
July 22 : Scriptures Isaiah 7-9

SUMMARY

Chapter 7 opens about ten years after Isaiah's call into the prophetic ministry in 740 B.C. when King Uzziah died. His son, Jotham, has also died, and Uzziah's grandson, Ahaz, is Judah's king. The Assyrian empire has grown powerful and threatening to the northern kingdom of Israel. Because of Israel's rampant idolatry, the Lord decreed that the northern kingdom would be exiled out of the land, and the Assyrians would do just that. But that's about twenty years away for Israel. At this time, Israel's king, Pekah, and Aram's king, Rezin, have teamed up against the Assyrians. They asked king Ahaz of Judah to join them, but Ahaz refused. He believed they were a more immediate threat than the Assyrians. Immediate? Yes. Brutal? No. The allied kings of Israel and Aram moved to attack Judah. However, Ahaz was contemplating (if not already) paying the Assyrians to attack the northern kingdom to eliminate his attackers. As Aram's army moved into Israel, Ahaz became afraid. Isaiah brought God's word to Ahaz. "Whom do you trust more, Yehovah or the Assyrians?"

Isaiah meets Ahaz with the prophet's son, She'ar-jashub, in tow. He reassures Ahaz that those two "smoldering stubs or firebrands" won't fulfill their plan to depose Ahaz and install a puppet king in his place (7:4-6). Why is that? Because the Lord says that within 65 years, the two attacking kingdoms won't exist (7:8), "so buck up and trust the Lord, Ahaz. If you don't, you won't last." Isaiah's son, She'ar-jashub, is a prophetic sign, and his name means, "a remnant will return." Even though the Lord will discipline His people through attack and exile, they won't fall as to be destroyed. The Lord will watch over a remnant to ensure His plan through Israel will continue.

After Isaiah gives Ahaz the Lord's assurance, God allows Ahaz to ask for a sign to confirm His word to bolster Ahaz's trust. Ahaz can ask whatever he wants, no matter how big or small (7:10). When Ahaz declines, likely out of fear and insecurity, Isaiah proclaims the Lord's sign, a *stunning, two-fold prophetic sign*. "See, the virgin will conceive, have a son, and name him Immanuel" (7:14). Here's a little background. The "virgin" means a young woman of marriageable age. This word likely refers to Isaiah's wife since he and his wife had children to whom the Lord gave prophetic names. Isaiah's children were walking prophetic confirmations to Isaiah's prophecies (see 8:18). The pregnancy and birth of this child will confirm to Ahaz that God is with him and Judah. Before the baby reaches childhood, the two threatening nations will be destroyed (7:16). Isaiah's prophecy to Ahaz came around 730 B.C., and the Assyrian army destroyed Aram and Israel on and around 722 B.C. So, by the time Isaiah's son, Immanuel, was eight, the threat was gone according to God's promise. However, Judah won't avoid trouble, either. The king of

Assyria will invade Judah as well (7:17). Together with the Egyptians (the fly), the Assyrians (the bee) will occupy the land. Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser, will ravage Judah as a razor shaves hair (7:20).

Chapter 8 continues Isaiah's Assyrian prophecy to Ahaz. Isaiah records his prophecy as an affirmation, a "See? God told you so" kind of thing, and he writes it large and has two men witness it. What does he write? A descriptive name, "Maher-shalal-hash-baz," which means "Speeding to the Plunder, Hurrying to the Spoil." Curious. But then Isaiah sleeps with his wife, and she conceives a son whom Isaiah names Maher-shalal-hash-baz. So, now Isaiah has two children that are walking prophecies. Immanuel reminds Ahaz that God will act against the allied kings of the north, and Maher-shalal-hash-baz declares that Assyria will most certainly invade Aram and Israel before he learns to talk in about a year. Then comes Yehovah's word through Isaiah: "Because the northern kingdom rejected Me in favor of a neighboring king, Rezin of Aram, then Assyria will swamp them. Assyria won't stop there. The empire will move on Judah and bring you nearly to destruction. But Assyria will not completely conquer you because I'm with you!" (8:8-10).

