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Sermon Notes

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Judgments for the Earth, Joy for the Righteous, Glory for God

Isaiah 24:1-23

Context: New Section of Isaiah's prophecy

Isaiah 13-23 Unifying Theme: God is the Sovereign Ruler of the Nations... for His own glory, for the judgment of the wicked and the salvation of the righteous

Isaiah 13-23: Point made by a series of oracles against the nations, one after another

Against Babylon (ch. 13); Assyria (14); the Philistines (14); Moab (15-16); Damascus (17); Ethiopia (18); Egypt (19); Babylon again (21); Edom (21); Arabia (21); Judah/Jerusalem (22); Tyre/Sidon (23)

Isaiah 24-27 completes this whole section

Isaiah 24: God's judgment generally on the whole earth

Isaiah 25-27 The joy and delight of the righteous... Isaiah 25: delight in the feast God spreads for all nations in the defeat of death; Isaiah 26: hymn of thanksgiving for God's deliverance ("you will keep in perfect peace him whose mind is stayed on you"); Isaiah 26: psalm of dependence on God; Isaiah 27: the redemption of Israel... celebrating that the "whole world will be fruitful" (27:6)

Isaiah 24: Very complex and detailed chapter... covers the destruction of the whole earth and the establishment of God's open reign in Jerusalem; because of these grand and glorious sweeping themes, and because the total destruction of the earth is in view, some have called this chapter "Isaiah's Apocalypse"

I agree that those themes do appear in this chapter; but I also think it speaks in generic terms about MANY JUDGMENTS from the Lord that would happen from Isaiah's time onwards, including our present day... all of them "DRESS REHEARSALS" for the final drama described so powerfully in the Book of Revelation and other places

Important concept in my view of end times doctrine (called eschatology)... rhythms and repeated events that prefigure what will happen right at the end of the world

Matthew 24:37 “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man...”

AS IT WAS... SO IT WILL BE... History repeats itself

So, in Isaiah 24, we have judgments (plural) from God on the whole earth because of human sin; those judgments follow a certain pattern... in Isaiah 24, it is likened to the fall of a walled city

Isaiah 24:10 The ruined city lies desolate; the entrance to every house is barred.

Isaiah 24:12 The city is left in ruins, its gate is battered to pieces.

The city represents what St. Augustine called the “City of Man” ... the sum total of human society and experience... the “world” ... literally in cities, for the most in 2008, it was established that 50% of the world’s population lives in urban settings; by the year 2050 it will pass over 70%)... but whether urban or rural, the “City of Man” represents all of humanity

Isaiah 24 depicts the fall again and again and again of aspects of the City of Man... usually by other people invading and destroying them

Therefore, in the 5th century when Attila the Hun was sweeping through Europe and destroying one village after another, he was called the “Scourge of God” ... the destruction was a judgment from God for sins; there were real people who died – sent into eternity by Attila; so also with the Vikings in the 10th century and Genghis Khan and the Mongol horde in the 13th century...

Conqueror after conqueror, sweeping in to batter gates to pieces and destroy buildings; people giving up joy and music and drinking and dancing, cowering behind the barred doors of their homes, hoping to survive... but there would be no escape.

Then, at the end of the world, the same thing will happen under the Antichrist... and then the earth itself will be invaded by the Armies of Heaven:

Revelation 19:11-16 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Christ's return will be in direct response to the armies of the Antichrist which are sweeping over the earth; they will assemble to try to fight Jesus and His heavenly army... what a JOKE!!!

Revelation 19:19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army.

They lose.

So... all of this is in view in Isaiah 24... let's look at it in detail

I. The Judgments of God on the Whole Earth (vs. 1-6)

Isaiah 24:1-6 See, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants--² it will be the same for priest as for people, for master as for servant, for mistress as for maid, for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor.³ The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered. The LORD has spoken this word.⁴ The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish.⁵ The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant.⁶ Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.

