

We Can Trust Him

Isaiah 26:1-21

I agree with Pastor Ken that I too was surprised when I first looked at the Scripture texts chosen for Advent by the D6 curriculum. And yet when I pondered it some more, these texts, which speak a lot about sin and judgment, explain why God the Father had to send His one and only Son, to be the last Adam, in order to address the wreckage caused by the first Adam. This may be a new thought for most of you but two thousand years before the birth of Christ, God chose Abraham to be a second Adam, so that he and his offspring could help undo the mess caused by Adam's sin. Let me show you this as we look at God's call and promise to Abraham recorded in **Genesis 12:1-3**,

"Now the LORD said to Abram [which God changed to Abraham because it means father of a multitude], 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house [who were all idol worshipers] to the land that I will show you. ² And I

will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

Abraham did what God said and his descendants became the people on earth who worshiped the true and living God. Unfortunately, many Israelites, who claimed to be descendants of Abraham, were not true worshipers of God. This demonstrated that a greater Adam than Abraham was needed, which is why God promised to send His Son, Immanuel, God with us. Listen to the promise recorded in **Isaiah 9:6-7**,

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end"

When did our Lord Jesus begin His government of peace? He started it over two thousand years ago. And the primary instrument

Christ works through to spread that government of peace is the New Covenant Church, birthed at Jerusalem in Acts 2.

Christ's new humanity was initially all Jewish, but then quickly began spreading among the Gentiles, who also became true citizens of Christ's Kingdom of peace. All this is exciting, but the Bible is clear that Christ's Kingdom and its citizens are going to be resisted and fought against by unrepentant sinners. The result of this resistance has been and will be various judgments by God, which bring deliverance to the righteous and doom to the wicked. Let's again listen to **Isaiah 1:27-28**, which was taught by Pastor Jeff on the first Sunday of Advent,

"Zion [God's people] will be redeemed by justice, and those who repent, by righteousness.²⁸ But rebels and [unrepentant] sinners shall be broken together, and those who forsake the LORD shall be consumed."

Last Sunday, the second Sunday of Advent, we also heard about God's judgments upon the wicked and His blessings upon the righteous. Look with me at **Isaiah 24:5-6**,

"The earth [the Hebrew

word for earth is also used for land. And if it is referring to land, it is normally referring to the land of a particular nation] lies defiled under its inhabitants; for they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant [this would favor that the land of Israel is in view].⁶ Therefore a curse devours the land, and its inhabitants suffer for their guilt; therefore the inhabitants of the earth are scorched, and few men are left."

This was the case in Isaiah's day, when the armies of Assyria came and devastated the land of Israel, carrying away the Ten Northern Tribes – as well as many of the people of Judah. But in the midst of God's judgment upon unbelieving Israel, we read verses of hope in **Isaiah 24:14-16**,

"They [God's people] lift up their voices, they sing for joy; over the majesty of the LORD they shout from the west.¹⁵ Therefore in the east give glory to the LORD; in the coastlands of the sea, give glory to the name of the LORD, the God of Israel.¹⁶ From the ends of the earth we hear songs of praise, of

glory to the Righteous
One."

I believe Isaiah is seeing into the future concerning God's promise that Abraham's offspring will bless all the nations of the earth. But it is not going to happen without bitter resistance. And so on this third Sunday of Advent, we come to Isaiah 26, which starts on a high note – but also deals with God's judgment upon the wicked. Let me remind you that God's judgments are a part of God's glory. They display and magnify His holy power. Please follow as I read Isaiah 26:1-4,

"In that day this song will be sung in the land of Judah: 'We have a strong city; he sets up salvation as walls and bulwarks. ² Open the gates, that the righteous nation that keeps faith may enter in. ³ You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.

⁴ Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock'" [the people of Israel first began referring to God as a rock – after their time in the wilderness – when God caused life giving water to flow out of a rock].

In verse 1, what is "that day" – when a song of joy would be heard in the land of Judah? During Advent we remember what the angels said at Christ's birth

in **Luke 2:8-14**,

"And in the same region [Judah] there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹ And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with fear. ¹⁰ And the angel said to them, 'Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people [Jews and Gentiles]. ¹¹ For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord' . . . ¹³ And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, ¹⁴ 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!'"

Why was Christ born of the Tribe of Judah and from the lineage of David? Because He is the rightful king of the Jews. David was merely a shadow of Christ. The wise men who traveled from afar knew this, which is why we read in **Matthew 2:1-2**,

"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men

from the east came to
Jerusalem, ² saying, 'Where
is he who has been born
king of the Jews? For we
saw his star when it rose
and have come to worship
him.'"

