

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 67

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The Great Day of His Wrath by John Martin Cir. 1851–53

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

Message Sixty-Seven

GOD'S REASONS FOR JUDGMENT

May 31, 2020

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Isaiah 29:9–16

⁹Tarry ye and wonder; take your pleasure and be blind: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink. ¹⁰For Jehovah hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes, the prophets; and your heads, the seers, hath he covered. ¹¹And all vision is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed: ¹²and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned.

¹³And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them; ¹⁴therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

¹⁵Woe unto them that hide deep their counsel from Jehovah, and whose works are in the dark, and that say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? ¹⁶Ye turn things upside down! Shall the potter be esteemed as clay; that the thing made should say of him that made it, He made me not; or the thing formed say of him that formed it, He hath no understanding (ASV, 1901)?

DIVINE IMPAIRMENT

Isaiah 29:9

⁹Tarry ye and wonder; take your pleasure and be blind: they are drunken, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink, ¹⁰For Jehovah hath poured out upon you the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes, the prophets; and your heads, the seers, hath he covered. (ASV, 1901).

The prophet addresses the people of Judah. He exhorts them to reflect on their deeds and to wonder why they forsook the words of the living God, transmitted to them through His prophets. Instead they listened to the false prophets, who enticed them to do evil. The people had rejected the teaching of Isaiah with mockery. Even when they did not have strong drink, they were intoxicated with the lies of the false prophets. They did not understand truth any more than the drunkard who had become stupefied, blind, and drunken to the truth as well as reality. Isaiah then tells them to act as he knows that they will act. They will simply “stare with astonishment”

at a prophecy which will seem to them outside of what they had accepted from the false prophets. They will not yield to the truth even with the slightest belief.

This stubbornness eventually resulted in God's punishment when God visited them. "*Jehovah is slow to anger, and great in power, and will by no means clear the guilty*" (Nahum 1:3). This prophecy now gives an answer to the secret of Israel's stubbornness and punishment. It also shows how great is the LORD'S mercy and grace towards his people.

Therefore, the time would come when they would be really amazed and stupefied, blind and drunken—both physically and spiritually. Their spiritual leaders, the prophets and priests, would grope in darkness or blindness. In "*the spirit of deep sleep,*" one of total unconsciousness or "stupor," would be poured upon them. Gave them up to a stupid state of spirit; to a reprobate mind, a mind void of judgment and sense; to judicial blindness and hardness of heart. The most glaring example of this blindness is with the Jewish leaders at the time of Christ and his apostles. They chose darkness rather than the light of the Gospel, which was all surrounding them. They were so self-righteous that they had been given up by God to a reprobate mind. Their obstinate rejection of the Messiah, is the obvious evidence. This results in God's wrath.

Romans 1:18–32

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, ²³ and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. ²⁴ Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: ²⁵ who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 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.

The Apostle Paul references Isaiah 29:9, as proof of that blindness that had happened unto them was a factor in his time, and will be beyond (Romans 11:7, 8). God *hath closed your eyes*; that is, the eyes of their understandings, so that they could not see Jesus the Messiah, and the fulfilment of prophecies in Him, or the danger they were in, or the ruin that was coming upon their nation in 70 AD. when the Romans took down the Temple. Even when it did arrive they were still flattering themselves with safety and deliverance Isaiah says that *the prophets and your rulers, the seers hath he covered*; the eyes of them, as before; were blinded, including the Scribes and Pharisees, the elders of the people, their ecclesiastical rulers. who pretended to be seers, and to know more than others.

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS

Isaiah 29:11–12

¹¹And all vision is become unto you as the words of a book that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying, Read, this, I pray thee; and he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed: ¹²and the book is delivered to him that is not learned, saying, Read, this, I pray thee; and he saith, I am not learned (ASV, 1901).

These verses give additional insight of the people's spiritual blindness. A permanently sealed book (or scroll) cannot be opened for reading. Moreover, even if the book were opened, its meaning would not be understood by anyone. Consequently, the book remained a "closed" book for the people as a whole, because they were all in darkness and in deep sleep.

