

"SEIR'S GAZETTE"

Isaiah 21

INTRODUCTION:

This passage of Scripture is like a reporter giving three news articles from The Watchtower. Now Gazette means news - a newspaper, an official journal which is an official paper as one of Great Britians. It contains a list of honors, names of bankrupts, public notices. Hence, it means to announce or publish in a Gazette.

The Prophet Isaiah is publishing the news in the form of emblems or signs concerning three great powers. And this Prophecy or news comes from the watch-tower at Jerusalem. And he is looking out on the horizon to see if there is any change. And the faithful people of God are anxious to know what the news is. And their urgent voices that call unto him. The voices from the South that call -- watchman of the night. He wants to know how much of the night still remains and will the night soon pass. Now the answer that he presents must be honest and he must put the truth to them.

News can be truthful or it can be deceiving. For example Marie Antoinette made her triumphal entry into Paris in the days before the French Revolution. No beggar we are told was allowed to be seen on the line of route. The authorities swept into the side streets all the wretched and poor of the capitol. The eye of the young queen was not allowed a single glimpse of the misery of Paris. All was made to appear prosperous and fair. And so the queen and her husband lived in a fooled Paradise until the revolution awakened them to the tragic reality.

Isaiah as a watchman here gets the news and he is going to report the news as he sees it, and it is going to be in three articles.

In these chapters we have the burdens and they are linked together and a plain word or name perhaps, but an emblem may be used. For example you will note here the desert of the sea. You will note next the seir - the dumah, which means silent storm. And then you will see the valley dead. So in clearness you will see Babylon, Edom, and Arabia, in striking symbols.

Now the report will be:

First, Security of Babylon. 1-10

Second, Solution of Edom. 11-12

Third, Short Time for the Arabians. 13-17

This will be the news report.

And Isaiah now lived in a world much like our own. World powers were preparing for battle and supremacy. Times were prosperous due to the government. There was a great deal of corruption in public as well as in private life. In such a condition Isaiah pictures himself as a watchman, on the wall of a city. Now the message which he delivers he calls the burden -- the burden of Dumah. Now that might refer to anyone or several cities. It might be symbolic. It might be a symbol of any age, or people -- it might be like the age in which we live. A time of frustration in which a call may be coming to us.

The watchman's (business) was to give warning and prophecy. The wall is no stronger than the character of the watchman or the gate-keeper. The watchman could give the signs of the weather. He could give the time of the night. Or he could give the information about the in-coming enemy.

I. Security of Babylon - Verse 1-10.

Verse 1 - We see that Babylon was marked for ruin. God saw fit that these people who tended to be friends were like a desert, or a plain of sea as described. We remember that a desert means, though it was now a populated city, Babylon is so often the typical city ready for destruction. Because of man's sin - the great enemy of the New Testament Church is often tied up in this.

The Persians were to be the soldiers to come in and take possession. They were to be the instruments employed of God to destroy. Babylon went over to Cyrus who knew the way into the city and to the palace where Belshazzar was slain. The poor oppressed captives - it would be welcome news for them. They had been a long time under this domination and they needed and longed for deliverance.

Verse 2 - To the proud oppressors it would be a very grievous occasion.

Why is Babylon called desert of the sea. It might be because of its situation or the vast plains amid the marshes. It might look like a dry desert. Another idea might be that it was without God. Hence, it was as a desert, and even more restless as a sea.

The army is caught in a storm wind going across the desert. Soldiers were to be sharp, swift and terrible. This was literally fulfilled the very night that the hand-writing appeared on the wall as Daniel 5:6 describes the terror and the King was slain on that night at the peak of his joy while he was with his concubines and his lords and was profaning the temple vessels.

Verse 3 - It was to him very painful and it was like travail of a woman. *Britisher*

Visited an American Home - 3 cars garage, gorgeous living room, color TV, kitchen fitted with latest appliances, beautiful pool - lady in Eto's Reading A Book - "How to be happy"

Verse 4 - It was a fearful time. Their pleasure had turned sour on them.

Verse 5 - He describes the state of Babylon in a most graphic way. He presents them as first preparing the table, making ready for feasting, and then they set a watch in the watch-tower. Now they give themselves to feasting. And then he moves on to say that everything is fine. And suddenly there is alarm and a call to anoint the shields and prepare for war. So Babylon would be found when the enemy should surprise him. All his festival and gayness. He is looking at a scene that is sure to come years later at a banquet. In the midst of this, the startling shout of the watchman says, the shield anointed. Now Daniel who shall actually live among those scenes shall give him the 5th Chapter as history and add the divine sentence on Babylon's plaster wall -- but nothing of the surprise attack itself.

Jeremiah in the 51st chapter tells something about the capture of the city.