God turns to talk to Isaiah next. The people of Judah are panicking, and fear is causing them to create all sorts of conspiracy theories. Isaiah is to pay no attention to them (8:12). Instead, Isaiah is to listen to Yehovah alone. God will protect His prophet, but Israel and Judah will be judged. Why this "bind up the testimony/seal the instruction" command? God wants Isaiah to record the prophecy so it can be revealed when the events happen. This confirmation proves the words were from God. If the words are from God, God is the one causing it all to happen. In 8:18, Isaiah says that he and his children are all the people need for information about what's coming. The people try to coerce Isaiah into using occult ways of getting more information, but Isaiah refuses. They have all they need with his sealed testimony and instruction. And if any occult info does come, it's bogus if it doesn't line up with God's word. Meanwhile, the situation will go badly for the people.

At last! Some good news! It starts with Isaiah's "Nevertheless" in chapter 9. Isaiah is given a prophetic vision that stretches far into the future. He's been prophesying about the northern half of Israel coming under the darkness of Assyrian domination. Nevertheless, Isaiah sees a time when that darkness will lift, and a great light will shine on the region. The Lord will break the oppression over the land (9:4-5). How will He do it? By another remarkable birth. "For a child will be born for us, a son will be given to us, and the government will be on his shoulders. He will be named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace" (9:6). Is this another prophetic child for Isaiah? No. Even if he did have a child, Assyrian domination over Israel wasn't accomplished until

about 100 years after Isaiah. This prophecy looks ahead to different oppression and a different child. This child will be exceptional and one of a kind. He will be characterized by extreme wisdom (perhaps Solomon-like), a never-ending life, a supreme peace-maker, and best of all, He will have a divine nature. The only one who qualifies for that is Jesus. Now imagine that. Isaiah prophesied about Jesus over 700 years before Jesus' birth. And where did Jesus grow up? In the region, Isaiah says that will see a great light – what was the center of northern Israel, the area known in Jesus' day as Galilee of the Gentiles. And as what did Jesus refer to Himself? The Light of the World (John 8:12). God needs no person to help Him do this. He will accomplish this all Himself.

Now Isaiah's prophetic eyes shift back to his day (9:8-21). Will God's people respond to His call? Nope. Just like God told Isaiah, the people will remain blind and deaf despite Isaiah's clear warning. The attacked people will arrogantly rebuild rather than seek the Lord about why this happened to them (9:13). Therefore, Yehovah will take out Israel's leadership, and all the people will suffer (9:13-17). Amid God's judgment, they will turn on each other. Ephraim and Manasseh were Joseph's two sons. Therefore, these two brotherly tribes should have supported one another. No way. They go after each other and turn on Judah as well. Despite this, God's anger is still hot.

INSIGHT

Isaiah's name (*Yeshu-yahu*) means *Yehovah will save*. Therefore, don't be surprised to see many references to Jesus in his prophecies because Jesus' name (*Yeshua*) means *salvation*. What God promised through Isaiah, he delivered to us in Jesus.

July 23 : Scriptures Isaiah 10-12

SUMMARY

God's anger is referenced four times (9:12, 17, 21, 10:4), and this fourth *woe* begins in chapter 10, verse 1. God pronounces judgment on the wicked who exploit and oppress the vulnerable; the poor, the widows, and the orphans (10:1-2). So, they like oppression? Well, they're going to get some of their own through the Assyrians, and Yehovah won't help them (10:3-4).

Speaking of the Assyrians, they're going to get trounced by God, too. Yehovah will thrash them because while He called them to be His tool of judgment against Israel and Judah, the Assyrians were vicious and went far beyond what God wanted (10:7). In their arrogance and pride, and drunk with victorious conquest, the Assyrians think they can level anything in their path. But when Yehovah is done disciplining Judah and Jerusalem, He will slap down Assyria's pride harshly for their pride (10:12-14). But who is Assyria but a tool in God's hand, and does a tool use the worker? No. Israel's Light (God) will light a fire of judgment that will burn Assyria to the ground with only a tiny remnant remaining (10:16-19).

