

Today's Quick Word Isaiah 3:24

By Bruce Christian

ISAIAH 3:24 Instead of fragrance there will be a stench; instead of a sash, a rope; instead of well-dressed hair, baldness; instead of fine clothing, sackcloth; instead of beauty, branding.

Isaiah's harsh and cutting words from the LORD were a rebuke and a warning to the City of Zion, representing God's Covenant people on earth.

The rebuke was against their focus on material things and an outward, superficial display of comfort, pleasure, success, complacency, and everything else that goes with worldly pursuits that leave no place for their LORD God and what he has revealed to them in his Word. They had all the outward appearances of being 'religious' people, but their hearts were deeply embedded in the world and what it had to offer, and not in the pursuit and disciplines of godliness.

The warning was against the ultimate futility of seeking meaning in things that might LOOK good, but have no LASTING value.

Applying these things to our own day, 'Zion' represents God's (New) Covenant people, the 'Church' he redeemed for himself through the shed blood of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. So it is CHRISTIANS who need to take on board this rebuke and heed this warning today.

Jesus reflected Isaiah's exhortation in his words to his disciples (and, by implication, to all who will claim to follow him): "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not

destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matthew 6:19-21).

The Apostle Paul saw the need for his 'apprentice', Timothy, to be aware of the dangers of worldliness: "People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness.", and "Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me ..." (1 Timothy 6:9-11; 2 Timothy 4:11a).

The Apostle John had similar concerns for the Church generally towards the end of the First Century: "Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives for ever." (1 John 2:15-17).

Perhaps our present pandemic, and all the devastating economic difficulties associated with it, are a wake-up call for us, as we seek to live and witness as Christ's ambassadors in an historically affluent society, to hear this rebuke and to heed this timely warning.

Today's Quick Word Hebrews 12:28-29

By Bruce Christian

HEBREWS 12:28-29 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our “God is a consuming fire.”

We live in a world that is decaying (Romans 8:20-22) and doomed for destruction: “By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” (2 Peter 3:7). This, of course, has always been the case, ever since Adam’s sin in rebelling against the Creator’s rightful rule (Genesis 3:17-19; Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22). But the reality of this has become clearer to us as our comfortable prosperity is shaken by a tiny, ‘invisible’ virus.

What a great blessing it is for us, therefore, in the midst of this crisis, to be reminded from God’s infallible Word that when we “fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (verse 2), we migrate into a kingdom whose borders aren’t closed, and one which CANNOT be shaken! How encouraging to KNOW that through HIM we have been brought “to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God ... to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, to the church of the

firstborn, whose names are written in heaven”; what a blessing to KNOW that “[we] have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel” (verses 22-24).

What a great time it is to “be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe”! Let this be a God-given opportunity for us to witness powerfully to a watching world that we truly ‘worship’ him ‘acceptably with reverence and awe’ - a reverence and awe that leads to greater obedience to his Word. Let us make it clear that we are not doing this in order to BECOME citizens of this ‘unshakeable’ kingdom, but because we already ARE citizens as a result of his amazing, undeserved grace.

Then perhaps, by this same grace, and through this strong witness, others might come to “fix [their] eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (verse 2), and so escape God’s ‘consuming fire’.

Today's Quick Word Isaiah 10:13

By Bruce Christian

ISAIAH 10:13 For [the king of Assyria] says: 'By the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, because I have understanding. I removed the boundaries of nations, I plundered their treasures; like a mighty one I subdued their kings.'

Pride is arguably the worst sin of which we can be guilty, for two reasons.

Firstly, it is usurping God's rightful place in our lives as our Creator and the One who commands our obedience and to whom we must all give account; it is my failing to humble myself before the Sovereign Lord of my life and to acknowledge his power and rule over me. It was pride that led Adam and Eve to disobey in the Garden and introduce the destructive power of sin and death into God's perfect world.

Secondly, pride, by its very nature, prevents us from even recognising its control over us, and causes us to become 'experts' at condemning much 'less destructive' sins in others - much like the Pharisee who 'thanked God that he was not like robbers, evil doers, adulterers or tax collectors', but who received Jesus' greater condemnation in the parable in Luke 18:9-14.

When God blesses us with some measure of success it is tempting to bask in the glory of what we have achieved and forget that we are only ever instruments in HIS sovereign hands to carry out HIS purposes for HIS GLORY and for the good of his people. God had used Assyria to bring measured judgement on the northern kingdom of Israel, but the victory had gone to proud Sennacherib's head and he was now ready to attack Jerusalem and annihilate God's covenant people altogether - or so he thought! But he had failed to understand or acknowledge who the source of his power was, and how he himself was now under even greater judgement from that same source. We see another prime example of the same thing happening in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, a century later (Daniel 4).

When Jesus said, "I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it" (Mark 10:15) he was warning us against the arrogance, self-reliance and self-confidence that has been the eternal downfall of so many. Are we careful to make sure God alone gets ALL the glory for 'our' successes and achievements?