

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
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Open Our Eyes, Lord

Read Isaiah 29:9-16

Key verse: “Stupefy yourselves and be in a stupor, blind yourselves and be blind!” (Isaiah 29:9a).

Someone once said, “When I read the Bible, I discover myself in its pages.” The Bible does reveal ourselves to us, and it offers hope for personal transformation by God’s grace. But sometimes the Bible offers us a sobering warning.

In Isaiah 29, the prophet Isaiah speaks of Jerusalem’s spiritual state and warns of impending judgment. The prophet’s words speak to us today about the results of willful, persistent rebellion against God. As we see in verses 9-16, these are the predictable results:

1. When we persistently rebel against God, we become spiritually blind (vv. 9-12). One Sunday morning, a pastor preached a powerful message which his young worship leader brought to a close with the following instructions: “Now let us bow our heads, close our eyes, and sing ‘Open Our Eyes, Lord.’”

It’s a good story, but the spiritual reality is not so funny. When we refuse to see the truth and walk in it, we eventually forfeit our ability to perceive truth. We become spiritually blind.

“Stupefy yourselves and be in a stupor, blind yourselves and be blind! Be drunk, but not from wine; stagger, but not from strong drink!” (Isaiah 29:9). Old Testament scholar Walter Eichrodt says of this verse: “Deliberate disregard of divine truth, habitual failure to listen to God’s warning, inevitably lead to that deadness in regard to God’s operations which at the decisive moment notices nothing, but in a stupor, asleep, or drunk, lurches irremediably toward the approaching disaster” (Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*).

2. When we persistently rebel against God, we become hypocritical in our worship and our speech (v. 13). “The Lord said: Because these people draw near with their mouths and honor me with their lips, while their hearts are far from me, and their worship of me is a human commandment learned by rote; so I will again do amazing things with this people, shocking and amazing. The

wisdom of their wise shall perish, and the discernment of the discerning shall be hidden” (Isaiah 29:13-14).

The people of Jerusalem had substituted a “show” of ritual worship for true worship of and obedience to God from hearts of love. They spoke “religious” words but the words meant little to them personally.

Jesus reminded us that a person’s outer appearance and behavior can be misleading. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees of his day because they looked impressively religious on the outside but their hearts were far from God.

Thirty-three-year-old Darryl Kyle, a pitcher for the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team, was the picture of health. But on June 22, 2002, a scheduled game between the Cardinals and the Chicago Cubs was cancelled because of a shocking discovery. Young Kyle, who had been a pitching sensation, was found dead in a Chicago hotel room. An autopsy discovered that he had died from a massive heart attack. His main coronary artery was 90 percent blocked.

Darryl Kyle looked healthy on the outside, but his heart was diseased. When we persistently rebel against God, we become hypocritical in our worship and our speech.

3. When we persistently rebel against God, we falsely believe that God neither knows nor cares about our sin (vv. 15-16). The people of Jerusalem deceived themselves in believing that either God couldn’t see their sins or else that God would not hold them accountable: “Ha! You who hide a plan too deep for the Lord, whose deeds are in the dark, and who say, ‘Who sees us? Who knows us?’” (v. 15).

Ultimately, in their persistent rebellion against God, they moved toward denying God altogether. Like many in our day, they were turning away from believing in God as their maker and ruler to viewing themselves as the center of the moral universe: “You turn things upside down! Shall the potter be regarded as the clay? Shall the thing made say of its maker, ‘He did not make me’; or the thing formed say of the one who formed it, ‘He has no understanding’?” (v. 16).

Isaiah 29:9-16 is an insightful look at what happens when we persistently rebel against God. We become spiritually blind. We become hypocritical in our worship and our speech. We falsely believe that God neither knows nor cares about our sin. And ultimately, like the people of ancient Jerusalem, we bring ourselves under the judgment of God.

The good news, in both the old and new testaments, is that we can turn from sin and be forgiven and restored!

II Chronicles 7:14 proclaims: “If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked

ways, then I will hear from heaven and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.”

I John 1:9 promises: “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

Thanks be to God!

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