

NOTES: Isaiah 26:1-9 “The City of God”

WELCOME

My name is Tim

Do consulting work w/ churches

Been coming up from PDX regularly for 1.5 years to help

Worked with music

Now helping w/ preaching support

Great to be with you all again

Pray

INTRO

We're going to continue in Isaiah today

Specifically ch. 26

Going to talk a lot about two cities

And where our deepest hope should rest

But, to set the stage, I want to tell you a little about a guy named...

Augustine - late 300's-early 400's AD

North African - present day Algeria (next to Egypt)

One of the most influential biblical/theological thinkers of all time

Raised in Christian family but walked away from faith

saved by Jesus in his early 30's

Captured that journey in his best known work “Confessions”

The first known “spiritual autobiography” - telling his story

Where he says of God, “...*you made us with yourself as our goal, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.*”

Became a priest about 10 years later

Then bishop of Hippo - city in N Africa just across from Italy

In 410 Rome was sacked by Germanic tribes called Visigoths

Rome seen as the spiritual capitol of Christians - like Jerusalem to Israel

Many Christians disillusioned - like fall of Jerusalem

Augustine wrote his 2nd best known work in response - "The City of God"

He says:

Humanity basically consists of 2 groups → two "cities"

The city of man →

- nations, cultures, businesses, ideas, trends, politics, etc.
- build by human hands
- united against God
- building it's own world on its own terms
- this city is passing away

In contrast to...

The city of God →

- God's people
- gathered under his rule
- enjoying Him forever
- built by God and God alone
- transcends all earthly national identity
- will endure forever

He describes the difference between the two this way:

Two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. For the one seeks glory from men; but the greater glory of the other is God...

That brings us to our passage today - Isa 26

part of a larger section - Isa 24-26

Remember how Isaiah begins → message of judgement against Israel & Judah

Surround by Assyria

In the midst of threat & judgement...

Isaiah “flashes forward” to the end of the world

“The Day of the Lord”

Final judgement

Fulfillment of all God’s promises

JOKE: guess I’m the end times guy !!!

As he speaks of these events

He speaks of them as TWO CITIES

Part of the inspiration of Augustine’s work

Starts off w/...

Ch 24 & 1st half of 25 = destruction of the “city of man”

- all the ways humanity exalted itself against God & His people
- will turn to mourning and defeat
- no more parties, drinking or music apart from/against God
- “the earth is utterly broken...”
- “the earth staggers like a drunken man...”

Ch. 25:6-12 = the city of God

6 On this mountain the Lord of hosts will make **for all peoples**
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

7 And he will swallow up on this mountain
the covering that is cast over all peoples,
the veil that is spread over all nations.

8 He will swallow up death forever;
and the Lord God will **wipe away tears from all faces**,
and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,
for the Lord has spoken.

9 It will be said on that day,
“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.
This is the Lord; we have waited for him;
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

That brings us to our passage...
Look at what it meant to them then
How it connects to Jesus
And what it means for us

THE SONG OF THE CITY OF GOD

| **26:1** In **that day this song** will be sung in the land of **Judah**:

After everything Isa is describing comes to pass
After all the judgement...

God's people - Will sing!!!

The song starts with ...

The City of God

| **1b** “We have a **strong city**;
he sets up **salvation**
as walls and bulwarks.

In contrast to the cities of the world

That rise & fall

Particularly under the threats of empires like Assyria & Babylon

God's people ARE a **strong city** = noun, not verb

Strong = nature

But it's strength is NOT from

Physical **walls & bulwarks** - (Bulwark = defensive wall)

What keeps God's people safe in this final city is His **salvation**

God's judgment is coming in the near term for Israel/Judah

But his salvation will keep his people safe for all eternity

NOTE:

He has NOT promised physical salvation in this life

Even for himself

It is a future reality

For Israel/Judah

and us

2 Open the gates,

that the **righteous nation** that **keeps faith** may enter in.

righteous = right w/ God

keeps faith = holds faithful to God, the opposite of those who turn away

The gates of the city of God are open to all the faithful

Then a powerful statement...

3 You keep him in **perfect peace**

whose **mind** is **stayed on you**,

because **he trusts in you**.

perfect peace = literally *shalom*, *shalom* = peace, peace

- duplication/repeated words = emphasis, totality
- in contrast to pseudo-peace, fleeting peace, conditional peace based on circumstance

Whose **mind** = tendency of the mind, frame of mind, mind-set, disposition

- something that is actively formed
- translated elsewhere as: form, framing, formation, a thing framed, meditation

Is **stayed** = supported, sustained, upheld, leaned

- like a support beam - structure
- something you lean against for support

The one who actively puts their trust in God

Who looks to HIS faithfulness

Like a support structure of a building
They, and they alone,
Find perfect peace and wellbeing

Again in start contrast
To one who puts their hope in their own abilities & strength

They...