Neither David or
Solomon were worshiped,
but their far greater son
Jesus was worshiped at His
very birth. And the
kingdom over which David
and Solomon ruled was but
a shadow of the Kingdom
of peace Christ came to
establish. Matthew 4:17
speaks about the beginning
of Christ's public ministry.
Listen to what it says,
"From that time Jesus
began to preach, saying,
'Repent, for the kingdom of
heaven is at hand.'" The
source of Christ's Kingdom
is from heaven, but it is a
Kingdom designed to
function here on earth. The
only people who can be
citizens of Christ Kingdom
are those who have
repented of their sin and
have embraced Christ as
their Savior and King. The
more people who do that,
the more Christ's Kingdom
of righteousness and peace
will advance upon the
earth.

How much will Christ's
Kingdom advance? Let's
look again at the promise of

Isaiah 9:7, "Of the increase of his government [His Kingdom] and peace there will be no end." In Matthew 13:31-32, Jesus said His kingdom is like a mustard seed, that starts small but grows mightily. The promise of Isaiah 9:7, is that its increase will never be stopped. It is going to grow larger and larger. I do not know how we can escape that truth – or why we would want to. It is believing God's promises that give us comfort, joy and peace – even when skies are dark. And friends, there will be dark skies because Christ's Kingdom and rule will face what may appear to be overwhelming opposition. But listen to what God has to say about this opposition in Isaiah 26:5-9,

"For he has humbled the inhabitants of the height, the lofty city [of the proud]. He lays it low, lays it low to the ground, casts it to the dust. ⁶ The foot tramples it, the feet of the poor, the steps of the needy [the meek and humble will prevail over the proud]. ⁷ The path of the righteous is level; you make level the way of the righteous. ⁸ In the path of your judgments, O LORD, we wait for you;

your name and
remembrance are the desire
of our soul. ⁹ My soul
yearns for you in the night;
my spirit within me
earnestly seeks you. For
when your judgments are in
the earth, the inhabitants of
the world learn
righteousness."

When God deals with
the wicked, it allows the
righteous to continue to
advance what is right and
true. I would love for all
wicked people to repent and
turn to God. But if they
will not, then it is better for
the world if God's
judgments come upon
them. **Proverbs 29:2**
states, "When the righteous
increase, the people rejoice,
but when the wicked rule,
the people groan." Are
there people who **do not**
learn from God's
judgments? Yes. **Proverbs**
17:10 speaks about them,
"A rebuke goes deeper into
a man of understanding
than a hundred blows upon
a fool." Friends, it is really
bad to be an unteachable
fool, but **Proverbs 26:12**
tells us there is something
even worse, "Do you see a
man who is wise in his own
eyes? There is more hope
for a fool than for him."
This is why God apposes
the proud but gives grace to

the humble. When the Virgin Mary was told that she would give birth to the Messiah, the truths she spoke are in agreement with Isaiah 26:5-9. Listen to what Mary proclaimed about God in **Luke 1:51-52**, ". . . he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts; he has brought down the mighty from their thrones and exalted those of humble estate."

That is how it has always been, and how it will always be. Why would any of us think that the proud and wicked, who are under God's curse, will prevail over the humble and righteous, who receive God's blessing? And we must not think that the wicked will only get their due after they die.

Proverbs 11:31 says, "If the righteous is repaid on earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!"

Let's continue reading Isaiah 26:10-12,

"If favor is shown to the wicked, he does not learn righteousness; in the land of uprightness he [the wicked] deals corruptly and does not see the majesty of the LORD [he is too busy gratifying his selfish desires]. ¹¹ O LORD, your hand is lifted up, but they [the wicked] do not see it. Let them see your zeal for your people, and be ashamed. Let the fire for your adversaries consume

them. ¹² O LORD, you will ordain peace for us [those who trust in God and His promises], for you have indeed done for us all our works."

This is the kind of prayer the Apostle Paul prayed in I Corinthians 16:22. Persecution was coming down upon the followers of Christ and so Paul cried out "Maranatha! Our Lord, come." Paul was not praying for the Second Coming of Christ. He was praying for the Lord to judge the wicked, so that the gospel could continue to move forward. The glorious New Covenant Church and Gospel Age had just begun when Paul prayed that prayer. Paul's generation was actually living in the last days of Old Covenant Israel, with its stone temple, animal sacrifices and Levitical priesthood. Sadly, all the nations did not get blessed by Old Covenant Israel. A new and better covenant was needed. This truth is intimated in Isaiah 26:13-18,

