

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 54

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Jacob Wrestling with the Angel by Rembrandt Cir. 1659-60

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah Message Fifty-Three

LITTLE APOCALYPSE OF ISAIAH PART V
THE NATION ISRAEL & REASONS FOR THE TRIBULATION

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On May 15, 1948 the State of Israel was reborn as a sovereign nation. It had been 2,534 years since Israel was last an independent nation and never in world history has a previously destroyed nation regained its sovereignty. Their beginnings were shown in Genesis.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH ABRAHAM

The Abrahamic Covenant is the first unconditional covenant that God made with Israel. The Abrahamic Covenant promised a seed, land, and blessings. The three major promises of this covenant were personal promises to Abraham, national promises to Israel and universal promises to all the people of the earth. God promised that He would bless him and make him a blessing to others, to make his name great, to give him many descendents, to make him the father of a multitude of nations, to give him the land of Canaan for always and to bless them that blessed Abraham and to curse them that cursed him. (Genesis 12; 13; 15 & 17). God also made national promises concerning Israel. They are: to make a great nation of his descendents; to give land from the eastern most branch of the Nile delta called the river of Egypt to the Euphrates to his descendents forever; and to give the Abrahamic covenant to his descendents for ever (Genesis 17:19; 21; 26:2-4; Genesis 28:12-15). Finally, God made universal covenants to Abraham that would affect everybody on the earth.

Genesis Chapter 12, and includes seven "I Wills":

1. And I will make of thee a great nation,
2. and I will bless thee,
3. and make thy name great;
4. and thou shalt be a blessing:
5. And I will bless them that bless thee,
6. and curse him that curseth thee:
7. and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. Genesis 12:2-3

Further God promised to have Abraham's people the Israelites sojourn in Egypt for four-hundred years.

Genesis 15:13

¹³And he said unto Abram, Know of a surety that thy seed shall be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years (ASV, 1901).

THE COVENANT PASSED TO HIS SON ISAAC, THE CHILD OF PROMISE

Genesis 26:3

²And Jehovah appeared unto him, and said, Go not down into Egypt; dwell in the land which I shall tell thee of: ³sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these lands, and I will establish the oath which I swore unto Abraham thy father; ⁴and I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and will give unto thy seed all these lands; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (ASV, 1901).

THE COVENANT THEN PASSED TO ISAAC'S SON JACOB

Genesis 32:24–30

²⁴And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. ²⁵And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was strained, as he wrestled with him. ²⁶And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me ²⁷And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. ²⁸And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed. ²⁹And Jacob asked him, and said, Tell me, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore, is it that thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. ³⁰And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for, said he, I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved (ASV, 1901).

Jacob wrestled with a celestial being that had the appearance of a man. We know this to be the Angel of Jehovah also known as a preincarnate appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Hosea 12: 5 confirms the “man” as an angelic being and not an earthly man. The wrestling went on all night until the morning. The text says that the Angel did not prevail against Jacob. This is not because He was not able (angels are significantly stronger than men), but because He wanted the struggle to last. Jacob was going to come out of it a better, more refined man. Finally, when the Lord wanted the wrestling to end He gave Jacob's thigh a debilitating supernatural blow that dislocated Jacob's hip. Still, Jacob would not release his hold on the Angel until He blessed him. Interestingly the Angel asked Jacob his name and he answered “Jacob.” The Angel then *said*, “*Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for thou hast striven with God and with men, and hast prevailed.*” So, God renames Jacob “*Israel*”, which in Hebrew is *Yisrael*, or a combination of two Hebrew words *sarah* and *el* and it literally means “he who strives with God.” The word play helps our understanding of Israel and Jacob. The Abrahamic Covenant he was prophesied to receive by inference he now receives and it includes him striving with his father-in-Law, brother and God Himself.

Genesis chapter thirty-four tells the story of the rape of Jacob's daughter Dinah. In their condemnation of these events Jacob's sons use the name Israel for the first time in reference to themselves as a nation and not just a family or an alternate name for Jacob. The emerging seeds of a nation are seen in this chapter.

Genesis 34:7

⁷And the sons of Jacob came in from the field when they heard it: and the men were grieved, and they were very wroth, because he had wrought folly in Israel in lying with Jacob's daughter; which thing ought not to be done (ASV, 1901).