A. God's Judgments Extend to All Nations... the Whole Earth (vs. 1)

Isaiah 24:1 Behold, the LORD is going to lay waste the earth and devastate it; he will ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants

1. Extreme statements made in this chapter concerning the fate of the whole earth
2. It begins with a dramatic two words in the Hebrew: "Behold, the LORD..."
 - a. As if the events of this chapter pull back a curtain and God is revealed
 - b. The awesome, powerful, holy, judge of all the earth is on display
3. Two aspects here: the ENTIRE EARTH and ALL ITS INHABITANTS are in view
 - a. God is not a "tribal deity"... the God of the Jews only...
 - b. God rules the whole earth... He eyes range to and fro over the earth to test the hearts of all inhabitants
4. Also, the judgments affect the actual planet on which we live

- a. He will “lay waste the earth and devastate it”...
- b. He will “ruin its face and scatter its inhabitants...”
- c. Verse 3:

Isaiah 24:3 The earth will be completely laid waste and totally plundered.

- d. Later in the chapter:

Isaiah 24:18-20 the foundations of the earth shake. ¹⁹ The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken. ²⁰ The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls-- never to rise again.

This solid earth, apparently unshakable under our feet, is to God nothing more than a flimsy hut that can be pulled down with a rope on the heads of the people cowering inside

B. Back to Genesis

So... where does God get the power to do this? Well, He is the one who shaped the universe and the earth itself up from being “formless and empty”

Genesis 1:1-2 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty

He also has the power to reverse the whole process... and since He made it and it belongs to Him, He also has the RIGHT to do it as well

Jeremiah 4:23-26 I looked at the earth, and it was formless and empty; and at the heavens, and their light was gone. ²⁴ I looked at the mountains, and they were quaking; all the hills were swaying. ²⁵ I looked, and there were no people; every bird in the sky had flown away. ²⁶ I looked, and the fruitful land was a desert; all its towns lay in ruins before the LORD, before his fierce anger.

C. Judgment Universal: No One Escapes (vs. 2)

Isaiah 24:2 it will be the same for priest as for people, for master as for servant, for mistress as for maid, for seller as for buyer, for borrower as for lender, for debtor as for creditor.

1. The “high and mighty” of human society will have no advantages when this judgment comes
2. It will be the same for the high as well as the low... everyone is under the gaze and the sword of this Holy God

3. This is the great leveling of society... the priest and the people alike under the judgment; the master and the slave alike judged by God; the buyer and the seller, the lender and the borrower; the strong and the weak; the old and the young... NO ESCAPE FOR ANYONE...
4. God is not impressed by our positions or our lineage or our achievements or our talents.

Isaiah 24:4 The earth dries up and withers, the world languishes and withers, the exalted of the earth languish.

D. Why Is the Earth Devastated? Answer: Human Sin

Isaiah 24:5-6 The earth is defiled by its people; they have disobeyed the laws, violated the statutes and broken the everlasting covenant. ⁶ Therefore a curse consumes the earth; its people must bear their guilt. Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.

1. The judgment of God comes as a direct result of human sin
2. Isaiah says the earth is DEFILED (polluted) by its people
3. He specifically cites their rebellion against God's laws and statutes
4. Since the scope of this chapter is worldwide, it is difficult to understand what it means that

[they have] broken the everlasting covenant

5. What "covenant"???

 - a. A covenant is a binding agreement between two or more parties
 - b. God sometimes makes unilateral covenants, like the one after the flood of Noah... God made a covenant with the earth

Genesis 9:11 I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be cut off by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth."

God set a rainbow in the sky as a sign of this covenant... He will never break it

 - c. This is called an "everlasting covenant" as well... but how can we break it?
 - d. The Covenant with David is also called an "everlasting covenant", but it was made unilaterally with David that one of his descendents would sit on his throne forever... that is Jesus Christ; again, nothing for the human race to break

- e. The Mosaic Covenant was definitely something that could be broken by sinners... and it WAS!!! Big-time. But it was not everlasting, nor was it universal... it was for the Jewish nation alone. How could all mankind break it?
- f. So... what is this “everlasting covenant” that people all over the earth have broken?
- g. I think this is referring to the basic relationship between God the Creator and Man the Creature to obey His moral laws written in our hearts and consciences...it is never referred to as a covenant in the Old Testament, but it makes the most sense here... it explains the universality of human sin and God's judgment
- h. Paul asserts this clearly in Romans 2

Romans 2:15 [Gentiles] show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.

