

Review

In Isaiah 24, we read of the judgment which will come upon the world. A time when the earth will be laid waste and its surface will be distorted (Isa. 24:1). Why? Because of mankind's continual transgression of God's laws (Isa. 24:5).

There is good news, however, for those who love the Lord and obey His commandments. Chapter 24 finished with the statement that...

Is. 24:23 ...the LORD of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders.

Tonight, this contrast between what happens to the rejecters and to the worshipers continues...

25:1-5 I Will Exalt You

Isaiah worships the Lord by exalting Him and giving Him thanks. "Exalt" is a word we use quite a bit, but don't often define. It means to lift or raise up. Obviously, it's an impossibility for us to lift the Lord up physically, but we can raise Him figuratively. How?

The Bible describes people who are exalted by being lifted up (or lifting themselves up) into positions of power and authority, into places of higher priority than others (Exo. 9:17; Josh. 3:7; 1Ki. 1:5; 1Ki. 16:2; etc.). We exalt the Lord in much the same way. When we acknowledge His high position of authority over us, allowing nothing else to have higher priority or position in our hearts and minds, then we are exalting Him. A good example of this is found in the book of Nehemiah, when the Levites praised Him by saying,

Neh. 9:5-6 "...O may Your glorious name be blessed and exalted above all blessing and praise! You alone are the LORD. You have made the heavens, the heaven of heavens with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. You give life to all of them and the heavenly host bows down before You."

This kind of worshipful acknowledgment is what it means to exalt God. Isaiah did so by speaking of God's power over every powerful city, army, and government.

At the same time, he praises the Lord for His attention to the weak and defenseless.

25:6-12 The Banquet For All Peoples

The lavish banquet for all peoples will be prepared by the Lord "on this mountain." Which mountain? Most likely, the one Isaiah told us about, that the nations would come to for worship:

Is. 2:2-3 Now it will come about that in the last days the mountain of the house of the LORD will be established as the chief of the mountains, and will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways and that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Mount Zion in Jerusalem is the place from which the Lord will rule and reign, and meet with the people of the world. It is probably the location that Isaiah is talking about, where a banquet will be held during the Millennium.

26:1-6 We Have A Strong City

Chapter 25 ended with the statement that the Lord was going to bring down the "unassailable fortifications" of the cities of Moab. In contrast, the Millennium will be marked by the Jews singing about the secure city that God will establish in the land of Judah.

Of course, the song isn't about the city only. It will be serving as an example of the security people find when they trust in Him.

26:7-8 The Smooth Way Of The Righteous

"The way of the righteous is smooth." While this might sound at first like a shaving commercial, in reality, the smoothness being referred to is the path, not the skin. Remember when John the Baptist came on the scene, Luke said,

Luke 3:3-5 And he came into all the district around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, "THE VOICE OF ONE CRYING IN THE WILDERNESS, 'MAKE READY THE WAY OF THE LORD, MAKE HIS PATHS STRAIGHT. EVERY RAVINE WILL BE FILLED, AND EVERY MOUNTAIN AND HILL WILL BE BROUGHT LOW; THE CROOKED WILL BECOME STRAIGHT, AND THE ROUGH ROADS SMOOTH'"

Luke was quoting from Isaiah chapter 40, not 26, but it helps us to see the context of the way of the righteous being smooth. It refers to a path that has been straightened and smoothed. Potholes have been filled in. Steep grades have been leveled. John was saying that the Lord was coming, and that men should make it easy for Him to get to their hearts. Here, Isaiah is appealing to the Lord to smooth the path before the righteous, basically to make life easier for those who live righteously.

26:9-11 The Wicked Does Not Learn Righteousness

The day is coming when God will rule this earth as king on the earth. Righteousness will be imposed with a rod of iron. But this will not erase the sinful nature of man. In spite of the favor shown to him, the wicked man will still sin. This is one of the aspects of the Millennium of which people are often not aware. There will still be people who deal unjustly, and who reject the ways of God.

This is why I do not believe that we can turn our country to righteousness through legislation. Prohibition didn't stop people from desiring to drink. Outlawing drugs hasn't stopped drug users. Now, don't misunderstand me: I'm all for getting rid of alcohol and drugs, but think about it - we're fooling ourselves if we think that laws mandating righteousness are going to result in righteous citizens. That approach isn't even going to work when God is the President!

Ultimately, the only way to separate the righteous from the unrighteous will be to release Satan at the end of the Millennium and give people the choice of who they want to follow. Those who follow Satan will be

devoured by fire (Rev. 20:9).

26:12 You Have Performed For Us All Our Works

One of the great devotional thoughts of the Bible is in this verse: the Lord has performed for us all our works. This knowledge completely destroys self-righteousness. Any time that I start to get full of myself, thinking, "I have done this good thing," I am immediately humbled when I remember that God has done it for me.

Paul expounded on this point to the Ephesians, saying,

Eph. 2:8-10 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

We haven't been saved through our good works. We've been saved through faith, and whatever faith we have was given to us by God. As for good works, any good works we do are works which God prepared beforehand, and performed Himself. Where is boasting? Where is self-righteousness? It's all God's grace.

26:13 Other Masters

Isaiah's people had spent years in subjection to oppressors. Using just the book of Judges as an example, we can see how they served the kings of Mesopotamia (Judg. 3:8), Moab (Judg. 3:14), Canaan (Judg. 4:2), Midian (Judg. 6:1), Philistia and Ammon (Judg. 10:7).

Every time the Israelites were given over to the rule of these nations, it was because they had forgotten the Lord and done evil (Judg. 3:7).

In our own lives, we have done this as well. We have given ourselves over to other masters. Money, relationships, drugs or alcohol, addictions, even hobbies have ruled our lives. But many of us have come to the conclusion that we must be ruled by nothing else but God. We have learned the same lesson as Simon Peter. Jesus gave a hard teaching in John 6,

and...

John 6:66-69 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

There are those who try to walk the fence, allowing both God and something else to rule. It doesn't work, because...

Matt. 6:24 "No one can serve two masters..."