

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 56

March 1, 2020



Simeon's Song of Praise for the future Messiah by Rembrandt Cir 1669

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Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

Message Fifty-Six

LITTLE APOCALYPSE OF ISAIAH PART VIII

March 1, 2020

Daniel E. Woodhead

BIRTH PANGS LEADING TO THE BLOSSOMING OF ISRAEL

Isaiah 26:16– 18

¹⁶Jehovah, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them. ¹⁷Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain and crieth out in her pangs; so we have been before thee, O Jehovah. ¹⁸We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen (ASV, 1901).

ISRAEL TURNED TO GOD IN DISTRESS

Isaiah 26:16

¹⁶Jehovah, in trouble have they visited thee; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them (ASV, 1901).

The nation Israel had many travails imposed upon them which they brought upon themselves through idolatry and sin. When God corrected them, He caused them to turn to Him in prayer, especially during times of exile when the host countries were hostile and it was clear that only God could help us. The greatest persecution and correction is coming to them in the Tribulation. Therefore, Israel's enemies and persecutions caused them to realize that survival depended on turning to God. The Hebrew word *lachash* translated here as prayer actually has a stronger meaning than just prayer. It means properly a silent whispering, muttering; and then a sighing, a calling for help. This is the sense here. In their calamity they sighed, and called on God for help in a humble manner. This prayer represents intense prayer from the deepest recessed of the Heart The people realized that God, not coincidence, was the source of their suffering for which He was bringing punishment upon them.

PAIN AS A WOMAN IN CHILDBIRTH

Isaiah 26:17–18

¹⁷Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain and crieth out in her pangs; so we have been before thee, O Jehovah. ¹⁸We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind; we have not wrought any deliverance in the earth; neither have the inhabitants of the world fallen, ²⁰Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. ²¹For, behold, Jehovah cometh forth out

of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain (ASV, 1901).

This verse describes the intensity of the prayer that the people offer when they suffer persecution during their various exiles and ultimately the Tribulation. Isaiah compares the persecutions to a woman in labor. Despite Israel's suffering, their knowledge and love for God is never diminished. Similarly, when a woman is experiencing labor pains, she should not blame her husband for her pain. This was the new condition of their life because of their sin which, God described to them after the Fall. To the woman he said:

Genesis 3:16

¹⁶Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy pain and thy conception; in pain thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee (ASV, 1901).

After giving birth when the intensity of the pain is gone she continues to live with him and love him. A woman willingly endures her labor pains because: she knows that in the end she will give birth to a child. So, too, Israel willingly endures its exile because it knows that it will end in the ultimate redemption. They realized that someday there will be a Messianic Kingdom which will be an absolute blessing to the earth and them as well. The comparison continues as Israel is compared to a woman who experiences labor pains and thinks that her suffering will end soon but the birthing process lasts longer than she expects. Finally, in the end with the birth of her child, the majority of the intense pain is over. So, too, Israel in exile has suffered many persecutions, hoping that each would be the last one, only to realize that the ordeal was not over. The prophet describes the seemingly fruitless labor as having borne wind, as if she were giving birth to air. The suffering in exile with the Gentile nations the similar because it did not yet bring salvation. The wicked enemy descendants of Ishmael and Esau who abundantly inhabit the world are still here indicating that the time of Israel's nation salvation has not yet arrived. Jesus described the steps leading up to the birth of the Messianic kingdom and birth pangs.

1. THE SIGN OF THE END OF THE AGE

Jesus while sitting on the Mount of Olives and answering His inner circle of apostles, Peter, James John, and Andrew regarding the sign of His return is recorded in Matthew 24:7-8; Mark 13:8; Luke 21:10-11.

The Matthew Account Reads:

Matthew 24:7-8

For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these [are] the beginning of sorrows (ASV, 1901).

According to all three Gospel writers, the sign of the end of the age is said to be when nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. This act will be coupled with famines and earth quakes in various places and then Jesus clearly stated that this would be the beginning of travail (sorrows).

The term travail means “birth pang”. It references the series of birth pangs that a woman undergoes before giving birth to a baby. The prophets pictured the last days as a series of birth pangs before the birth of the Messianic Age. The beginning of travail, the first birth pang and the sign that the end of the age has begun is when nation rises against nation and kingdom against kingdom. This is a Jewish idiomatic phrase. It refers to a conflict within the totality of the geography under discussion. The following two Old Testament passages are prime examples.