- i. It's understood in Romans 1 as well:

Romans 1:21 For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him

Romans 1:25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-- who is forever praised. Amen.

- 6. This violation of God's internally written moral code has resulted in sin and guilt for every single human being on the face of the earth...

Romans 3:10-12 As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. ¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."

- 7. Isaiah says this violation of God's laws and breaking of His eternal covenant has resulted in the defilement of the earth; His justice is waiting to be satisfied by the outpouring of wrath on the earth that this chapter describes plainly

E. Strong Link Between Creation and Man

- 1. So... why should the earth itself suffer and be judged?
- 2. Well... God put the earth under our command... it was and is ours to care for;
- 3. When Adam sinned, the whole earth was cursed; when human sin reached a terrible peak in the days of Noah, the whole earth was flooded

4. So Paul says in Romans 8:

Romans 8:20-21 the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

F. Still... In Wrath, God Remembers Mercy (Remnant)

Isaiah 24:6 Therefore earth's inhabitants are burned up, and very few are left.

1. Yet, for all of this, not every single human being is destroyed
2. Later, I will describe how this remnant, though sinful originally, is made righteous in God's sight and not swept away
3. But notice that, proportionally they are FEW IN NUMBER... the Hebrew says "very few are left"

II. The End of Worldly Joy (vs. 7-12)

Isaiah 24:7-12 The new wine dries up and the vine withers; all the merrymakers groan. ⁸ The gaiety of the tambourines is stilled, the noise of the revelers has stopped, the joyful harp is silent. ⁹ No longer do they drink wine with a song; the beer is bitter to its drinkers. ¹⁰ The ruined city lies desolate; the entrance to every house is barred. ¹¹ In the streets they cry out for wine; all joy turns to gloom, all gaiety is banished from the earth. ¹² The city is left in ruins, its gate is battered to pieces.

A. People Always Seek Escape in Worldly Pleasure

1. We saw that a few weeks ago in the prediction of the fall of Jerusalem... instead of weeping for their sins and fasting and praying, they slaughtered sheep and cattle and had a gluttonous feast
2. So also the night of the fall of Babylon... Belshazzar's feast
3. So also the night of the fall of Berlin to the Red Army in 1945... in Hitler's bunker there was a wild party
4. Here is a group of people living for new wine and merrymaking; laughter and music; reveling and singing

B. Here... God Shuts the Pleasure Down (vs. 11)

1. Everything is SHUT DOWN... the new wine is dried up... instead of merrymaking, the people GROAN...

2. No one picks up a tambourine to rattle it; no one wants to strum a harp
3. The desolation of the city is terrifying... people are barred up inside their homes trying to escape death
4. Look at verse 11

Isaiah 24:11 all joy turns to gloom, all gaiety is banished from the earth.

C. The Destruction of the City of Man (vs. 10-12)

1. The city is locked up... living in terror

Isaiah 24:12 The city is left in ruins, its gate is battered to pieces.

2. The gate is the city's protection from the assault... with the gate battered, the city is ruined
3. This is a symbol of the destruction of the City of Man

D. Wars and Rumors of Wars (Matthew 24:6)... Constant Cycle of Invasion/Destruction

Matthew 24:6-7 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

1. Isaiah 24 in some way traces out the cycle of God's patterns of judgment throughout human history
2. Again and again, this cycle of conquest and destruction will be played out
3. The scenes portrayed in Isaiah 24 are played again and again... this or that conqueror will sweep in and destroy some walled city; plundering the conquered people, he will establish his own walled city with lots of wealth and plunder; then others will come and plunder him

E. All the Suffering on Earth in Some Sense a Judgment from God

1. Every city ever conquered has in some sense been destroyed as a judgment from God
2. There are no righteous cities, no righteous armies, no righteous nations of all the political nations on earth

Luke 13:1-5 Now there were some present at that time who told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. ² Jesus answered, "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans because they suffered this way? ³ I tell you, no! But unless you

repent, you too will all perish. ⁴ Or those eighteen who died when the tower in Siloam fell on them-- do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? ⁵ I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish."

