

Bad News, Good News

Isaiah 34 & 35

Introduction

- A. Please open your Bibles to Isaiah 34. Does anyone remember a type of joke that was called “good news, bad news?”
1. The format is always the same. I have good news for you but alas, there is also bad news. I came upon some jokes this week for pastors (warning: I’m not a joke-teller).
- | | |
|------------|--|
| Good News: | Your women's softball team finally won a game. |
| Bad News: | They beat your men's softball team. |
-
- | | |
|------------|---|
| Good News: | Church attendance rose dramatically the last three weeks. |
| Bad News: | You were on vacation. |
-
- | | |
|------------|---|
| Good News: | Your deacons want to send you to the Holy Land. |
| Bad News: | They are stalling until the next war. |
-
- | | |
|------------|--|
| Good News: | The Elder Board accepted your job description the way you wrote it. |
| Bad News: | They were so inspired by it, they also formed a search committee to find somebody capable of filling the position. |
- B. My title today is the inverse of good news, bad news. **Bad News, Good News.**
1. Isaiah 34 is one of the most serious sections of Scripture you will ever read. It probably doesn’t get memorized. It is bad news (really, really bad news).
 2. Isaiah 35 is one of the most joyous sections of Scripture you will ever read. It is good news (really, really good news).
- C. We’ll look at the bad news first. Then we’ll look at the good news (which mirrors our lives).

Read Is 34:1-10 (Pray)

- A. Isaiah 34-35 serves chapters 28-33 in the same way that Isaiah 24-27 serves chapters 13-23. This is effective teaching. A longer statement followed by a more succinct statement.
1. There is judgment from God followed by mercy from God.
- B. The point of Isaiah 34 is that God is:
1. Enraged against all the nations and furious against their host (verse 2)
 2. God has devoted them to destruction and slaughter (verse 2)
 3. The Lord has a sword sated with blood (verse 6)
 4. The Lord has a sacrifice and a slaughter (verse 6)
 5. The Lord has a day of vengeance (verse 8)
- C. Against whom is God enraged? The list is lengthy:
1. The nations, the peoples, the earth and all that fills it, and the world (verse 1 & 2). It is pretty much the whole kitchen sink.
 2. In verse 5 little Edom is mentioned as a specific target. Why? Edom represents the self-

sufficiency and pride of man. Edom does not need or desire God (a Savior).

Ex: Do you remember the story of Jacob and Esau? Esau is famished after hunting and he sells his birthright for some red stew. Esau is a slave to his appetite.

Genesis 25:30 (ESV) And Esau said to Jacob, "Let me eat some of that red stew, for I am exhausted!" (Therefore his name was called Edom.)

3. Esau is a slave to his appetites. The result is that Jacob is blessed, Esau is cursed.

D. Isaiah 34 functions on two different levels.

1. One, Edom (south and east) will be a waste land. Edom was not renounced in chapters 13-23, but is now, because Edom represents the ways of the world (God or appetites).

2. Two, and more important to us, Isaiah 34 is a prophetic picture of hell.

Revelations 14:11 (ESV) And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name.

E. Do you believe the terrible reality of hell exists? Many in our day do not.

I was led to question the traditional belief in everlasting conscious torment because of moral revulsion and broader theological considerations, not first of all on scriptural grounds. It just does not make any sense to say that a God of love will torture people forever for sins done in the context of a finite life.... It's time for evangelicals to come out and say that the biblical and morally appropriate doctrine of hell is annihilation, not everlasting torment. Clark Pinnock in *Theological Crossfire: An Evangelical/Liberal Dialogue*, p 226-227