Here they began to view themselves as a nation approximately 1900 B.C.

Sometime later the ten older sons of Jacob, in their envy, sold Joseph, Jacob's favorite son into slavery to some itinerant Ishmaelite merchants traveling to Egypt. Joseph providentially rose up to become second only to pharaoh of the greatest nation on earth at that time and is charged with protecting that country from an imminent famine. In the process his family comes to Egypt seeking food. They reconcile with him and all seventy of them enter Egypt to live there under his protection.

When they emerged from Egypt four hundred years later travelling back to Canaan in 1445 B.C they were a bonafide nation with a population of more than two million citizens. Under the leadership of Moses, who was chosen by God, they become a theocracy. Over the next eight hundred fifty-nine years until they fell to the Babylonians, they would intermittently trust God and relapse into the idolatrous practices of the nations around them. God would correct them but all the while loving and assuring them He had a future for them as a nation.

Leviticus 26: 42-44

⁴²then will I remember my covenant with Jacob; and also my covenant with Isaac, and also my covenant with Abraham will I remember; and I will remember the land. ⁴³The land also shall be left by them, and shall enjoy its sabbaths, while it lieth desolate without them: and they shall accept of the punishment of their iniquity; because, even because they rejected mine ordinances, and their soul abhorred my statutes. ⁴⁴And yet for all that, when they are in the land of their enemies, I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them, to destroy them utterly, and to break my covenant with them; for I am Jehovah their God; ⁴⁵ but I will for their sakes remember the covenant of their ancestors, whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt in the sight of the nations, that I might be their God: I am Jehovah. ⁴⁶These are the statutes and ordinances and laws, which Jehovah made between Him and the children of Israel in mount Sinai by Moses (ASV 1901).

In His faithfulness He will someday fulfill His covenant with Abraham by blessing Messiah or Christ-believing Jews and bring them into the promised land of Israel. The fullness of the covenant will be realized in the Millennium. However, He gave them sufficient prophecies insuring that they would be back in the land before that time but in a state of unbelief regarding Jesus as their Messiah. The apostle Paul says that the value of Israel is that to them God gave the oracles of God our Bible and the Messiah (Romans 3:2; 9:4-5).

It is this unbelief for which they will be judged severely.

THE TRIBULATION

In the Old Testament, the most common name for the Great Tribulation is the Day of Jehovah or the Day of the Lord found in various passages. These are not the only references just the most popular ones. They are directed at the nation Israel for unbelief in their Messiah.

The Time of Jacob's Trouble, Jacob's name was changed to Israel.—Jeremiah 30:7

The Seventieth Week (a seven) of Daniel—Daniel 9:27
 Jehovah's Strange Work—Isaiah 28:21
 Jehovah's Strange Act—Isaiah 28:21
 The Day of Israel's Calamity—Deuteronomy 32:35; Obadiah 12–14
 The Tribulation—Deuteronomy 4:30
 The Indignation—Isaiah 26:20; Daniel 11:36
 The Overflowing Scourge—Isaiah 28:15, 18
 The Day of Vengeance—Isaiah 34:8; 35:4; 61:2
 The Year of Recompense—Isaiah 34:8
 The Time of Trouble—Daniel 12:1; Zephaniah 1:15
 The Day of Wrath—Zephaniah 1:15
 The Day of Distress—Zephaniah 1:15
 The Day of Wasteness—Zephaniah 1:15
 The Day of Desolation—Zephaniah 1:15
 The Day of Darkness—Zephaniah 1:15; Amos 5:18, 20; Joel 2:2
 The Day of Gloominess—Zephaniah 1:15; Joel 2:2
 The Day of Clouds—Zephaniah 1:15; Joel 2:2
 The Day of Thick Darkness—Zephaniah 1:15; Joel 2:2
 The Day of the Trumpet—Zephaniah 1:16
 The Day of Alarm—Zephaniah 1:16

The New Testament names and designations include:

