

A Garden of Cucumbers

Isaiah 1:4 – 18

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~ Any nation that has risen to power and subsequently fallen will have three clearly defined downward steps in their history: 1) spiritual and religious apostasy 2) moral awfulness and 3) political anarchy. Society in those nations ignore the negative progression of the first two until political anarchy begins; at which time they cry out for the government to be changed. They reason that a new system should be adopted at that time. Tragically, by the time political anarchy arrives, a course-correction is not possible. So, that said, let me promise you this leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God will be repulsing, terrifying, wholly bitter, sheer pessimism – and darker than you have experienced in a safari report before. Perhaps some will label this teaching despondent and hopeless. Frankly, I suggest everyone stop reading and go do something else. Only the blood-tipped ear of a genuine child of God will hear comfort in the judgment spoken by the Spirit of God in this section of Scripture.

In our previous two reports, we barely opened the book of Isaiah; and, if you are still reading, but have not read those first two reports, I suggest you go back and do so now. Without a firm foundation, we are never – ever – going to understand prophecy properly, correctly, and completely – because that would be impossible. We left off in our last report in God’s courtroom of His universe; where He has called all of His created intelligences to gather as a witness and hear the judgment He is going to pronounce — which is just, holy, and righteous. God is the Judge of this whole earth; and here, He is going to judge His Own chosen people, the nation Israel. That likely reads as a foreign language to most people, and probably seems totally out of character with the God misguided errors in the modern church have perpetuated.

Although it seems as if the Lord has been dethroned from His rule in this present hour – I can assure you that nothing could be further from the truth. Irrespective of false preconceived notions, God judges His people — just as He did by allowing the nation Israel to go into captivity — and has

dispersed them throughout the world as I type this report and you read it. My friends, this section of Scripture ought to scream like a five-alarm siren — to individuals as well as nations. So, now that the charge has been read aloud by God in verses one through three, we're going to learn the grisly details of said sins, trespasses, and other transgressions by the children of Israel....

4 Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel unto anger, they are gone away backward.

~ God is speaking to His chosen people in this passage. They are in a backslidden condition of filth and perversion. "*Laden with iniquity*" sheds a spotlight on how the nation Israel was saddled in moral awfulness, and rejected God wholesale at the time in which we are studying. The Lord Jesus Christ arrives seven hundred years after this prophecy was given — and they continue to deny Him as their Messiah to this very hour. Friends, I *KNOW* some people simply cannot accept this truth — but here it is in black and white straight from the mouth of the Lord through His prophet! You might want to write this part down. These people have turned from God and He is laying it on the line with them. And the straight talk waxes harsher from here — *MUCH* harsher.

The description in verse four fits every philosophy of human government, present system of political economy, and modern theory of secular affairs that man has constructed. A godless, manmade system can only ever produce madness. Thank God He overrules, reigns superior, and dictates protection for His children in this sick, lost, and dying world. When Christ returns, He will rule in an iron-fisted dictatorship. Nations rise and fall because they reject God and begin to lean on their own understanding. That is *PRECISELY* what Israel was doing in the day in which Isaiah wrote.

We first learned about this cycle of rebellion in the Book of Judges. Israel was initially serving God and was being blessed by Him. God prospered them and led them. But they turned away from Him to the idolatry of the surrounding nations. Then, they forgot God, and slipped into abject

rebellion. That resulted in them doing evil in the sight of the Lord by following their own ways. Then, they were sold into slavery and servitude. So, God delivered them completely into the hands of their enemies. That's when they repented, and cried out for a judge to deliver them. God raised up judges for them — but they repeated the same cycle. That went on for thirteen judges, over roughly three hundred years. Of course, the Book of Judges ends with God declaring, "... every man did that which was right in his own eyes." That means they didn't learn from history, friends.

