

Introduction: The history of humanity is littered with hundreds of cultures that have risen, thrived for a season and then choked on themselves. They either faded away or became a small regional tribe. *** Somewhere near twenty have grown to a point of regional dominance. They lasted centuries before being replaced by the next big power. A few of these are Egypt, Babylon and Persia. Two thousand years ago Rome dominated the entire Mediterranean Sea basin from Europe to northern Africa as far east as western Asia. Since the First World War there has been the British Empire, the Soviet Union, the United States and China. *** Those who honestly study history and human nature discover that no man-made system of government and laws is able to overcome the basic selfishness and pride that is in the human heart. No one wants to be told what to do: not from another human being, and also not by God. *** In all this larger history, there is a small nation descended from Abraham, Isaac and Israel that dominated the Middle East for eighty years from 1000 BC until 920 BC under two kings chosen by God. The land ruled by David and Solomon went north to the Euphrates River, south to Egypt and east to the desert. It was about the size of Illinois, the twenty-fifth largest state. Some five hundred years later King Artaxerxes king of Persia and other countries searched the archives and found powerful kings had ruled from Jerusalem. (*Ezra 4:20*) *** However, even people chosen by The Covenant God soon turned away from Him and went the way their twisted hearts led them. Some two hundred years after Solomon Yahweh called Isaiah to speak prophetically to a people about to be conquered and scattered forever. (*2 Kings 17*) *** All prophecy is poetry. In the passage this morning Isaiah was inspired to use twenty distinct synonyms for depravity, evil and turning away from God. Line-by-line Yahweh tells of His power to save His people in spite of their grave transgressions.

I. Look, Yahweh can save, but His people are excessively evil; and, while they hope for salvation, they speak revolt.
(*Verses 1-15a*)

A. Yahweh can save, but His people are full of fifteen kinds of crooked violence, evil and destruction. (*Verses 1-8*)

1. Behold! Yahweh's hand is not short from causing to save, nor His ear become dull to hear. (*Verse 1*)

Strong declaration: Yahweh emphatically states He can save and hear His people. He puts this negatively because His people are acting like He is too weak to save and does not care to hear.

2. Your iniquities have caused a separation between you and your God and your sins have caused Him to hide His face from you from hearing. (*Verse 2*)

Estrangement: As always, the fault is not with God, but with His people choosing to separate themselves from Him by their attitudes and actions.

3. Because your hands have been defiled in blood, your fingers in iniquity, your lips have spoken lies, your tongue will mutter injustice; no one is calling in justice, no one is pleading truth, they trust in confusion to speak nothing, to conceive mischief, to bear wickedness. (*Verses 3-4*)

'Twisted': 'Iniquity' refers to whatever in the human heart is twisted towards God.

Confusion: This word describes the earth after creation. It was confused without form and void. (*Genesis 1:2*)

4. They hatch viper's eggs and weave a spider's web, he who eats their eggs will die and the one being crushed will be hatched a snake; their webs will not be clothing and they will not cover themselves in their works, their works are works of wickedness and deeds of violence in their hands. (*Verses 5-6*)

Snakes and spider webs: Two words are used out of several species of poisonous snakes. Yahweh wants His people to see their feeble efforts at doing good works to hide their twisted hearts are as weak and invisible to Him as a spider web is to people.

Hamas: Violence is ^khamas, the same word in Arabic used by the terrorist group.

5. Their feet will run to evil and they will make haste to shed innocent blood; their thoughts are wickedness, and havoc and destruction in their highways. (*Verse 7*)

Proverbs: The first line is from the proverbs of Solomon where a father tells his sons not to join with those seeking to waylay innocent travelers. (*Proverbs 1:16*)

Highwaymen: The second half of the sentence applies God's wisdom to people living in Isaiah's day.

6. The way of peace they do not know and there is no justice in their tracks, they have made their path perverse and whoever is treading them has not known peace. (*Verse 8*)

No justice: There is much here, but their biggest sin is they are not doing justice. (*Micah 6:8*)

B. The people respond that they hoped for light and salvation; but, they are lying, transgressing people, speaking revolt against their God. (*Verses 9-15a*)

1. Therefore justice is far from us and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, behold darkness, for brightness, we walk in gloom; we grope the wall like the blind, like those with no eyes we grope, we stumble at noon as those in the twilight, in full vigor as dead. (*Verses 9-10*)

Darkness: Confessing they lack justice, they say their hope for light has resulted in darkness.

Blindness: They have also become blind at midday.