The Day of the Lord—1 Thessalonians 5:2
 The Wrath of God—Revelation 15:1, 7; 14:10, 19; 16:1
 The Hour of Trial—Revelation 3:10
 The Great Day of the Wrath of the Lamb of God—Revelation 6:16–17
 The Wrath to Come—1 Thessalonians 1:10
 The Wrath—1 Thessalonians 5:9; Revelation 11:18
 The Great Tribulation—Matthew 24:21; Revelation 2:22; 7:14
 The Tribulation—Matthew 24:29
 The Hour of Judgment—Revelation 14:7

THE PURPOSES OF THE TRIBULATION

1. To make an end of wickedness and wicked ones (Isaiah 13:9; 24:19-20).
2. To bring about a worldwide revival (Revelation 7:1-8, Matthew 24:14).
3. To break the power of the Holy People (Daniel 12:5-7; Ezekiel 20:33-38).

So, one major reason for the Tribulation is to break the power of the Jews in their unbelief in their Messiah. In fact, the first reference to the Tribulation is "The Time of Jacob's Trouble". Those who have believed are now considered to be part of the Church and they will leave the earth in the Rapture prior to the Tribulation.

In concert with this is Christ's Words regarding the Jews finally accepting them as their Messiah. This of course refers to the Jews who did not believe in Jesus and entered the invisible Church.

Matthew 23:39

“For I say to you, from now on you will not see Me until you say, BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD!” (NASB)

And finally, the final fulfillment of the Bible’s prophesy regarding the Jews national salvation.

Romans 11:26-27

²⁶and so all Israel shall be saved: even as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer; He shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: ²⁷And this is my covenant unto them, When I shall take away their sins (ASV, 1901).

During the last stage of the Great Tribulation, which we call the battle of Armageddon, the Antichrist, will move his forces into the Valley of Jezreel. His enemies, which are the underground or resistance forces who have been saved during the Tribulation, take the opportunity to destroy Babylon the world capital of the Antichrist. They do it unannounced and in rapid fashion. According to Isaiah 13:3, they will be Gentile believers of the Tribulation. Just prior to this they will make their way to Jerusalem to report to the Jews who are there. This sudden destruction of the world political and economic capital will cause great distress on the earth, but not in heaven. Because when Babylon gets destroyed it will signal to those in Heaven that the Second Coming is soon to occur!

I Thessalonians 5:2-3

² For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.³ For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape (KJV).

THE ANCIENT JEWISH WEDDING

A most profound illustration in Scripture is the depiction of the Church as the bride of Jesus the Messiah (Ephesians 5:25-29). To approach this illustration from a modern perspective, we miss much of the richness and depth of this picture. To truly appreciate what it must have meant to Jesus' disciples when He taught them about His Kingdom using marriage metaphors, or to Paul's readers when he described Christ as the husband of the Church, we need to discover what marriage and courtship were like in First Century Israel. When we compare what we discover to the calling out of the Church by the Lord Jesus, we find an amazing parallel, in which virtually every aspect of the ancient Jewish tradition is fulfilled. This Jewish wedding actually continued until the early twentieth century.

The importance of this is that, we see that our God is a God who pays meticulous attention to detail, who fulfills according to what He has established, who was willing to pay an inconceivably high price to secure a Bride for His Son, and who will not fail to send His Son back to reclaim His Beloved.

The Jews had no dating or courtships as we now think of those things. Marriage to them was a practical legal matter, established by contract and carried through by exacting procedure. These customs exists in a form today in the Jewish wedding ceremony.

When the father of the young man of Israel in Jesus’ time chose the girl he wanted for his son he would approach her father with a marriage contract. He would come to her house with a covenant- a true legal agreement – giving the terms by which he would be willing to propose marriage. The most important consideration in the contract was the price the bridegroom would be willing to pay.

The “bride price” is still utilized today in parts of the Mediterranean and African worlds and while it seems archaic to us, it had some useful purposes. First of all, if the bridegroom was willing to sacrifice hard cash for his bride, he was showing his love in a tangible way. Secondly, it was a favor to his future father-in-law. In the days of farming and heavy labor, it was something of a liability to raise a daughter. A family with sons would prosper more because of the built-in work force; but a family with daughters would expect to “consolidate their losses” when the girls were mature enough to attract bridegrooms. And so the father of the bride was more or less paid off for his earlier expenses and for his patience and skill in raising a girl to be good marriage material.

