

QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

www.quantockministries.org.uk

*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry
for the Christian community*

D M HERRING
45 LUXBOROUGH ROAD
BRIDGWATER
TA6 7JN

01278 451297
qmins@aol.com

ISAIAH 26 v 20 – 21 - DOORS ARE SHUTTING

Isaiah was an amazing prophet, and the Old Testament prophecy that bears his name is an amazing book. Not only does it contain many important warnings of what would happen to the Lord's ancient people, Judah and Israel; not only does it contain many prophecies of the coming Messiah in His birth, nature, and death; it also contains much of the Messiah's future influence on the world as the Suffering Servant (the Church age – the age of the Bride), and as the Reigning King (the Millennium). Isaiah also tells us in some detail the nature of the judgement time (the Tribulation) at the end of the Church age and leading up to the Messiah's second arrival on Earth.

Isaiah chapter 24 is a very graphic description of a worldwide catastrophe, happening to an extent which has not occurred since the Flood. As the chapter concludes in verse 23 with the Lord reigning in Jerusalem, it can only be a description of this judgement period at the end of the Church age. Similarly, Isaiah turns again to that moment in history with these two verses in chapter 26. Before we consider the verses in detail we note that there is a pattern of "shutting" at the times of judgement which mark the end of each of the ages (or dispensations) of God's dealings with humanity. We will quickly look at that pattern.

1. Age of Innocence – Creation to the Fall. Utopia is shut to humanity by a flaming sword, Genesis 3 v 23 – 24.
 2. Age of Conscience – the Fall to the Flood. God Himself shut the door of Noah's ark, Genesis 7 v 16.
 3. Age of Humanism – the Flood to Babel. The different languages shut down internationalism, Genesis 11 v 7 – 9.
 4. Age of Promise – Abram to Sinai. Egypt's power shut down through the Red Sea drowning, Exodus 14 v 26 – 28.
 5. Age of Law – Sinai to Pentecost. The (temporary) shutting out of the Jews from their land, Matthew 23 v 37 – 39.
 6. Age of the Bride – Pentecost to the Lord's Return. Doors shutting at the rapture of the Saints, Isaiah 26 v 20 – 21.
 7. Age of the Kingdom – Millennial Reign. Afterwards, sinners shut out for ever, Revelation 20 v 7 – 15 & 21 v 27.
- Then the doors will never be shut again; no more judgement, and eternally open for blessing – Revelation 21 v 25.

So, we'll now look at Isaiah 26 v 20 – 21.

Go, my people

Just before the doors are shut, as the Lord's people we need to be ready to be on the move - away from the situations and circumstances where we were before. This is certainly the case today, following Covid-19, when change is being forced upon us. We must not be like Lot's wife, looking back, and yearning for the old securities (Isaiah 43 v 18 – 19).

Enter your rooms

As the coming wrath will affect all the people of the earth, the Lord's people will have to go to a place of security. This is because we will not have to face God's wrath, because Jesus faced it for us (1 Thessalonians 1 v 10, 5 v 9, Revelation 3 v 10). The most obvious place for us to go is found in John 14 v 2 – 4, where there are many rooms in the Father's house (Heaven) and where the Lord Jesus has prepared a specific place for His Bride. So this is the event we call the Rapture, when all of those who have a saving faith in Jesus, both dead and alive at that moment, will rise again in resurrection bodies to enjoy the eternal presence of the Lord.

And shut the doors behind you

This is a most solemn warning – people will look for us, but we won't be found. And the shutting of the doors will be extremely sudden (1 Corinthians 15 v 52 and 1 Thessalonians 5 v 1 – 3). The Tribulation judgement will be within the overall Church age, as its final event. The next age will commence when Jesus brings that judgement time to an end by standing on the Mount of Olives, inaugurating His millennial reign (Zechariah 14 v 1 – 9). However, during the Tribulation there will be the creation of saints without number by Jewish evangelism, but they will have to pass through terrible wrath, and they will not be part of the Bride (Revelation 7).

Hide yourselves for a little while until His wrath has passed by

Jesus gives a clear explanation of the “little while” in Matthew 24 v 22 by telling us that if the Tribulation exceeded the appointed seven years (Daniel’s 70th “week” – Daniel 9 v 27), no human life would survive. We then return with the Lord, in our eternal resurrection bodies, and as His bride (Revelation 19 v 6 – 16 and Zechariah 14 v 5).

