

GOD'S ANGER BECOMES A CONSUMING FIRE!

Isaiah 9:8-21 and 10:1-4.

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I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND BIBLICAL CONTEXT

A. Historical Background

As was established back in January, we know that **the Israelites** became *divided into two nations*, namely, **Israel**, the Northern state (consisting of **10 Tribes**) with **Samaria** as its capital and **Judah**, the southern nation (consisting of **2 Tribes** – Judah and Benjamin) with **Jerusalem** as its capital. The Israelites were divided into two nations immediately after King Solomon's death *because of idol worship initiated by him*. Recall the Israelites **demanded to be led by kings** just like the other idol worshipping nation instead of the God who *delivered them out slavery in Egypt, led them into Canaan where they inherited lands they didn't deserve, lived in houses they didn't build and came into possessions of farms, cattle and wealth they didn't work for!* By the time we get to the time of Isaiah, the Israelites had **descended into Apostacy** led by several idol worshipping kings which *eventually* culminated in the **total destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple** by the Babylonians. As we continue to study the Book of Isaiah, we must pay attention to **the fundamental reason** for the *division* of Israelites, their *constant conflicts* between them and the **ongoing wars** with the neighboring nations was **the introduction of idol worship!** *However, God always provided opportunities for them to repent of their unfaithfulness and rebelliousness.* God raised Prophets such as Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, etc. at different times in their long history. **The Prophets** not only **warned** them about what will happen to them if they don't repent and turn back to God, but also **explained the indictment brought by God and the nature of the Judgements to come.** **Yet, again and again, they refused to return back to Him!** Consequently, not only they continued to lose territories, but also diminished in significance and influence in the world. Because they *despised their faith in God* and turned to idols, **the Lord gave them over to the idol worshipping nations** who *looted* their palaces, *mercilessly killed* many of the Israelites, *destroyed* their cities, took the rest of them *into exile* and made them *their servants!*

B. Biblical Context

Even though the Israelites gave God all the reasons to completely destroy them in His anger, He *always pulled back* from doing so **because of the Promises** He gave to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David. Even though the Israelites **broke the Covenant** over and over again, God in His Love, Mercy and Grace continued to advance **His Plan of Salvation** using the **few Remnants**

who never stopped believing in God! Even though the Israelites gave God every opportunity to wipe them out completely, He continued to raise up Prophets who proclaimed **the Prophecy of Hope regarding the Messiah who is to come** as in **Isaiah 9:1-7!** *For the few Remnants, such Prophecy of Hope was enough in spite of the turmoil, hardships and impoverishment brought about by the rebelliousness of their fellow Israelites!* Hallelujah! Because of the **Prophecy of Hope in the Messiah** to come, the **Few Remnants** kept on trusting in the Lord and pressed on in their faith! Because they trusted in God's Word, they were able to **rise above** hardships, servitude, injustice and exploitation **even in exile!** Hallelujah! Because God continued to show Himself to His faithful servants such as Daniel, Jeremiah and Isaiah, those remnants who were in exile were able to keep their faith alive! *Because of the Prophecy of Hope, the Few Remnants kept their faith in God and passed on the Legacy of Faith to their children and grandchildren!*

II. THE LESSON: God's Anger Becomes a Consuming Fire!

1. vv. 8-12. The Prophecy Against Jacob

Jacob is one of the twins born to Isaac and Rebeka. God changed Jacob's name to **Israel** (Gen. 32:22-32) and multiplied him into millions according to His Promises given to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 15:1-6). **God kept His Promises!** Even though the descendants of Jacob became unfaithful and disobedient to God generation after generation, the Lord kept His Promises to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and David in response to the faithfulness of the Few Remnants! But because God is Holy, Righteous and Just, He **cannot ignore** the unfaithful, unrighteous, unjust and rebellious acts of His chosen people! God's people needed to know that their willful disobedience and wickedness against Him cannot go on without arousing His Righteous Anger towards them! They have worn His Patience through their **insolent, stubborn and arrogant behavior** toward the Holy and Righteous God. **God told Isaiah what God was ready to do to them in His Righteous Anger which will consume them like fire!**

In the **Prophecy of Judgement** against Jacob/the Israelites, notice that there is mention of (a) **Ephraim**, (b) **inhabitants of Samaria** [which point to the Northern Kingdom], (c) **Rezin** (who was the last king of **Syria** with whom **Ephraim** formed political alliance to fight against **Judah** [the Southern Kingdom]). The Bible mentioned them by name to highlight **Ephraim** and **Judah** who are **brothers** are *aligning themselves with foreign powers* in order to fight against each other! **Let us now break down the verses.**

- a) Verses 8-10. Israel/Ephraim/Samaria – inhabitants of the **Northern Kingdom** are saying in their pride, ignorance and arrogance that they will build back better than before by replacing “the bricks that have

fallen down” with “dressed stones,” and “the fig trees that have been felled” with “cedar.”

- b) Verse 11 (a) . “But the LORD has strengthened Rezin’s foes against them and has spurred their enemies on. In other words, *God had already devised another plan of destruction for them!* **Rezin** was the last king of **Syria** who was killed by the **Assyrians**. Rezin’s foes were the Assyrians. Israel’s longtime foes were the Arameans and the Philistines. **God has already summoned them against Jacob/Israel/Ephraim/Samaria “to devour them.”** What they were planning was all in vain! God has already given the Prophecy against Israel/Ephraim/Samaria to his faithful Prophet Isaiah. It has been proclaimed! It will come to pass!
- c) Verse 11 (b). “**Yet for all this, His anger is not returned away, His Hand is still upraised.**”

It is amazing and instructive to realize to what an extent the Israelites have descended by refusing to hear God’s repeated Call for repentance! Reading and studying the history of the Israelites and their kings, we discover that both the **Syrians** and **Assyrians**, at one time or another, had fought against Israel and Judah and made them their subjects paying tributes to them. What the Israelites *repeatedly failed to learn and understand* was that *political alliances* with idol worshipping nations was (a) unreliable, short lived and exploitative and (b) *an affront* to God! Such a *persistent behavior* of the Israelites in spite of the **recurring Call for Repentance** from God through His Prophets eventually brought the Angry Judgement of Lord!

