

## God Saves Sinners!

KSBC 11/13/11

The Whole World is in His Hand

Isaiah 14:22-27

**Intro** Read Isaiah 13:1-9; 14:1-2; 14:22-27

We see things differently don't we? The prophet Isaiah certainly saw God and himself differently after the encounter he had with God in the year that King Uzziah died (6). Isaiah saw the whole earth full of God's glory. You and I see the whole earth full of other stuff.

It is a vicious struggle to be enthused about God saving sinners when we are surrounded by and overwhelmed with the 'in our faces' realities of our present world. What we see and experience is that power, intelligence, money, and independence are the 'glory' touch points of real life. As a matter of fact it is not a stretch to say that we are routinely blown away by the glory of this world. We see the power that wealth, fame, attractiveness and strength produce in real life both between individuals and nations, and we go weak in the knees. The glory of our world has its philosophical and theological roots sunk deeply into the creed of our Babel dwelling ancestors which was 'let us make a name for ourselves.'

The distracting and attractive glory of our world is seen and celebrated in many ways.

- National allegiance and power. Order the chaos of this world through better laws, economy, education and religion. Super power nations are super in many ways.
- Pride and determination. The collective security that comes from the strength of the human spirit to prevail regardless of what comes our way. There are some great stories out there.
- Hope and alliances. History has demonstrated that all we have is each other and the hope that science, military strength, politics and education – all productive and proven entities – will continue to provide security in the face of unfortunate contrary forces. Remember to turn your phone off in church, if something bad happens you can still receive a text message.

The world of Isaiah's day was no different. Instead of nations you and I recognize from the news of today, Isaiah relayed the message that God saves sinners in a world dominated by the great powers of Babylon, Assyria, Egypt, Philistia, Moab, Aram, Edom, Arabia and Tyre. Any casual or extended glance at the world of his day would immediately cause a person to be impressed primarily with the glories of superior military strength, great and powerful leaders, prosperous economies and beneficial alliances. If you were a part of a powerful and prosperous nation, you would say that life is full of glory. Power, pride and determination is the stuff the glory of the earth is made of. Look at our stuff . . . it is big, complex, beautiful, productive and dependable . . . and we made it.

The issue we face is not that human government, finances, power, or education are wrong. Nor is it that they do not produce effective and good results. Nor is it that we should not be responsibly and biblically involved as learners, citizens, stewards and church members. The problem we wrestle with is that we forget or fail to see that as huge as the glories of our world are, they are only secondary causes to and under the control of the first and primary cause, the Holy God of Israel. We place our confidence in the lesser glory that is not glory.

The 'day of the Lord' in the Bible is both a specific time in the future as well as historical times of foreshadowing when the secondary causes, powers and glories of this earth will be stripped away by divine force. It is a real time experience of the curtain being pulled back to actually see the glory of God that indeed fills the whole earth. He alone is trustworthy. He alone is glorious. He alone is powerful. It is a day of wrath, destruction, suffering and no escape as God pulls the plug on all forms of human and spiritual rebellion and pride expressed toward him. The truth will be seen clearly that God is more

powerful, more satisfying and more worthy of our worship than all the secondary causes that appeal for our trust and affections. Only those whose security is found in God through Christ will be rescued.

God saves sinners. He saves sinners whose trust is deeply embedded in the glories of this world. Isaiah helps us understand, believe and proclaim this message by again focusing our attention beyond our comfortable horizons to see the outstretched hand of God in our world today. God has his hand stretched out to save sinners today. Please understand that he is serious, active, involved, on schedule and in control. It may seem that the world and your life is spinning out of control at times or is perhaps absolutely glorious, but a glimpse at the coming day of the Lord will cause you to see that your world is, always has been and always will be in his hand.