"O LORD our God, other lords [rulers] besides you have ruled over us, but your name alone we bring to remembrance. ¹⁴ They [the wicked who ruled over them] are dead, they will

not live; they are shades,
they will not arise; to that
end you have visited them
with destruction and wiped
out all remembrance of
them. ¹⁵ But you have
increased the nation [I
believe Isaiah is again
seeing into the future when
multitudes of Gentiles
would join Abraham's true
descendants in following
the Lord], O LORD, you
have increased the nation;
you are glorified; you have
enlarged all the borders of
the land. ¹⁶ O LORD, in
distress they [unbelieving
Jews] sought you; they
poured out a whispered
prayer when your discipline
was upon them. ¹⁷ Like a
pregnant woman who
writhes and cries out in her
pangs when she is near to
giving birth, so were we
[disobedient Old Covenant
Israel] because of you, O
LORD; ¹⁸ we were
pregnant, we writhed, but
we have given birth to
wind. We have
accomplished no
deliverance in the earth, and
the [wicked] inhabitants of
the world have not fallen."

God always had a
remnant of believing Jews
during the Old Covenant
Age. But most of Old
Covenant Israel was

unfaithful to their covenant with God. This is why God made a New Covenant, based upon greater provisions and better promises than the Old. Old Covenant Israel failed because most of the Jews in the Old Covenant did not have Abraham's faith in God, nor did they have God's Law written on their hearts. Listen to God's praise of Abraham recorded in **Genesis 26:5**, ". . . Abraham [willingly] obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws."

Friends, every person who has entered into the New Covenant through repentance and faith in Christ, has God's Moral Law written upon our hearts. And God's promise to Abraham, that his descendants will bless all the nations, will be fulfilled through us. God's New Covenant people are not going to give birth to the wind.

In verse 19, Isaiah takes us as far into the future as the Old Testament takes us. I believe the Apostle Paul had this verse in mind when he wrote I Corinthians 15:50-53 and I Thessalonians 4:15-17],

"Your dead [all those who truly follow God] shall live; their bodies shall rise. You who dwell in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For your dew is a dew of light, and the earth will give birth to the dead."

This great bodily resurrection will take place at the close of this New Covenant Age. In verses 20-21, Isaiah returns to the Jewish people of his day, who were horribly judged by God at the hands of the Assyrians,

"Come, my people, enter your chambers, and shut your doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until the fury has passed by.

²¹ For behold, the LORD is coming out from his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth [land of Israel] for their iniquity, and the earth will disclose the [innocent] blood shed on it, and will no more cover its slain."

God clearly told the Jews of Isaiah's day that this was going to happen in **Isaiah 10:5-6**,

"Ah, Assyria, the rod of my anger . . . ⁶ Against a godless nation [referring to Israel] I send him, and against the people of my wrath I command him, to take spoil and seize plunder, and to tread them

down like the mire of the streets."

Unfortunately this was not to be the last time unbelieving Jews would be punished for their sins. When our Lord Jesus came to earth, the Jewish people as a whole were once again in a very dark place. Jesus warned those who had seen His mighty miracles and heard the truth of His words, and yet rejected Him and went on to persecute His followers – that their judgment would be worse than God's judgment upon Sodom and Gomorrah. And the judgment which that generation of Jews experienced from A.D. 66 to A.D. 70, was worse. But friends, many people do learn from God's judgments. The Jewish people are no longer known as persecutors of Christians, as they were in Christ's day. This is why I do not believe the Holocaust experienced by the Jews during WWII, was a judgment by God against the Jews. Friends, there were over 100 million people killed because evil tyrants such as Hitler, Stalin and Mao were allowed to be in positions of abusive power. I hope the peoples of the world are learning

never to do that again.

We are to learn from our mistakes and take hope in God's promises. Listen to God's promise spoken through Jeremiah, to the Jewish people, who were facing imminent judgment from God at the hands of the Babylonians around 600 B.C. God says in **Jeremiah 29:11**, "For I know the plans I have for you declares the LORD, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future." This is God's plan for all the nations, because God's promise to Abraham is that his offspring will bless all the nations. The Apostle Paul tells us how in **Galatians 3:7-**

8,

"Know then that it is those of faith [in Christ] who are the sons of Abraham. ⁶ And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed'" [including Israel].

Listen now to **Isaiah 19:23-25**,

"In that day [sometime in our future] there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria [In Isaiah's day, Assyria encompassed modern day Turkey, Syria,

Iran, Iraq], and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. ²⁴ In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, ²⁵ whom the LORD of hosts has blessed, saying, ‘Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.’”

These are the kind of promises that add to my joy and peace in Christ. If you have not yet repented of your sins, and put your trust for salvation in what Christ has accomplished through His death and resurrection – then why not today embrace Him as your Savior and Lord? And then join Christ’s new humanity in being a blessing to all the nations – including the one in which we live. Let’s pray.