

The Prophecy About the Exile Yet to Come!

Scripture: Isaiah 5:24-30

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I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND BIBLICAL CONTEXT

A. Historical Background: Historical Circumstances

Isaiah, the son of Amoz, ministered/prophesied during the time of the divided Kingdom, mainly to Judah. He had been raised in Jerusalem as a child but was now married with two sons. When God called him to prophesy, he responded with cheerful readiness.

B. Biblical Context

Isaiah prophesied under four Kings of Judah. Some of his prophecies were fulfilled within his lifetime which provided his credentials. Under King Uzziah (the first of the four kings), Judah became strong, both with its construction and trade, and its military might. Unfortunately, its spiritual status declined. Isaiah speaks “woe” to many situations in vv. 8-10, 11-14, 18-19, 20, 21, and 22-24.

Isaiah’s “woes” included:

1. Perverters of Possessions (v. 8-10)
2. Perverters of Pleasure (vv. 11-17)
3. Perverters of Reverence (vv. 18-19)
4. Perverters of Values (v. 20)
5. Perverters of Wisdom (v. 21)
6. Perverters of Justice (vv. 22-23)

What does “woe” mean? Woe is sadness. Some synonyms are distress, regret, deep troubles. But woe is deeper – deep inconsolable sadness. Isaiah was reminding the people that God was angry, and they would indeed be punished. Chapter 5 of Isaiah concludes the prophecy started in chapter 2. **Verses 24-30 provides the ending of this prophecy in announcing God’s action in sending a mighty army against Judah which will conquer it and leave the land in darkness.**

II. The Lesson: The Prophecy About the Exile Yet to Come!

1. **v. 24.** Therefore, as tongues of fire lick up straw and as dry grass sinks down in the flames, so their roots will decay (**Job 18:16**) and their flowers blow away like dust; for they have rejected the law of the Lord Almighty and (**spurned the word**, meaning – **rejected with disdain, regarded as unworthy of notice**). (**Isa. 8:6; 30:9, 12**) of the Holy One of Israel.

Job's friends said these same words to him - letting him know they thought his suffering was the result of his rejection of God. Which of course was not true. However, this verse tells that the people of Israel and Judah have suffered and would continue to suffer because of their rejection of God and His laws.

(**Luke 12:47**) That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. (If you know to do right and do wrong you will be beaten with many blows)

The people suffered because they rejected God's law. It is sad to see so many people today searching for meaning in life while **spurning God's Word**. We can avoid the error of Israel and Judah by making reading the Bible a high priority in our lives.

2. **v. 25.** Therefore, the Lord's anger (**2Kings 22:13**) burned against the people; his hand is raised, and he strikes them down. The mountains shake, and the dead bodies are like refuse (**2 King 9:37**) in the streets. Yet for all this, his anger is not turned away, (**Jer. 4:8, Da. 9:16**) his hand is still upraised. (**Isa. 9:12, 17, 21; 10:4**).

These same words in 2 Kings point out that this rejection of God and its consequences go on for a long time. **It becomes Judah's legacy**. In 2 Kings there is hope for a better outcome. But here in Isaiah, God is so angry with His people that He raises His hand and does not bring it down. Isaiah prophecies an earthquake, perhaps war, with bodies in the street like garbage.

3. **v. 26.** He lifts up a banner for the distant nations, he whistles (**Isa. 7:18, Zec. 10:8**) for those at the ends of the earth. (**Dt. 28:49; Isa. 13:5, 18:3**) Here they come, swiftly and speedily!

This is a verse that talks about another kind of “whistle”. **In Zechariah, God “whistles” for the people to gather and come to Him. God’s “whistle” is meant to get our attention.** In Isaiah, God’s “whistle” is to call armies from other lands to come and conquer Judah.

4. v. 27. Not one of them grows tired or stumbles, not one slumbers or sleeps; not a belt is loosened at the waist, (**Job 12:18**) not a sandal thong is broken. (**Joel 2:7-8**).

Joel 2:7-8. These words are spoken again in another book of prophecy, Joel. Both books let us know that regardless of how far the enemy has traveled, or how long they’ve been traveling, they will still be able to conquer. They won’t get tired, no one has to sleep, no one stumbles. They just wage war. And win.

5. v. 28. Their arrows are sharp, (**Ps. 45:5**) all their bows (**Ps. 7:12**) are strung; their horses hoofs seem like flint, their chariot wheels like a whirlwind.

Psalm 45:5. This Psalm using the same words, tells us that the conquerors will have sharp arrows to pierce the hearts of sinners and they will trample the conquered under their feet.

