

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Isaiah: Jahweh Is Salvation

Part XLIV: God's Work To Change Judah's False Spirituality To Heartfelt Worship (Isaiah 29:1-24)

I. Introduction

- A. Much like many religious people today, the men of Judah in the prophet Isaiah's era were guilty of an artificial spirituality where their worship of God was composed of mere external rituals instead of heartfelt devotion.
- B. Isaiah 29:1-24 predicts God's long-term plan to change that false spirituality into true worship, and we view the passage for our insight and edification today:

II. God's Work To Change Judah's False Spirituality To Heartfelt Worship, Isaiah 29:1-24.

- A. In Isaiah 29:1-4, God predicted that he would cause the people of Judah who regularly sacrificed at the Jerusalem temple to be brought low in great trial when He brought enemy Gentile armies against them:
 - 1. In '*ari'el*, a term meaning "lion of God" which here refers to Jerusalem where king David camped, the men of Judah yearly observed the Lord's sacrificial feasts, and God pronounced a woe on this city while urging that its feasts keep being observed as He distressed *ari'el* by making it like an *ari'el*, a word that can **also** mean "altar hearth" where ash dust collects, Isa. 29:1-2; B. K. C., O. T., p. 1078; Kittel, Bib. Heb., p. 646.
 - 2. Indeed, God said He would cause Judah's Gentile enemies to surround and encamp against her, bringing her down and thoroughly humiliating her to where she could only whisper from the dust, Isaiah 29:3-4.
- B. Yet, once God brought Judah low in great suffering from her foes, He would turn against those Gentile foes, fighting against them and also bringing them down to the dust and utterly vanquishing them, Isaiah 29:5-8.
- C. To explain God's purpose in these events, Isaiah 29:9-16 reveals God desired to judge Judah for an artificial spirituality that promoted external rituals of men in sacrificial observance without heeding God from the heart:
 - 1. The Lord stated He was at work in Judah of Isaiah's era to cause her people spiritual blindness, Isaiah 29:9.
 - 2. This blindness was seen in the lack of understanding in Judah's people or prophets about Isaiah's message of future judgment on the invading Assyrians that Isaiah had recorded, Isaiah 29:10-12; Ibid., p. 1079.
 - 3. The cause behind this divine blinding to the truth was God's anger at the false spirituality in Judah:
 - a. With their mouths, the people drew near to the Lord in their religious rituals, but their hearts were far from Him, and instead of revering God, their reverence was for a system of man-made rules, Isaiah 29:13.
 - b. God would thus cause the insight and discernment of their wise men to perish, Isaiah 29:14.
 - c. Some of the people thought that performing their deeds in secret would hide them from the Lord, but they did not realize God could hide things from man, not man from God, that they had forgotten that God was the Creator and knew His creatures well while they did not know all about Him, Isaiah 29:15-16.
- D. Nevertheless, in the future Messianic Kingdom after Judah's greatest time of trial in the Great Tribulation, God's blessing would flow to the people as their worship of Him would be from the heart, Isaiah 29:17-24:
 - 1. Shifting from man's ignorance of God to the hidden plans of God, the Lord announced that, following the intense trials of Judah in the Great Tribulation period to come, in the Messianic Kingdom [of Christ], Judah's people would see great agricultural blessings arise in the land by divine blessing, Isaiah 29:17.
 - 2. In that era, the deaf would hear and the blind see, both physically and spiritually opposite the era of Isaiah's time with its spiritual blindness, and the upright would rejoice greatly in the Lord, Isaiah 29:18-19.
 - 3. In contrast to this destiny of the upright, sinners would be brought to nothing in judgment, Isa. 29:20-21.
 - 4. Finally, opposite the false spirituality of Judah's people in Isaiah's era, the Lord Who redeemed Abraham announced that upon seeing the Lord's blessing of Judah, her people would sanctify the Lord, they would stand in awe of the Holy One of Israel, and those who went astray would come to understanding, and those who complained would accept instruction in true spirituality, Isaiah 29:22-24 NIV.

Lesson: *The false spirituality of external ritualism, artificial wisdom and spiritual blindness of the people of Judah in Isaiah's era via trials allowed of God through opposition from Gentile foes would be changed into a heartfelt worship of the Lord, spiritual insight and blessing. Some of these trials would occur with the invasion of Assyria followed by God's rescue of Judah under king Hezekiah, but many would occur in the Great Tribulation to come.*

Application: *(1) May we truly believe on Jesus Christ for salvation from sin and not rely on a dead religiosity for eternal life, for salvation is by faith, not by works, Ephesians 2:8-9. (2) As believers, may we utilize the trials God allows us to face to depart from an external religiosity to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth, John 4:21-24.*