4 **Trust** in the Lord **forever**,
for the **Lord God** is an **everlasting rock**.

Lord God = YHWH - personal name of God

Because of his unbroken faithfulness
We who belong to Him
Are to trust him forever
He is worthy of that trust
As our **eternal rock**

Then they will sing about...

The City of Man

In contrast to the city of God...

5 For he has **humbled**
the inhabitants of the height,
the lofty city.
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 lofty city = a metaphorical image of all cities

- regardless of political orientation
- they ALL set themselves up against God in pride and self-sufficiency
- Isaiah predicts the destruction of Israel & Judah AND Assyria & Babylon

He says all the cities of the world
As they exalt themselves against God
Will be humbled

And they will be humbled by God's power & HIS ALONE
Such that the feet of the **poor** & **needy** will trample them
Not the powerful and strong

The Path Toward The City of God

Back to the present
The path in the right direction...

7 The **path of the righteous is level;**
you make level the way of the **righteous**.

In the ancient world roadways often went up and down
They didn't have excavation tech that we have to level things out

The path of **the righteous** is level
There is an ease to following it

Similar to the saying elsewhere in scripture: **he will make your paths straight**

8 **In the path of your judgments,**
O Lord, **we wait for you;**
your name and remembrance
are the **desire of our soul**.

Such a profound statement

Isaiah says,
We know we are in the path of your judgement
But we wait patiently for you
Trusting your goodness
While the city of man falls apart
YOU, more than anything this world has to offer
Are the desire of our soul

soul = nephesh - whole being

9 My soul **yearns** for you in the night;
my spirit within me **earnestly seeks** you.

Reminiscent of Psalm 63

For when your judgments are in the earth,
the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness.

Those who recognize God's judgement for what it is
Have an opportunity to see and know Him

Isa 26 = A song of hope in the midst of judgement

After this song concludes
This section of thought ch. 24-27
ends w/

27 = restoration of Israel

- Satan, his works and followers will be defeated
- God's people will be restored

The message of God through Isaiah to Israel/Judah is clear

Judgement is coming
Everything is going to change
Assyria WILL invade
Then Babylon
I know it looks dark
It WILL be in some ways
The idea that God's people = powerful nation is OVER !!!
That was never the plan anyway
But even in this dark time
THERE IS HOPE

God's people will not be totally destroyed
He will gather a people from ALL nations
It WILL be a city - but not on Earth
A future spiritual city
The city of God

Ultimately points to...

JESUS BUILDS THE CITY OF GOD

Jesus came into our world
God in the flesh

His first words, from the first gospel story written:

“The **time is fulfilled**, and the **kingdom of God is at hand**; repent and believe in the **gospel**.”

Mk 1:15.

Jesus is the one Isaiah & the other prophets predicted and longed for
He came inviting anyone who would listen
To join “the kingdom of God”
His people
To be with him
Under his rule
The **city of God's** people Isaiah spoke of in ch. 26
This kingdom, just like Isaiah predicted

Is a kingdom people made up of **ALL NATIONS**

But tragically,
the people who were supposed to be looking for the “city of God”
Turned out to be more interested in the “**city of man**”
Especially those in power & leadership
They were looking for
Blessing and peace for **ONLY** their people
And power over any who opposed
They were just “the city of man” dressed up in a religious outfit
They saw Jesus as a threat to what **THEY** had built
Had him killed

But he rose from the dead
Forgave his followers who abandoned him
Make it clear that the true hope
Was eternal life with Him when He returns
In the mean time
We are to hold on to that hope
More deeply than anything we can build in this world
And point to that hope with everything we have
To anyone who would listen
Until that hope is fulfilled
Either by death
Or Jesus’ return

THE CITY OF GOD FULFILLED

Revelation describes what it will be like
In shockingly similar language to Isaiah 24-27
Even though it was written 6-7 centuries later
By Jesus’ best friend John

In ch. 19:6-7 he says...

