

Congregational handout; outline sermon text on following pages

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Judgement of the Nations

Isaiah 63:1-14

May 20, 2012

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^C Exodus 3:7, 9, Judges 2:18

^D Titus 2:14, Deuteronomy 7:7-8

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A. Introduction

1. War and Judgement

- a. If you travel on 7th Avenue in New York City, just a couple of blocks from Central Park, you will see a relatively squat, although ornate, building, about 5 storeys high among the surrounding towers
- b. not that imposing outside, but much more inside which reveals a beautiful concert hall, one of the world's most famous: Carnegie Hall
- c. this was built in 1891 by the steel magnate, Andrew Carnegie
- d. if you asked Carnegie, he would have said he was a Christian, and on the wall of his library over the fireplace hung a plaque bearing these words, 'Let there be light!'
- e. but Carnegie had another religion, that of pacifism, and this coloured his entire attitude to the Scriptures; he is quoted as saying
- f. "I picked up the Bible just the other day and was reading the story of the times of Samuel. One king after another comes along and they are all engaged from year to year in killing — it is really slaughter. All sorts of ghastly incidents are related, and some passages are simply revolting to a mind accustomed to feel toward humanity as Christ felt, and the thing is that God is pictured as directing and helping it all. It is God who leads in the slaughter and He even inspires His children to the most unmerciful acts. ... do not teach (these things) to boys and girls as heroic deeds, to be admired and copied, and, for heaven's sake, do not tell them that the God pictured in some parts of these stories is the God Jesus Christ shows us in the Sermon on the Mount." —{2}.
- g. At another time Carnegie said, "... there ought to be an edition of the Old Testament prepared for use in church and home, which would leave out those parts that are not Christian." —{3}.
- h. Carnegie made the same mistake a lot of people have made, even a lot of churches have made: they want to pick and choose the parts of the Scriptures that suit themselves, and leave the rest out.
- i. the Scriptures record those wars because those wars were a visible expression of God's judgement upon sin — but the preaching of God's judgement, of hell-fire and brimstone — is unpopular with many people

2. Our Scripture Reading. Isaiah 63:1-14

- a. Carnegie would have discarded the first part of this chapter
- b. for it speaks about judgement, a particularly violent judgement
- c. he might have kept some of the last part, because there is found in it a description of the patience, mercy and lovingkindness of God
- d. are there two different Gods? ... a God of the OT, another of the NT?
- e. No. The book of Isaiah begins with a message of judgement; we will see that it ends with a message of judgement; and throughout it carries messages of judgement against individuals, against the Jews and against nations. Yet we can also rightly refer to it as 'the gospel,' the good news, 'according to Isaiah.' How can this be?
- f. The gospel is about God's salvation, but how great is that salvation?
 - (A) is it simply a nice little pat on the back, an admiration by God, of those who try to do the best they can, who 'live a good life'?
 - (B) or is it the snatching by God of a person from a terrible, but well-deserved punishment?
 - (C) both the OT and NT Scriptures make it clear that it is the latter; judgement as in the first part of Isaiah 63 is also found in the NT
 - (D) judgement shows the depth of man's sin, the height of God's mercy – by it we see our need and God's provision for that need
- g. Let us look at this subject of judgement in these verses

B. Edom and the Nations

1. The First Question, verse 1a – [Who is this who comes from Edom, With garments of glowing colours \(lit. of redness\) from Bozrah, This One who is majestic in His apparel, Marching in the greatness of His strength?](#)
 - a. This Bozrah was the capital city of the nation of Edom
 - (A) and that nation was peopled with the descendants of Esau
 - (1) he was Jacob's brother, the older twin of the two
 - (2) he wasn't concerned with spiritual matters until it was too late
 - (B) in effect, Edom was a cousin nation to Israel
 - (C) but that didn't make it friendly to Israel, its neighbour

