

19. Jesus in Isaiah – Part 3

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Sometimes in my small brain, I wonder why the Lord doesn't show even the tiniest portion of the horror of the Great Tribulation and hell, so that the unbelievers of the world would turn their hearts to Him. Then, ever so gently, the Holy Spirit reminds me that it would not be the free will of men, rather the raw power of God. The Lord does not use fear tactics like people would.

I am so glad that we, born-again Christians don't have to have a fear of going through the Great Tribulation, because we will be taken away before the hell on earth will break loose.

A. JESUS IN THE JUDGMENT SEAT

Isaiah 24:17-23 Fear and the pit and the snare Are upon you, O inhabitant of the earth. 18 And it shall be That he who flees from the noise of the fear Shall fall into the pit, And he who comes up from the midst of the pit Shall be caught in the snare; For the windows from on high are open, And the foundations of the earth are shaken. 19 The earth is violently broken, The earth is split open, The earth is shaken exceedingly. 20 The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, And shall totter like a hut; Its transgression shall be heavy upon it, And it will fall, and not rise again. 21 It shall come to pass in that day That the Lord will punish on high the host of exalted ones, And on the earth the kings of the earth. 22 They will be gathered together, As prisoners are gathered in the pit, And will be shut up in the prison; After many days they will be punished. 23 Then the moon will be disgraced And the sun ashamed; For the Lord of hosts will reign On Mount Zion and in Jerusalem And before His elders, gloriously.

At the Great White Throne Judgment, those unbelievers will wish that they spoke one less lie and did one less wicked thing against the Lord and other human beings. The judgment of God will be inescapable, complete, precise, and righteous, because our God is no respecter of persons.

What we just read in chapter 24 is what will happen during the 7 year Tribulation. Especially in v19 and 20, it describes major earthquakes that rattle everything around the world.

You might have heard "the Ring of Fire" from somewhere. It is an area in the basin of the Pacific Ocean where a large number of earthquakes and volcanic eruptions occur. In a 25,000 mile horseshoe shape, it is associated with a nearly continuous series of oceanic trenches, volcanic arcs, and volcanic belts and/or plate movements. It has 452 volcanoes. That's more than 75% of the world's active and dormant volcanoes. Any of these things, especially plate movements will cause massive tsunamis. One particular one is about 70 years behind of its average schedule that can easily swallow up all the coastlines in Northwest of the USA. The Lord Jesus might just use one of these during the Great Tribulation time.

You cannot talk about the End Time Prophecy without mentioning the rapture. This theology is surrounded by many heresies, including time setting. When Jesus said, "No-one-knows," means exactly "No-one-knows." I don't know which part of this "No-one-knows" people don't understand.

As many of you already know, generally, there are four different concepts for the time of the Rapture: Pre-Tribulation, Mid-Tribulation, Post-Tribulation, and Pan-Tribulation.

Why does the debate continue concerning the timing of this event? I believe that it is due to misunderstanding to whom Jesus was speaking:

Matthew 24:21-22 For then shall be great Tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.

On the basis of this verse, people say, "Aha! Here we see the elect in the Tribulation." However, they are failing to realize that the term "elect" can be referred to three groups of people: Christians (Colossians 3:12), Israel in general (Isaiah 45:4), and those who will be saved during the Tribulation.

So, to which of the elect does Jesus refer in Matthew 24:21? I believe the answer lies in the verse preceding it.

Matthew 24:20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:

Even to this day, the vast majority of transportation, whether it is public or private, in Israel is shut down on the Sabbath. Since the Sabbath means nothing to Gentile nations, the application is clearly to Israel people.

I had an occasion to talk with someone who was a staunch believer for the Mid-Tribulation. He made a good argument for how we can draw parallels between Matthew 24 and Revelation 6. So he firmly argued with me that the church would go through the Tribulation. The one very important thing he didn't include in his equation was that the 'elect' was not the church by the context of Matthew 24:20. It is the people of Israel.

Besides, you don't find anywhere from chapter 6 to 19 in the Book of Revelation referring to the church. Some people also argue that those who get saved during the Tribulation are the church. No, the apostle John, the author of the Book of Revelation, stopped using the word 'church' after chapters 1 through 3 of this Book, never again during the Tribulation period.

B. JESUS IN THE REBIRTH OF ISRAEL

Isaiah 27:6 Those who come He shall cause to take root in Jacob; Israel shall blossom and bud, And fill the face of the world with fruit.

The land of Israel was desolate worthless swampland in the early 1900s. As the Zionist movement grew, the Jews began to open up the streams that had been blocked by the dirt piles and transformed the swampland to the lush valleys of beautiful farmland that grow various fruits, vegetables, and flowers. Israel is now the fourth largest exporter of fruit in the world. Israel land is about the size of New Jersey. The Lord Jesus foretold it over 2700 years ago.

This prophecy must have sounded ridiculous to the people while the nation of Israel was not existing before 1948. Since they couldn't even imagine how God would bring back Israel to life, so they came to their own conclusion: They thought that this blossoming Israel is not literal Israel, rather it is the church that would replace the ancient and non-existing Israel.

Some Bible scholars say that the church is now “spiritual Israel” and that all of these OT promises are now being fulfilled in a spiritual sense in the church. This theology is known as the “Replacement Theology”. The late Dr. D. James Kennedy was the central figure of this theology. Though I have a great deal of respect for this godly man, but he was wrong on this one. Contrary to those “Replacement Theology” scholars, the apostle Paul devoted all of Romans 11 to present proof that God is not through with Israel.