6 I heard what seemed to be the voice of a **great multitude**, like the roar **of many waters** and
like the sound of **mighty peals of thunder**, crying out,

7 Let us rejoice and exult
and give him the glory,
for **the marriage of the Lamb has come,**
and **his Bride has made herself ready;**

This is the feast Isaiah talked about in ch 25

the Lamb = Jesus

his Bride = the Church = ALL Jesus' people

And then in ch. 21...

1 Then I saw a **new heaven and a new earth**, for the **first heaven and the first earth had passed away**, and the sea was no more.

the "city of man" passed away.

And the perfect "city of God" comes down...

2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, **the dwelling place of God is with man**. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will **wipe away every tear from their eyes**, and **death shall be no more**, (*just like Isaiah said in ch. 25*) neither shall there be **mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore**, for the former things have passed away."

THIS IS OUR HOPE !!!

This is when...

all God's promises come true

we finally see perfect justice

All evil goes away

The perfect "city of God"

Throughout time

God's people continue to get confused

Try to create the "city of God" on earth

Instead they keep creating a cheap religious version of the “city of man”

Because ONLY GOD can build the “city of God”

All our versions of it will pass away

And the new city/dwelling place for God’s people

Will come down from heaven

We don’t leave earth and go UP to heaven - except temporarily

Heaven comes down

But I’m guessing the questions remains...

How does this actually connect to life?

It seems so far off

REMEMBER YOUR DEEPEST HOPE & LIVE ACCORDINGLY !!!

One more passage to share that directly connects...

2 Peter 3

Wrote these words from Rome

While waiting to be executed

Some of his last words

1 This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am **stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder,**

stirring = stimulate, rouse, WAKE YOU UP!

Remind you of what’s important

Your deepest hope

2 that you should **remember the predictions of the holy prophets** and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles,

remember the scriptures

especially prophets like Isaiah!

3 knowing this first of all, that **scoffers** will come in **the last days** with scoffing, **following their own sinful desires**.

false teachers

this is what they'll say...

4 They will say, "**Where is the promise of his coming?** For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are **continuing as they were from the beginning** of creation."

future hope = weak minded superstition

fairy tales

regressive

etc.

5 For **they deliberately overlook this fact**, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, **6** and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. **7** But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

God is Creator

creating everything we know with words from his mouth

he has judged the earth before → the flood

he will do it again as he promised → final judgement

8 But **do not overlook this one fact**, beloved, that with **the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day**.

his time is NOT like our time

remember this and do not lose heart

9 The Lord is **not slow to fulfill his promise** as some count slowness, but is **patient** toward you, not **wishing that any should perish**, but that all should reach repentance.

he is patient

with us
and all who do not know him yet

10 But **the day of the Lord will come like a thief**, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

the day of the Lord - Isaiah's language for final judgement & restoration
it will come unexpectedly - **like a thief**
much of the created world will pass away

11 Since all these things are thus to be **dissolved**, **what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness...**

dissolved = broken apart
how then shall we live in response to this ???

From Isaiah's time
To Jesus' time
To Peter's
To Augustine's
To ours

Humanity exalts itself against God
Building systems of defiance and independence from Him
Like a kid defiantly emancipating themselves from their parents

Yet, through it all
Jesus is calling - inviting
Anyone who with eyes to see and ears to hear
To something deeper
Like Augustine said in his confessions
"...you made us with yourself as our goal, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

We rest in Him
Until our hope is finally fulfilled

When we see him face to face

Like Isaiah said...

8 In the **path** of your **judgments**,
O Lord, we wait for you;

We can feel the judgement:

- Wars - Ukraine/Russia, Azerbaijan/Armenia, Israel/Hamas (just this week)
- Conflicts & Divisions - everywhere we look
- Broken relationships in our lives
- Earth groaning w/ natural disasters

In the midst of it all

Isaiah says we can have perfect peace ???

HOW ???

Isaiah, Jesus, Peter & Augustine give us our answer

If our peace is set on things of this world

On the “city of man”

We will have NO PEACE

But instead...

If our mind is stayed on God

Supported by,

Sustained

Upheld by

Like a support structure

His promises for “the city of God”

That begin now, in this life

But will only be fulfilled in the next

Then...

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.**

Let's pray

RESPONSE

COMMUNION

Come to the table

Anyone who believes in Jesus can come and eat & drink

Remembering the one who made life w/ God possible

Through his life, death, resurrection

Bread = broken body

Wine - shed blood to forgive sin

We keep remembering

Until the great day when He finally returns

And we sing the song of the city of God

Face to face with the object of our faith

SONG

Naomi has worked up a new song that fits perfectly with this

Listen to her and then sing along