**“Yet, for All this, His Anger is No Turned Away,
His Hand is Still Upraised.”**

2. vv. 13-18. But the People Have Not Returned to Him.

In spite of the **warnings** pronounced by Prophet Isaiah, the Israelites were bent on being unrepentant, preferring to continue in their wicked ways! In spite of *their knowledge from past experiences* of what happens to them when the Israelites disobeyed God, they were bent on repeating the same mistakes! It is one thing when someone keeps on making the same mistakes for lack of knowledge. It is completely another matter when someone *knowingly does the same things* even though he/she **knows** *the severe consequences of repeating the same mistakes again and again!* The Israelites **know** what happened to their ancestors who continue to **murmur, grumble** and **complain** all the time even as God *continued* to lead them, provide for them and lavish them with His Love, Grace and Patience! So, the LORD was determined to act in His Anger as follows:

- Verses 14 & 15. “To **cut off** from Israel both **head** and **tail** in a single day.” The “head” are the “*elders and prominent men*” of Israel. And the “tail” are “**the prophets who teach lies.**”
- Verses 16. God will not make distinctions between those who **mislead** and those who are **misled**. He will judge all. **The misled** *at some point* must listen to God who speaks through His faithful prophets such as Isaiah and ***notice the difference between those who lie and tell the Truth.*** They delight in the lies of the false prophets because ***they don’t want to hear and heed the Truth!*** It is not that they didn’t hear the Truth at some point in their lives! They *refused* to accept it because they *preferred to live with the lie!* **That is wickedness!**
- Verse 17. Unfaithfulness, Ungodliness and Rebelliousness have become so pervasive and prevalent that the whole society has descended into wickedness and Apostasy! Children from young age are taught and socialized into idolatry, adultery, lying, cheating, stealing, bribery, etc. ***such wickedness has become the norm!*** When God’s chosen people descend to such abhorrent levels, God’s Holiness and Righteousness causes Him to Act Judgement in Anger! At such times, God even ceases to have compassion over the “fatherless and widows.” The wickedness of the Israelites has reached a point “**for everyone is ungodly and wicked, every mouth speaks vileness.**”

3. vv. 19-21. **The Wrath of the LORD Almighty will Consume like Fire!**

God’s wrath will turn the people of God against each other to the degree that “... the people will be fuel for the fire, no one will spare his brother, ... each will feed on the flesh of his own offspring; Manasseh will feed on Ephraim, and Ephraim on Manasseh.”

a) Ephraim and Manasseh will Devour Each Other.

Recall that Ephraim and Manasseh were the children of Joseph. Recall that both of them were blessed by Jacob, their grandfather, just before he died (Genesis 48:1-22). What a tragedy and travesty it is for their descendants (offsprings) to become the enemies of God to receive such utterly devastating divine condemnation!

b) Ephraim and Manasseh will Turn Against Judah.

What remained of Ephraim and Manasseh will turn against Judah (southern kingdom). Even after all of these horrible things have taken place in the future, the Bible says, “Yet for all this, His anger is not turned away, **His Hand is Still Upraised.**” Translation: God will not be satisfied until the nations of both Israel and Judah are completely done away! God’s Wrath

which consumes like fire will continue until nothing is left to burn! **Such tragic catastrophe could have been averted only if the people of God had listened to the Prophets and heeded the warnings! Verse 13 tells us why God's Anger burned against His people!**

4. vv. 1-4. of Chapter 10. Yet, for All this, His Anger is No Turned Away, His Hand is Still Upraised.

a) Verse 1-2: Woe to those Who Make Unjust Laws.

Those who are **empowered to make laws** are supposed to *wright them* to uphold **Justice, Fairness** and **Truth** so that they become the *foundation* for society to be safe and flourish peacefully in their daily endeavors. When they make "unjust laws" for ill gains taking advantage of their privileged positions, they will escape the Judgement of God.

The Woe is directed toward those who:

- **"make unjust laws;**
- **"issue oppressive decrees;**
- **"deprive the poor of their rights;**
- **"withhold justice from the oppressed people;**
- **"make widows their prey;**
- **"rob the fatherless."**

b) Verses 3. Where will You Hide on the Day of Reckoning?

The Bible says, when **the Day of Reckoning comes**, there is no place to hide! There will be nobody to help them! Their wealth cannot protect them against God's Wrath! **Verse 4 (a).** The only thing left for them will be a **place among the Captives or the Slain.**

c) Verse 4 (b). Yet, God's Anger Still Burns! His Hand is Still Upraised.

III. CONCLUSION:

IT IS ABSOLUTELY A DREADFUL THING TO BECOME THE ENEMY OF GOD, THE LORD ALMIGHTY!

The Bible says in **Hebrews 10:26-31**. "If we **deliberately keep on sinning** *after we have received the knowledge of the Truth*, no sacrifice for sin is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgement and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God. ... For we know Him who said, 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay', and again, 'The Lord will judge His people. ... **It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God.**'"