Isaiah 19:1-4

The burden of Egypt. Behold, Jehovah rideth upon a swift cloud, and cometh unto Egypt: and the idols of Egypt shall tremble at his presence; and the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of it. And I will stir up the Egyptians against the Egyptians: and they shall fight every one against his brother, and every one against his neighbor; city against city, [and] kingdom against kingdom:

And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst of it; and I will destroy the counsel thereof: and they shall seek unto the idols, and to the charmers, and to them that have familiar spirits, and to the wizards. And I will give over the Egyptians into the hand of a cruel lord; and a fierce king shall rule over them, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts (ASV, 1901).

Here the land of Egypt is being discussed and the idiom points to a conflict all over the land of Egypt as the nation is completely engaged in a civil war.

Second it is found in:

II Chronicles 15:1-7

And the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded: and he went out to meet Asa, and said unto him, Hear ye me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin: Jehovah is with you, while ye are with him; and if ye seek him, he will be found of you; but if ye forsake him, he will forsake you. Now for a long season Israel was without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law: But when in their distress they turned unto Jehovah, the God of Israel, and sought him, he was found of them. And in those times there was no peace to him that went out, nor to him that came in; but great vexations were upon all the inhabitants of the lands. And they were broken in pieces, nation against nation, and city against city; for God did vex them with all adversity. But be ye strong, and let not your hands be slack; for your work shall be rewarded (ASV, 1901).

In this passage it is the entire Middle East that is being discussed, and the idiom points to conflict all over the Middle East. When Jesus gave these answers to His inner circle within the Olivet Discourse He was discussing events involving the entire world.

This is clear from Matthew 24: 14; 21; 30 and 31. Hence the idiom refers to a worldwide conflict and this worldwide conflict is the first birth pang., signifying that the end of the age or the last days had begun. There have been and will be at least nine visible birth pangs leading up to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom.

Jesus had already clearly stated that local wars between a few nations would not indicate that the end

had begun. But when He said that when there is *nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom*, this will mean the end of the age has begun.

It is important to realize what this idiom actually means to Jewish writers of Scripture within other theological documents. The idiom *nation against nation, and kingdom against kingdom* in other Jewish writing as well. One is the “Zohar Chadash” which states:

“At that time wars shall be stirred up in the world. Nation shall be against nation and city against city; much distress shall be renewed against the enemies of the Israelites.”

Another Jewish midrash (commentary) known as the Bereshit Rabbah states:

“If you shall see the kingdoms rising against each other in turn, then give heed and note the footsteps of the Messiah (XLII:4)

The Jewish Rabbis teach that a worldwide conflict would signal the coming of the Messiah. They also refer to the Antichrist as Armilus. Jesus said that when the world war occurs, while it does not signal the coming of the Messiah, it will signal that the end of the age has begun. These are the birth pangs that Jesus talked about.

World war I, 1914-1918, was the fulfillment of this particular prophecy, for that was the first time the entire world was at war. Following that was, World War II and that was a continuation of World War I. Furthermore; both world wars had a massive impact on Jewish history. World War I gave impetus to the growth of the existing Zionist movement, and World War II led to the re-establishment of the Jewish State. Since WW I, history has entered the last days of the Church Age. However, the last days are an extended period of time with an unknown termination time.

Jesus does describe these calamities as the *beginning of sorrows*, which is literally the beginning of labor pains; the idea is both of giving birth to a new age, and implying an increase of intensity and frequency in these calamities. The new age will be the Kingdom of Christ on earth He spoke of in the Lord’s Prayer.

Matthew 6:9–13

⁹ After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. ¹⁰ Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us this day our daily bread. ¹² And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. ¹³ And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen (KJV).

The worldwide conflict was to be coupled with famines and earth quakes. As far as famines are concerned, here are a few of the large ones since the time of the First World War.

DATES FROM & TO	PERIOD	NO. EARTHQUAKES (Mag. > 6.99)
1863 to 1900 incl.	38 yrs.	12
1901 to 1938 incl.	38 yrs.	53
1939 to 1976 incl.	38 yrs.	71
1977 to 2014 incl. *	38 yrs.	164 (to Mar. 2011) predict >190 in total.

