

The Weekly Word

October 1-7, 2018

It's October... fall is truly here. Crisp air. May God be with you as you continue to explore Isaiah, the prophet. Happy reading...

Grace and Peace, Bill

To hear the Bible read click this link... <http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/audio/>.

Monday, October 1: Isaiah 18- Listen for the Lord...

Through Isaiah, God is speaking words to all the countries and cultures around His people. God's eyes now turn to Cush. As the word begins to flow God notes how all people naturally see and respond to appropriate signs and signals. *All you people of the world, you who live on the earth, when a banner is raised on the mountains, you will see it, and when a trumpet sounds, you will hear it. This is what the LORD says to me: ... (3-4a)*

This word picture launched my meditations. When a banner is raised on a mountain we see it. When a trumpet blast is sounded people hear it. In today's language, when a police siren sounds we pay attention. This word picture is followed immediately by, *This is what the LORD says to me:...*

What hit me is that God gets our attention (banner, trumpet, siren) and then speaks...

How often has God tried to get my attention, and I haven't given it? This question plagues me...

Lord God, am I paying attention to You? Open my ears and maybe more importantly, open my heart to hear You, to pay attention and listen for Your voice. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Tuesday, October 2: Isaiah 19- That all might praise the Lord...

Chapter 19 is given a heading in my Bible, "A Prophecy Against Egypt." I realize that these headings are not canonical, but generally descriptive. What I found fascinating was that the prophecy concludes with a blessing that Egypt and Assyria will erect altars to the Lord and worship Him.

In that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the heart of Egypt, and a monument to the LORD at its border. It will be a sign and witness to the LORD Almighty in the land of Egypt. When they cry out to the LORD because of their oppressors, he will send them a savior and defender, and he will rescue them. So the LORD will make himself known to the Egyptians, and in that day they will acknowledge the LORD. They will worship with sacrifices and grain offerings; they will make vows to the LORD and keep them. The LORD will strike Egypt with a plague; he will strike them and heal them. They will turn to the LORD, and he will respond to their pleas and heal them.

In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria. The Assyrians will go to Egypt and the Egyptians to Assyria. The Egyptians and Assyrians will worship together. In that day Israel will be the third, along with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing on the earth. The LORD Almighty will bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt my people, Assyria my handiwork, and Israel my inheritance" (19-25).

The modern day span of this prophecy would include Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and Egypt. How amazing it will be when all these peoples worship the Lord.

Would that all words from God end with people worshipping the Lord and being blessed.

Oh, God, I pray for the completion of this word. I pray that the nations of Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Jordan and Egypt come to know You.

Lord, how many of the problems in today's world would disappear if all these peoples united under You God – Father, Jesus, Holy Spirit? Lord, if these peoples united it could/ would be a catalyst for the world to unite under Jesus. May this become reality... may the world and all the peoples of the world come to know Jesus. I pray in His name. Amen.

Wednesday, October 3: Isaiah 20- Prayers for the United States of America...

In this short chapter, when I read verse 5: *Those who trusted in Cush and boasted in Egypt will be dismayed and put to shame*, I immediately thought when we trust in anything other than the Lord we will be dismayed and put to shame.

At one point Egypt was the pinnacle of human society, and yet here Egypt is being defeated by Assyria. Oh, how the mighty fall. Instantly as I wrote this last sentence I thought, someday that will likely be true of my country, the United States of America. Right now it feels like we are a forever great nation. Likely Egypt at one point certainly thought they were a forever great nation, but then the tide changes and the mighty fall.

Hopefully I will not be alive when the USA slips, but only God knows His plans for any country, including mine.

These thoughts drive me to pray for my country...

Lord God, for two centuries and counting you have had Your eye on the USA. You have protected her and helped us flourish. We like to think it is our ideals, and while that may be an element of our greatness, Your providential hand is the more foundational reason. I lift up my country and pray that You would sustain us. I pray that You would watch over us. Keep our eyes on doing good and help us from growing arrogant and haughty... like any mighty country we are more vulnerable when that happens. Grace us also to be a force for good in the world and to be a force for You and the completion of Your commission to take the name of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Thursday, October 4: Isaiah 21- The final word...

The Lord continues His scan of Israel's neighbors, parceling out His judgments against these nations. The third prophecy in this chapter closes with the words, *The LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken* (17b).