- (D) there are numerous places in Scripture detailing this animosity it showed, but here are just two:
 - (1) Amos 1:11-12, 'Thus says the Lord, "For three transgressions of Edom and for four I will not revoke its punishment, Because he pursued his brother with the sword, While he stifled his compassion; His anger also tore continually, And he maintained his fury forever. ..."'
 - (2) Psalm 137:7, 'Remember, O Lord, against the sons of Edom The day of (the destruction of) Jerusalem, Who said, "Raze it, raze it To its very foundation."'
 - (E) in interpreting Scripture, Edom represents the world system which is uninterested in God and the enemy of His people, the Church
 - b. So, 'Who is this who comes from Edom?' – the prophet's question
 - (A) his clothing shows he is a king
 - (B) his coming in strength shows he is a victorious conqueror
 - (C) the language reminds us of the description of the King in Psalm 45:3-4, '... In Your splendour and Your majesty! And in Your majesty ride on victoriously, For the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; ...' ... but look, He himself gives ...
2. The Answer, verse 1b – 'It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save.'
- a. He identifies Himself with two key features
 - (A) there is His word: it is righteous or just – this statement shows that He is executing the duty of a King, that of being Judge; and the judgement which goes forth from His mouth is truly justice
 - (B) there is His power: He is able not only to condemn the wicked, but also to deliver the innocent
 - b. but before coming to a conclusion, consider ...
3. The Second Question, verse 2 – Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press?
- a. the Hebrew of this question, as well as the comparison given to one who was treading a wine press, both imply that red was not the original colour of his clothing
 - b. and so the question, 'Why?' to which the one coming again gives ...
4. The Answer, verses 3-6 – 3 'I have trodden the wine trough alone, And from the peoples there was no man

with Me. I also trod them in My anger And trampled them in My wrath; And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, And I stained all My raiment. 4 For the day of vengeance was in My heart, And My year of redemption has come. 5 I looked, and there was no one to help, And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; So My own arm brought salvation to Me, And My wrath upheld Me. 6 I trod down the peoples in My anger And made them drunk in My wrath, And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth.' ... and from His answer we clearly see

a. from what He has been doing, that He is Divine

(A) first, He has been carrying out this judgement – for that is what is being described in these verses – all alone; with no human help (that is repeated); it was by His own arm

(1) in the OT we have numerous examples of God using nations to accomplish His judgement against people

(2) but here, One Person alone carries it out

(B) second, the scope of this judgement is not trivial

(1) it begins with Edom, the enemy of God's people

(2) but it encompasses peoples (the word is plural), the nations

(C) third, it was the fulfilment of a pre-existing plan in His own Person

(1) it took place in the day and year according to that plan

(2) vengeance, the punishing of wrong-doers, also involves the correcting of their wrongs, and is an essential part of God's plan of redemption, when He vindicates His own people

(D) finally, it is an act of wrath

(1) wrath, as repeatedly used in Scripture, applies to God's

(2) His wrath based not on malice, caprice, or temper

(3) but it derives directly from the holiness of God

(4) and is directed at rebel mankind on account of his sin

b. the imagery of this passage is used in the NT book of Revelation

(A) Revelation 14:19-20, 'So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God. And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.'

- (B) Carnegie must have omitted that book from 'Christian' Scripture - it is not a pretty picture; but judgement is not pretty nor pleasant
- (C) Who treads that wine-press? the answer is given later in Revelation 19:11-15, 'And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war. His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself. He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. ... (15) From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.'
- c. this One who comes of Edom is the Christ
 - (A) not the Christ of the Cross and the atonement; because it is not Christ's blood that is shed, but the blood of the wicked
 - (B) this is the victorious Christ as King and Judge
 - (C) this is not contradictory to Christ's being Saviour, for He brings to fulfilment the salvation of God's people in that judgement

C. Israel and God's People

1. Their Privileged Relationship

- a. God's Covenant, verse 7 - I shall make mention of (I shall cause (you) to remember) the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, According to all that the Lord has granted us, And the great goodness toward the house of Israel, Which He has granted them according to His compassion And according to the abundance of His lovingkindnesses.
 - (A) His covenant is founded upon His lovingkindness
 - (1) that is a word that rolls into it the meanings of mercy, of love, of kindness, all expressed in concrete acts: lovingkindnesses
 - (2) this is as true of the OT covenant made with the OT church as it is of the NT covenant made with the NT church
 - (B) its goodness is revealed by God's acts of compassion to His people
 - (1) their slavery in Egypt brought deliverance through Moses, to whom He said this in Exodus 3:7,

9, 'I have surely seen the affliction of My people who are in Egypt, and have given heed to their cry because of their taskmasters, for I am aware of their sufferings. ... Now, behold, the cry of the sons of Israel has come to Me; furthermore, I have seen the oppression with which the Egyptians are oppressing them.'

(2) the concern of God for His people, despite their disobedience, is expressed in similar terms and acts in Judges 2:18, 'When the Lord raised up judges for them, the Lord was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the Lord was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.'

b. They were chosen, verses 8-9 – 8 For He said, 'Surely, they are My people, Sons who will not deal falsely.' So He became their Saviour. 9 In all their affliction He was afflicted, And the angel of His presence (or, Face) saved them; In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, And He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.

