

PTB2-16b: Where Peace and Calamity Come From!

(“ I make peace and create calamity”)

“I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, through you have not known Me. That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things.” (Isaiah 45:5-6)

4-3: Isaiah 1-39.

Now in 739 to 701 we come to Isaiah 1-39 which is the history and message of Isaiah of his own lifetime, and once again looking for The Message for his generation which is the same message for our generation. First a little history of this 39 years of the lifetime of Isaiah: the period of the rise of the last greatness of Assyria, ended finally in 609 BC by the Mede-Babylonian coalition {recall how commentators like Carroll like to summarize the before and after of the Assyrian period as first the Prophets of the Assyrian Period and then as the Prophets of the Chaldean period, Chaldea being a summary territory of both the Medes and the Babylonians, also of Persia}; the beginning weaknesses of Assyrians rulers gave all their neighbors including Judah and Israel relief from their expansions, the two kingdoms therefore enjoying a period of peace and prosperity not known since King Solomon; Jeroboam {the second King by that name} was King in Israel and Azariah or Uzziah was king in Judah; this long period of peace and prosperity lead the kings and the subjects to think that God was pleased with them; Amos and Hosea had been sent by God to counter the false sense of security; Judah was a little less corrupted by apostasy; apostasy was defined as spiritual and actual prostitution with idolatry, adultery, and oppression of the people; King Menahem of Israel as early as 752 BC had to pay tribute to Assyria (II Kings 15:19-20), and in 731 the Assyrian King {Pul} took possession of Galilee which was north of the Jezreel Valley (II Kings 15:29); Judah called together her court to decide about being pro or anti-Assyrian, but with Ahaz as King in Judah (735 BC), the foreign policy became Pro, prompting an attack the same year from the King of Israel and Damascus which lead Ahaz in turn to seek help from King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria (II Kings 16:7-9); Isaiah launched out in 1:21-23 and 2:12-17 that Judah should be rather pro-God than pro or con Assyria; they according to Isaiah would take all offered and the rest by force (Isaiah 8:5-8); after Tiglathpileser destroyed Damascus, King Ahaz was forced to make a more binding treaty (II Kings 16:10-16 and Isaiah 7:14-16) which demanded recognition of the gods of Assyria, which gave Ahaz and Judah rest for a time but which Isaiah insists they would have had anyway since Tiglathpileser III died in 727; King Hoshea of Israel, a former vassal, made insurrection against the then king of Assyria, Shalmaneser and in 724 BC started a three year siege against Samaria, the horrors of which are described in II Kings 6:24-29, and the forecasts of their disaster by Amos (3:9-11) and Hoses (8:5-6;14:1) came true though approximately

50 years before the actual event; after Shalmaneser died, the king of Assyria was Sargon who experienced revolts all over his kingdom including one to the south in Babylon and especially in Chaldea, the southern part of Mesopotamia, also problems to the north with the Medes; the son of Ahaz in Judah, Hezekiah reigned with a foreign policy that was anti-Assyrian, shifting toward dependence on the weak Egypt {Isaiah denounced this policy also in 29-31 since Egypt was weak}; Hezekiah, according to the Bible was a good king, purging the land of idolatry and the temple of paganized worship, also a revival of the Mosaic law and an aggressive ruler who extended the borders of the kingdom of Judah; Hezekiah attempted to lure some from the northern kingdom of Israel, captive to Assyria; Sargon having achieved dominance over the kingdoms north and south, and as described in Isaiah 14 deemed himself to be "lord of the universe"; Sargon died on the battlefield in 706, being replaced by an also powerful King Sennacherib against whom Hezekiah made an alliance with Philistia, Judah, Edom, and Moab with the coalition attacking the Philistines, also encouraged by Egypt {**Isaiah all this politics and scheming as an affront to God, Isaiah 22:5-14; 29:15-16; and 30:1-18**}; in the campaigns of the first three years of Sennacherib he defeated Babylon, restored his eastern border, and stood at the gates of Jerusalem in Judah; he attached the frontier fortresses of Judah, later Hezekiah paid him tribute, in spite of which he came against Jerusalem demanding surrender and deportation (Isaiah 36:16-18); Isaiah told Hezekiah of deliverance from God, and a plague destroyed the Assyrian Army on the northern border of Egypt while they sought to pursue the Egyptian army.

