

24.09.06 Coromandel Baptist 10:00 a.m.

Nations under the Shroud

Bible Readings = Is. 25:6-9 and Hebrews 2:10-18

Introduction:

- (1) Last time we were dealing with the theme of the nations, we spoke about the spiritual forces which operate behind the scenes to influence the direction and character of the nations.
- (2) We saw that these principalities and powers were all created as good, but due to their own rebellion, now are opposed to God and to his purposes in the world.
- (3) Some are impersonal entities (e.g. the Flesh, Sin); others are personal spiritual beings (demonic forces).
- (4) However, the common feature is their head: Satan, with whom the whole of rebellious humanity is now aligned, even though this thought would be abhorrent to many.
- (5) In the end, the power of these forces of wickedness in heavenly places is based on one thing: guilt.

This week, we aim to see how it is that the nations live under the shroud of death, why it is that this is linked to their guilt and how the Son of Man brings release.

1. All Nations Lie Under the Shroud of Death

(1) In Is. 25:6-9 contains both a statement of fact and a promise.

- The statement of fact is that all the nations/peoples live under the veil/shroud of death. This is not simply a statement that all die, but that the nations are all 'shrouded' entities (Is. 25:7)
 - Chapters 24-27 of Isaiah, deal with God's victory over the nations and their rulers, but (as seen last time) this includes the heavenly rulers as well as the earthly kings (see Is. 24:21)
 - Among the enemies to be defeated is Death itself. That the verses lie here, amid the passages dealing with the nations, is significant.
 - § The nations are themselves enslaved.
- The statement of promise is that the dominion of death would be broken, but God's own action, according to his own mercy. The hold that death has on the peoples/nations is unbreakable, and thus there is no escape from it apart from his action.
 - God purposes to do this 'on this mountain' (see Is. 25:7 compared with 24:23. i.e. Mt Zion, his holy hill, centred at Jerusalem geographically due to its link with the Temple, but understood spiritually in the New Testament after the crucifixion and resurrection e.g. Heb. 12:22)
 - He plans to do it 'on that day' (see Is. 25:9 compared with the repeated use of this phrase in 24:21; 26:1; 27:1, 2, 13). This is 'the day of the Lord' (see the notes below from TISBE entry on *Day of the Lord*): the day of judgement and liberation, in which the kingdom of God is secured forever.

(2) This dominion of death over the nations is not simply the absolute fact that all men and women die, but that the nations themselves live under the shroud.

- This means that the cultures of the nations are to be understood in relation to their being ‘veiled’ under death. The reality, terror and judgement of death are the factors under which nations develop their cultures.
 - See here the work of social psychologists such as Ernst Becker, and the supporting research of Sheldon Solomon, Greenberg, Yalom; *et. al.*
 - § Terror Management Theory (TMT).
 - Death anxiety: universal, easily provoked, difficult to suppress once provoked
 - Cultural anxiety buffers (world views; systems for securing oneself; self esteem)
 - Nations warring over things that will preserve their anxiety buffers: in the fear of death we provoke more death...all in an attempt to remove death further from us.
 - § See the common question in the media regarding govt policy in relation to terrorism e.g. “Is America/Australia/UK safe/safer/safest...?”
- This all from a non-biblical framework: but we bear in mind the reading from Hebrews about the fear of death keeping people in slavery all their lives.

2. From Whence Comes the Fear?

(1) Death is not simply an event, but a state of existence. See for example many New Testament references:

- cf. Eph. 2:1, 5 cf. 1:19 (a resurrection needed to bring us into relation to God again in Christ!); John 5:25 & Matt. 8:22 cf. the raising of Lazarus as an enacted sign; Rom. 8:2, ‘law of sin and death’ under which we ‘live’/exist; 1 John 3:14...passed out death to life.
- See the parallelism in John 3:36 *whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him* (NIV).
 - To be in a state of death is to be under the wrath of God in our sin.

(2) Therefore the event of death brings fear with it, not because of itself, but because of what it is and what it ushers us into: it is judgement on sin and it ushers us into the court of God the Judge.

- See, for example, Heb. 9:27 Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment (NIV) cf. John 5:26-29; Rom. 14:9-12; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Tim. 4:1;etc.
- Guilt is the universal experience of humanity. Objective guilt leads to subjective guilt and shame.
 - Release from fear could only come through the removal of judgement.

3. And How Can the Fear Be Removed?

(1) The evil one gains power by virtue of this fear (thus Heb. 2:14ff.). Conversely his power is taken away when the guilt is removed (as in Col. 2:13ff.)

- Compare with 1 Corinthians 15:56-57

(2) It is important to see that we have been cleansed *and renewed* in the Son!

- There is a washing of *regeneration* and a *renewal* in the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5). This means it is not that we have the simple declaration that we are acquitted (i.e. not guilty), but that we are positively restored and made new in the Son. In glory conformed to his image.
 - See Romans 8:28ff. cf. 1 John 3:2 compared with 1 John 4:18.
 - We are fully restored in the Son! Now we already have been blessed with all the spiritual blessing in him. You have been put to death, buried and raised, and now await the revelation of the sons of God. (Col. 3:1-4 cf. Rom. 8:18ff.)

(3) It is this proclamation that wins the nations, and which is so opposed by the evil one, since it totally removes his base of operation.

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Day of the Lord: (Heb: *yom Yahweh*; Grk: *he hemera tou Kuriou*): The idea is a common Old Testament one. It denotes the consummation of the kingdom of God and the absolute cessation of all attacks upon it (Isa 2:12; 13:6,9; 34:8; Ezek 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:11; Am 5:18; Zeph 1:14; Zec 14:1) It is a "day of visitation" (Isa 10:3), a day "of the wrath of Yahweh" (Ezek 7:19), a "great day of Yahweh" (Zeph 1:14). The entire conception in the Old Testament is dark and foreboding.

On the other hand the New Testament idea is pervaded with the elements of hope and joy and victory. In the New Testament it is eminently the day of Christ, the day of His coming in the glory of His father. The very conception of Him as the "Son of Man" points to this day (E. Kuehl, *Das Selbstbewusstsein Jesu*, 68). Jn 5:27: "And he gave him authority to execute judgment, because he is a son of man" (compare Mt 24:27,30; Lk 12:8). It is true in the New Testament there is a dark background to the bright picture, for it still remains a "day of wrath". (Rom 2:5,6), a "great day" (Rev 6:17; Jude 1:6), a "day of God" (2 Pet 3:12), a "day of judgment" (Mt 10:15; 2 Pet 3:7; Rom 2:16). Sometimes it is called "that day" (Mt 7:22; 1 Thess 5:4; 2 Tim 4:8), and again it is called "the day" without any qualification whatever, as if it were the only day worth counting in all the history of the world and of the race (1 Cor 3:13). To the unbeliever, the New Testament depicts it as a day of terror; to the believer, as a day of joy. For on that day Christ will raise the dead, especially His own dead, the bodies of those that believed in Him--"that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day" (Jn 6:39). In that day He comes to His own (Mt 16:27), and therefore it is called "the day of our Lord Jesus" (2 Cor 1:14), "the day of Jesus Christ" or "of Christ" (Phil 1:6,10), the day when there "shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven" (Mt 24:30). All Paulinic literature is especially suffused with this longing for the "parousia," the day of Christ's glorious manifestation. The entire conception of that day centers therefore in Christ and points to the everlasting establishment of the kingdom of heaven, from which sin will be forever eliminated, and in which the antithesis between Nature and grace will be changed into an everlasting synthesis. (H. E. Dosker)