

# The Day of the Lord's Vengeance – Isaiah 34

**Introduction** – Isaiah's earlier series of woes upon the nations began with Babylon (Isaiah 13), which we saw was representative of the city of Man in rebellion to God. In our study then we learned that unbelieving Jerusalem is that city in the days of Jesus. Here, at the end of the second series of woes, Edom is selected to represent "*the nations*" summoned in the day of the Lord's vengeance. At first this seems wrong, for Israel is supposed to be representing the nations as the priestly nation. Israel was the center of the world in the old administration, and that whole world was coming under the curse of God.

**Overview** – All nations, Jew and Gentile, are summoned to come and hear the judgment of the Lord (v1). He is going to carry out a war of utter destruction (v2). This will be the end of the world as they knew it, even the cosmic rulers will all be brought down (vv3-4). Edom, the special people of God's curse, is singled out (v5). The bloody end of Edom will be as a sacrifice to the Lord (vv6-7), because this will be the day of His vengeance (v8). There will be no end to this curse; the city will lie in utter waste (vv9-10). It will be de-created ("*without form*" and "*void*," v11, i.e. Gen 1:2). A garden for people to dwell in will become a desert haunted with wild beasts (vv11-15). The book of the Lord has declared this, measured it, and it will surely come to pass (vv16-17).

**Finding Edom** – Edom is a nation made up of the descendants of Esau, the older brother of Jacob, of whom God said, "*the older shall serve the younger*," (Gen 25:23), and "*Jacob I loved, but Esau I have hated*" (Mal 1:2-3). Paul teaches us that the story of Esau is proof of God's unconditional electing love (Rom 9:10-13), and more importantly in Paul's day, that not all Israel was Israel (Rom 9:6). Paul was arguing that God's electing love was through Jesus Christ and that if He was for us, nothing could be against us (Rom 8:31). The natural question then was, "then why is Israel going to be destroyed?" and Paul's answer is basically because unbelieving Israel had become, in effect, the descendants of Esau – the one who sold his inheritance for a pot of stew (Gen 25:33, Heb 12:16). In today's world, weird prophecies exist about who Edom is (or where the lost ten tribes are). But if we see the rejection of Christ by the Jews and Gentiles alike and the fall of Jerusalem and the temple in 70AD in light of the prophecies of the Old Covenant administration, it becomes clear. Jacob is the son who is believing Israel (Isaiah 14:1). Esau and the nation of Edom, spiritually speaking, is unbelieving Israel.

**The Nations as Well** – The nations are all summoned because when the host of heaven is dissolved, all the host will fall (v4). This cosmic de-creation language is symbol-language for the fall of all the principalities and powers over the nations. We studied this in more detail in Isaiah 13 and 24. All nations are under the curse because "*all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Rom 3:23). This is why all nations must "*Kiss the Son, lest He be angry*" (Psalm 2:10-12).

**The Day of Vengeance** – When would this "*day of the Lord's vengeance*" be (v8)? Some want to push this vision all the way to the end of the world in which we live. But the power of sin was dealt with in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through the Cross, Christ disarmed all principalities and powers (Col 2:15). Within the same generation (Matt 24:34) the vindication of Jesus Christ, the vengeance of God, and the cutting off of Israel (Rom 11:19) took place culminating with the final destruction of the temple.

**A World of Blood and Sacrifice** – The OT world was a world of much bloody sacrifice. The story of mankind has also been a story of much shedding of blood. Even in our own generation and upon our own land the shedding of the blood of the unborn – it staggers our sensibilities and we seek to hide it away (we quickly read over 34:3 and we don't want to paint a picture of that image in our mind). All death is the terrible result of the sin of our parents in the garden (Rom 6:23a). While *the* day of vengeance came in Christ's day, days of vengeance fall upon nations in time and space as God meets out His justice and wrath.

**Timeless Truths** – To say that sin was dealt with in Jesus Christ is not to say that there is no sin in the world today. The kingdom of God has come and we, the pilgrims of that kingdom, are called to disciple the nations to repent of their sins and come to Jesus Christ. In the end, each and every one of us must align ourselves with the Israel that has become Esau or the Israel that has become Jacob, and then we must face our destinies. Either you are on course to be a part of that eternal blood and fire sacrifice because of your sins or you are on course to eternal life and glory because you have been placed in the perfect once-for-all blood sacrifice of your Substitute, the Lord Jesus. That alignment is one of faith. What do you believe? Or rather, in whom do you believe? Yourself (city of Man), or Jesus (city of God)? Of course, a follow up question is this: do you live like it?

**Death AND Resurrection** – Chapters 34 and 35 bring to close this section of woes and curses and do so with a striking contrast. It is the contrast of death and resurrection. It is the contrast of a productive land turned into a desert (ch 34) and desert turning into a garden (ch 35). A world was destroyed in the death of Jesus and a new world, a new humanity was brought forth in His resurrection.