And with this brief historical background of Isaiah 1-39, we are ready to pursue the main purpose in this chapter of The Message of Isaiah 1-39. If we select from John Oswalt's outline on Isaiah 1-29 in the NEW INTERNATIONAL COMMENTARIES, we find most of what applies to The Message in Roman Numeral One, "The Present and Future of God's People, 1:1-5:30.

(1). Israel has forsaken God and provoked His anger, 1:2-9.

"Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the LORD, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward." (Isaiah 1:4)

(2). God Desires Justice, not hypocritical worship, 1:10-20.

"Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear...Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; put away the evil of your doings from before My eyes. Cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, rebuke the oppressor; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow." (Isaiah 1:15b-17)

(3). The Before and After of Jerusalem, 1:21-23.

"How the faithful city has become a harlot! {Sounds Hosea} It was full of justice; righteousness lodged in it, but now murderers. Your silver has become dross, your wine mixed with water. Your princes are rebellious, and companions of thieves; everyone loves bribes, and follows after rewards. They do not defend the fatherless, nor does the cause of the widow come before them." (Isaiah 1:21-23)

(4). Judgment and Restoration for Jerusalem, 1:24-26.

"Therefore the Lord says, The LORD of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, 'Ah, I will rid Myself of My adversaries, and take vengeance on My enemies. I will turn My hand

against you, and thoroughly purge away your dross, and take away all your alloy. I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.” (1:24-26)

We know that while there was a few years of respite in order that the Messiah might live, die, and be resurrected before Israel and Jerusalem were completely cut off with blindness, the theme by and large has passed from earth to eternity, from the old Jerusalem to the new Jerusalem which be lowered from heaven after the Second Coming of Christ. You see this judgment to be on all people of the earth as well as on God’s people, the two being divided by “adversaries” **{and you know that to be a term for God’s people who are not acting like God’s people and the “enemies” for the rest of the world}**. You also see that in the following verses of 1:27-31 where the “destruction of transgressors and of sinners shall be together, and those who forsake the Lord shall be consumed (1:28), also in the “both will burn together, and no one shall quench them (1:31b).

(5). Eternal Honor in the “latter days” for Judah and Jerusalem, 2:1-4.

“Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains...and all nations shall flow to it...nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore.” (Isaiah 2:1 and 2:4b)

I feel sorry for the disciples of Darby and Scofield who try to read into this another revival for Israel, past the momentary respite with return from Persian Captivity in order for Christ to be born...that is try to read into this another time on earth past now and before eternity, a millennium of peace and the restoration of Jerusalem. Stay in context, how can you miss that time is over when all the above takes place. Herein is the major problem of the fundamentalists and others, taking such Scriptures out of context they read in an Age between the Falling Away and the Second Coming with rapture of believers and judgment of the world with rewards and punishments for the wheat and the tares. It takes far more imagination, running everywhere with a verse of Scripture, picking and choosing from the Bible, than to just admit that this is for the very end of this Age, the time of Eternity.

(6). That you must see this in the context of the end of all time and the beginning of eternity is further carried forth in context with the famous Day of the LORD of the OT which starts in 2:5 and runs through 2:22. First in 2:10 with the call for the house of Jacob as well as the whole earth to get inside the rock and to hide in the dirt in order to get away from the terror of the LORD, from the glory of His majesty. What is going to happen on the Day of the LORD? Well, 2:11 the lofty looks of man caused by pride are going to be humbled; the haughtiness of man is going to be bowed down by the reigning and returning Christ, even by the angels as having gathered men from the four corners of the earth they separate the sheep from the goats and tell them why; and the LORD alone shall be exalted in that Day of the LORD. Is that clear enough for you? Further characteristics, second of the Day of the LORD in 2:12 and following as that Day comes upon all proud and lofty, upon all lifted up which will be brought low, even upon the high trees and high mountains--you see it is on nature as well as humanity, on buildings, on other structures of man, on ships and sloops, on the loftiness of man and their

haughtiness; and as all idols are abolished, the LORD alone will be exalted in that Day. Men will run into the caves of the rocks from the terror of the LORD at this Day “when He arises to shake the earth” (2:19 & 2:21b, repeated twice).