The day of the Lord, the culmination and termination of history, changes your view of God in these ways:

### **1. God is decisive in his judgment. 14:22-24**

Both our desire for independence and the accumulation of time tease us to believe that God is either uncertain of what he wants to do or slow to pull the trigger. How else do you explain that centuries have passed and things seem to continue on as always? God promised to send Jesus back in salvation and judgment, but he obviously has not done that. Meanwhile life goes on driven by the glories of power, wealth and intelligence. Cmp. 5:19

Note the repetition of terms that intentionally portray our God as one who is both present and active in the affairs of the world.

- God has spoken. Hear the sounds of 13:1-5
- God has acted. Note the limited shelf life of human empires.
- God has purposed. Appreciate God's patient love. 14:1-2; 46:8-13

The truth is that God alone decisively guides nations, leaders and all history in a purposeful and beneficial manner. 10:5-6, 15 19:12,17

So shall it be . . . so shall it stand. 2Peter 3:10

### **2. God is destructive in his judgment. 14:25**

These chapters of Isaiah describe some of the most violent and cruel actions known to the human story. That is part of our dilemma. Human slaughter, genocide, murder of women and children and complete disregard for life and property are very well known and documented experiences for earth dwellers like us. This happens presently as well as in history. Without careful attention to the scriptures, we will shape the holy God of Israel into some form that is passive about evil and the people of this world into some form more than proud rebels at war with God.

The object of his destruction is human pride and rebellion. 13:6-9; 14:4b-21 a complete exposure of the nature of evil . . . become like God . . . never submit at any cost. God will break/destroy the proud.

The power of his destruction is overwhelming. Human and national power will be rendered helpless, creation itself will tremble and human cruelty will be unleashed. 13:9-22

The method of his destruction is to unleash current restraints on evil. 13:4, 17 Sodom/Gomorrah like behavior is the result of human rebellion and desire to make themselves a name apart from submission to their creator. God uses and directs sinners to judge sinners by removing the restraints of grace so that the evil of rebellion and pride is revealed in all its cruelty and savagery.

I 43:11-15

2Peter 2:4-13

### **3. God is determined in his judgment.**

**14:26-27**

God is determined, not confused or weak. This exclusive determination is absolutely offensive to the proud rebel who offers answers to the rhetorical questions of verse 27. The one who lives to be independent from God would offer all kinds of other powers or forces worthy of our trust that would likely annul or turn back the ways of God. God's judgment will not be turned back on the proud and rebellious.

God's determination is seen not only in judgment of the unrighteous, but in saving the righteous. 14:1-2 reminds of God's compassion and choice to reverse the slavery and captivity of those who are in covenant with him. His promise to save is supported by his determination as well.

God's determination is universal. He is not the god of a specific region or ethnic group. His glory fills the whole earth and will, as a result of his judgment on rebellion, be seen and revealed for all to see. Both the whole earth and all nations will see the glory of the Lord.

God's hand is stretched out and cannot be turned back or made to stop.

The clock of God's day of ultimate judgment and destruction is ticking. His hand is stretched out.

### **Take Aways**

1. Be ready. Matt. 24:44; 25:46
2. Be energized. 2Peter 3:1-2, 11-12
3. Be encouraged. 1Thess. 5:11, 18

## Discussion Questions

1. Have someone(s) share the 4 minute version of their 'saved by God story' and give them encouraging feedback (and a cookie) per the five crises of Isaiah's model testimony.
2. Read Isaiah 13 or 14:1-27. Make a list of observations about God from your reading. What seems to be the point Isaiah is making about God through this pronouncement (13) and taunt song (14)?
3. Explain 'secondary causes.' Review the introductory paragraphs and share your observations or personal experience with the glories of secondary causes.
4. What are your 'hard to swallow' issues regarding God's judgment as seen in the coming 'day of the Lord?' How do you defend/explain a God who uses powerful nations to destroy/judge other nations for his purposes?
5. Review the 'take aways' by looking at the supporting scripture texts. Do the 'take aways' to each other. What would that 'doing' of the word look like? What does practical application of the 'day of the Lord' look like in your world?
6. Pray together for people to be saved by God from your spheres of influence.
7. Select a group member and help prepare them to tell their 'saved by God story' to the church family on a Sunday morning soon.