

A PROPHET SPEAKS ABOUT FORGIVENESS

Scripture reading: Selected passages from Isaiah.

Introduction: One interesting thing about the study of the various books of the Bible is to determine what any book has to say, or contribute, to the main doctrines of Scripture.

E.g., what does it teach us about God? Or, what does it teach us about man? Or, what does it teach us about salvation? The same would apply to all of the doctrines of the Word.

Not every book deals with every subject--it is important to note this also.

But what we do find is a most amazing harmony, an agreement, between the books of the OT and the books of the NT.

Tonight we want to look into the prophecy of Isaiah to find out what he taught about forgiveness.

To do this we need to understand what he meant by sin.

I. WHAT ISAIAH BELIEVED ABOUT SIN.

A. Generally. Cf. Isa. 1:4.

Without doubt he believed that this was the basic problem of the people of Judah, and that it extended to all alike. This any many other passages teach basically the same.

Cf. 59:1, 2,

"Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you, that he will not hear.

B. Specifically. There are three words which Isaiah uses primarily to describe what he means about sin.

1. "Sin" - חטא. This is the negative side of sin. It is a failure to do what is right in God's sight, a falling short of God's purpose that we please Him and be like Him. Cf. Isa. 6:7.
2. "Iniquity" - רשע. This is the positive side of sin. Not only do we fail to do what God wants us to do, but we pervert and distort ourselves by doing what we want to do. Cf. Isa. 40:2; 53:5, 6.

3. "Transgression"-^{עֲוֹן}. This is rebellion, a revolt, a refusal to submit to rightful authority. Cf. Isa. 43:25. Not only are we sinners, but we are content to let it stay that way.

With such a condition existing in the hearts and lives of the people of Israel (or Judah), it is extremely important to see how Isaiah handles this tremendous problem.

II. WHAT ISAIAH BELIEVED ABOUT FORGIVENESS.

- A. The key passage: Isa. 53, esp. vv. 5, 6, 10-12.

Obviously Isaiah did not believe that the people of Judah could take care of their own sins. He pointed ahead prophetically to One who was coming who would "bear their iniquities" (v. 11b). We have a clear teaching of the substitutionary death of our Lord Jesus Christ. In this Isaiah is in perfect agreement with all of the writers of the NT: Paul, Peter, John.

- B. The specific details.

Isaiah was like many of the other writers of Scripture in that he stated a thing in several different ways to let his readers (and his hearers) know the great fulness of his subject.

There are seven things which Isaiah teaches us:
and there is some overlap for emphasis.

1. Cf. Isa. 6:7.

We can begin with the prophet himself. He says two things about his own sin.

- #1 a. "Taken away." They are removed from the sinner so that they are no longer a problem for him.
- #2 b. "Purged." They have been atoned for. All that has been required has been accomplished. There is nothing left for man to do.

- #3 2. Cf. Isa. 38:17.

Isaiah uses a figure of speech to indicate that God has cast our sins where He cannot see them, and so they are forgotten.

- #4 3. Cf. Isa. 40:2.

There is definitely a similarity between this and Isa. 6:7. "Pardoned" means paid off as a debt, and

includes the fact that God is satisfied. This is preeminently important because salvation must satisfy God or it means nothing at all.

4. Cf. Isa. 43:25; 44:22.

The similarity between these verses makes them emphatic, and allows us to take them together.

#5

a. "Blotted out" means to wipe something away, or off. The record is removed and can never be restored.

#6

b. "Will not remember" shows, as William Pettingill used to say, that God has a good forgetory.

Cf. Heb. 10:17,

"And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

This all ties in with Isa. 38:17.

#7

5. All of these 6 things have to do with the removal of our sin. But does forgiveness bring anything positive to us? Isaiah would say, "Yes." Cf. Isa. 53:11,
 "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many."

"By his knowledge" points to the knowledge that the Servant of the Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ, has of God, of man, of the issues involved, etc., and knowing all of this He has not only brought about man's pardon, but He has provided for man's complete acceptance with God up to and including "a right state of life and conduct, and one that should be well-pleasing to God" (Delitzsch, II, 337).

Thus, Isaiah believed in a righteous standing for the people of God which results in a righteous life!

Concl: Knowing what you do about the NT, do you see anything wrong in the teachings of Isaiah?

He and Paul would have had a great time together preaching the Gospel, wouldn't they? There is perfect harmony here with the NT.

How thankful we should be! Our sins are forgiven and forgotten. And, thank God, the door to forgiveness is still open to all who will believe that it is not a work which needs to be earned, but a provision that has already been made by Isaiah's Servant of the Lord, our Lord Jesus Christ.