Source: US Geologic Survey

Famines:

1. China 1958-62 between 10 and 30 million died from Mao's Great Leap Forward
2. Soviet Union 1921-22 9 million died by crop failures due to communist collectivism.
3. Soviet Union (Ukraine) 1932-34 between 7-8 million died under Stalin's programs.
4. North-west China 1927 3-6 million died drought, warlords and taxation
5. China (Henan) 1943 5 million died war with Japan and grain seizures by Chinese army
6. N Korea 1995-99 2.8 to 3.5 million died because of communism and flooding
7. India (Bengal) 1943 2.1 to 3 million people died due to crop failure and food exports to allied armies in WW II
8. China (Hunan) 1929 2 million due to drought and war
9. Soviet Union (Ukraine and Belorussia) 1946-47 2 million died drought and communist re-collectivism.
10. Cambodia 1979 1.5 and 2 million civil war and the Khmer Rouge as well as Vietnamese invading

Sources:

- * *Famine in the 20th Century* by Stephen Devereux, Institute of Development Studies, UK
- * Field Exchange, Emergency Nutrition Network

The worldwide conflict was to be coupled with famines and earth quakes. There have been significant increases in famines and earthquakes since the First World War. Just like birth pangs they have increased in intensity and the timing of their frequency is increasing

2. THE REESTABLISHMENT OF THE STATE OF ISRAEL

One passage clearly dealing with a return in unbelief in preparation for judgment is found in Ezekiel.

Ezekiel 20:33–38:

³³As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, surely with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out, will I be king over you. ³⁴And I will bring you out from the peoples, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with wrath poured out; ³⁵and I will bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there will I enter into judgment with you face to face. ³⁶Like as I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I enter into judgment with you, saith the Lord Jehovah. ³⁷And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; ³⁸and I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that

transgress against me; I will bring them forth out of the land where they sojourn, but they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and ye shall know that I am Jehovah (ASV, 1901).

Other passages are Ezekiel 22:17–22; Ezekiel 36:22–24 (regathering before regeneration) Isaiah 11:11–12; Zephaniah 2:1–2:

So, 1948 marked another birth pang of the last days. The restoration of the Jewish State is a fulfillment of those prophecies that spoke of a regathering in unbelief in preparation for judgment.

3. JERUSALEM UNDER JEWISH CONTROL

The fact that the Jewish State had to exist before the Tribulation does not necessarily require the total Jewish control of Jerusalem. Daniel 9: 27; Matthew 24: 15; II Thessalonians 2: 2-3; Revelation 11: 1-2 all speak of a third Jewish temple. We know this to be the tribulation temple. Since there must be complete Jewish control of Jerusalem in order to rebuild the temple, the Jews must have a higher degree of control than they had after their independence in May of 1948. The 1967 Six Day War brought about the fulfillment of the prophecy regarding the Jewish control of the Old City of Jerusalem.

4. THE ALLIED NATIONS OF RUSSIA AND THE ISLAMIC NATIONS ATTACK ISRAEL

Ezekiel 38: 1 to 39: 16 describes an invasion of armies from the north that results in their total destruction. The Bible is not explicit regarding the precise dates upon which most future end time events will occur. It does however give the observant student of the Scriptures a sequential chronology of those events. The invading forces reach the mountains of Israel then God destroys them all as He protects His chosen people Israel. Scripture does not identify a person here, only a title along with some interesting characteristics, which he possesses. The Bible states that even though God is against him God will nevertheless lead him and his allied armed forces against the Jews. The text uses the ancient names of the countries, which today are Russia, Iran, Ethiopia, Somaliland, Germany, Armenia, and Turkey. Saudi Arabia stands by and watches. The biblical text states that the reason is for Russia's own premeditated effort, for they *devise an evil thing and* resolve to invade for the purpose of spoils. It might be to get close to the oil fields in the Arab nations. It might be to get access to the huge offshore natural gas finds. The Lord allows this invasion to come to pass, regardless of Russia's reasons so that He *might be sanctified in the eyes of the nations* in light of what is about to happen. God is about to demonstrate His glory on the world stage for all to see. He will move out in judgment to destroy the invading army. The methods He uses are listed in the text. Several causes are listed: earthquake, civil war breaking out among the invading soldiers themselves, pestilence, blood, flood, hailstones, fire, and brimstone. It is the fire and brimstone description that leads to the belief that nuclear weapons are used by the Israelis to defend themselves. Since these things totally destroy the invading army without the aid of other nations, God succeeds in sanctifying Himself in the eyes of many people. In other words, the world will see and realize that God has glorified Himself. In 39:1-5 there is a further description of the invasion and its subsequent destruction.

