

**CALVARY PANDAN
BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH**

DHW BIBLE CLASS

LESSON 27

ISAIAH

CHAPTER 27

Theme: "Restoring the Diaspora!"

THEME VERSE

Isaiah 27:13 (KJV) "And it shall come to pass in that day, that the great trumpet shall be blown, and they shall come which were ready to perish in the land of Assyria, and the outcasts in the land of Egypt, and shall worship the LORD in the holy mount at Jerusalem."

INTRODUCTION

Many great and powerful nations that existed in the past have disappeared from the face of the earth. They left behind records, great monuments and ruins for archaeologists to discover and learn about their way of life and greatness. These nations of the world come and go through the passage of time like stars that appear in the heavens and shine for a brief moment then burn themselves out with an explosion never to be seen or to rise again.

However, the nation of Israel is like no other nation of the world. For one thing, the rest of the nations of the world are designed and spawned by

man or a group of men. They function as a nation with man's philosophies as their anchor, not knowing what is absolutely right or wrong. They develop rules and guidelines to regulate their way of life, hoping to have some semblance of normalcy to live through the day. These guidelines and rules evolved to become the law of the land. These laws change with the times to suit the times. For example, one generation might pass a law criminalising homosexuality. Today that law is removed when homosexuality is accepted by man as an alternative way of life. In fact some countries are toying with the notion of criminalising those who teach that homosexuality is wrong and is a sin. But these laws of man are man-centred and very subjective. They change. They are not absolutes. Right today could be the wrong of tomorrow.

The nation of Israel is different as night is different from day, as heaven is from hell. Israel was founded by God with a spiritual purpose of saving mankind from their sin. The Messiah will come from Israel. Israel will be called God's people. They were given many special blessings and responsibilities by God. They were the guardians of God's Word. They were to be living testimonies of God's grace and mercies in their lives. They will not fade into the abyss like other Gentile nations and be forgotten. God will never let that happen. Israel will be dispersed because of her many unrepentant sins and rebellion against God. But God will restore the diaspora in due time so that the will and purpose of God through Israel will be

fulfilled. In Isaiah 27, we see such a restoration.

OUTLINE

1. Israel is forever protected (vv.1-6);
2. Unique and special chastisement! (vv. 7-11);
3. Gathered one by one (vv. 12-13);

COMMENTARY

Israel is Forever Protected!

“In that day” immediately continues the link of Chapter 27 to Chapters 25 and 26. The focus is still Israel. The destruction of Israel’s enemies is mentioned first. The word “sore” means severe. The “sore and great and strong” sword to punish the leviathan has to refer to the powerful Word of God, which is the sword of the spirit. The Bible is a spiritual book and hence, the reference is to the Word of God employed to defeat the enemies of Israel. The Word of God is severe in its punishment. It is absolute, clear and sharp in its definition of what is right and wrong. There is no way anyone can bribe the LORD to alter His justice. The standard is unyielding and true. It is also great and strong. There is nothing on earth greater than the power that is in God’s Word. It is greater than any man’s word. It is eternal and forever true. Every jot and tittle will not pass away even when the heavens and the earth pass away. It is strong because it can stand any test and against any attack. The Word of

God is sure and cuts through every fetter that binds every heart. This powerful word is the sword that will destroy defeat Israel’s enemies.

The question is, what is the identity of this enemy of Israel? Leviathan is used literally to describe a sea creature in Job 41:1. But in Psalm 74:14 it is used as a figure to refer to Pharaoh of Moses’ time. This being the case, the context determines the meaning of a word. The leviathan has to be understood figuratively. What is it a figure of? Some commentators interpret it as a reference to the Assyrians whereas others to the Babylonians. Some have even suggested that the leviathan here refers to Satan. My personal view is that it refers to Satan who is behind all the Gentile nations like Assyria and Babylon in their madness of empire building and killing of tens of thousands of the conquered people. The other reason is, since the weapon used against the enemy is the Word of God then it is spiritual rather than physical warfare.

The characteristics of the enemies of Israel are more important than the identity of the enemies in this context. It is a piercing serpent, which points to her speed in movement and flight. She could flee swiftly and suddenly. This points to her agility and her ability to escape and to run. The second characteristic is that it is a crooked serpent. This is a *hapax legomena* that has the root meaning of “to wrest”. It is to twist something out of shape such as to torture someone. It is not just a reference to one who is

sly and cunning but also cruel and vicious. It will twist the truth as well as to torture those who are its enemies.

The sea here might refer to the foreboding and mysterious place from which this leviathan resides. The LORD will slay or kill this evil one which is also called "dragon" here. When will the slaying take place? Will it take place at the cross of Calvary when Christ died for us or when the LORD returns in the cloud of glory riding a white horse at the battle of Armageddon? If the interpretation of leviathan is the Assyrians or Babylonians, then the defeat would be when these kingdoms were destroyed. In the case of the Assyrians, they were destroyed by the Babylonians and the Babylonians in turn were destroyed by the Medo-Persians.

