it up.’ She would not humble herself to God. She would not learn the lessons God wanted her to learn. She was proud and arrogant of heart. It is pure arrogance for God’s people to think that they can build anything or accomplish anything without God. You try to do things and leave God out and you are heading to disaster. Notice at the end of **verse 9**, that a **pride problem is a heart problem.**

God permitted Assyria to sweep into the land of Israel including Ephraim the largest tribe and Samaria the capital of Israel and do great damage. They knocked down walls and burned down trees. Instead of Israel turning to the Lord for help and crying out to Him asking for His forgiveness and mercy, she said ‘no problem, we’ll rebuild with stones and we will replace the trees.’ She was proud and arrogant. She was self-reliant and self-dependent.

Just recently I heard our former President Bush tell the story of a town he had visited that had been devastated by a tornado. He said all the people were saying they would not let this get them down, but they would rebuild. In fact, he said he went back in a few months and the whole place had been rebuilt. He said these people had the great American spirit. Well the great American spirit isn’t so great when you compare it to the Word of God. I am getting so sick and tired of hearing politicians say - we can always trust the American people. What we need to be saying is we need to get the American people turning to and trusting in God. But just like Israel, as a nation we are too proud, too self-reliant, too arrogant to turn to the God of the Bible.

WARNING #2 – God will judge Israel by causing external adversaries to devour her.
9:11-12

I want you to carefully see from **verse 11** that it is not all the threatening powers who are determining the destiny of God’s nation, it is God. He is permitting these devastating things to happen to his people in an attempt to get them to turn to Him. But because they don’t turn to Him, He says, “I’ll spur on your enemies and bring them against you at a rapid rate.”

These enemies would include some of the Arameans from the east and the Philistines from the west. Rezin was the king of Aram (7:1) who had initially been an ally of Israel. He had initially been Israel's friend. But because she refused to turn to God, God would even cause former friends to cause big trouble. He would spur on these external enemies to come up against Israel.

Isaiah was telling the nation exactly what God was doing, but she would not repent. She refused to turn to Him. As Edward Young said, it did not matter how much God "punished them," they would not repent (*The Book of Isaiah*, Vol. 1, p. 350).

WARNING #3 – God will judge Israel by cutting them off from truth. **9:13-17**

Isaiah was deeply saddened by the fact that even though God causes all of these negative things to hit His people, they will not turn to Him. The whole nation would go down. **This nation was being led astray from the Word of God by its leadership. The leaders of Israel were good politicians, but they were evil spiritual leaders.**

The elders and the false prophets were not leading the people into a careful and accurate understanding of God's Word. They were leading them astray. **They were promoting a self-reliant rather than God-dependant life view.**

All the people were corrupt, from the head to the tail (**v. 14**); from the leaders and prophets to the people on the streets (**v. 15-16**), from the old to the young even to the widow and the orphan (**v. 17**). This was a corrupt group of people.

Keep in mind that there were all kinds of temple services to which these people went, but they were not hearing the real truth of God. Those who knew the truth were not standing for it and those who didn't could care less. It has been well said - "people get the government they deserve." There is a distinct connection between corrupt leaders and corrupt people.

Verse 17 says - Every one was a godless evildoer. Every mouth speaks foolishness. Therefore God's hand is stretched out against Israel. They all will go down and be judged by God.

I believe that most of the politicians in Washington fall into the same category of these leaders in Israel. They are not leading this nation back toward God and the Bible. They are like the blind leading the blind. Let's try this or that. Hear Isaiah, Mr. President - turn this nation back to a reverence for God. Here Isaiah, Mr. Senator - turn this nation back to a reverence for God. Hear Isaiah, Mr. Congressman - turn this nation back to a reverence for God. You do that and you'll see unbelievable things happen.

I am convinced that not only are these problems today in the United States of America, but in most churches in this country. I recently received two catalogs that supposedly are "worship catalogues" for churches and they contained electric guitars, amps and drums that used to be marketed to rock and roll bands. Most churches are being led to believe this is really the leading of God. Truth is, very few churches will even tell God's people the truth of these verses. Most will tell you "God loves you just the way you are." "God wants to bless you regardless of what you do." These are lies from hell. Almost every mouth is speaking foolishness and that was the same problem in Israel.

WARNING #4 – God will judge Israel by causing internal adversaries to devour her. **9:18-21**

Israel had betrayed God so God will cause them to betray each other. Israel was being destroyed by the wickedness of the people, so God would destroy the people. As **verse 21** says, Manasseh turned on Ephraim and Ephraim turned against Manasseh and both turned against Judah (II Chronicles 28:6-8).

