

The Rebellion of God's People Yesha'yahu 1:1-9

In my last post, we concluded the background material on the book of **Yesha'yahu**. In this post, we start to dig into the actual scripture.

"This is the vision of Yesha'yahu, the son of Amotz, which he saw concerning Y'hudah and Yerushalayim during the days of 'Uziyahu, Yotam, Achaz and Y'chizkiyahu, kings of Y'hudah:

² 'Hear, heaven! Listen, earth! For Adonai is speaking. I raised and brought up children, but they rebelled against me. ³ An ox knows its owner and a donkey its master's stall, but Isra'el does not know, my people do not reflect. ⁴ Oh, sinful nation, a people weighed down by iniquity, descendants of evildoers, immoral children! They have abandoned Adonai, spurned the Holy One of Isra'el, turned their backs on him! ⁵ Where should I strike you next, as you persist in rebelling? The whole head is sick, the whole heart diseased. ⁶ From the sole of the foot to the head there is nothing healthy, only wounds, bruises and festering sores that haven't been dressed or bandaged or softened up with oil. ⁷ Your land is desolate; your cities are burned to the ground; foreigners devour your land in your presence; it's as desolate as if overwhelmed by floods. ⁸ The daughter of Tziyon is left like a shack in a vineyard, like a shed in a cucumber field, like a city under siege. ⁹ If Adonai-Tzva'ot had not left us a tiny, tiny remnant, we would have become like S'dom; we would have resembled 'Amora." ~ Yesha'yahu 1:1-9 (CJB)

This chapter describes a courtroom scene. God convenes the court and states the charges forcefully. He presents His case and pronounces the nation guilty. The call goes out to the heavens and the earth to hear the charges against God's people. In Deuteronomy 4:26, 30:19 the heavens and earth are invoked as witnesses to the covenant. It is appropriate here that they are called on to hear the indictment detailing the violation of that covenant.

How did God describe His sinful people? They were rebellious children (vv. 2-4) who did not have as much devotion to God as animals do to their masters! **Rebelled** carries with it the idea of breaking a contract. At **Sinai**, **Isra'el** had entered into a solemn covenant with **Adonai** (Exodus 19-20), but they had broken the covenant by their unbelief and idolatry. They did not appreciate what God had done for them and were taking their blessings for granted. They had forsaken the Lord, gone backward, and grown corrupt; therefore, they were guilty and deserved judgment.

From the human point of view, the nation was prospering; but from God's point of view, the nation was like a wretched victim who had been beaten from head to foot and left to die (vv. 5-6). The wounds had become infected, the whole body diseased, and nobody was doing anything to help. In spite of the optimism of **Y'hudah's** leaders, the nation was morally and spiritually corrupt, and judgment was inevitable.

In verses 7-9, God pictures **Y'hudah** as a ravaged battlefield, a desert that had once been a garden. In using this image, **Yesha'yahu** may have been looking ahead to the invasion of **Sancheriv**, when **Y'hudah** was devastated by the **Ashur** army, and only **Yerushalayim** was spared (chaps. 36-37). The people would not let God manage the land according to His law, so God turned **Y'hudah** over to foreigners and permitted His people to suffer.

The devastation of the land was a natural consequence of the invasion. Invading armies often lacked an adequate supply line and therefore expected to live off the land they were invading. What they

didn't use for their purposes they destroyed. Not only were the crops burned, but the trampling of the land often crippled the agricultural cycle for several seasons afterward.

Tziyon is the name for the mountain on which **Yerushalayim** is situated and represents that special location from which the Lord conquers and reigns. It is therefore also associated with the **Davidic** covenant and kingship ordained by God. The daughter of **Tziyon** would then be the city itself. It reminds the reader of the intimate relationship God enjoyed with the people He must judge. A shelter in a vineyard or a shack in a cucumber field were both fragile. Without upkeep they would crumble, providing an illuminating analogy for the desolation of Jerusalem.

In the **S'dom** and **Amora** account in Genesis 19 these cities are not destroyed by invading armies, but that is not the nature of the comparison here. The totality of the destruction as God's judgment is the emphasis of the text. A just God would be expected to bring comparable judgment for comparable crimes. God had been gracious. He did not completely destroy His people. Rather, a remnant would survive the judgment; restoration would follow the cleansing of judgment.

In my next post, I will explore **Yesha'yahu 1:10-17 ~ God Has Had Enough**.