See, the Lord is coming out of His dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins

This is the reason why we are called to go away and shut the doors. It is not a call to legalism, for we are all sinners, and no amount of religious or legalistic endeavour will ever make us perfect and ready to appear before God. The great central truth of the Christian Gospel is that we are each called personally to acknowledge our sinfulness and then recognise that Jesus bore the punishment for our personal sins by dying in our place. That brings us God’s forgiveness and the clear promise of eternal life (John 3 v 16). All who have done this are the Lord’s people (saints) and will be part of His Bride for eternity. If, on the other hand, we ignore the Lord’s atoning death for us personally, then we have to face the punishment of God’s wrath for our own disobedience and will be shut out when the doors are closed. Once those doors are shut the time of God’s judgement starts (2 Thessalonians 2 v 7 – 8). Until the doors are shut, we are still in the day of grace. The troubles that are present all over the world now do not constitute God’s judgement, but a foreshadowing of that judgement, given as a warning to the world as an act of His grace.

The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer

God’s people may be hidden by their doors being shut, but there will be plenty of awfulness that will then suddenly be revealed. This is a powerful picture in an Old Testament context. Shedding blood was the most serious of crimes, but as all sins bring about someone’s detriment, the principle behind this statement indicates that what will be disclosed is all harmful behaviour towards others. With the killing of another human, the first task of law was to ascertain if the deed was intentional or unintentional. If it was intentional, that was murder and death was to be the punishment. However, if the death was caused unintentionally, the perpetrator could flee to a city of refuge (there were six altogether), stay there until the death of the current high priest, and then regain his or her freedom. (The whole law regarding the cities of refuge can be found in Numbers 35 v 9 – 28 and Deuteronomy 19 v 1 – 14.) The central issue here is whether the sins that have been committed by “the people of the earth” towards each other, whether physical, emotional, psychological, or in any other way, are intentional or unintentional. However, they are all still sins.

In the light of this passage, what is our duty today, before the doors are shut?

- 1. Where refuge is to be found.** We share these thoughts following a worldwide period of pandemic, with rapidly changing social and political conditions. Here in the UK we find ourselves in very new circumstances in the Church. My guess is that the same applies in many other countries. The Christian Gospel of Jesus and Him crucified has always been our only place of refuge, but there are so few places today where the Gospel and the inerrant authority of scripture is faithfully believed and proclaimed. The altar in the temple in Old Testament times (e.g., Psalm 27 v 4 – 6), and church buildings in Church age times, have always been regarded as physical places of refuge, but we know that churches can only be as good as the Gospel message that is found therein. So much of what goes on in churches today provides no refuge at all in a spiritual sense. Now, it seems, the only sphere of influence that unbelievers can seek as a refuge has to be mainly us as individuals, wherever we find ourselves. This may be on our own in person, through our homes, or hopefully in our fellowships if they are places where the Gospel is preached. The great age of evangelism that many of us have seen over the past 70-odd years is just a shadow now. The Holy Spirit is still here to convict of sin, righteousness, and judgement, but His activity will be much more through our individual obedience and ministry, rather than through mass evangelism. Our lives and homes may be the centres of spiritual power much more than before, and they may be where sinners can begin to find true refuge in Jesus. But we must never forget that such “doors” are going to be shut suddenly, at any time.
- 2. Intentional and unintentional sin.** The other lesson this passage teaches us is that we must try and discern the difference between those whose sin is intentional and those whose sin is unintentional. All are sinners, tainted as we all are by original sin. If we are those the Holy Spirit is able to use to point to the true refuge in these dark days then we’re going to have to find out if people are more motivated through the mind or through the will in what they do. When someone says that they don’t believe in God, it’s usually a “will” thing, not a “mind” thing, in that they don’t want to believe in God. When a person’s sinfulness and unbelief is intentionally coming from their will, there’s nothing much we can do about it. This was a central feature of the Lord’s ministry, and He certainly couldn’t do much with most of the Pharisees, for example, or Judas. But when someone has unintentional but honest difficulties about understanding the things that are divine and spiritual, then we must seek the Holy Spirit’s anointing to break through the fog of false thinking that our society today is forcing upon people, from childhood onwards. The interesting parallel with the Old Testament procedure involving cities of refuge is that the release of the unintentional killer could take place on the death of the high priest. Surely, then, our prayer should be that those who genuinely cannot understand the need for salvation, and deep in their souls have not intentionally said “I will not have this man to rule over me”, will be released from their blindness and ignorance by the knowledge of the death of the great high priest, Jesus Himself. May we all be those providing a place of refuge through the Gospel for the “whosoever will”, before the doors are suddenly and finally shut, and wrath is poured out.