Death: Finally, in full bodily vigor, they are spiritually dead. As James would later teach, our evil desires are the first step on the path that leads to death. (*James 1:14-15*)

2. We all growl like bears, and like doves we moan intensely; we will look for justice and none, for salvation and far from us. (Verse 11)

Creatures: The people compare themselves to suffering creatures. The churches in Rome were told that all creation was groaning while waiting for the revelation of God's children. (Romans 8:19-22)

No hope of salvation: They conclude salvation is far from them. Their twisted hearts prevent them from realizing and receiving the salvation Yahweh declared in His opening sentence. This is sad.

3. For our transgressions increase and our sins answer against us, for our transgressions are with us and we have known our iniquities; to transgress and deceive Yahweh and move away from following our God, to speak oppression and revolt, to conceive and utter from the heart lying words. (Verses 12-13)

Left God: They admit they have left God by moving away from Him and His ways,

4. Justice has been driven back, righteousness stands far off because truth has stumbled in the street, equity cannot enter, truth is lacking and the one departing from evil becomes prey. (Verses 14-15a)

Godly character blocked: They know they have blocked God's justice, righteousness, equity and especially truth.

Evil consumes repentant: The tragic consequence is that any remnant looking to turn back to God from evil to seek justice is being hunted by the majority as prey.

When evil abounds, justice seekers become prey

II. Finally, in wrath Yahweh comes in His Spirit and power to both save and repay evil. (Verses 15b-19)

- A. What Yahweh saw displeased Him, so He worked salvation repaying evil with wrath. (Verses 15b-18)

1. Then Yahweh saw and it was evil in His eyes because no justice, then He saw no man and was astonished (there was) no intercessor. (Verses 15b-16a)

Evil: The evil hearts of His people have brought about evil deeds, and Yahweh is amazed no one stands up for the oppressed.

2. Then His own arm brought salvation to Him, and His righteousness, it upheld Him. (Verse 16b)

Grace in action: Salvation and righteousness are Yahweh's gracious acts to people to reestablish His desired relationship with them. He is the primary beneficiary of this. His gift worked in His people frees them from the darkness in their hearts.

Yahweh Himself worked salvation for His people trapped in darkness

3. Then He clothed (Himself in) righteousness as a breastplate and a helmet of salvation on His head. (Verse 17a)

Spiritual armor: The apostle Paul used this revelation of God about His armor as the basis for his command to the churches in Asia Minor to clothe themselves in God's armor. (Ephesians 6:12-17)

Righteousness: To be righteous means to be perfectly straight. God expresses His righteousness throughout His Word. His saving of people from themselves and out of darkness, in spite of themselves and to fulfill His Covenant, is the greatest expression of His righteousness.

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4. Then He clothed Himself in garments of vengeance (for) clothing, and then covered Himself with zeal as a robe; according to their dealing so He will repay wrath to His adversaries, recompense to His enemies, to the coastlands recompense He will repay. (Verses 17b-18)

Jealous zeal: God's zeal to act is motivated by His jealousy of love and grace to His people.

Evil repaid with wrath: This means He will repay in wrath to His enemies the evil done to His people.

- B. Then all will fear Yahweh and His glory as He comes in power, driven by His Spirit. (Verse 19)

1. And they will fear The Name of Yahweh from the west and His glory from the rising of the sun. (Verse 19a)

Universal fear of faith: To fear the awesome Covenant God is a prerequisite of faith IN Him.

Faith must have a powerful person as its object. Here this faith of fear will circle the earth, west to east.

Glory from sun: It is Yahweh who gives glory to the sun which it reflects back to Him. (Psalm 19:1-6)

2. For He will come like a restricted river being driven by His Spirit. (Verse 19b)

Coming in power: When a river reaches a narrow portion, the force of its flow may cause a flood.

His second coming will be in power to judge those who refused to turn to Him in faith in His Son.

Driven by Spirit of Yahweh: The Church of Jesus makes progress in the power of The Holy Spirit, given after Jesus' first coming. (Acts 1:1-8; Romans 14:15; 1 Thessalonians 1)

Bottom Line: Let us all take to heart Yahweh's declaration of His ability to act to save: both in His wrath against evil and in the power of His Spirit to create fear leading to faith. Then He will save us from darkness.

Yahweh Himself worked salvation for His people trapped in darkness

Conclusion: Yahweh can save but His people are excessively evil: while hoping for salvation, they speak revolt.

So, Yahweh was displeased to the point He worked salvation, repaying evil with wrath so all people would fear Him as He comes in power driven by His Spirit.

Yahweh Himself worked salvation for His people trapped in darkness