In that day when the serpent is soundly defeated by the LORD, Israel shall sing. A vineyard of red wine! This phrase is understood figuratively to mean that the people of God will be like the vineyard of red wine i.e. the purest and best wine. This is precious to the LORD. Verse 3 says that the LORD will keep it. The word for keep has the idea of "guarding by concealment." The LORD's protection over His people is the meaning here. Not only that the LORD will also water it i.e. He will ensure that the vineyard is healthy and will grow fruitfully. To make sure that it is not harmed or hurt, the LORD says that He will "keep" (same word as above) it night and day. He will not let it get out of His sovereign care day and night!

Verse 4 says that the LORD will have no fury against His own vineyard. The word "fury" comes from the root, which means "heat." This fury destroys to the uttermost and will not be levelled against His vineyard. The LORD will chastise His people but will never destroy them totally. This kind of fury is not in the LORD when He deals with His people. However, the enemies of His vineyard are those who set like briars and thorns against the LORD in battle. They will be thoroughly burned by the LORD after He has gone through them like a man marching right across them as if they offered no resistance. Briars and thorns are weeds that destroy the vineyard. The LORD will root them up and destroy them completely.

Alternatively these Gentile nations could turn to the LORD and take hold of His strength. They will have to treat God's people properly and stop attacking them. They will make peace with the LORD. The only way is to repent of their sins and accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. This is the only way to make peace with God for the barrier between God and man is man's sin. When man's sins are washed by the blood of Christ, their sins are forgiven and peace is then made with God (v.5).

The people of God will take root and be firmly established in the Land of Promise. Israel will blossom and bear fruit i.e. they will increase in great numbers and fill the face of the world with fruit. This definitely includes all believing Israelites and Gentiles. The spiritual significance is emphasized

here rather than the physical. It is not Israel as a nation per se that will spread and fill the earth. The spiritual Israel comprises of Israelites and Gentile converts who have accepted Christ as Lord and Saviour. In order for this to happen in the prophetic future, present Israel has to be protected by God until all the promises of God in Israel including the first coming of Christ are fulfilled.

Unique and Special Chastisement!

Using two rhetorical questions, the LORD definitively asked if He had ever smitten Israel the way that He smote Gentile nation! Obviously the answer is a resounding no. Has the LORD slain Israel in the same manner that He slain the Gentile nations? Never! Israel has a covenantal relationship with God that is conditional upon the LORD's faithfulness alone. Regardless of Israel conduct, God's promise of the coming Messiah cannot be thwarted by sinful man. However, the blessings of being part of God's unfolding plan of redemption for mankind are dependent upon obedience to God's Word. When Israel rebels against God, God will punish Israel, and He did many times throughout Israel's existence. However these were considered chastisements to draw Israel back to the right path of godly witness whereas Gentile nations were not given such a spiritual calling. When their sins were full, God will utterly destroy them in the same way He ordered Joshua and Israel to utterly destroy all the Canaanites.

The dealing of the LORD upon Israel will always be in measure i.e. in

moderation. He will carefully measure it so that Israel will be justly judged in order to ensure her return to the path of righteousness. When judgement shoots forth i.e. sent away by the LORD, he would debate with it i.e. argue within Himself what the measure ought to be. There is no impulsive and thoughtless punishment from the LORD. This is not to imply at all that when the LORD punishes Israel's enemies that the judgement was without thought. The positive does not imply the negative here. The LORD stays i.e. takes away the rough wind i.e. the severe wind when He sent forth the east wind. The word for "rough" is the same as the word "sore" in verse 1. The east wind refers to the desert wind that is hot and very dry. It is often used to describe the judgement sent by God. In the case of Israel, God will remove the severity from the east wind even as He sent the east wind to chastise Israel (verse 8).

By this carefully measured discipline will the LORD purge disobedient Israel of her sins. The purpose is to take away all the fruit of her sins. These sins would include the idolatrous altars, groves and images. The LORD will turn all the stones of the altars into chalkstones i.e. powdery dust. They will be beaten in sunder i.e. dashed into pieces. The groves i.e. Phoenician goddesses and images shall not stand up i.e. they will certainly be cut down. The strength of the negative is the same as the Ten Commandments (v.9).

Just because the chastisement against Israel is carefully measured by

the LORD, it does not mean that it will be a joy ride. The chastisement will be painful as the sins of Israel were serious and many. Israel's defenced city (probably a reference to Jerusalem) that they hid in for protection against their enemies shall be made desolate by the LORD. Their habitations i.e. homes will be desolate, left vacant like a wilderness where calf will feed and lie down and consume their branches. What it means here is that the homes of the Israelites will be demolished and overgrown by greenery and vegetation. Cows will feed from the places that used to house Israelites. Overgrown properties can only take place after a long period of destruction and neglect. There is no one to buy, take over or rebuild the vacant properties! This is a definite reference to the exile that will come upon Israel (v10).

When the boughs are withered, they shall be broken off. The women will come and set them on fire. Israel with her many unrepentant sins is likened to old withered boughs that will surely be cut off because it will not bear fruit. The women in those days gather firewood and use these old boughs for firewood. Israel will go the way of uselessness as she has failed the LORD miserably in her terrible witness. The charge was that Israel has become a people without understanding. Therefore the LORD who made them will certainly not have mercy on them (same strength as the Ten Commandments) and He who formed them will not show them any favour i.e. grace. Israel will not be totally destroyed but that does not

mean that she will not be punished sufficiently for her manifold sins.