The armies will fall specifically on the mountains of Israel. They extend the length of the center of the country, beginning at the southern point of the Valley of Jezreel at the town of Jenin in Galilee (Biblical Ein and Ganim) and continuing south until they stop at a point north of Beersheba in the Negev. These mountains contain the famous biblical cities of Dothan, Shechem, Samaria, Shiloh,

Bethel, Ai, Ramah, Bethlehem, Hebron, Debir, and most importantly Jerusalem. Jerusalem might be the goal of the invading army. Interestingly, the armies are said to go up against the people of Israel.

Not only is the Russian and allied army destroyed, but the land of Russia itself is devastated by the raining of brimstone, causing much destruction in the nation itself. It will cause Russia, Germany and the Muslim nations to cease being political forces in world affairs.

The probability that nuclear weapons will be in use is threefold. One, both Russia and Israel have them now and Iran is rapidly attempting to enrich uranium with no meaningful attempts by the Western Nations to stop them. Two; the text discusses the use of fire and brimstone as well as earthquakes which results in total destruction of the invading forces and the areas in which they live. This is a typical description of a nuclear explosion. The Scripture explains that Israel will burn the weapons that are left over from the battle for seven years. Finally, when they begin to bury the dead there will be a waiting period of seven months. This delay is due to the contamination of the bodies. Therefore, the gravediggers must wait seven months before they start. Interestingly the Jews will set up professionals to oversee the process. After the seven months any travelers that pass through the land will be asked to avoid touching any unburied human bones. They are to call for the professional buriers to secure them. Overlooking the cemetery, a new city will be built and named Hamonah, which means "multitude".

5. THE ONE WORLD GOVERNMENT

We can see how the eastern nations have been fueling the Arabs in their fight with Israel. The Western nations have supported Israel. But some day this east-west division will give way to a one-world government. In light of Ezekiel 38:1–39:16, the eastern balance of power will collapse with the fall of Russian forces and their Islamic allies in Israel and the destruction of Russia itself. With the eastern power destroyed, this will open the way for a one-world government. It will be a form of imperialism like Rome was, of course, but whether this will be in the form of the United Nations or the form of a select leadership is unknown. But that this one world government will occur and *devour the whole world* is clear.

6. THE TEN KINGDOMS

Daniel 7: 24a says, "*Out of this kingdom shall ten kings arise...*

Somehow the one-world government will split into ten divisions of some sort. It could geographic or economic or some amalgamation of the two. These will cover the entire earth and they will continue until the middle of the Tribulation.

7. THE RISE OF THE ANTICHRIST

Daniel 7: 24b says, *And another shall arise after them; and he shall be diverse from the former, and he shall put down three kings.* In other words, this charismatic world leader comes to power and solidifies it by killing three of the ten kings of the ten divisions. II Thessalonians 2: 1-3 tells us that the revealing of the Antichrist will come after the apostasy and just before the Day of the Lord which is another term for the Tribulation.

8. THE PERIOD OF PEACE AND FALSE SECURITY

Another birth pang is one that leads up to the Tribulation is found in I Thessalonians.

I Thessalonians 5:1–3:

But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 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).

9. THE SEVEN-YEAR COVENANT

Daniel 9: 27

²⁷ And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week: and in the middle of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one that makes desolate; and even unto the full end, and that determined, shall wrath be poured out upon the desolate (ASV, 1901).

Within the seventy weeks prophecy that was given to Daniel, the Antichrist's covenant with Israel (the many) is revealed. It is a covenant that is the starting point of the seventieth seven of weeks or the Tribulation. *And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week:* As you might expect God is not happy with the Jews (many) for making this covenant for He calls them scoffers.

Isaiah 28: 14-15

¹⁴ Therefore, hear the word of the Lord, O scoffers, Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem, ¹⁵Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, And with Sheol we have made a pact. The overwhelming scourge will not reach us when it passes by, For we have made falsehood our refuge and we have concealed ourselves with deception (ASV, 1901)."

They actually believe that they will be exempt from the effects of the Tribulation. They know it is coming but the Antichrist has convinced them that they will be saved from it. The Tribulation Starts with This Covenant Seven Years Later Christ Returns when The Jews Beg Him to Come Back.

NEXT MESSAGE: THE LITTLE APOCALYPSE PART IX

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