C. JESUS IN THE CORNERSTONE

Isaiah 28:16 Therefore thus says the Lord God: “Behold, I lay in Zion a stone for a foundation, A tried stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; Whoever believes will not act hastily.

As the people of Judah’s only hope was in the tried and true foundation stone that is Jesus Christ, our hope should always remain with Him. He is our Rock of all ages, and all the other ground is sinking sand. If they had faith in their God Jehovah, they would not be rushing here and there, trying to forge alliances with pagan nations. This practice started with their forefather king Solomon who had a profound assurance of protection from God Himself.

Remember what happened to him? Because he made alliances with pagan nations around him through many marriages that his pagan wives led him to worship their pagan idols and he eventually walked away from the Lord.

This Scripture was quoted by the apostle Peter in his epistle 1 Peter 2:6. The apostle applies this passage directly to the Messiah Jesus Christ. He is the Foundation for our lives, and only with a secure, stable foundation can anything lasting be built. Anything “added on” to the house, not built upon the foundation, is sure to end up in the wreckage.

During that time, the builder must lay down the cornerstone first, then he could put the rest of the stones together. God laid Jesus as our Cornerstone so that we could be aligned with Him. Then, we will have a firm foundation in our lives. Without that foundation, it is no wonder that unbelievers’ lives are shamble.

The prime example of lousy foundation would be the Leaning Tower of Pisa. Scientists report that the 8 stories 179-foot bell tower moves about one-twentieth of an inch a year, and is now 17 feet out of plumb. They are doing everything they can to keep that unique building up on the ground. By the way, the word “pisa” means “marshy land,” which should have given the original builders a clue to do something about the foundation. But obviously they didn’t. As a matter of fact, the tower began to lean even before it was completed. And get this, its foundation is only 10 feet deep!

If you are not grounded in the Word of God daily, it is like you do not have a good foundation for your life. The Bible is not something you carry to the church only, rather it should carry you in making decisions everyday. As you have heard, it doesn’t matter how many times you go through the Bible in your life, but it matters how deep the Bible goes through you.

D. JESUS IN HEALING

Isaiah 35:5-6 Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. 6 Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.

Even a strong and spirit filled believer goes through difficult and depressed times now and then. When John the Baptist was in prison, he was apparently confused about why Jesus hadn't established His kingdom on earth yet. He had baptized Jesus and had seen the Holy spirit descend on Him. He also heard the reports about Jesus' miracles and teachings from others. During the time of difficulty in prison, he doubted. He sent his disciples to Jesus to ask, "Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?"

Matthew 11:4-6 Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: 5 The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them. 6 And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me."

These are the fulfillments of the prophecies that Isaiah said when the Messiah came.

E. JESUS IN THE POSITION OF KING AND SHEPHERD

Isaiah 40:3-4 The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert A highway for our God. 4 Every valley shall be exalted And every mountain and hill brought low; The crooked places shall be made straight And the rough places smooth;

Isaiah 40:11-17 He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, And carry them in His bosom, And gently lead those who are with young. 12 Who has measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, Measured heaven with a span And calculated the dust of the earth in a measure? Weighed the mountains in scales And the hills in a balance? 13 Who has directed the Spirit of the Lord, Or as His counselor has taught Him? 14 With whom did He take counsel, and who instructed Him, And taught Him in the path of justice? Who taught Him knowledge, And showed Him the way of understanding? 15 Behold, the nations are as a drop in a bucket, And are counted as the small dust on the scales; Look, He lifts up the isles as a very little thing. 16 And Lebanon is not sufficient to burn, Nor its beasts sufficient for a burnt offering. 17 All nations before Him are as nothing, And they are counted by Him less than nothing and worthless.

Here is a word picture of the idea of preparing the way of the Lord, because the real preparation to receive Him must take place in our hearts. Of course, this portion of the Scripture reminds you of the ministry of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Jesus.

I love the way Isaiah described the Lord as a Gentle Shepherd in v11. Then, we find the greatness of God over anything in the universe in v12-17. He can measure the entire universe with a span of His hand. By the way, the region visible from earth is a sphere with a radius of about 46 billion light years and the scientists believe that the universe is continuously expanding.

Of course, this is another example of what we call an anthropomorphism – speaking of God in human terms so we can partially understand who He is and what He does. God is not a being with the body of a giant, so large that all the waters of the earth could be cupped in His actual hand, or so large that the universe could be measured by the span of His hand.

I also love the way Isaiah said about the nations "a drop in a bucket" in v15. All the super power nations showing off their military power might impress us, but to our infinite God, they are less than nothing.

But listen to me, my brothers and sisters, if you ever feel so small and insignificant that you wonder if God really cares about you personally, remember that He knows the name of every star and your name as well.

John 10:3 To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.

The same God who numbers and names all the stars can heal your broken heart, if you let Him.

Psalm 147:3-4 He heals the brokenhearted And binds up their wounds. 4 He counts the number of the stars; He calls them all by name.

Someone has defined "circumstances" as "those nasty things you see when you get your eyes off of God." Not bad. If you look at God through your circumstances, He will seem small and very far away; but if by faith you look at your circumstances through God, He will draw very near and reveal His greatness to you.

F. APPLICATIONS

1) No one is more secure than those who are in God's hands.

The flood waters that brought condemnation to the world lifted Noah and his family up above the judgment. They were secure in the ark of safety because they followed the Lord.

2) The Lord will keep every promise mentioned in this Book, the Bible. Believe it.

3) God's judgment storm for America is coming. Don't be at the receiving side. Be on God's side.

4) Look at others, and be distressed. Look at yourself, and be depressed. Look to God, and you'll be blessed.