



“The Refuge of Lies”

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Today we'll be taking a look at an ominous prophecy found in the Old Testament book of **Isaiah**. The prophet here is warning of judgment that is going to befall Judah and the city of Jerusalem when the Assyrians would invade. The people in charge at the time were not very concerned because they had made alliances and plans that they thought protected them from any danger. Unfortunately, those plans didn't include trusting in and obeying God.

Isaiah 28:14-17 “Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place.”

Isaiah says that these religious and political leaders had a great surprise in store. The refuge in which they were hiding, spiritually speaking, was suddenly swept away. That same surprise awaits many today as well. We'll talk about the refuge of lies today. Could it be that you're taking comfort in a lie? That the judgment of God may be closer and more certain than you think? What we're going to talk about today could actually determine where you will spend eternity.

When Isaiah wrote the prophecy in our text, Judah was about to be invaded by the Assyrians. This invasion represented God's judgment on the people of Judah, but the rulers of Judah mocked the warnings of judgment and doom. Instead of trusting in God and turning their hearts to Him, they were making an unholy alliance with Egypt that they thought would protect them from being invaded. God's people had a history of relying on pagan nations for protection and entering into compromising

partnerships and alliances with the countries around them instead of relying upon God. In this case, they believed they had staved off any threat and were in no danger.

But Isaiah warns that they were deceiving themselves. They WOULD face God's sure and coming judgment, and nothing they did short of turning back to God and trusting in Him would spare the destruction that was coming. According to **verse 15**, they had made a covenant with death and hell and had hidden themselves beneath a refuge of lies. But Isaiah said that God's judgment was going to come and that the hail would sweep away the refuge of lies and the waters would overflow their hiding place (**verse 17**). In other words, they were fooling themselves by thinking they would escape God's wrath and judgment. In contrast to this, a few chapters later, Isaiah foresees the rule of the coming Messiah over spiritual Zion.

Isaiah 32:2 "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land."

The protection that was missing during the time of which Isaiah prophesies in **chapter 28** would one day exist when the perfect ruler, the Lord Jesus Christ, would establish His kingdom on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus would be the refuge that would forever protect the people from danger and destruction. The Bible teaches that every person needs a refuge. We need a hiding place, and that hiding place is Jesus. That theme occurs throughout the Bible story.

Proverbs 14:26 "In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge."

You recall when the children of Israel were enslaved in Egypt long ago, God promised to pass through the land and slay all of the firstborn of their captors, the Egyptians. But He provided a refuge for His own people, telling them to mark their houses with the blood of the lamb, and where He saw the blood, He would pass over them (**Exodus 12:13**). That blood—which prefigured the blood of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God—made their houses a refuge from the destroyer.

You may also recall later when they settled in the land of Canaan that God appointed six cities throughout the land to serve as cities of refuge for those who were fleeing from justice. If one was accidentally responsible for the death of someone and his life was sought in return, he could go to one of these cities of refuge. As long as he remained inside its gates, he was secure, and no one could harm him. That too foreshadowed Christ and the refuge He offers to His church, to those sinners who run to Him in obedient faith (**Numbers 35:15**).

Jesus is a refuge. I might add that He is the ONLY refuge and protection from the sure and coming judgment of Almighty God. We need such a refuge because we are all sinners deserving of death.

Romans 3:23 "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;"

That exempts no one. ALL have sinned. Paul also said that the wages of such sin is death.

Romans 6:23 "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

That's why when we place our faith in Christ, turning away from sin in repentance and being buried with Christ in baptism, being washed in His blood, we then find a refuge from the condemnation of sin. We are marked by His blood as it were. Jesus provides a refuge.

Romans 8:1 "There is therefore now (that is, to the baptized believer) **no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.**"

But like the people in Isaiah's day, instead of trusting in the righteousness of God, the Jews of old set about to establish their own standard of righteousness. And like the people of Isaiah's day, the Jews of Paul's day were hiding beneath a refuge of lies. They were saying, *because we are Abraham's children, we will escape the judgment of God.* But Paul shows that that was not the case. God will judge ALL sin. I want to consider with you some of the lies in which many of us today are seeking refuge. First, some have deceived themselves about the coming judgment day. At least they live and act as though there will be no judgment. My friend, the Bible—beyond the shadow of a single doubt—testifies that such a day is coming. There are warnings of the judgment day placed within God's word from beginning to end. It is referred to again and again as "THE DAY OF JUDGMENT." Do you ever stop to think as you live your life that one day you will stand before Jesus Christ Himself and be judged?

Many people have this romantic idea that everybody dies and meets St. Peter at the pearly gates and enters right into heaven and lives happily forever after. But don't be fooled.

Hebrews 9:27 "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:"

It is unscriptural to say that people immediately go to heaven when they die. Nobody goes immediately to heaven when they die. The sad reality is that many will never go to heaven. In fact, many who thought they would, never will go to heaven because there is a judgment that takes place between death and eternity and every single soul will pass in review by that judgment bar.

II Corinthians 5:10 "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

II Peter 2:6-9 "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after (that means even those in our time) should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:"

There is a day of judgment that is coming. The Bible says that those who have not obeyed the gospel will be punished in that day.

II Thessalonians 1:7-9 "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;"

Instead of taking refuge in Christ, many are taking refuge in the false idea that God won't judge them. There are so many people who believe that God can't bring Himself to punish people who live in sin. But the Bible says otherwise.