There it is. The final word, *the God of Israel, has spoken*.

The Lord doesn't need incantations, or magic or displays of power. All God needs to do is speak and what He says happens. This has been the picture we see of God from the very first words of the Bible. God spoke and creation happened. Now God speaks and judgment happens.

The Lord God, all-powerful, only needs to speak and what He speaks happens.

Absolute power. Absolute authority. Absolute rule. Absolute...

It is difficult for me to fathom absolute. Nothing in my frame of reference is absolute, except the Lord. And it is difficult to truly comprehend a lone exception. To simply be able to speak and create things, that is so far above my frame of understanding.

As I ponder all this I am awed by the greatness of the Lord. And then I am awed that the Absolute Sovereign of the world would be mindful of me, a tiny insignificant speck of humanity.

Humbled. Awed. Blessed. Amazed. Appreciative.

Oh, Lord God, I do not deserve Your lavish love, care, concern and interest. I don't really have words to respond. Joy and wonder roll over me. Appreciation for You and Your kindness well up inside of me. Tears of love fill my eyes. Thank You, Lord. Bless You, Lord.

I pray through Jesus, my Savior. Amen.

Friday, October 5: Isaiah 22- The danger of becoming puffed up...

I can easily imagine God's people in Jerusalem becoming puffed up as God circles them, judging all their neighbors and enemies. How much more the hammer blow of this chapter must have hurt as they rolled the scroll only to find their city and their name among the judged!

This stings because I can imagine so easily how puffed up Jerusalem could have felt because I think I would have become puffed up. My imagination is so much a projection of myself.

So even as God is judging Jerusalem in this chapter of the Bible, I am feeling a pinch of warning.

“Bill, don't allow yourself to become puffed up with pride on how well or how blessed you are. Beware, Bill, for you, too, are a sinner deserving of judgment. Only God's grace, mercy and love through Jesus Christ separates you from deserved judgment... don't ever forget this.”

Lord, Your Word has chastised me. It has cut me to the bone and marrow. Cleanse me, O Lord, from my sin of pride, that I might be Your faithful servant. I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Saturday, October 6: Isaiah 23- Can't hide from God...

I did a little reading on Tyre, it was a small sailing powerhouse in the ancient world. And because of its small size Tyre was generally left alone by major powers when they roared through and conquered the region. This however was about to change. God's judgment was soon to be realized. No longer would Tyre be a hidden gem, left alone by the large powers.

The Expositor's Bible Commentary notes: *The Phoenicians, with their accumulated wealth and their blatant materialism, represented the very type of culture against whose vices Amos in particular warned the Israelites. Until the time of the Assyrians, who had designs on the whole Mediterranean seaboard and its hinterland, this small state and its important commercial cities had been left relatively undisturbed by conflict.* From Assyria forward most powerhouses inflicted their will on the Phoenicians.

Pondering Tyre's story brought some interesting thoughts. For years they escaped any kind of punishment/attack as different rulers moved through the area. But then God named a day and said now I will bring judgment upon you for the way you have been living... a way that doesn't acknowledge Me or My way.

Like Tyre I can feel like I am not seen, as if God is not paying attention to my sin. This can lead to false feelings that God won't be bothered with my sin. Thus, I'm okay.

But I am not okay and my sin is mounting up. The story of Tyre reminds me that judgment will eventually come, in God's timing. The story of Tyre also reminds me that I don't get away with sin; eventually in God's timing judgment comes to everyone. Everyone... even me and you.

Have I been hiding from God? Do I think I can hide my sins from God? I can't. God sees and knows everything... and my day will come.

Without Jesus that day would be a disaster, like it was for Tyre.

Lord, I sit here and face myself and my sin. I am far from perfect. I would be lost without your grace and the atonement of Jesus for my sins and the sins of the world. Through Jesus, I pray. Amen.

Sunday, October 7, 2018, Sunday Worship

If any of my thoughts or the Bible readings spark questions send an email reply and I will do my best to answer all questions from people on the list... I will answer personal questions privately; general questions will be answered in a subsequent email installment.

If you are reading along with me from the PCOG website you can send questions or request being placed on the weekly email list by emailing Lisa at office@pcogonline.org.

Click here for a link to my sermons on the web. Sermons are generally posted within 2 days.