Israel's leaders were spiritually blind to God's lessons. Factual cognition sleep, oppressed all levels of the Israelites whether they were learned or simple, all were affected, regardless of position or status. They were hypocrites taught by the precepts of men. The prophecies in the book of Isaiah, concerning the Messiah, were no more seen, known, and understood, both by the priests and the people, than if they had been in an unreadable book, written, rolled up, and sealed. This was all because of the blindness and stupidity of the people, whose eyes were closed, and their heads covered. The people in their justification spoke, "*And he saith, I cannot, for it is sealed*", was an excuse invented, because they had no mind or interest to read it, or otherwise they could have said, open, and I'll read it; or he might have broken off the seal; but knowing there were difficult things, and things hard to be understood, in it, did not care to look into it, and read it, and attempt to explain it to others.

Repeatedly, Israel has been reproached because of its spiritual darkness or blindness (Psalm 82:5; Isaiah 1:3; 9:2; 27:11; 42:18–20; 44:18; Jeremiah 5:21; Matthew 13:13–19; 15:15; 23:19–24:6; II Corinthians 3:14–15). Even the disciples were rebuked by Jesus for the same reason (Luke 24:25–27).

THE LORD'S PROMISE

Isaiah 29:13–14

¹³And the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw nigh unto me, and with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught them; ¹⁴therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder; and the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid (ASV, 1901).

Now the Lord speaks directly to the leaders, and the term used to designate Him is one that calls to mind His almighty power. It is God the all-powerful who now speaks in characterization of His people. He calls the nation with the derogative term “this people,” as though to say, this people upon which a spirit of deep sleep has been poured out, and which are, drunken, and uncaring for the truth.

They are praising of Him, and expressing great love for Him. However, this false profession of love was all outwardly, with their lips and mouths only. God knows what their genuine thoughts were when He says, “*but have removed their heart far from me.*” They did not really care to serve Him. Their genuine affections were not set upon Him, nor the desires of their souls unto Him. They did not really fear God or know Him. This was because of the attitude toward God that the false prophets gave them. As the text says, “*and their fear towards me is taught by the precept of men.*” Their worship of God was not according to what the Word of God said, which revealed His true will. Instead they believed according to the traditions of the elders, which they preferred to the Word of God, and, by observing them, transgressed the truth of God’s Word, and made it of no effect

In a perverted sense the people did fear God. Their fearing of Him, however, was simply a command of men, a thing that was learned from other people who also did not know God. That fear explained here is to be understood in an outward sense alone. It is really simply going through the motions of religious service or worship without their genuine heartfelt love for God. It was not a fear that proceeds from the heart. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10), but such fear proceeds from the heart and is characterized by a devotion of the whole being to God. This fear that God accuses them of what was external or their façade and so was no true fear at all. It consisted merely in commandments that had originated from men, rather than in divine revelation. It was something that had to be learned from other men. Those who thus worshipped were taught of men and not of God. Human authority was sufficient for their worship, but human authority is not sufficient for God.

In admonishing the Pharisees (Matthew 15:9) the Lord Jesus had in mind their own specific man-made requirements which they had made into law. There was growing up a great body of oral tradition which, the Jews had embodied during the Second Temple Period (520 B.C. – 70 AD.) in the, Talmud, Mishnah and the Gemara. The Lord Jesus made it quite clear that these were not the Word of God. In Isaiah’s day there was no such books of oral tradition. The leaders taught the people who “worshipped” God in the way that pleased them, but not in the way that

pleased Him. This they did in that they regarded the outward form of worship as sufficient, separated of the attitude of heart. In other words, they were hypocrites. The priests encouraged this. They only cared for the temporal such as, the worshipper bringing the requisite sacrifices and offerings, but not that he come to the Lord in humble and true devotion.

In verse 14 God calls attention to Himself with a forceful “behold!” for He is the one who is again about to perform a wonder to the nation Israel. What Isaiah says is that God will treat this people, or perform a work with respect to this people, such as only God can do. By means of repetition this thought is strengthened, *doing wondrously and a wonder*.