Now Isaiah reports the same thing. The crisis is eminent. In a few short words he describes how they are reclined and eased but somebody says you princess, get up, get ready. Anoint your shields and get ready to defend yourself because this was an alarming message, to these people.

Verse 6 - Now somebody asked the watchman what is it -- what do you see. Go set a watchman - let him declare what he seeeth. Ask the watchman. See the watchman. Ask him

for the news. Let him tell you whether or not all is well. Now this being done, himself, Isaiah, the watchman - again begins to tell what is going on. Now this is a description of Cyrus and Darius as they come into the city. It is very much like the story of David described in 2 Sam. 18:24 and Jehu 2 K. 9:17.

Verse 7 - The answer is given. The news is published. The security of Babylon here is discussed. He said I see horses and chariots coming two abreast. I see riders coming two abreast. And he describes how they are coming. Some are coming in Chariots. Some are coming upon mules. Some are coming in chariots drawn by camels. And this is a great force he sees in the distance. And he begins to give them the news of this -- military force. The war is being waged in a way to throw confusion in the enemy. Here is a swift moving army passing out of sight.

Verse 8 - Now he has challenged them to listen and here is a lion at my post he says. He cries as a lion. From this watchtower, from this position - it seems that it is the daytime but the whole thing is turning night. He is weary with the watching of the day and night, the long hours, and it is hard on his nerves. And here is the roar -- now this is not an expression of discontent, but this is the roar as in Amos 3:4 - shall the lion roar when he hath no prey. That is, the lion is now springing ready for his kill. He is coming in to take possession. These chariots are moving and this is coming out of a man's mouth. Everybody knew the meaning of this. It is likely that it was intended to raise attention. He that hath an ear in other words, let him hear the lion's roar.

He talks about how faithful he has been upon the watchtower, watching. It is not that he expected the downfall of Babylon. But he is not complaining. He has been there watching the situation.

Verse 9 - Now he gives the great discovery he has made and he says Babylon fallen is Babylon. The horsemen are here, the enemy are here in the city. The over-throw is taking place. And here is the triumph from sorrow that is being published.

Now this is very much like Revelation 14:8 and 18:2. The literal city - the spiritual type, when at last the enemy is going to be over-thrown. And the divine judgment comes and we are going to see that Babylon the great is going to be over-thrown. 2 Chron. 18:5-11.

Verse 10 - Threshings. In this news report he says, he tells them what I've heard from the Lord. And he says I have announced it faithfully. Now this is a notice to God's people. And the title the Prophet give them in God's name - oh my threshings of the corn. He turns to his own nation and this is very representative of our God, like a tender parent. The child of my threshing floor. That is God will thresh the wheat on the threshing floor and will deal with the instrument - and in this way he points to the future day, when the place of that world power that opposes the Jew in the past. It is a time of sorrow but he points out like a threshing floor, as in the book of Micah 4:13, says arise, thresh oh daughters of Zion. In other words Babylon is up, Israel is down. So the chant now is Babylon is falling. Now Israel will rise again.

Judgment on the spiritual Babylon, the Harlot Church, equally involves the thorough and final deliverance of the true bride of Christ. And this is going to be a great conflict in the world. The church as the land is of the Jews, the seed of the Gentiles. The prophet says - he gives them this title. The church is God's floor in which the most valuable fruit and products of the earth are to be gathered.

The true believers are the corn of God's floor. Hypocrites are the straw.

The true corn may expect afflictions, they are going to suffer hardships. And this will be by appointment. But here comes an assurance now that some day the church will be relieved of this. This is intended of the Lord. Now the whole design of this prophecy therefore is to console Judah, console God's people and help them to know that evil in Babylon one day will be brought down. The security of Babylon is to pass away.

II. Solution of Edom - Verse 11 - 12.

Verse 11 - One called out of Seir. Watchmen what of the night. The cry comes from a specified person, not from a specified person, but from fear, from a place. And it is

something significant. What is seir? The word means rough or hairy. Esau, the first settler of this land. Gen. 25:25. The hairy man. Now this is a striking characteristic. He goes to his own place to dwell in the rough mountains. And Edom had become Dumah. Which means a silence of death. A storm swept mountain. This is in contrast with the desert and the sea. In other words, seir in Dumah is storm silence. Of course we might take this into the New Testament and both Dumah and Seir - it is silent, godward as Babylon was desert from the same point of view. There was no songs - no praises lifted up to God. There was the burden of their sin and what a storm. This is an example of fear today. The restlessness, the human government we have - Democracy. Death which shatters over this world, and we well might say, Watchman, what of the night.

Nor is the repeated question but it is like a sick man on his bed at night with the long hours wondering if the night will ever end. Asking again, what time is it. Oh, me, is it not almost daybreak.

Here is a longing and expectation for the end of the night. Now, you get the truth of this - you will see that this points us to the night when the return of our Lord will take place. What of the night.