(A) God's intention for them

- (1) was that they should not deal falsely, not live the lie
- (2) but that they should be a holy people, bringing glory to God
- (3) so he became their Saviour – specifically from Egypt
- (4) so God still deals with His people today: He is their Saviour
- (5) 'who gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.' (Titus 2:14)

(B) God identified Himself with them

- (1) there was nothing in Israel that earned this favour
- (2) 'The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.' (Deuteronomy 7:7-8)
- (3) what a privilege and blessing

c. Their alienation, verse 10 – But they rebelled And grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them.

- (A) God didn't change – of Israel we read in Jeremiah 31:3, 'The Lord appeared to him from afar, saying, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore I have drawn you with lovingkindness."'
- (B) it was Israel herself that changed, that walked away from her place of privilege as the people of God's covenant
- (C) by this they changed their position and their relationship: instead of basking in God's favour, they aligned themselves as His enemy
- (D) what a warning this is to the child of God in Jesus Christ
- d. Repentant Remembrances, verses 11-14 – 11 Then His people remembered the days of old, of Moses. Where is He who brought them up out of the sea with the shepherds of His flock? Where is He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them, 12 Who caused His glorious arm to go at the right hand of Moses, Who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting name, 13 Who led them through the depths? Like the horse in the wilderness, they did not stumble; 14 As the cattle which go down into the valley, The Spirit of the Lord gave them rest. So You led Your people, To make for Yourself a glorious name.
 - (A) here we find described what we have already anticipated – how God became their Saviour, delivering them from Egypt's bondage
 - (B) but it also goes on that in delivering them from the labour of their slavery, he also delivered them into the land of rest, Canaan
 - (C) God did this to His own glory, but also to their benefit
 - (D) the cross of Christ brings salvation that is to the glory of God, but also to the infinite and eternal benefit of those who believe
 - (E) God intends for His people a tremendous, blessed freedom:
 - (1) it is portrayed first of all as horse roaming freely without any impediment in the plains of the desert
 - (2) it is portrayed secondly of cattle, moving in the heat of the day down to a place of shelter from the open hills – where I lived up until about age 7, there was an old elm tree, and under it in the heat of the summer, the cattle (and me) would come and lie down to rest in its shade
 - (F) this remembrance of what God has done brings repentance and praise to God by those His people

whose love for Him has cooled

2. just a comment that the Trinity is found in this passage: Israel was ...
 - a. A people chosen by Yahweh as Father
 - b. A people accompanied by the Person of the Angel of Yahweh's Face
 - c. A people vexing the Person of the Holy Spirit of Yahweh

D. Conclusion

1. Mr Carnegie: God has not changed
 - a. the loving God of the OT is the loving God of the NT
 - b. the God who in lovingkindness becomes the Saviour of His people
 - c. but He is also still the Holy God, the God who brings judgement upon sin and the sinner; that is true of God the Father, of God the Son in Jesus Christ, of God the Holy Spirit (I'll leave you to discover that to be so in the Scriptures)
 - d. and the mass of mankind – all those outside of Jesus Christ – are standing under that judgement unless they turn to Christ
 - e. so that those of us, whom He has saved – not by any good works that we have done, but simply by His grace and mercy
 - f. we have the responsibility to make that salvation known to the world

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AV Authorized (King James) Version

NAS New American Standard version © 1960, 1995 The Lockman Foundation (usually the 1995 edition)

NIV New International Version © 1984 by the International Bible Society

NKJV New King James Version © 1979 Thomas Nelson Inc., Publishers

Some of my favourite commentaries and resources used in the preparation of this message are identified as follow:

BM – Biblical Museum, Editor James Comper Gray, ca 1870

EBC – The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, © 1986 Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 49530, Michigan

Volume 6, Isaiah, by Geoffrey W. Grogan, Principal, Bible Training Institute, Glasgow, Scotland;

EJY – The Book of Isaiah by Edward J. Young; © 1965; Wm. B. Eerdmans

K&D – Commentary on the Old Testament, by Keil & Delitzsch; Volume 7, Isaiah, by Franz Delitzsch

Kerux – The sermon & illustration data base compiled by Rev. David Holwick at the web-site,

www.holwick.com.

2. Source: *Personal Recollections of Andrew Carnegie*, by Frederick Lynch, D. D., October 18, 1920. Kerux illustration 2790. Also found at

http://m8y.org/NakedWord/-w_lynch-c-s_frederick-c-s_d-p-s_d-p-t_personal-s_reollections-sof-s_andre_w-s_carnegie.html

3. ibid