

High and Exalted (4): The Day of the Lord

(Isaiah 13)

I. Introduction

A. We are continuing today our study of Isaiah called, *"High and Exalted"*

1. We'll be in Isaiah 13 to, but I want to first jump ahead to **Isaiah 45:1**

a. Here Isaiah calls Cyrus His anointed who will subdue and rule nations

b. Daniel predicted the Medio-Persian Empire would supplant Babylon

1) Remember the writing on the wall-- "mene, mene, tekel, parsin"

2) The last word meant, *"Your empire is given to Medes & Persians"*

c. Cyrus was the first great emperor, and the one that mattered to Juda

d. It was Cyrus that allowed subjugated people (Jews) to return home

2. Not long ago, Prime Minister Netanyahu compared Pres. Trump to Cyrus

a. He would be the great world leader to guarantee Israel's freedom

b. That comparison is used by people from Mike Pence to Jerry Fallwell

1) Jim Bakker is hawking \$45 coins with picture of Cyrus and Trump

2) It's a *"point of contact with God"* to hold as you pray for reelection

B. What's the point? **Isaiah 13** will speak to great changes in world events

1. God was at work behind the scenes to accomplish His will in world

a. God puts kings on their thrones, and He takes them off (**Dan 2:20-21**)

b. That makes sense; God is sovereign over all kings and ruler (**Dan 4:17**)

c. Does God still do that? Did he lose interest in powers-n-principalities?

2. God didn't retire from king-making; He did retire from prophet-sending

a. Prophets held back curtain to show what in the world God was doing

b. We interpret anything we see as good as God's work in world

1) Berlin wall falls, economy recovers, Cubs win the series... it's God

2) Mr. Trump promises to build a wall and secure our border... it's God

3) Why couldn't it be God leading refugees to freedom? (*Did before!*)

3. In Isaiah, God's people rarely understood what it was that God was doing

a. Isaiah job was to tell them what in the world God was doing in world

b. They had Isaiah to explain it to them, but they still didn't get it

c. Let's look at the **Isaiah 13** and see if there's a message there for us

II. The Day of the Lord

- A. Isaiah begins with a clear message of destruction for Babylon (**Isa 13:1-3**)
1. We mentioned in earlier lesson the prophetic theme of "Day of the Lord"
 - a. This was a day of judgement and wrath brought against a people
 - 1) Sometimes, the Day of the Lord was judgement against nations
 - 2) Other times it was for God's own people (*as we saw in chapter 1*)
 - b. Isaiah picks up the familiar prophet theme: Day of Lord (**Isaiah 13:6,9**)
 - 1) Isaiah holds back the curtain of future to show the end of Babylon
 - 2) Ever the most super of super-powers must bow to the will of God
 2. **Factoid:** Babylon wasn't a super-power as Isaiah writes (not even close)
 - a. Isaiah was called as a prophet in 757 BC (*in the year King Uzziah died*)
 - 1) Babylon destroyed Assyria at Battle of Carchemish in 605 BC
 - 2) Babylon would be a world power 150 years after Isaiah wrote
 - b. Isaiah's message here would have made little sense to Judah
 - 1) They wanted to know Assyria was going down, but Babylon?
 - 2) God was working in world, but what in the world is He doing?
 - a) What if a prophet from God came to speak to our world situation?
 - b) His message, "*The Kingdom of France will fall.*" Not very helpful
 - c. During the life of Isaiah, Judah saw Babylon as a potential ally
 - 1) Hezekiah made an alliance with Babylon (*Isaiah was not happy*)
 - 2) Josiah died in battle with Egypt attempted to aid Babylon
 3. God is doing something in the world but what in the world is he doing
- B. That becomes a more pressing question when we look closer at the text
1. Remember how Isaiah started the book comparing Judah to Sodom?
 - a. We suggested anytime anyone is compared to Sodom, not good
 - b. That's also the language he uses for the Day of the Lord here (**13:19**)
 2. Do you remember the dramatic fall of Babylon to Medes and Persians?
 - a. Me either! Babylon went out with a weak whimper, not a big bang
 - b. Forces of Darius the Mede took Babylon without even a battle
 - c. Someone just opened a gate and Medes and Persians walked in