In spite of nearly every judge in the book of Judges being a terrible person, the problem is not the judges in the Book of Judges — nor was the problem the form of government. No, friends, the problem was in the temple. When religious apostasy begins, God is going to put His hand down on that nation — ANY nation. He will see judgment through by permitting the next downward step, moral awfulness. It's a natural and normal result; and can only be followed by the final step: political anarchy. God always exhibits judgment on a nation beginning when spiritual apostasy sets in. Friends, that is critical to recognize and comprehend....

5 Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more: the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint.

6 From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.

7 Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire: your land, strangers devour it in your presence, and it is desolate, as overthrown by strangers.

8 And the daughter of Zion is left as a cottage in a vineyard, as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, as a besieged city.

9 Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and we should have been like unto Gomorrah.

~ God's people are a dramatically small remnant. The number of genuine believers who desire to obey the commands of Christ is so small I don't think we could even call them a remnant. As for Israel, there is *NO POSSIBLE* way they have returned to the land according to Scriptural prophecy. Attempting to lift one little chapter out of Ezekiel, or a few verses from Hosea, while ignoring the entirety of Biblical prophecy is reckless, irresponsible, and foolish. God declares that when Israel returns to the land in fulfillment of prophecy, the desert will blossom like a rose. That desert is *NOT* blossoming like a rose today. God says that when they return to the land in fulfillment of prophecy, they will dwell in peace and safety. To say they live in peace and safety today is simply not credible. Further, the millennial temple *MUST* be set up to fulfill this prophecy – but the Mosque of Omar stands on the temple mount – and it isn't going anywhere.

Most importantly, the Word of God says that when Israel returns to the land in fulfillment of prophecy, they will worship the True and Living God. Well, they reject the Lord Jesus Christ today, and they worship science and education. They don't even acknowledge the God of the Old Testament as their religion today. So, according to the Bible, Israel *CANNOT* be back in that land in fulfillment of prophecy. *IMPOSSIBLE!* God said Israel would return three times, and they have been back twice. When they return in fulfillment of prophecy, they will never go out again, either. That will be during the Millennium Kingdom.

We can regard anyone who takes the position that Israel has returned to that land today in fulfillment of prophecy as simply trafficking in sensationalism. The Bible is sensational enough without tampering with it – as in – adding to it; but that's exactly what men are doing when they say Israel is back in the land today according to prophecy. Also, you can erroneously attempt to relegate this to the so-called "*replacement theology*" – but the church is God's instrument to witness to the world today – not Israel. Sound doctrine only works out one way, friends....

10 Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah.

11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?

13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them.

15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood.

16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil;

17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.

~ The Lord Jesus Christ said, *“come unto Me all you who are heavy laden and burdened and I will give you rest...”* What were these people “laden” and “burdened” with? We just heard the explanation in verse four of chapter one of Isaiah – they were *LADEN WITH SIN*, my beloved. Just as the nation Israel was totally and completely bogged-down in the day in which we are studying, we just happen to, likewise, be utterly paralyzed and immobilized in our own sins today. Those of you who carry unconfessed sins in your life bear your own burden. *ONLY IF* and when we confess those sins is Christ just and able to forgive us. Until then, we have no part with Jesus. That’s what God says in first John chapter one verse nine, by the way – irrespective of whether you like it, understand it, accept it and believe it – or not! Redemptive rest comes *ONLY* when we bow our knee voluntarily in confession of our sins in prayer.

Israel was going through the form of ritual in the temple in Isaiah's day, but their heart was far from God. Their religion had no effect on their conduct. Their hearts were not changed. Their lives were not changed. Their minds were not purified. And that just happens to be the problem in our contemporary church today, my friends. It is a problem amongst believers, and it ranks right there with a total and complete ignorance of the Word of God. Most people have reached a place where they have a form of Godliness, but they deny the power of the Spirit of God. Everything Israel was doing at this time in which we are studying was empty, vain, and utterly meaningless to God. Even their solemn meetings were iniquity in God's eyes. Turn that over in your mind and see what you come up with.

