

## A Promised Remnant with Purpose

In our previous sermons from the series “Christ and His Church in the Book of Isaiah” in chapter 12 we saw the state of David’s earthly kingdom at the time of the coming of the Messiah. A stump, amidst a forest in decay and from that stump, from that remnant we read that a branch would come forth. In Isaiah 17 we read that it shall come to pass that *“the glory of Jacob will wane, and the fatness of his flesh grow lean.”* Like a man with a terrible illness the kingdom will waste away to almost nothing. Isaiah then goes on to describes a reaping of the land whereby a great majority of Judah’s inhabitants will be carried away into captivity, yet a few olives are left on the branches of the olive tree and a few grapes are left on the vine. What we learn here is that after the inhabitants of the former glorious earthly kingdom of David will be carried away into Babylon, the earthly kingdom of David will fall into decay, yet a remnant of God’s elect would remain even from among the dispersed. And here is the great hope and comfort for God’s elect, from that remnant, from that decaying stump would come forth a kingdom that would cover the earth, a throne would once again be established and from a virgin born infant would rise up One who would sit upon that throne eternally and this remnant of Israel will look to their Maker, the God of Israel. Over and over again, we see this picture, this symbolic language in the Prophetic word of the prophet.

Now coming to Isaiah 24 we are enabled to view a fuller picture of this coming kingdom. But as we come to the very first few verses Isaiah reveals to us the great extreme between the city of God and the city of man. *“Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty and makes it waste, distorts its surface and scatters abroad its inhabitants. And it shall be: as with the people, so with the priest; as with the servant, so with his master; as with the maid, so with her mistress; as with the buyer, so with the seller; as with the lender, so with the borrower; as with the creditor, so with the debtor. The land shall be entirely emptied and utterly plundered, for the Lord has spoken this word. The earth mourns and fades away, the world languishes and fades away”* Isa 24:1-4 And then he proceeds to tell us why the world is left desolate, in verse 6, *“The curse has devoured the earth, and those who dwell in it are desolate.”* Desolate, without hope and without any cause for comfort. In the first epistle of John, the Apostle explains it in these words, *“Do not love the world or the things in the world.”* Then he gives us the reason why, *“The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”* What we want to note this morning is that even though the Church, the Kingdom of God may suffer in this world, she alone has cause for great comfort and great hope.

Isa 24:11-16 The mirth of the land is gone. In the city desolation is left, and the gate is stricken with destruction. When it shall be thus in the midst of the land among the people, it shall be like the shaking of an olive tree, like the gleaning of grapes when the vintage is done. They shall lift up their voice, they shall sing; for the majesty of the Lord they shall cry aloud from the sea. Therefore glorify the Lord in the dawning light, the name of the Lord God of Israel in the coastlands of the sea. From the ends of the earth we have heard songs: “Glory to the righteous!” What we shall see in this passage is the contrast from mirth removed to joy restored.

- A. The message of hope begins with a prophetic word of doom. - *The mirth of the land is gone. In the city desolation is left, and the gate is stricken with destruction.*
1. The ornament and perfection of cities consists of its inhabitants
    - a. But here we find a city that has been deserted of its inhabitants
    - b. The gate the place of commerce both in materials and conversation is also desolate
      - (1) There the people assembled for conversation
      - (2) It was at the gate the merchants would bring their goods
      - (3) There the courts of justice were held.
  2. Isaiah having spoken of the earth over all now limits it to the “land” - *For it shall be in the midst of the land.*
    - a. The use of the singular “land” here refers to Jerusalem, not to the nations of the world as in the opening remarks” - *“Behold, the Lord makes the earth empty and makes it waste.”*
    - b. Using this term we may properly understand that the Prophet appears to address the chosen people and not all the nations indiscriminately
    - c. Calvin’s comment here is, “certainly this prediction applies strictly to the kingdom of Christ.”

3. The city of David has been made a desolation, yet Isaiah tells us that it is but a reaping of the fruit, "As the shaking of an olive-tree, like the gleaning of grapes when the vintage is done.

*Isa 17:5-6 It shall be as when the harvester gathers the grain, and reaps the heads with his arm; it shall be as he who gathers heads of grain in the Valley of Rephaim. Yet **gleaning grapes will be left in it, like the shaking of an olive tree, two or three olives at the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in its most fruitful branches,**" Says the Lord God of Israel.*

- a. There will be a few olives left on the branches,
  - b. Gleaning grapes - that which was purposely left for the poor
  - c. In chapter 17 when the Prophet used the same metaphor he spoke of the Church alone.
4. What God is telling us here is that He will bring the earthly house of David to an end but the seed of God would be left, a remnant of God's faithful would remain.
  5. Here we are assured as believers that we must never think that the Church will ever be utterly destroyed.
  6. All God's needs is a small remnant
    - a. The greater part of Israel and Judah will be taken away into captivity
    - b. God had kept His promise to Abraham,
    - c. His descendants had become a great nation, and had become as the sand of the sea.
    - d. All this was fulfilled in the time of David and Solomon's kingdom.

*Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life. (1 Kings 4:21).*

- e. But because of their rebellion God brought that earthly kingdom to an end.
7. But Isaiah would not have God's people despair, for the greater promise was yet to come
    - a. God had also promised that in the Seed of Abraham all nations of the earth would be blessed
    - b. And He had also promised that one would forever reign upon the throne of David.

CONCLUSION: And thus we see here a promised remnant with purpose.

Has God ever needed a large army to defeat the enemy?

We would desire greatness in our numbers so we could look good

God desires that He might be glorified in His people.

It was not Israel's army that defeated Pharaoh's army

It was not a large army under Gideon that defeated the enemy

It was the head and shoulders above all men King Saul that defeated Goliath

It will not be a great and powerful church that will bring Satan to his end

A small remnant is sufficient

A small remnant at Pentecost

A small remnant at the Reformation

It may well be a small remnant at our Lord's coming that all glory might be to Him alone.