III. The Reactions of the Righteous (vs. 13-16)

Isaiah 24:13-16 So will it be on the earth and among the nations, as when an olive tree is beaten, or as when gleanings are left after the grape harvest. ¹⁴ They raise their voices, they shout for joy; from the west they acclaim the LORD's majesty. ¹⁵ Therefore in the east give glory to the LORD; exalt the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, in the islands of the sea. ¹⁶ From the ends of the earth we hear singing: "Glory to the Righteous One." But I said, "I waste away, I waste away! Woe to me! The treacherous betray! With treachery the treacherous betray!"

A. The Godly Remnant (Olives and Grapes) (vs. 13)

1. Like Isaiah 17:5-6

Isaiah 17:6 Yet some gleanings will remain, as when an olive tree is beaten, leaving two or three olives on the topmost branches, four or five on the fruitful boughs

2. These gleanings represent the godly remnant in the City of Man THROUGHOUT THE EARTH... look at verse 13:

So it will be ON THE EARTH and AMONG THE NATIONS...

3. These are the elect, the godly remnant from every tribe, language, people, nation

Romans 11:5 So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace.

4. The indication is that the number of those saved will be proportionately FEW... gleanings left after the grape harvest

B. "Tell the Righteous It Will Go Well For Them" (Isaiah 3:10)

Isaiah 3:10-11 Tell the righteous it will be well with them, for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds. ¹¹ Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them! They will be paid back for what their hands have done.

C. The Reactions of the Righteous... Two VERY DIFFERENT REACTIONS

1. Reaction #1: SHOUTING FOR JOY

Vs. 14-16 They raise their voices, they shout for joy; from the west they acclaim the LORD's majesty. ¹⁵ Therefore in the east give glory to the LORD; exalt the

name of the LORD, the God of Israel, in the islands of the sea. ¹⁶ From the ends of the earth we hear singing: "Glory to the Righteous One."

- a. Why? God's glory is revealed: majesty, justice, faithfulness
- b. Praising God for who He is and what He is doing
- c. Verse 15: EXHORTATION FROM ISAIAH... "give glory to God"

2. PREACH THE GOSPEL!!!!

- a. Where do the "righteous" come from?
- b. Romans 3 says there are no righteous people?
- c. In Christ, however,
- d. Isaiah appeals to the distant nations to 1) give glory to the Lord; 2) exalt the name of the Lord
- e. Paul promises that "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved..."
- f. We live in a distant land and a very distant time from Isaiah... but he still foresaw the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth
- g. MISSIONS!!! The "islands of the sea"
- h. As a result of the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, there is a godly remnant of true believers who have been made righteous by faith in the blood of Christ, who trust God and delight in everything He does... including the destruction of wicked people by God's direct actions... so...
THEY SING

3. Reaction #2: Isaiah's Lamentation because of the Wicked

Isaiah 24:16 But I said, "I waste away, I waste away! Woe to me! The treacherous betray! With treachery the treacherous betray!"

- a. It COULD BE his compassion on them for the wrath of God that will sweep them away... very possible, because Isaiah laments the destruction of Babylon in Isaiah 21; and Jesus weeps over Jerusalem; and Paul wishes he could exchange his own salvation for that of the Christ-rejecting Jews

ASIDE: this is a very valid reaction; we should cultivate a heart of grief over both the fact that wicked people violate God's laws and that they will be condemned by God if they refuse to repent

- b. However... a more likely explanation is that Isaiah is lamenting all the damage the wicked will do between now and then
- c. Look at his words: he feels sick, like a diseased man wasting away... why? Because of the treachery of the treacherous... they are such liars, such deceivers, such covenant-breakers, such cheats and aggressive oppressors that Isaiah knows that God's patience will allow them time to do lots more wicked things
- d. Like Elisha's grief over the future wickedness of Hazael, who was about to become King of the Arameans:

2 Kings 8:11-12 He stared at him with a fixed gaze until Hazael felt ashamed. Then the man of God began to weep. ¹² "Why is my lord weeping?" asked Hazael. "Because I know the harm you will do to the Israelites," he answered. "You will set fire to their fortified places, kill their young men with the sword, dash their little children to the ground, and rip open their pregnant women."