The laws God commands become wrong for us to adopt when our heart is not right with Him. God hides Himself from those people. Also, to be clear, God just called all who believe they keep the "Torah" — the Mosaic Law — a bunch of phony hypocrites. Let's not be counterfeit Christians any longer. Don't like that talk?— Pray for me, friends; take your complaint against me up with God. Let me know what He answers....

18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.

~ So, even at this late hour, as our Spiritual Safari ends this leg of our expedition through the entire Word of God, He gives Israel every opportunity to turn to Him once again. God says, "don't plead 'not guilty'" — because we are guilty. We have already lost in God's courtroom. However, there is still almost one hundred years in Israel's ancient history before they are taken into Babylonian captivity. Unfortunately, they aren't going to listen to Isaiah — they're going to kill him. This world doesn't need any more "Declarations of Independence." No, what we need are more Declarations of *DEPENDANCE*. Dependence upon God, that is! We are in a state of *global* political anarchy; there is no question about that. If that isn't obvious to you, then you're not accepting reality. We have world-wide problems that men are utterly incapable of solving.

Gibbon lists five reasons for the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. 1) The undermining and disintegration of the dignity and sanctity of the home and family 2) Higher and higher taxes in the form of spending on free bread and entertainment for the populace 3) The mad craze for pleasure; with brutal and immoral sports becoming the main focus of society 4) The building of ever-bigger and always-greater armaments; when the real enemy was already within and 5) The total and complete decay and denial of individual responsibility as religion froze into a mere form; thereby losing touch with the reality of life on the street and as a moral compass. All three steps in the downward spiral of any nation are contained in Gibbon's assessment.

In America's youth, we had a profound sense of national purpose in politics. That has wholly disappeared today; that which our politicians say publicly and that which they say privately are different things. In public, they espouse a great and prosperous future; but the private conversations of any thoughtful thinking man or woman doubt those public statements. Our social and economic problems have no solution. Sexual perversion is mandated as law. Law enforcement has their hands tied to a lawless minority. Colleges are big business that turn out nothing except heavily indebted idiots. Rape on campus is an epidemic of which we don't even know the true numbers. Divorce outnumbers marriage. Suicide and murder are pandemic problems. Antisemitism is rampant. Serious crimes go unsolved and uninvestigated. That's not the simple-minded viewpoint of some wild-eyed fundamental Bible teacher, either; no, the American dream has vanished and the terrifying reality of decadence permeates contemporary society. Those are facts that cannot be denied.

Spiritual apostasy has grown to a fatal malignancy. In the last six thousand years or so, there have been twenty-one major civilizations; and each one has vanished; and they did so precisely when they rejected the True and Living God – the Lord Jesus Christ. Government control, military might, industrial expansion, and bumper-crops are useless. Society is dominated by people who either do not understand or outright deny that our spiritual condition is so dire. That's where we are today as God says, "*...come now and let us reason together.*" Well, today is the day of salvation friends.

TODAY, if we shall hear His voice. And today will be the last tomorrow for some people, by the way.

What we need are truly born-again Christians supporting and attending a Bible study where the Word of God is taught properly, correctly, and completely. There is no other way out, and our opportunity to turn to Him is desperately limited now. Philosophy says, “.... *think your way out of your problem.*” Politics say, “.... *spend your way out.*” Societal constructs say, “.... *pleasure your way out.*” Indulgence says, “.... *consume your way out.*” Liberalism says, “.... *legislate your way out.*” Science says, “.... *invent your way out.*” Capitalism says, “.... *work your way out.*” Labor says, “.... *strike your way out.*” Fascism says, “.... *bluff your way out.*” Militarism says, “.... *fight your way out.*” The Word of God says, “.... *pray your way out*” and the Lord Jesus Christ says, “.... *I am the way....*” Nothing else besides Christ and the Word of God are the Blessed Hope of this world. If change doesn't begin there, it isn't going to begin. Nothing else whatsoever is going to make a fraction of a percentage point difference in the rates of our present moral awfulness. Nothing ~

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