The father of the bridegroom would present himself to the bride or her father with this agreement, offering to pay a suitable price for her, and she and her father would consider his contract. If the terms were suitable, the future bride and groom would drink a cup of wine together and this would seal the bargain. This cup was most significant. It signified the bridegroom’s willingness to sacrifice in order to have this bride. It was offered as a toast to the bride and of course, it showed the bride’s willingness to enter into this marriage.

Then the groom would pay the price. This price was no modest token but was set so that the new bride would be a costly item – that was the idea. The young man’s family had no delusions that they were getting something for nothing. They would pay dearly to marry the girl of their choice.

When the matter was settled the groom and his father would depart. He would make a little speech to his bride saying, “I go to prepare a place for you,” and he would return to his father’s house. Back at his father’s house he would build her a bridal chamber, a little mansion, in which they would have their future honeymoon.

He would actually build a separate building on his father’s property, or decorate a room in this father’s house. The bridal chamber had to be beautiful- one doesn’t honeymoon anywhere; and it had to be stocked with provisions since the bride and groom were going to remain in it for seven days. This construction project would take the better part of a year, ordinarily and the father of the groom would be the judge of when it was finished. The father of the groom would be the final judge on when the chamber was ready and when the young man would go to claim his bride.

The bride, for her part, was obliged to do a lot of waiting. She would take the time to gather her trousseau and be ready when her bridegroom came. Custom provided that she had to have an oil lamp ready in case he came late at night in the darkness, because she had to be ready to travel at a moment’s notice. During this long period of waiting, she was referred to as “consecrated” or “set apart” or “bought with a price”. She was truly a lady-in-waiting, but there was no doubt that her groom would return. Sometimes the young man would depart for a very long time indeed, but of course he had paid a high price for his bride; even though there were other young women available, he would surely return to the one with whom he had made a covenant.

The bride would wear her veil whenever she stepped out of her house so that other young men would realize that she was spoken for and would not try to approach her with another contract. (Today the Bride of Christ wears a veil-those understanding of our covenant try to make other contracts with us that would violate the one we have with our Bridegroom. We are to resist those other offers and wait only for the One Who paid for us.)

As the year went on, the bride would assemble her sisters and bridesmaids and whoever would go with her to the wedding when the bridegroom came, and they would each have their oil lamps ready. They would wait at her house every night on the chance that the groom would come along with his groomsmen, and sweep them all away to a joyous and sudden wedding.

Meanwhile, the bridegroom would be building and decorating with all that he had. His father would inspect the chamber from time to time to see if it was ready. If we came along the road at this point and saw the young man working on his bridal chamber, we might well ask, "When is the big day?" But the bridegroom would answer, "Only my father knows that."

Finally, the chamber would be ready and the bridegroom would assemble his young friends to accompany him on the exciting trip to claim his bride. The big moment had arrived and the bridegroom was more than ready, we can be sure. He and his young men would set out in the night making every attempt to completely surprise the bride.

And that's the romantic part-all the Jewish brides were "stolen." The Jews had a special understanding of a woman's heart. What a thrill for her, to be "abducted" and carried off into the night, not by a stranger but by the one who loved her so much that he had paid a high price for her.

Over at the bride's house, things had better be ready! To be sure, the bride would be surprised since the groom would try to come at midnight while she was sleeping. But, the oil lamps were ready and the bride had her veil. And while she might be sleeping in her wedding dress, she was definitely surprised. It is a wonder that she could sleep at all as the year went on.

Now there were rules to be observed in consideration of a woman's feelings. The groom couldn't just rush in on her. Actually, as the excited party of young men would get close to her house they were obliged to give a warning. Someone in the wedding party would shout.

When the bride heard that shout, she knew her young man would be there momentarily. She had only time to light her lamp, grab her honeymoon clothing and go. Her sisters and bridesmaids who wanted to attend also had to have their lamps trimmed and ready too. No one would try and walk through ancient Israel with its rocky terrain in the dark of night without carrying a lamp.