God describes Israel's wickedness in **verse 18**. It burns like a fire. It consumes every one and every thing. That is exactly what wickedness will do if it is not faced; it will devour you. It will lead to the chastening hand of God.

So God would actually cause people within to turn against each other. **Civil war is a judgment of God**. When brother turns against brother and tribe turns against tribe and nation turns against nation, what is left is a bunch of animals who devour each other.

Now I believe we are on the verge of God rapturing the Church. What this means is that the restraining ministry of the Holy Spirit that indwells every believer will be removed. It is no coincidence that one of the first things that will happen will be an outbreak of Civil war - Revelation 6:3-4. Civil war is clearly a judgment of God for a refusal to turn to Him. It is God who causes this and yet people still will not turn to Him.

WARNING #5 – God will judge Israel because of her terrible wickedness . **10:1-4**

There have always been those who consider it good business to take advantage of others. The leaders of Israel were corrupt and were leading the people astray and they were taking advantage of people. They were involved in social injustice. One writer observed, even in our country today justice is becoming a rarer and rarer commodity. God was fed up with leaders who refused to lead according to His Word and will. They were not promoting God's righteousness or justice. There are five specific charges God leveled against them:

(Wicked Way #1) - They make evil laws. **10:1a**

The leaders of Israel legislated corrupt laws that were contrary to God and His Word. Don't you see a parallel here to the United States? We have made laws that make it legal to kill or abort a baby. Many states are now making laws that make it legal for same sex relationships which are an abominable sin that brings God's wrath. We have made laws in this country that actually protect and provide for one who refuses to work. Our legislatures are no better than Israel's.

(Wicked Way #2) - They make unjust decisions. **10:1b**

What was happening in Israel during the days of Isaiah is happening in this country during our days.

We have become so polluted in our judicial system that it becomes a game to the defense to see if they can get their evil, guilty client to walk away free. They are not interested in truth but in creating doubt. They even pick juries they think they can sway to let their client go free.

So we turn on the news and we learn of a jury that lets O.J. walk. We turn on the news another day and we learn of a jury that lets Phil Spector off the hook. We turn on the news and we

learn of two little children, a boy and a girl, who have disappeared in Florida in a neighborhood that has 44 known child molesters who have been allowed to live in society because of unjust decisions.

(Wicked Way #3) - They deprive the poor of their rights. 10:2a

I just read a statement by a political analyst that says this: “Every program that has been devised to help the poor has hurt the poor.” What happens is someone must manage the program and gets a good salary to do it. But then this person begins to come up with some formula for determining who he will help and who he won’t. He hires a staff which eats up more of the money and then they in turn subjectively decided who to help, and the straight reality is the poor who really need the help don’t get it. I know this to be true. I actually saw this with my own eyes in our first church. A woman, who was trying to do odd jobs to help provide for her and her children, was penalized in the help she could get, but a woman who sat at home and did nothing got full support of everything. Israel’s problem in Isaiah’s day is ours today. In all reality, we don’t honestly take care of the poor.

(Wicked Way #4) - They take things from widows. 10:2b

I believe there are some home foreclosures that are legitimate, but I also believe that there are some home foreclosures against widows that will bring the judgment of God. Widows in Isaiah’s day, looked to their leaders for help and support. They certainly were not getting government funding from the Assyrians or Philistines. So they looked to their leaders and when they looked for help, what they discovered is the leaders wanted to devour their property.

I have literally known of a man in ministry who went into widows homes and stole things from them. How about those radio and TV ministers that are getting widows to turn their money over to them promising them the blessings of God if they do? All this is thievery.

(Wicked Way #5) - They take things from orphans. 10:2c

Fatherless children had no one to whom they could turn and when they turned to the leaders, they even took the property of the orphans.

Any time any operation profits by oppression it is heading to God’s judgment.

In **verses 3-4** God says, I will bring my devastating punishment against you and you will not be able to turn to Me. “The day of punishment” (**v. 3**) is not just a reference to Assyria but to the Great Tribulation. What Israel will do is leave her wealth; she will hide and be taken captive and she will die. These warnings were aimed at God’s own people. **Know this about God’s warnings; they are always progressive ; they go from bad to worse.**

We are very near the Great Tribulation and Israel is going down because she will not turn to the One who can help her. But how about you today?

God stretches out His hand to offer you His grace. Will you receive it? You need to know this - that same hand that can give you mercy can deal you misery. That is precisely the message Israel received from Isaiah.