(7). Then the Day becomes a closer Day of Judgment in chapter 3 and following, a Day of near Judgment for Judah and Jerusalem as compared to the judgment of eternity and on the whole earth which was previously the province of the Day of the LORD. This is the nature of the Prophets, the Day of the LORD in the OT Prophets has two aspects: a day of more immediate and localized judgment with characteristics of the final Day, and a final Day of Judgment and justice with some characteristics of the more immediate and localized judgment. I like to call it sweeps rather than a duplicity of meaning and predictions. God has the same intentions in each case, to right the wrong and to reward the right. In one case, it is eternal justice at work and in the other case it is immediate and rectifying justice at work.

4-4: Isaiah 40-55, A Message of Hope for People in Exile.

1. Historical events of the world between 605-539 B.C.

While the 40-55 section of Isaiah is not tied to historical events like 1-39, we can easily recognize from the message and messages the God’s people are in exile; and while in history no nation has ever returned from exile, it was predicted in Isaiah and happened in 539 B.C. During this 605-539 period of history world dominance shifted from Nineveh and Assyria to Babylon. In 609 a coalition of Babylon and the Mede-Persians dominated Assyria to become the world power. **{Medes were a more north eastern group from Assyria and the Persian more eastern.}** This world empire of 605-539 is generally called in history the Neo-Babylonian empire, primary under the leadership of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon made famous in Daniel from the writing on the wall, but partly because of weaker kings which followed him **{and the workings of God in history which determines the bounds of all nations, and over which angels are placed}** the Persian Empire took over in 539. Jerusalem feel captive to the Babylonian Empire in 586 with a subsequent deportation of princes and other leaders like Daniel to their Empire **{a foreign policy that had also been practiced by Assyrian against Israel in order to eliminate continued opposition}**, with an earlier deportation in Judah of 598 as told in II Kings 24:8-17. **{You will again recall that the Writing Prophets are divided into the two broad categories of first the Assyrian Captivity period and then the Chaldean period, Chaldea being the southern most part of Mesopotamia and where Abraham came from originally, Ur of Chaldea.}**

“In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim {the present king of Judah} became his vassal for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him. And the LORD sent against him {notice that the Bible claims, and if we have the faith of the Bible and in the Bible we must believe it also, that God Himself sent the army of Babylon against God’s people in Judah and Jerusalem because they had long ago ceased to act like God’s people} raiding bands of Chaldeans {up to this point in the Prophets the impending disasters on God’s people have been more so-called natural disasters, but now God sends “raiding bands of Chaldeans”, seeing that there was more than one invasion}...bands of Syrians, bands of Moabites, and bands of the people of Ammon {and more than country sent bands}; He sent them against Judah to destroy it {the purpose of God here is clear--to destroy Judah as a nation, and the reason

is to follow, but first we must be reminded as stated in Amos that God never does anything without first telling His people through the Prophets, and the Prophets did warn the people of Judah}, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken by His servants the Prophets. Surely at the commandment of the LORD this came upon Judah {the writer of II Kings under the leadership of the Holy Spirit wants to remind us that this Captivity was commanded by God, the Great Maker of History}, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, and also because of the innocent blood that he had shed; for he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, which the LORD would not pardon." (II Kings 24:1-4)

2. A Message of Isaiah 40-55 from God and through the Prophet Isaiah is that far from complete abandonment of His own people, God has chosen them through whom to show His power over the deities of Babylon. God can and will: (1) destroy the idols of Babylon, (2) redeem His people from their sins, always a personal message to individuals and more important than the prosperity of non-captivity, and (3) to bring the people back to their homeland which has never happened in history. God chose the first king of the Persian Empire, Cyrus, through whom to do this in 539 when the Medo-Persians completed the conquest of the Neo-Babylonian Empire that they had been working on for 75 years rebuilding. From the perspective of Cyrus, he adopted a foreign policy of soliciting obedience from dominated subjects by pleasing them, thus as recorded in Ezra 1:1-4 he granted exiles the right to go home and provided money for the rebuilding of their national shrines.