We must not confuse just chastisement with lax chastisement. The former is right whereas the latter is favouritism and a sin (v.11).

Gathered One by One!

In that day refers to the day when Israel will be broken off like old withered boughs and burned. The LORD will restore Israel to Himself one by one. The manner in which this is done is the use of the metaphor of the LORD beating off the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt. The meaning is that the LORD will save His remnant like a man at the river "detouring" lumber that was flowing in the stream toward the ocean, and he takes them and guides them toward the stream. The remnant that was probably exiled into Egypt will be brought back to Israel by the LORD. This is done one at a time. Care and consideration is emphasized by the use of this phrase, "one by one."

The phrase "in that day" is used here in verse 12 as well. This day refers to the gathering of the remnant back to the LORD as verse 11 reveals. The great trumpet shall be blown signals a great call from the LORD throughout the Land of captivity. The ten tribes that will be exiled in Assyria will hear the trumpet call and return to Israel. The remnant that was in Egypt will also hear the trumpet call and return to Israel. They shall return to worship the LORD in the holy mount of Jerusalem. This is a very blessed hope given by the LORD to disobedient Israel in the day of Isaiah. Israel has

not been exiled yet and the LORD has already given hope to them (v.13).

PRACTICAL VALUE

The Enemies of God Punished!

The certainty of the LORD's punishment upon His enemies must never be doubted. When persecution comes upon God's people, they need to remember that they are actually punishing the LORD Himself. When God's people serve Him, they represent Him. When the enemies hinder their work, they are hindering God's work. When they persecute God's people, they are persecuting God. God will punish them in His time.

This was the message given to us by God in Isaiah 27. Israel will be punished for her many sins by the LORD. The LORD will use the Assyrians to be the punisher. But the punisher will be severely punished by the LORD in due course for their cruelty and wickedness to God's people. If God were to punish the punisher whom He used to chastise disobedient Israel, how much more when God's people are obedient in serving Him!

Tempered Chastisement for God's People!

The chastisement of God upon His people is always carefully tempered. The measure meted out is to bring about repentance and restoration of God's people back to Himself. When God's people sinned, they brought shame to the name of Christ. They reflected a false image of Christ to the unbelieving world. The

LORD cannot and will not let that happen. Israel must be chastised!

However, God's people must never compare and equate the LORD's chastisement of her with the severe punishment on Gentile nations. The latter will be punished with total annihilation whereas Israel will never be. Israel has been carefully formed and nurtured by the LORD as a nation with a spiritual purpose which no other manmade nation will ever have. These many spiritual purposes cannot fail. They must come to pass for the LORD's reputation depends on their fulfilment. Even though Israel was a nation like all other nations in terms of sin and depravity, but because of the LORD's plan of salvation through her, she will be preserved by the LORD. Her punishment will always be measured in light of the LORD's will and plan to save mankind through Christ Jesus.

Hope Always Extended in Midst of Chastisement!

To be chastised without the offer of hope is not God's way. Holding a rod of correction in one hand and hope in the other is always the way of God whenever He disciplines His children. This has not changed at all. For God deals with the OT people of God the same way He is dealing with His people in the New Testament. This is very comforting to us. God deals with us as His children whereas God deals with our enemies as His enemies. Relationship makes a world of difference. The former is no longer viewed as depraved sinners whereas the latter is viewed as depraved sinners already condemned and

awaiting the sentence of death and Hell! This stark contrast is due entirely to the grace of God upon God's people.

God's people must never for one second think that they are less depraved than the enemies of God prior to salvation. Every sinner is in the same depraved boat! There is no exception. God's grace and mercy saved us and not we of ourselves. There is nothing good in us for God to save us, but for His grace and mercy. We need to realize this truth in order not to be arrogant but all be filled with gratitude to God by serving Him faithfully and humbly. AMEN.

2. Is God watering your life right now? Please explain your answer.

DAILY READINGS & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Daily Readings

MONDAY: Isaiah 27:1-13

TUESDAY: Isaiah 27:1-13

WEDNESDAY: Isaiah 27:1-13

THURSDAY: Isaiah 27:1-13

FRIDAY: Isaiah 27:1-13.

Discussion Questions

1. Is it just that the LORD severely punishes the enemies of Israel whom He used to chastise Israel in the first place? How do you explain this apparent injustice?

3. How do you feel knowing that the LORD will never deal with you as He would deal with His enemies? What is the difference? Please explain your answer.

4. Please share with your group an example in your own life where the LORD has dealt with you in chastisement? Was it painful then? Please elaborate.

5. Are there idols in your life that need to be gotten rid of before chastisement comes to get rid of them for you? Please explain.

6. How do you feel about the truth that God's promises will never fail? All His promises are true, amen. The people whom God used to fulfill these promises might fail but His promises will still hold true. Do you agree with these statements? Please explain your answer.

7. What lessons can you learn from this chapter about God's Word and about yourself?