

Handout: Isaiah Lesson 7

The Church sees the prophecy of Isaiah Chapter 11 and the joy of those redeemed in Chapter 12 fulfilled in the universal Church of Jesus Christ: ... *all sons [and daughters] of the Church should have a lively awareness of their responsibility to the world; they should foster in themselves a truly catholic spirit; they should spend their forces in the work of evangelization. And yet, let everyone know that their first and most important obligation for the spread of the Faith is this: to lead a profoundly Christian life.*

The Council of Vatican II, *Ad gentes*, 36

Chapter 12 is a canticle of praise expressing the joy of all parts of Israelite society:

1. Verses 1-2 express the individual's response to God's redemptive works: the subject "You will say" is in the masculine singular.
2. In verses 3-5 the focus changes: the verbs are in the plural as the entire community joins in praising God and in proclaiming the goodness of His works.
3. In verse 6 the tense is in the feminine singular in expressing the joy of God present among His covenant people.

Isaiah Chapters 1-12 contain truths that are valuable and which we should apply to our lives today. The Book of Isaiah has much to tell us about who God is, who we are in our relationship with God, and what God expects of us as His covenant people:

1. We should see God's discipline as an opportunity to come to repentance.
2. Some will reject God's fatherly correction like the people of Israel, or remain ignorant of His sovereignty over their lives like the Assyrians, while others will remain faithful no matter what life throws at them, like the faithful remnant.
3. The Messianic prophecies in chapters 7-11 should serve to remind us of the glorious future God has planned for us in the Kingdom of the greater than David—the Redeemer-Messiah who gave His life for us so that we can live forever with Him: first in His Kingdom of the Church, and then at the end of our lives in His heavenly kingdom, and in the age of peace and righteousness He will bring to all creation in His Second Advent.

Chapters 13-23 answer challenges to God's divine plan in Isaiah's oracles against the nations by announcing that Yahweh is sovereign over all the nations of the earth whether or not they recognize Him as the One True God. Since the prophecy of the destruction of Babylon in Isaiah chapter 13 is so far removed from the time of Isaiah's ministry in the 8th century BC, many modern commentators propose it was not written by Isaiah but by another writer they call the "second Isaiah" who lived in the 6th century BC when these events took place. There are three problems with this interpretation:

1. Isaiah 13:1 identifies the one who receives this vision as Isaiah son of Amoz, the same prophet who was identified in Isaiah 1:1.
2. The literary style is the same as earlier prophecies by Isaiah, and the 6th century BC prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Zephaniah (who lived when the events prophesied by Isaiah took place) will use portions of Isaiah's Babylon prophecy in their books.

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3. To deny this is the prophecy of Isaiah in the 8th century BC, denies that God is capable of predictive prophecy. If that is the case, how is it, then, that Isaiah's Messianic prophecies were fulfilled with such accuracy in the 1st century AD in Jesus of Nazareth? The telling of this prophecy c. a hundred and fifty years before the events are fulfilled is evidence that what God speaks comes about. He is the God who has sovereignty over all nations and all the destinies of men in all of human time.

The expressions the "Day of Yahweh", or "Day of the Lord", or "Day of Judgment", or "Day of Vengeance" [vengeance in Hebrew = "balancing the scales"] do not refer to a 24-hour day but to a period in time in which God manifests His purposes in a particularly distinctive way in the heavens and on earth. The "Day of Yahweh" usually includes three elements in the awesome coming of God in power and majesty:

1. God's judgment against unbelievers
2. The cleansing/purification of God's people
3. The salvation of God's people

The New Testament writers also spoke of the "Day of Yahweh" as the "Day of the Lord", or the "Day of Christ Jesus", or the "Day of Christ" in these same three ways, proclaiming the day of the Lord's ultimate fulfillment in Jesus' Second Coming: *I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus* (Phil 1:6 NAB; also see 1:10 = "Day of Christ; 2:16 = "Day of Christ"; 2 Thes 2:2 = "Day of the Lord").

The Fathers of the Church (Origen, Augustine, Jerome, and others), citing 14:12 and arguing that humans do not fall from heaven, interpreted the 5 "I shall/I will" boasts of the king of Babylon in verses 13-14 as symbolic of the arrogant and prideful boasts of Satan against God in the great heavenly rebellion that took place prior to the Fall of Adam and which is recorded in the Book of Revelation: *And now war broke out in heaven, when Michael with his angels attacked the dragon. The dragon fought back with his angels, but they were defeated and driven out of heaven. The great dragon, the primeval serpent, known as the devil or Satan, who had led all the world astray, was hurled down to the earth and his angels were hurled down with him* (Rev 12:7-9). In their interpretation of these verses, the Fathers wrote that the 5 "I shall/I will" boasts of Satan were answered by the 5 bloody wounds on the Body of Christ as He suffered on the Cross: the 2 wounds in each of His hands, the 2 wounds in each of His feet, and the blood from the crown of thorns on His head. See CCC 391-395, 550.