3. God as in Isaiah 40-55 has always demanded that His people recognize Him as the only real God, and further that His activities through His people should lead the rest of the world to know that there is no other god such as Marduk, Ashur, Bel, and Amon-Re.

"I am the LORD, and there is no other; There is no God besides Me. I will gird you, through you have not known Me. That they may know from the rising of the sun to its setting that there is none besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no other; I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create calamity; I, the LORD, do all these things." (Isaiah 45:5-6)

(1). The same God who created light and darkness, yea all the universe, also rules over human history creating nations and the boundaries of nations.

(2). God controls history by bringing calamities and by subverting calamities.

(3). God brings both natural disasters and the calamities of warfare from other nations. If you do not see this, then the God of your mentality is only half a God of the Bible, therefore not God at all but more like the idols. Of course, this is only in your mind; and like Phillips said years in his book, "Your God is too Small". What has developed beyond Phillips is that American Society with a Christian and Bible influence has created an American Conscience, where the social and political conscience itself as become a god--summarized as I do what I think is right and what my conscience tells me is right--and based on the American Democratic Faith. This Faith, unlike the faith of Christ and the Bible, (one) adheres to the majority as right, (two) adheres to a toleration that allows intolerance toward the sound doctrine of the Bible, (three) that promotes the peace which the world gives over the peace which Christ gives and which divides society into two groups--tares and wheat, sheep and goats, believers and nonbelievers. You can bet that

in the recent disasters in this nation of Katrina, tornadoes, and earthquakes as well as other manifestations of “blood, fire, and vapor of smoke” that must come before that great and notable Day of the LORD and Lord, are denied by the American Democratic Faith as calamities from God, even as is 911.

4. The Message in Isaiah 40-55 is more the redemptive aspect of God’s chastisement of His people. Still God’s people must act like God’s people without false gods, the first of the Ten Commandments exist as always and as from God, not to make graven images even if in the mind, not to worship other gods but to worship the Lord your God with all your heart mind and soul as explained by Jesus and as quoted from the OT, and not to take the name of the LORD your God in vain, a practice that we see increasingly in American even among church members and which is one of the primary signs that we are in the Falling Away of God’s people from God, Christ, and the Bible. It is also an immutable law of God that ruin, or calamity or disaster, follows wickedness as surely as the night follows the day.

The Disciples Study Bible summarizes 40-55 as “God’s Word for His Confused People” with the aspects of (1) God comes to His people when judgment has passed, 40:1-31, (2) God holds His people by the hand, 41:1-29, (3) The light of truth in darkness, 42:1-25, (4) God alone is Savior of His people, 43:1-28, (5) Homemade gods can never save {we would include in that the idols which God’s people tend to make today in their own minds, according to their own desires, and based on the collective American Conscience with the American Democratic Faith for justification}, (6) God may use an unbeliever, 45:1-25 **{after God is the creator of all and the ultimate controller of the universe, although He allows certain natural laws like gravity and certain freedoms to Satan without His intervention except when necessary in the answer to pray or guidance}**, (7) False gods make life’s load heavier, 46:1-13, (8) Ruin follows wickedness as night follows day, 47:1-15 {this is also an immutability law of God which is based on His character, personality, and holiness}, (8) Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, 48:1-52:15, (9) Healing comes to many through the suffering of One, 53:1-12, (10) God keeps His promises (54:1-17), and (11) God’s finest invitation of Return to Me, 55:1-13.

(1). The Message of Isaiah 40.

As in NT times the complete Bible message, often called prophesy, has three aspects--exhortation, rebuke, and comfort--so chapter 40 of Isaiah can be considered the Comfort chapter of the Message. To use some of the descriptive words of the NT on the character of God: “God is not willing that any should perish”; “God is longsuffering and patient”; “God is slow to anger”; and God is quick to repent, or change His mind when faced with a change of attitude and action on the part of His creations. Of course, you must realize that we have a very unique set of circumstances of history with which we are dealing here as God has already punished Judah and Jerusalem with the calamity of captivity, and now His forgiveness and mercy are tended to His own people: (one) the warfare of God against Jerusalem is ended; (two) God has pardoned the iniquity of the people of Jerusalem; (three) the punishment is behind them as they have now received double from God for all their sins; (four) here is the real message of comfort which will come in approximately 500 years, preparations will be made for the nation and in the nation for the coming of the Messiah, most often in Isaiah called the suffering servant or the Son of