6. v. 29. Their roar is like that of the lion, (**Jer. 51:38; Zep. 3:3**) they roar like young lion; they growl as they seize (**Isa. 10:6; 49:24-25**) their prey and carry it off with no one to rescue. (**Isa. 42:22; Mic. 5:8**)

Zephaniah 3:3. Zephaniah uses these same words to prophecy what God will do to sinners. Isaiah’s verse lets us know that the conquering armies will growl like lions as they seize their conquered peoples. And drag them off to captivity.

7. v. 30. In that day they will roar over it like the roaring of the sea. (**Lk. 21:25**) And if one looks at the land, he will see darkness and distress; (**Isa. 8:22; Jer. 4:23-28**) even the light will be darkened. (**Joel 2:10**) by the clouds.

Joel 2:10. Using similar words, Joel and Isaiah warn the people that their whole world could be in darkness because of their sin, rejecting God and His goodness.

Habakkuk 1:5-11 is a prophecy in which God relates His intention to raise up Babylon, a “ruthless” and “dreaded” nation, to achieve His purpose. This raises the question; Does God sometimes use evil to accomplish His plans?

There is an important distinction to be made between God *controlling* evil and God *creating* evil. God is not the author of sin, but He can use sinful men to attain an objective. **Romans 8:28** says, “For those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” “All things” includes both good and bad things. God can use struggles, heartbreaks, and tragedies in ways to bring about His glory and our good. Such events, even though we don’t understand the reason for them, are part of His perfect, divine plan. If God could not control evil, He would not be God. His sovereignty demands that He be in control of everything, even “dreaded” nations such as Babylon.

At the same time, the Bible is clear that God does not sin, and He performs no evil. **James 1:13** teaches, “God cannot be tempted with evil, and he himself tempts no one.” **Deuteronomy 32:4** says, “The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice” (see also **2 Samuel 22:31**; **Psalms 18:30**; and **Matthew 5:48**).

The problem in Habakkuk is that God was using the Babylonians (an evil people) to accomplish His will. Our wise and perfect God can and sometimes does use the sin already existing in our world to fulfill His purpose. The perfect example of this is Jesus’ crucifixion: the murder of Christ was an evil act, but through it God redeemed His elect and “disarmed the [demonic] powers and authorities” (**Colossians 2:15**). In Habakkuk’s day, God’s purpose was to bring judgment on Judah for their idolatry. Babylon was the instrument of His judgment (cf. **Isaiah 10:5**).

God’s revelation caused Habakkuk to then ask how God could use a nation more wicked than Judah to judge Judah (1:12-2:1). God’s response was a promise that He would later punish Babylon as well (2:2-20). In the end, Habakkuk could only acknowledge the Lord’s perfect wisdom; the prophet ends with a song of praise in chapter 3.

We may struggle with questions about God’s methods as Habakkuk did. How God chooses to operate is up to Him. At times, He intervenes miraculously. Other times, He works behind the scenes. And, yes, God may even allow a certain measure of freedom to evil forces in our world to bring about His design. Like Habakkuk, if we view life from God’s perspective, our response will be to worship the Lord, knowing He is in control of all things.

III. CONCLUSION

This passage, Isaiah 5:24-30, shows God's character. Exodus 34: 6-7 says that although God is "compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounds in lovingkindness and truth. . . forgives iniquity, transgression, and sin; **yet he will by no means leave the guilty unpunished.**"

This passage describes what God would do if the people disobeyed him (Deuteronomy 28). Assyria began to torment Israel during the reign of Ahaz (735 – 715 B.C.). This powerful aggressor destroyed the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. and scattered the people throughout its own empire. **Sin has consequences.** Although this judgement was not immediate, **eventually Israel was punished.**

Deuteronomy 28 talks about the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience. That same thought, with those same outcomes, travels throughout the Bible, from the Old Testament and down to us.

Unfortunately, for the people of Judah and Israel, Isaiah and other prophets had warned them time and time again that **rejecting the Lord, His Laws, and His Will**, would result in punishment.

About 100 years after this warning, Assyria conquered Judah and the people were taken into captivity. Less than 100 years after that, Israel (the Southern Kingdom) was conquered and taken into captivity.

This is a Warning: If you do what you have always done; you will get what you have always gotten. The God we serve is a God full of Grace and Mercy, but He is also a consuming fire. The **wages of sin** is death but the gift of God is **eternal life**. The greatest place to be in this world is in the **Will of God**. Where else can we go to seek refuge for our soul? Don't just be hearers of the Word but be doers of the Word. **Sin Has Consequences!**