IV. Outside of Christ... Judgment is Inescapable (vs. 17-22)

Isaiah 24:17-22 Terror and pit and snare await you, O people of the earth. ¹⁸ Whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit; whoever climbs out of the pit will be caught in a snare. The floodgates of the heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth shake. ¹⁹ The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken. ²⁰ The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind; so heavy upon it is the guilt of its rebellion that it falls-- never to rise again. ²¹ In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below. ²² They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days.

- A. They Will Run... But They Cannot Hide... and They Cannot Escape
- B. God Has Planned Out the Means for Judgment... and They Are Effective (vs. 17)

Isaiah 24:17-18 Terror and pit and snare await you, O people of the earth. ¹⁸ Whoever flees at the sound of terror will fall into a pit; whoever climbs out of the pit will be caught in a snare.

- C. A Fine Filter, and None Can Slip Through (vs. 18)
 - 1. Fleeing the terror... they fall into a pit
 - 2. If they escape the put, they will be trapped by the snare
- D. As It Was In the Days of Noah... No One Escaped (vs. 18)

Isaiah 24:18-20 *The floodgates of the heavens are opened, the foundations of the earth shake. ¹⁹ The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken. ²⁰ The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind;*

1. The “floodgates of the heavens” were opened then... rain came down and swept away the entire world, except the godly remnant on the Ark
2. There was no escape... all flesh on earth died... everyone with the breath of life in their nostrils

E. The Whole Earth Will Be Destroyed (vs. 19-20)

Isaiah 24:19-20 *The earth is broken up, the earth is split asunder, the earth is thoroughly shaken. ²⁰ The earth reels like a drunkard, it sways like a hut in the wind;*

1. Here, the language soars to new heights... this seems to encompass the whole surface of the earth
2. Perhaps by this point in the prophecy, God is looking beyond “wars and rumors of wars” to the destruction of the universe in preparation for the New Heavens and New Earth
3. Hebrews 1 and Hebrews 12; 2 Peter 3

Hebrews 1:10-12 *"In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. ¹¹ They will perish, but you remain; they will all wear out like a garment. ¹² You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed.*

2 Peter 3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.*

4. So... CLEARLY ... there is nowhere to hide

F. The Satanic, Heavenly Powers Judged... and So Are their Earthly Puppets (vs. 21)

Isaiah 24:21-22 *In that day the LORD will punish the powers in the heavens above and the kings on the earth below. ²² They will be herded together like prisoners bound in a dungeon; they will be shut up in prison and be punished after many days.*

1. The “powers in the heavens above” are Satanic, demonic “powers and authorities”

Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

2. They are the unseen puppet masters of the kings of the earth...they are the dark powers behind every sinful throne in the world
3. So BOTH the puppet masters (the demons) and the puppets (the kings of the earth) will be punished

G. Herded Together and “Punished After Many Days...??” What Does That Mean?? (vs. 22)

V. The Finale: God’s Glorious City (vs. 23)

Isaiah 24:23 The moon will be abashed, the sun ashamed; for the LORD Almighty will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and before its elders, gloriously.

- A. The City of Man Will Be Gone... The City of God Will Remain Forever
- B. The “New Jerusalem”: Mt. Zion and Jerusalem Become Truly One
 1. Generally, in the OT, Mt. Zion refers to Jerusalem
 2. But it is Jerusalem as the place where God dwells and reigns
 3. Truly “Mt. Zion” is the idealized vision of the dwelling place of God with man
 4. That will be consummated at the end of the world, with the descent of the New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:2-3 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.

- C. The New Universe Has a New Light Source: The Glory of God
 1. The Sun and Moon will be out of a job
 2. They cannot “hold a candle to” the glory of God
 3. Hence their “shame”... they pale in comparison
 4. Striking... the sun is actually VERY BRIGHT... so bright, you can’t look at for longer than perhaps 15 seconds without beginning to go blind

5. God dwells in unapproachable light... He toned it down some, and entrusted the task to the sun... and even less to the moon

D. Jesus, the Lamb of God, is His Lamp

Revelation 21:23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp.

E. The “Elders” Will See It and Worship It Forever

1. “Elders” on Mt. Sinai

Exodus 24:9-11 Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up ¹⁰ and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself. ¹¹ But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; they saw God, and they ate and drank.

2. “Elders” in Revelation 4-5

Revelation 4:4 Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads.

3. “Elders” here

VI. Application

A.

B.