Man; (five) Cry out about this comfort and what shall we cry--that all flesh is lovely but like vanishing grass, cry out about the good tidings of the One to come who is your God, cry out that God through the Christ will feed His sheep like a flock, cry out that the God of all knowledge and wisdom is about to act definitively in history, cry out that all nations are to God like a drop in the bucket, nothing, and the isles **{that is us Gentiles led by the US}** are lifted up as a small thing **{as we consider God working through history, especially in Daniel, we realize how insignificant the US is although surely the leader in the Fullness of the Gentiles and in the spreading of the Gospel to every nation; however also in the Falling Away; and that God's center of gravity is always north and south of the holy land}**, cry out you can not liken God to something to be carved from wood; (six) have you not heard that from the very beginning of Creation that God sits on the circle of the earth and controls human history, bringing the princes and the judges to nothing, God blows on them shortly after they are established and they wither, sometimes He uses the whirlwind to take them away like stubble; (seven) who is like God or equal to God, look at in the creations of the universe at all His might and power; (eight) it is folly to say like Israel that the way they are living is hidden from God and that God is ignoring their just claim for justice; (nine) God does not weary or faint, His understanding of man and the ways of man and nations has no measure, God gives power to the weak and increases strength to those without might.

(2). Truth in darkness, the message of Isaiah 42.

We know from the NT that "in the fullness of time, God sent forth His son"; and that is exactly what is the truth in darkness that is being offered to God's people here. **{Never forget also that the real blessing on Abraham as a nation of believers, beyond the blessing of a innumerable number of people as a nation, was for the seed to be the Promised Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, and that for He to be the savior of believing Jews and Gentiles, here in Isaiah those Gentiles are describes as those of the "coastlands".}**

"Behold! My Servant {the Messiah and the Lord Jesus Christ} whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights {God the Father acknowledges at baptism, through John the Baptist, through the Spirit descending in the form of a dove, and on the mount of transfiguration how pleased He was with His Son and what He was doing, not to mention showing His pleasure with granted miracles and signs, and primarily in the resurrection from the dead!} I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles. He will not cry out, nor raise His voice, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed He will not break, and smoking flax He will not quench; He will bring forth justice for truth {you want real justice, God's people or all, look for it in the teachings and the life of Jesus as for example in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus demands the seeking first of the kingdom of God}. He will not fail nor be discouraged, till he has established justice in the earth {what did Jesus do during His life on earth, He established justice and the kingdom of God on earth}; and the coastlands shall wait for His Law {that is us Gentiles led by the US, but that is behind us now for we are near the end of the Fullness of the Gentiles, well into the Falling Away of God's Gentile people led by the US, and much closer to the Second Coming at which point it will be too late for any major human decisions for repentance--in fact the "now is the time" of Hebrews begs the very issue of the Falling Away in that you do not know at what point God will say of each of His present people, that is enough

of the “evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God” though your idols in your own brains have been finely developed by the American Conscience and the American Democratic Faith, enough because after over 40 years of wilderness wanderings in unbelief, you have passed the point of no return for Promise and Eternity with God.) (Isaiah 42:1-4)

(3). However judgment is still on the way before the Comfort of the Messiah, God’s people are as good as already “robbed” and “plundered” in Isaiah 42:21-25.

“Who among you will give ear to this? {the equivalent from God Himself of saying like the Prophets did, “who has believed our report?”}...Who will listen and hear from the time to come? Who gave Jacob for plunder, and Israel to the robbers? {the answer of God’s people should be that the Almighty God, ruler of heaven and earth, the God of all power and all seeing, gave first the northern kingdom to Assyria for robbery and then the southern kingdom of Jacob and Judah to Babylon for plunder}...Was it not the LORD, He against whom we have sinned? For they would not walk in His ways {a repeat of The Message of the Writing Prophets that God’s people are not acting like God’s people), nor were they obedient to His law.” (Isaiah 42:23-24)