3. But Isaiah describes a big bang or rather, a cosmic cataclysm (**13:10-13**)
 - a. The 4th day of creation will be reversed (*sun, moon, stars go dark*)
 - b. The world will be shaken, and the people of the world disappear
 - 1) Day of the Lord is when God steps into history to enforce will
 - 2) There is a corresponding quaking of the cosmos when he does
 4. This kind of prophetic language is used all through the Bible
 - a. Events on earth are ordinary, but God describes it as cataclysmic
 - 1) Joel predicted a coming locust plague (**Joel 2:30-31**)
 - 2) Amos describes God's judgement on Israel (**Amos 8:9**)
 - 3) Jesus predicts the destruction of Jerusalem Temple (**Matt 24:29**)
 - 4) Revelation describes the fall of Roman Empire (**Rev 6:12-13**)
 - b. All of that happened, although it wasn't nearly as dramatic on earth
 - 1) Joel's locust plague was bad, but not bad enough (didn't repent)
 - 2) Rome did fall, but it was a slow downward spiral, not brimstone
 - c. All of this reminds us of a final Day of the Lord, right? (**2 Pet 3:10**)
- C. A fringe benefit of being God is you don't have to explain yourself
1. God did once get into an interesting conversation with Habakkuk
 - a. Habakkuk wants to know how long God will ignore in injustice (**1:2-3**)
 - 1) It is tough to be a prophet with only one sermon, "Turn or burn."
 - 2) How long can you preach that before people ignore? How long?
 - b. Unlike most of us questioning God, Habakkuk gets answer (**1:5-6**)
 - 1) God promised Moses that he would drive out Israel's enemies
 - 2) He warned that if Israel acted like enemy, he'd bring back enemy
 - 3) So now God will use Babylon to punish his people for their sin
 - c. Habakkuk argues this can't be fair! Babylon is even worse (**1:13**)
 2. Habakkuk can't understand what in world God is doing. Neither can we
 - a. What God tells Habakkuk and tells us, "Just trust me" (**Hab 2:2-3**)
 - 1) We trust God is in control, even though we can't understand
 - 2) If God tried to explain it to us, we still would be able to understand
 - b. God gave Habakkuk his final answer; it is ours as well (**Hab 2:4**)

III. Conclusion: So What?

- A. **First**, every president is raised up by God... and is a tool of Satan
 - 1. Paul says that every authority that exist do so by God (**Rom 13:1**)
 - a. He also calls Satan "*the ruler of the kingdom of the air*" (**Eph 2:2**)
 - b. Jesus calls Satan the "*prince of this world*" three times in John
 - c. How could Satan offer Jesus kingdoms of world? They're all his!
 - 2. God's work in the world does not depend on which party is in control
 - a. If God can use the jawbone of donkey, he can use any politician
 - b. Again, God can work through or over whoever is elected this fall
- B. **Second**, for people of God, the way of peace and propriety trump politics
 - 1. God is above our political fights, and so should his church be
 - a. The last thing we need to do is add to the division and polarization
 - b. Paul says that we must be careful about the words we use (**Col 4:5-6**)
 - 2. You don't know what God is doing in the world. So don't act like it!
 - a. Have strong political view, or not... but live out the fruit of spirit
 - b. Be convinced in your own mind, but be a person of peace & civility
- C. **Third**, you may think the USA is the best nation on earth, but God doesn't
 - 1. I think our country is the best, warts and all, because I'm American
 - a. If I was French, I'd think France was the best country (and I'd be wrong)
 - b. There is no reason to think God thinks that USA is the best country
 - 2. God's eternal kingdom brings together every nation, tribe and people
 - a. Our allegiance should be first to the kingdom of God, then to country
 - b. We are not Americans who happen to be Christian; we are Christians...
- D. **Finally**, above all, we must trust that God rules-- relax and trust God
 - 1. That doesn't mean we can sit back or that we have no responsibility
 - a. It does mean that nothing human do will thwart God's plans for world
 - b. Can't we mess up so bad that God will decide to end it? Probably
 - c. But we can also live so well it will also "*speed its coming*" (**2 Pet 3:12**)
 - 2. In good times and bad times, the righteous must live by their faith
 - 3. No matter what happens in our world, the battle belongs to the Lord