What God will perform with respect to “this people” will bring about the perishing of their so-called wisdom. God will cause the people’s wisdom to perish. That is, it will disappear and vanish completely from the scene. This is not a new moving of God, but a continuation of His previous working. Under Ahaz’ reign for example, human wisdom was exalted above divine revelation. It appeared at that time to them to be prudence and wise. In spite of divine warnings to the contrary, Ahaz sought the help of the Assyrian instead of placing his trust in God. Nothing but ruin came as a result of that plan. Now, the people thought themselves immune from any invasion of Assyria. Later they falsely placed their trust that Egypt would be an ally and refuge. This did not work out for them either. They also thought that the Lord would never abandon them regardless of what they did. The wondrous work of the Lord was to bring the people was a demonstration that trusting in human wisdom would be foolish. No one, not even the wisest of men, would know a way out of the difficulty He would bring upon them. In an effort to understand God *on our terms*, we reduce Him to what we want Him to be, therefore making God subject to us. Or so it is thought by those who will not accept the revealed truth of Scripture.

He states not merely that wisdom itself will perish, but specifically that the wisdom of the nation’s wise ones will be lost. When the wise ones, who should know what to do in time of crisis, have no wisdom, then truly the condition of the nation is precarious. Only then the nation will turn to the Lord, the only source of true wisdom and perception. Isaiah emphasizes the thought by saying that the prudence or perception of the nation’s prudent or perceptive ones will hide itself. Therefore, it appears that in the time of need there will be no wisdom, all perception will completely have disappeared.

Here the Lord leading His people would take the initiative. The ultimate marvelous thing He will do is: *His light would shine in the darkness, and the darkness would not overcome it* (John 1:5). Marvelous things would happen at the time of deliverance, just as they happened in Egypt in ancient times. But now they would be delivered from mankind’s vain wisdom, haughtiness, and blindness. God would make foolish the wisdom of the world (1 Corinthians 1:20). This would be the entrance into the earth Himself in the body of Jesus of Nazareth. The other near term marvelous good news of what He is about to do is continued later in Isaiah 29:17–24.

GOD KNOWS MAN'S HIDDEN THOUGHTS

Isaiah 29:15–16

¹⁵Woe unto them that hide deep their counsel from Jehovah, and whose works are in the dark, and that say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us? ¹⁶Ye turn things upside down! Shall the potter be esteemed as clay; that the thing made should say of him that made it, He made me not; or the thing formed say of him that formed it, He hath no understanding (ASV, 1901)?

These people formed deep schemes, imagining they were not seen by the Lord, yet He that sits in the heaven saw them, and laughed at their vain imaginations as He relates in the Psalm.

Psalm 2:1–4

¹Why do the nations rage, And the peoples meditate a vain thing? ²The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against Jehovah, and against his anointed, saying, ³Let us break their bonds asunder, And cast away their cords from us. ⁴He that sitteth in the heavens will laugh: The Lord will have them in derision (ASV, 1901).

Isaiah describes them as those, *whose works are in the dark*; in the dark night, as if the darkness could conceal them from the all-seeing eye of God; such thoughts are truly thoughts of darkness. The intellectual elite think their inner thoughts are concealed from God, but they can't be hidden, though they flatter themselves they will: *and they say, who seeth us? and who knoweth us?* as no man, they imagined, does, so not even God Himself. This is pure denial of God's existence. This is what thoughts and beliefs lead to atheism. In denial of the Creator they imagine schemes of man's origin as from chance. This is what wicked men sink to. When they are about to bring about their ungodly schemes, they will ultimately hear what follows.

Such was the stupidity and perverseness of the Jewish leaders and the intellectuals, in trying to hide their thoughts and plans from the Lord, and in thinking that He did not see and know them. They thought God was like themselves; which is to say that the potter was reckoned as the same as the clay. They will not realize that they are the clay, and God the potter. The ungodly if they even recognize God at all think that God does not know them and what is done by His creatures. Which, is in effect to say that He did not make them; for He that made them must know their actions, and even the very thoughts of their hearts; as he that makes a watch knows all that is in it, and the motions of it. Isaiah says, "*or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, he had no understanding?*" This is to say that God did not know how to make them as it should have been made. This might as well be said, as for a creature to pretend that God does not know what and where he is, or what he is doing. We might ask, Can He Who formed the eyes not see?

Next message: GOD BLESSES AFTER CURSING

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