And here's the good news to God's people. Although *they* are left a remnant after the Assyrian "flood" flows by, the Lord will retrieve the survivors and bring them home. Historically, some survivors made it back to the Land after the Assyrian conquests and faced an influx of Gentiles that Assyria had transported to the land. This practice was the way Assyria broke the back of a country's nationalism by removing most indigenous people and mixing a lot of immigrants among them. This mixed-race group of Jews-Gentiles was why the central part of northern Israel was called Galilee of the Gentiles. A day is coming, says Isaiah, when God will stop the advancing Assyrian army on the outskirts of Jerusalem (10:28-32) and take them out (10:33-34).

In chapter 11, Isaiah's prophetic eyesight leaps far forward into the future. As my Study Bible points out, "Judgment in Isaiah is often described as cutting down of trees." So now, in 11:1, Isaiah prophesies that the Lord will bring new life from the stump of Jesse. Although the line of Judah's kings will have ended with no descendant ruling on Judah's throne, a future king is coming to take up David's rule and reign per God's promise. This Branch of the family will sprout from Jesse just as David had. But because it sprouts from Jesse and not David, it implies a king related to David but different. The Branch is a messianic title from here and in Jeremiah (23:5, 33:15). This king of David's line will be remarkable. While God's Spirit was on every king in David's line, they weren't all good kings. *This* king will have God's Spirit on him, and that will cause him to be wise,

understanding, full of counsel, strong, full of knowledge, and hold God in reverence. He will not judge by outward appearances but with righteousness and true justice. Under his reign, evil will be purged from Israel, and a special time of peace will fill Israel. Enemies will not exist, either between animals or animals and people, because it will be like Eden. Knowledge of the Lord will permeate everything in the region. Obviously, this hasn't happened yet in world history, but it's coming because God said it would.

For newcomers to the Bible, this is the time immediately after the Day of the Lord. On the Day of the Lord, God will interrupt human history and the long line of human dominion. Jesus will return, destroy those who oppose Him, and begin this wonderful time of peace called the Millennial reign (Revelation 20:6). When the Millennial Reign starts, and Jesus is in the land, He will call Israel's exiles home. It will be one big family reunion (11:10). The nations will come to Jerusalem to seek Jesus, the Branch, Jesse's descendant. He will gather all those children of Israel whose families had been lost and left in exile for at least 2,700 years since the Assyrian invasion. The two fighting brother tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, will reconcile with Judah (11:13-14). The restored Israelites will defeat their enemies – the Philistines and the descendants of Lot and Esau (11:14). Isaiah graphically portrays God reversing the exile by opening the way for His people to return from the land of the fly (Egypt) and the bee (Assyria).

Chapter 12 continues the grand prophecy of Israel's restoration. On the day Jesus does His reclaiming work, the children of Israel will sing of God's salvation!

INSIGHT

Remember what I said about the many allusions to Jesus in Isaiah? Chapter 12 has some doozies! Jesus' name, *Yeshua*, means *salvation*, right? Check out these verses:

"Indeed, God is my salvation; I will trust him and not be afraid, for the Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my song. He has become my salvation.' You will joyfully draw water from the springs of salvation, and on that day you will say, 'Give thanks to the Lord; proclaim his name!'" (Isaiah 12:2-4).

Now read it with the Hebrew words in place of the English. "Indeed, God is my *Yeshua*; I will trust him and not be afraid, for the Lord, the Lord himself, is my strength and my song. He has become my *Yeshua*.' You will joyfully draw water from the springs of *Yeshua*, and on that day you will say, 'Give thanks to the Lord; proclaim his name!'" That last line may seem a bit curious, but water from natural springs is called Living Water. It can never be contaminated or defiled because it's always moving.