Now, this was truly one of Israel's neighbors and it certainly meant that their distress was foretold. Not only for warning to them to prepare them for it, but it is a warning that Israel might not depend upon these people for relief.

So the question is put by the Edomite to the watchman. And he called him. He was concerned about the public safety and welfare.

The man of Macedonia in a vision called to Paul to come over and help. Acts. 16:9.

The man in Seir in his vision desired the Prophet to give him information and instruction.

Now this man did ~~not~~ call the newsmen or the Seir's of Edom. He turned not to the military man or the man of science, but he turned to the watchman -- God's watchman on the wall and asked him what about the night. He asked him what about the new day. And he was searching for an answer.

He called to God's Prophet. God's Prophet and Minister is appointed to be a watchman. And he is to be looked upon as such. The watchman in the city in the time of peace or crisis to direct those who depend upon him, and to bring comfort to them. And it is our duty to inquire of the watchman. What of the night. There are others who sleep but what time of the night is it. After a long sleep of sin, perhaps some feel they are secure. Rom. 13:11.

What tidings do you have of the night. We are ready to receive it. What is the news. You remember that the Lord said he is going to come as a thief in the night.

Verse 12 - The watchman's answer to this question is - he says the morning cometh. He answers by way of prediction. He says first the morning light is going to come. Peace is going to be your opportunity but he says afterwards come a night of trouble and calamity. It is night again. The night of sickness, the night of old age, the morning of prosperity, and so these are going to follow. One after the other. And perhaps we sometimes think how long are we going to be in this night, in which we live. The morning comes and we ask again, as this man on the mount. I think he was asking the minister of God to look into the counsel of God to bring to him warning and comfort. As so often they have heard the man of God pronounce judgment upon them, and condemn them.

And the watchman threatened judgment. Some are awakened, but some will mock the night. Now he says the morning cometh. That is the time of repentance will be granted. The long suffering and kindness of God will be granted to them. Some will inquire seriously about God's judgments and how to escape them.

There is still a door of hope if you will look for a place of mercy. Come to God through Jesus Christ and obtain this salvation.

But the citizens of the city are asleep - there is one anxious soul who goes out into the street, walks along wondering if light will soon come. Like a sick man on his bed. He is concerned for the safety and welfare while others are unconcerned. He heard the footsteps of the watchman on the wall. And with eagerness, he lifts up his voice to him.

What of the night about us. Twice the question comes. What tidings are there. How long will you sleep in sin.

This is the serious question because night symbolizes all that there is of evil. It is a life of godlessness. And few will deny that this world in which we are living in is going through a moral magnet everywhere. We have but to look about us and discover this.

I could mention two or three things -- the rising tide of personal dishonesty. They tell us that in some schools from 30% up cheat. They tell us that telephones are filled with slugs. And I read of one institution some years ago where the company had to take them out. That is, people are trying to get something for nothing, in picking up things that do not belong to them.

When we think about the darkness of our reading habits -- some of the comic books, some of the paper back books today. If you will look over the pile of magazines perhaps you have in your home -- what kind of reading material would you find there.

It seems that we have retreated into utter darkness. We have lost our morals. Boys and girls even in the teenage have no respect for each other. And society wants to put a cigarette in every girl's hand and a glass of beer in every teenager's hand. In some surveys we have revealed that even in high school a great percentage are experimenting with drink. How can the American family hold together with this.

We find that we are even retreating in the churches. And no longer do we hold up the high standards of Christianity and being a Christian and following Christ. Even Sunday School Teachers today do things that 30 years ago they would have been turned out of Church for. You have heard the old story where the Preacher said he had a thousand members and all of them were active. 500 for the Lord -- and 500 for the Devil.

We have retreated in the darkness concerning stewardship. We have a great slogan -- Every Baptist a tither -- every Christian a tither. The least should be expected of us. I know we cannot regulate this, we cannot take it as a law. But I wonder how much witnessing we would do in winning people to Christ if we would put more into it. Now the Prophet gives him the answer about this gloomy time. Actually he says things are going to get better. And actually he says, they are going to get worse. As soon as they get better, you will be relieved. But your troubles will not be over. So he was saying to them, Judah, as soon as this passes, there will be something else.