Jude 14-15 “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

The Bible leaves no doubt that God WILL come and judge and punish impenitent sinners. The Hebrew writer warned Christians who would leave the faith.

Hebrews 10:26-27 “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.”

Then there are those who convince themselves that while all of that may be true, God doesn't look at *them* in the same way He looks at *others*. He doesn't look at their sin the way He looks at the sins of others. They might say, *my sin isn't as bad or God sees the good that I do despite the bad. He knows what's in my heart.* Once again, that is seeking refuge in a lie. That's what the first century Jews thought as they compared themselves to the pagan Gentiles. They said to themselves, *Since we are Abraham's children, we're in good standing with God. His indignation and judgment toward sin doesn't apply to us because we're God's people. It applies to the Gentiles.* That's what they thought and that's what a lot of people think today in regard to their own personal sin. But after naming the sins of the Gentiles, Paul turns to his own countrymen and says this:

Romans 2:2-3 “But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things (talking about the Gentiles and all of their sin and immorality). And thinkest thou this, O man (to the Jews who were supposedly God's people), that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?”

Matthew 12:36 “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.”

John 5:28-29 “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Matthew 7:21-23 “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”

You see, the judgment day is a real event and everyone of us will stand there and appear before the Lord to be judged by our deeds. Jesus is a refuge in the coming judgment. His word, the plan of salvation, gospel obedience, His blood, His church—all of those things are the refuge that He by His grace and mercy has provided. But many are hiding beneath a refuge of lies.

Some are deceived about the standard of God's judgment. Jesus once said that we will be judged by His word.

John 12:48 "...the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day."

He told His apostles that they would sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel--that is, spiritual Israel (**Luke 22:30**). That means that we will be judged by the teachings of the apostles who preached and wrote by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Revelation 20:11-15 "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire."

Think about what that is saying. The judge will be Jesus. He is a righteous, all-knowing judge. He doesn't forget. He doesn't judge with partiality. The judge will not be your mother, your father, or your neighbor. The standard will be God's word; not your opinions or my opinions. Not the opinions of the majority. Not the opinions of the supreme court of the United States or the Congress or the President. We will one day be judged by the incontestable standard of God's perfect and immutable word. Are you seeking refuge in a lie? Are you deceiving yourself about the judgment day that is coming? You see, we ought to be worried about what the Bible says. And whether we are truly living, believing, preaching, and worshipping by it and not by what we think or what we want. We're going to stand before the Lord and be judged by His word.

Then some are hiding behind the idea of unconditional grace. They think that because God is a God of love, He is not full of wrath. He is more like a grandfather who dotes and gives out candy and laughs and looks the other way when we do mischief. They think that grace is essentially a blank check that God gives us that allows us to live basically however we choose without eternal consequences. That God's love, mercy, and patience means there is no judgment or condemnation to impenitent sinners. But NOTHING could be farther from the truth. Jude said this of false teachers of his day:

Jude 4 "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ."

In other words, they were using the grace of God as an excuse to sin or as a cover for their sin. Friend, listen to me: if you think God's grace will let you live like you want to and you think God's love means He won't take your sin seriously, that you won't have to account to Him for the way that you live and the deeds you do and the things you say, if you think that you can somehow splash through the blood of Calvary by the wanton and immoral life you're living, and then meet a smiling and gracious God in the by and by—you're fooling yourself. You are living under a deception. *The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies and the flood will overflow the hiding place!* Isaiah said.

Then there are those who think they can hide in the refuge of their good works. *I may be a sinner, but I do a lot of good things, too. I give to charity. I even give to the church. One time, I gave the preacher a discount on his roof or that mechanic work I did for him. I try to help people who are down and out. I certainly wouldn't try to hurt anyone. I always try to be honest. I pay my bills. I do a lot for the community. I am well thought of around town. I even go to church when I can. I'm a member of that big church that everybody goes to and you ought to see the good things that church is doing for the community. I may sin, but hasn't everyone? Aren't we all just sinners? You know, the good outweighs the bad, so it will be alright. Judgment won't come to me. When the Bible talks about hell, it's not talking about people like me. That's for Hitler, Stalin, Mao Zedong, and serial killers, terrorists and child molesters...But you see, you're hiding beneath a refuge of lies.*

Romans 3:10 "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one:"

Sin will merit the judgment of God—not His favor. The wages of sin IS death and the only refuge for that is found in obeying Christ. In the gospel. In surrendering your life to Him. And, yes, in the church. Have you obeyed the gospel? Are you living for Jesus? Are you in His church? Are you faithfully worshipping and serving the Lord? Isaiah told the wayward people of long ago that their refuge would not protect them from God's judgment. They were hiding in a refuge of lies that would be swept away. He then says that one day, One would come—Jesus the Messiah—and He would be *as a hiding place from the wind and a covert from the tempest, as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land (Isaiah 32:2)*. That's Jesus. That's your refuge. If you'll obey His word. If you'll wash in his blood. That old hymn says:

*Christ our Redeemer died on the cross;
Died for the sinner, paid all his due;
Sprinkle your soul with the blood of the Lamb,
"And I will pass, will pass over you."*

*Chiefest of sinners Jesus will save;
All He has promised, that He will do;
Wash in the fountain opened for sin,
"And I will pass, will pass over you."*

*Judgment is coming, all will be there,
Each one receiving justly his due;
Hide in the saving, sin-cleansing blood,
"And I will pass, will pass over you."*

When I See the Blood by John G. Foote

Are you taking refuge in Jesus and His word or in a refuge of lies?

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