And so the groom and his men would charge in, grab the girls and make off with them! The father of the bride and her brothers would look the other way-perhaps just making one quick check to be sure this was the young man with the contract-and the wedding party would be off. People in the village might be awakened from their sleep by the happy voices of the young people carrying the oil lamps through the streets, and that's how they knew a wedding was going on.

When the wedding party reached the house of the groom's father, the bride and groom would go into their chamber and shut the door. No one else would enter. The groom's father, meanwhile, would have assembled the wedding guests-his friends-and they would be ready to celebrate the new marriage. Since the wedding was actually going to take seven days (until the appearance of the bride and groom out of the wedding chamber), it was hard to plan for. Occasionally, the host would run out of wine, as one can well imagine. The Lord Himself graced a wedding at Cana with His presence and replenished the wine for the celebrants as told in John 2.

But the celebrating wouldn't start right away. First, the marriage had to actually be consummated. The law provided that the bride and groom become one before their marriage was recognized. Thus, the friend of the bridegroom- the individual we might refer to as the best man would stand near the bridal chamber and wait to hear the bridegroom's voice. When the marriage was consummated, the bridegroom would tell his friend through the door and the friend would then go to the wedding guests and announce the good news. The celebration would then begin and continue for an entire week.

At the end of the week, the bride and the groom would make their long awaited appearance to the cheers of the crowd. There would then be a joyous meal-a marriage supper, which we might refer to as the wedding reception-to honor the new couple. At this point, the bride would have discarded her veil, since she was now a married woman and all would see exactly who it was the bridegroom had chosen. The new couple and the guests would enjoy a magnificent feast to conclude the entire matrimonial week.

After the marriage supper, the bride and the groom would depart, not remaining any longer at the home of the groom's father. They would go instead to their own house, which had been prepared by the bridegroom. (The bride of Christ will spend seven years in heaven at the home of the groom's Father, and then we shall return with our Bridegroom to occupy the Kingdom He has prepared for us.)

As the bride and groom would travel back through the village, it would be appreciated by all the onlookers just who the couple was and where their permanent home would be.

And that was a complete Jewish wedding in Jesus' time. Readers of the Gospel can easily see the beautiful analogies between this complex procedure and the manner in which the Lord Himself called us His chosen Bride.

SO THERE ARE FIVE STAGES TO THE JEWISH WEDDING.

1. The Father of the Groom made the arrangement for the Bride and paid the bride price.
2. In this case the price was the blood of Jesus (Ephesians 5:25-29).
3. The fetching of the bride, which referred to today as the Rapture of the Church (I Thessalonians 4:13-18)
4. The Marriage ceremony of the bride to the Groom or the Church weds the Messiah (Revelation 19:6-8)
5. The wedding feast or the Marriage Feast of the Lamb.

THE MARRIAGE FEAST OF THE LAMB

The fifth stage of the Jewish wedding is the marriage feast and this lasted for seven days. The Church is the bride and was married to Christ in heaven after the Rapture and Resurrection. The Old Testament saints make up the friends of the bridegroom. Now that those saints have been resurrected too the wedding feast can take place. The wedding itself has already occurred and was just for the Church and Christ. The other saints are invited to the feast though. The invitation has already been issued.

Revelation 19:9

And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb. And he saith unto me, These are the true sayings of God (KJV).

The result of this invitation is the resurrection and the wedding feast, which will last for seven days. Christ spoke of this during the last supper as He raised His glass of wine with His apostles.

Matthew 26:27

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom (KJV).

This then is the event that inaugurates the Millennium. The Millennium is also known as the Theocratic Kingdom or the Messianic Kingdom. The wedding feast parable told by The Messiah is connected with the Kingdom.

Matthew 22:1-14

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment: And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. For many are called, but few are chosen (KJV).

The main point of this parable is that those who were originally bidden to the wedding feast, the Pharisees and the Jewish generation of Jesus' day will not partake of the feast or enter into the Theocratic Kingdom. This is because they committed the unpardonable sin of attributing the works of God to Satan. This is also known as blaspheming the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:29) The Jews of the Tribulation period will be at the supper and enter into the Kingdom. Only believers will go in; all unbelievers will be cast into outer darkness and be excluded from entering the Messianic Kingdom.

NEXT MESSAGE: THE LITTLE APOCALYPSE PART VI

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