1. It is fashionable to deny hell in our time. To do so is to deny Jesus Christ.

But the case is quite otherwise; let us face the facts. The doctrine of hell is not "mediaeval": it is Christ's. It is not a device of "mediaeval priestcraft" for frightening people into giving money to the church: it is Christ's deliberate judgment on sin. The imagery of the undying worm and the unquenchable fire derives, not from "mediaeval superstition," but originally from the Prophet Isaiah, and it was Christ who emphatically used it.... It confronts us in the oldest and least "edited" of the gospels: it is explicit in many of the most familiar parables and implicit in many more: it bulks far larger in the teaching than one realizes, until one reads the Evangelists through instead of picking out the most comfortable texts: one cannot get rid of it without tearing the New Testament to tatters. We cannot repudiate Hell without altogether repudiating Christ. Dorothy Sayers in *A Matter of Eternity*, p 86

2. Jesus taught there is wrath to come as did the Apostle Paul.

1 Thessalonians 1:10 (ESV) And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.

The ultimate salvation that any human being can ever experience is rescue from the wrath that is to come. Do we believe that there remains a wrath that is to come? I think the greatest point of unbelief in our culture and in our church today is an unbelief in the wrath of God and in His certain promise of judgment for the human race. R.C. Sproul in *Saved from What?*, p 22-23

Ex: Wrath won't scare you into heaven, only love conquers a rebel heart. My testimony is proof that fear does not triumph over a rebel heart. Kindness does.

F. God sends His only Son into this world as a demonstration of His love and kindness. Some, not all, will be rescued out of Edom.

Isaiah 63:1 (ESV) Who is this who comes from Edom, in crimsoned garments from Bozrah, he who is splendid in his apparel, marching in the greatness of his strength? "It is I, speaking in righteousness, mighty to save."

1. It is our Lord and King, Jesus Christ. So:

II. Isaiah 35 is really, really good news because here we see the effects of God's saving grace.

Read Isaiah 35:1-10

- A. In view of what is at stake, which is eternity, it would be absolutely correct to be terrified. To have an anxious heart regarding this judgment would be sanity.

Isaiah 35:4-6 (ESV) Say to those who have an anxious heart, "Be strong; fear not! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you."

- B. How do we know? Three ways (from Is 35 but using the NT):

1. One, you see, you hear, you leap and you sing for joy. Jesus quotes Is 35 in the NT (Luke and Matthew):

Matthew 11:5 (ESV) The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.

Isaiah 35:5-6 (ESV) Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; [6] then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

2. Two, living water flows in the desert (within us).

John 7:38 (ESV) Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'

Ex: The difference between the desert and Central PA is water. Water is life.

3. Three, there is a highway and it is called the way of holiness. The redeemed walk there with shouts of singing and everlasting joy is upon their heads. Why?

Ex: Different lives - the fruit of the Spirit from sowing to the Spirit.

- C. The Apostle Paul explains this new life this way:

2 Corinthians 5:10-11; 14-15 (ESV) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. [11] Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others... [14] For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; [15] and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

Ex: Our building fund will test this IF it is God's will. "No longer live for themselves but for Him who died who for their sake died and was raised."

- D. The ransomed of the Lord have been saved by God (grace). Saved from what?

1. The wrath of God. Every person listening to this sermon will either receive wrath or mercy (salvation) from God.

Someone will be sacrificed for your sins, either Christ as your substitute or you yourself. Ray Ortlund, Jr in PTW Isaiah Commentary, p 199

Close

- A. Let me mention two things. First, to those here who have resisted Christ, I ask you this question. Why? Why will you persist in heading toward the wrath of God?
 - 1. Isaiah 34 is very, very bad news. Isaiah 35 is very, very good news. God desires that all should be saved. How is your soul? Have you come to Christ (has He saved you)?
- B. Second, to those of us who are in Christ, we see in Isaiah 34 and 35 that our greatest problem has been solved. We are no longer under wrath. Therefore:
 - 1. What are you afraid of? We are scared of the wrong things. If we have Christ we have every spiritual blessing and to die is gain.

Trust Christ, don't trust the glory of Edom, human strength (the flesh). Where do you place your trust? Hint: Your prayers reveal your trust.
 - 2. Is your life a desert at the moment? If so, you've lost sight of the gospel and the cross. This world will never satisfy. Only Christ satisfies (now and forever).

Pray