Here, Jesus makes a connection between Himself and this verse: "The one who believes in me, as the scripture has said, will have streams of living water flow from deep within him. He said this about the Spirit, and those who believed in Jesus were going to receive the Spirit, for the Spirit had not yet been given because Jesus had not yet been glorified" (John 7:38-39).

What is the "spring water" that we will joyfully draw from the well of "Yeshua"? The Holy Spirit. Jesus will fill us with His Spirit, the Living Water that continually cleanses and refreshes us.

July 24 : Scriptures Isaiah 13-16

SUMMARY

Speaking of the Lord's triumph over His enemies, chapter 13 begins a long series of God's judgment on the nations (13:1-23:18). These "war woes" are against Babylon, Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Damascus and Syria, Israel (bummer!), Cush (Ethiopia today), Egypt, more for Babylon, Dumah (a trade oasis in Saudi Arabia), Arabia, Jerusalem, and Tyre (in Lebanon). Hang in there because it'll take three days to get through them.

The War Woe Against Babylon. What does it mean to "lift up a banner?" A banner is a battlefield flag used to rally troops to a central location. In this case, it's a picture of Yehovah calling together troops to do His bidding. Who are they? They are warriors, set apart to execute God's wrath (13:3). They're gathered from all around (13:5), and there'll be widespread devastation and human despair (13:6-8). Isaiah repeatedly calls this the "day of the Lord," so it'll be a time when the Lord will act in human affairs to accomplish something. Is it the final Day of the Lord, meaning when Jesus returns to save Israel and set up His kingdom? Perhaps. 13:9-16 seems to describe terrible events that will shake the whole earth. However, 13:17-18 refers to the Medes in action. The Medes were a significant Middle East power starting in 625 B.C., became subject to Persia in 550 B.C., and eventually dissolved into the nations in 226 B.C.

Let's set the timeline. The Assyrians were mighty and attacked Israel three times around 722 B.C., and the Medes rose in power in 625 B.C. After allying with the rising Babylonian empire, they defeated the Assyrian empire in 612 B.C. So, does this prophecy apply to the army of the Medes or some army in later times? Its primary interpretation is the Medes. So the Medes will one day attack whom? Babylon and the Babylonian empire (13:19). This prophecy is about the time *during* the prophet Daniel's later years when Babylon was defeated in one night by the combined Medo-Persian army in 539 B.C.

Okay, so if it's about the Medes conquering Babylon, why does it talk about "the whole world?" In some cases, this means the entire globe. In other contexts, it means the known *world of the Bible*, the Middle East, and those nations and regions noted in the Bible from the Mediterranean Sea, east to the Euphrates, and beyond to Persia (Iran today), and from Turkey south to northern and east-central Africa. The context supports "the whole world" as the Bible world I listed. *However*, prophecies can have double or triple fulfillments. This prophecy could find fulfillment in the future if an army from the ancient Mede region (Iran) marches against Babylon (Iraq). Come to think of it, there *was* the Iran-Iraq war from 1980-1988. But Iran didn't obliterate Iraq, so it wasn't a fulfillment of this prophecy. However, the Medes did indeed conquer Babylon. After a series of conquering

empires (Persians, Greeks, Muslims), the city was abandoned and uninhabited and slipped into the sands in the 600s A.D. The Medes may not have destroyed Babylon, but it indeed has fallen into dust as prophesied by Isaiah.

Chapter 14 continues the War Woe Against Babylon with Israel's return which happened when the Medo Persians conquered Babylon in 536 B.C. The Persian king, Cyrus the Great, gave the word for the Jews to return to Judah and Jerusalem, and many did. However, this prophecy in 14:1-2 talks about Israel resettling their land with the nations' help, "The nations will escort Israel and bring it to its homeland" and Israel making "captives of their captors and will rule over their oppressors." This situation hasn't happened yet, so I think I'll put this in the "yet-to-be-fulfilled" category.

