

Isaiah's Apocalypse

The second portion of our Old Testament reading for today brings us to consider a portion of Isaiah sometimes called "Isaiah's Apocalypse" (chapters 24-27). Isaiah 25 describes the fall of a great city, which will be made "an heap", in terms that relate to a future judgement of God upon the latter day Babylonian power.

Before we consider this, we need to note that Isaiah 24 continues a theme expressed in the preceding chapter:

"Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed, when Yahweh of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously" (Isa. 24:23).

In these words, we see the elevation of Jerusalem, which contrasts with the destruction of the city in chapter 25. This is important to note: whilst there are those who claim that the Apocalyptic Babylon (Rev. 17) is in fact Jerusalem, this cannot be so. Israel will be saved with an everlasting salvation (Isa. 45:17), whereas the harlot system of the Apocalypse is destroyed (Rev. 18-19). And today's chapter directly contrasts the two: Jerusalem exalted, and the city of Yahweh's cursing being made an heap.

Associated with Jerusalem's exaltation, is the reestablishment of Divine Rule over the nation, in a way reminiscent of her previous organisation:

"I will **restore thy judges as at the first**, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, the city of righteousness, the faithful city" (Isa. 1:26).

These judges and counsellors are described again in Isaiah 24, cited above, which speaks of "his ancients" who will share the glory of Divine Rule. The principle is also in Revelation chapter 4, where we read of those who will rule with the glorified Messiah:

"And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw **four and twenty elders, sitting**, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold" (Rev. 4:4).

In that day, the political orbs will cease to shine: as per Isaiah: the sun and moon will be confounded and ashamed. Or as John had it describe to him: "the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. 21:23). When the ancients reign gloriously, the Sun of Righteousness will have arisen, to illuminate the earth with Divine Splendour.

This is the context in which the following words were penned it is to do with the future reign of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elevation of Jerusalem. In chapter 25, God is praised because he has overthrown a great city:

“O Yahweh, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. For thou hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built” (Isa. 25:1-2).

The Apocalypse helps us to understand what city will be destroyed, when Jerusalem becomes the centre of Divine worship and glory: Here, we read of a great harlot system:

“The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet colour, and decked with gold, and precious stones and pearls, having a golden cup in her hand, full of abominations and filthiness of her fornication: And upon her forehead was a name written, MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH. And I saw the woman drunken with the blood of the saints, and with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus ...” (Rev. 17:4-6).

Notice that this city:

1. Is a mother system with daughters
2. Bears the name, or reputation of Babylon of old
3. Is prosperous
4. Is a persecutor of Messiah’s brethren

This can only relate to the Roman religious system, which defines herself as being a “Mother Church”, with all other churches being her daughters. It is a prosperous system in material things and is notorious for having been foremost in persecuting the true believers down through the ages. And her system echoes that of Babylon of old – to the extent that several books have been written outlining that situation. This is the city to be destroyed when Messiah comes again. Then it will be proclaimed:

“Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen ... Therefore, shall her plagues come in one day, death and mourning, and famine; and she shall be utterly burned with fire: for strong is the Lord God who judgeth her” (Rev. 18:2, 8 – but see whole chapter).

Indeed, that day will be one of great rejoicing for the true believers:

“Rejoice over her, thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets; for God hath avenged you on her” (vs 20).

In that day, it will be said that: “Yahweh is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land. Yahweh, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear: to judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress” (Psa. 10:16-18, also Psa. 72:11-14).

Isaiah 25 describes this situation when the great oppressor shall be ruined:

“thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm ...” (Isa. 25:4).

The oppressor having been destroyed, Jerusalem shall be exalted to become a joy and praise in all the earth (Isa. 62:7). It shall be a centre from which the nations shall be fed the bread of life, as Isaiah continues:

“In this mountain shall Yahweh of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined” (Isa. 25:6).

Earlier in his prophecy, Isaiah had spoken of how all nations shall go to Zion and Jerusalem for worship and education in Divine things (Isa. 2:2-3). In this same mountain, there shall be a house of prayer for all peoples (Isa. 56:7), and there shall be a feast of spiritual delights, as the invitation shall go out:

“Ho everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa. 55:1.)

The Psalmist expressed his desire concerning the things of God:

“O Yahweh, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is” (Psa. 63:1).

This is like our present situation. The area upon which the Harlot city exercises her influence – the European political animal – is describe as a “wilderness” (Rev. 17:3). Though it be prosperous in material things, it is spiritually dry and barren – where the water of life cannot be readily found. But the Psalmist continued to describe how this situation is only temporary, and looked to the future state of blessedness:

“My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips” (Ps 63:5).

The promised blessings of the Age to come will be as a consequence of the earth being “full of the knowledge of Yahweh as the waters cover the sea” (Isa 11:9). At present, the natural man cannot receive the things of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 2:14). They are blinded by the god of this world:

“if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:3-4).

But for those who see their way to believe, the Apostle continues:

“God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6).

Isaiah describes this learning process in terms of a veil, or blinding covering being removed:

“he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations” (Isa. 25:7).

The god of this world having been destroyed by the brightness of Messiah’s coming (2 Thess. 2:8), the veil cast over the understanding of men will be removed, and the key of knowledge restored.

The prophet continues: “he will swallow up death in victory ...” (Isa. 25:8). This is a primary work of the Lord Jesus Christ – the Apostle also alludes to this:

“we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life” (2 Cor. 5:4).

“... So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory ... thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 15:54, 57).

This will be a time of tremendous joy and rejoicing for those who have endured hardships for Christ’s sake. Though weeping will endure for the night, joy cometh in the morning. When the Sun of Righteousness will arise with healing, the sorrows of the night will become but a fading memory, replaced by the reality of the glorious kingdom. Hence our chapter continues:

“the Lord Yahweh will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for Yahweh hath spoken it” (Isa. 25:8).

And this is cited in the Apocalypse:

“God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Rev. 21:4).

In these words of the Apocalypse of Isaiah then, we find a glorious prophecy of days yet to come, when righteousness shall no longer be oppressed, and the people of God shall be restored back to Him. In that day, the nations will experience the blessings which result from righteousness, even a veritable feast of spiritual things. May that day be near!

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