Nowhere in all of Scripture is there a better illustration of what we are going through today. Think of the time when Germany was taking over the world. The battle in North Africa -- The Pacific. And think of the crowds of people in church praying for D-Day and Victory to come. Things look bright and it looked as though the morning had arrived. And then we settle back and we forgot about our churches. And then China was swallowed up by communism. Then we had the Korean War and it has continued until this hour in which we have in Asia another battle going on --- in Cuba --- and the cold war continues. The head of the Russian state continues in their hope. It seems that after a little night there is a let-up and yet the goal is still the same to absolutely dominate this whole world. And pressure is being put on to the breaking point here and there and different places, and we see this and the prophet is giving a plea. He is giving a plea to God's people to come back and return under Jehovah. He is telling them to inquire - to repent - and to come back to God. Here is history and the record of it and if we could only see that the morning comes to give us an opportunity. If it is not to be so, what must we do. Isaiah said return and come. Repent he says, change your mind, change your heart --- from turning away from God and consecrate your all unto God. This is the call - this hour. Now you can't do a whole lot about Russia but you can do what Joshua said in the 24th Chapter and the 15th Verse. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Now you can do this much. And here is the message and the cry of the watchman.

Night is symbolized here by the morning coming - things are going to get better. And then he says, they are going to get worse. Here is a call to repentance. Here is a call to inquire.

There is a piece of poetry which goes:

Watchman, tell us of the night.

What it's signs of promise are.

Traveler, ^{12'er} ~~for~~ yon mountains' heights,

See that glory-beaming star.

Watchman, tell us of the night,

Higher yet that star ascends,

Traveler! blessedness and light -
 Peace and truth its coarse pretends.

Watchmen! with its beams alone.
 Gild the spot that gave them birth?
 Traveler! ages are it's own,
 See, it burst o'er all the earth.

Watchmen! tell us of the night.
 For the morning seems to dawn.
 Traveler! darkness takes its flight,
 Doubt and terror are withdrawn.

Watchmen! let thy wondering cease;
 Hide thee to thy quiet home
 Traveler! lo! the prince of peace,
 Lo! the Son of God has come.

This is significant. I think if you were to search the New Testament, you would find that Jesus and the great man Paul quoted from Isaiah more than any other book. And this was a great hour, in the life of the nation, and he was giving this message.

Morning cometh, light and opportunity are coming, Christians can see streaks of the shining dawn -- morning coming for the penitent. Life is going to come for the doubting Thomas.

Night follows. If the morning is abused and wasted -- then the night of calamity and judgment are bound to follow.

This is the way you can trace the history of the church. The evening watch and the gradual loss of the light of truth in which the vail is pulled over the church in the first century and it is darker and darker under the cover of Rome. And then the mid-night watch. Slowly the church goes into the Dark Ages and it is like Sampson who awoke and burst the gates and bars of the Philistines with the reformation.

There was a re-awakening or the cock crowing watch. Now we have come to our own time and our own hour in history and it is about the last or the fourth morning watch and this is the cry from the man of Dumah and his words -- three watches are already spent. And since we are in the fourth, or at last the last days are at hand. It seems fitting that we should accept this morning star this new day. Isaiah who was writing hundreds of years before the Christian time is in harmony with all that the apostles had to say. The morning comes says the Prophet -- the day is at hand. It is in accord with what Paul had to say about it in 2 Thess. 1:6-7. The day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. And whoe unto you that desire the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord is darkness and not light. Amos 5:8. Are you still uncertain as to the meaning of the combination of day and night. It is quite clear here, and it should be clear for each of us to be sure the light has come but the darkness is going to follow. The Gospel word of invitation is here, return, and come.

Now it is for your benefit to know God's time.

The cry of a soul awakens to its guilt and here is the call to come - give up your love for darkness, this is a condition in which the glory can be restored.

Now the burden of the (desert of the sea) is looking from Jerusalem across the desert. And Babylon is just exactly like Hitler coming. Isaiah doesn't say I am going to tell you something. He just comes right out and tells it. And he says I am in distress, judgment - judgment! And in the 5th verse he says the table has been prepared, I tell you terror is in his voice. He has a vision of what is happening. The dark world opens, the palace of the king is before him. And how sad that night will end.

III. The Short Time Of Arabia - Verse 13-17.

Verse 13 - This was a large country to the Eastward and Southward to the land of Canaan. It was the land that was the possession of Abraham, and his descendants. They were people who generally lived in tents and kept cattle. It was sort of a wall in between Israel and their enemies.

Verse 14 - They shall stand in need of refreshment, being already about to perish they needed water, that could be sent to them by their neighbors. They were in distress.

They were about to die.

Verse 15 - A destroying Army is described. Swords and bows -- this is a description of war.

Verse 16 - The glory shall vanish away. Their possessions, their cattle, and all will fall by the wayside. And there is little that can be done. They will hide in the woodland which promises to be a cover for them.

Verse 16 - He gives the length of time that this is going to come to pass - within a year he says, this judgment will descend upon them. It is all ratified by the truth of God and it is sure to come upon these people. Now, let them turn unto God.

I trust that this report in the Gazette will cause you to pay attention to it's message.

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- 1. it cost God all he had to give salvation.*
- 2. it cost Christ all he had to bring it.*
- 3. it cost The Christian all he has to live it.*
- 4. it cost The Sinner his soul to reject salvation.*