What follows is a song celebrating Babylon's defeat (14:3-11) and the Babylonian king's downfall and humiliation in death (13:12-21). This is a fascinating piece of scripture because, on the surface, it's a wonderfully picturesque description of Babylon's king. This king thought he was all that, but he's not invincible. His pride makes him think he can contend with God, but no. God will bring him down to death, and he'll rot like all the other rulers. However, under the surface, these verses seem to speak about another person. What being could say, "I will ascend to the heavens; I will set up my throne above the stars of God. I will sit on the mount of the gods' assembly, in the remotest parts of the North. I will ascend above the highest clouds; I will make myself like the Most High" (14:13-14). Depending on who you talk to, some interpreters think this is a picture of Satan or the Antichrist. It could be, but I think those interpretations should be held lightly, with the primary understanding being a slam on the extremely prideful Babylonian king. Verses 22-23 describe Babylon's current state. Prophecy fulfilled.

Now comes the War Woe Against Assyria. Babylon was the center of power in the eastern part of Mesopotamia, and Assyria was the center of power in the north. Even though it was mighty and brought down the northern kingdom of Israel, God will raise a kingdom that would steamroll Assyria – Babylon. Since this prophecy focuses on Assyria, the "whole world" designation applies to just the Middle East. However, remember the double/triple fulfillment principle.

And here we have the War Woe Against Philistia. This prophecy came to Isaiah "in the year King Ahaz died," sometime between 720 -715 B.C. It's a warning to Philistia that just because Assyria's power has been weakened to the point where their oppression over Philistia is eased, they're coming back with a vengeance, and Philistia will shake with fear!

Chapter 15 is Isaiah's War Word to Moab. Isaiah flips his prophetic eye from the west to the east of Israel's borders. Refresher: Moab was born of Lot's incestuous union with his daughter after they fled Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction. Moab and Ammon (brothers) had back and forth relationships with Israel, their "cousin." In short, the prophecy talks about numerous cities in Moab from which people are fleeing. They're in mourning for whatever happened to their land, likely warfare. The land lies desolate, and the streams are full of blood. All this comes from the Lord's judgment on the Moabites.

Chapter 16 continues the War Woe Against Moab. The refugees will flee "out of the nest," their land. They'll send gifts to Israel (16:1) and plead for protection (16:3-4). Whether it comes or not isn't told. Isaiah tells us Moab's judgment came from their pride (a common theme), and their region-renowned vineyard and wine production will be shattered. And even though Isaiah brought this prophecy earlier (16:13), Moab now has only three years until destruction comes, leaving only a remnant (16:14).

INSIGHT

Isaiah 14:1-2 is such a tremendous encouragement to me. Israel had great difficulty staying faithful to the Lord. So much so that He had to kick them off His land and into exile, just as He promised. But after time served in Babylon (70 years), the Lord once again turned toward His people and brought them home. How often do we find ourselves in a situation where the Lord has to discipline us greatly because we've been disobedient? Yet, when the discipline is done, He graciously restores us to Himself, and we're wiser for what He allowed us to go through (or sent us through). Are you under His disciplining hand right now? Hang in there. Stay faithful. Trust that He has your best interests in mind. You'll make it through.

July 25 : Scriptures Isaiah 17-20

SUMMARY

And the War Woes continue. The first one in chapter 17 is for Damascus. It's fascinating that Damascus has been occupied for a *very long time*. Pottery's been found at the site that dates back to 3,000 B.C., and the earliest written record of Damascus is from 1490 B.C. Isaiah prophesies that Damascus will be utterly destroyed, and Aram will become like Israel – wiped out except for a remnant.

The War Woe Against Israel is next. "On that day" is not specified when it will occur. But what will happen is pictured is a dying body, a reaper cutting down the grain, and a harvester retrieving olives. Israel is "dying," and only a remnant (the gleanings that dropped from the harvester's arms) will remain. When that day comes, the Israelites will look to God, not their idols, for help, but it'll be too late. Even though they try to succeed (planting, etc.), nothing will become of it (17:10-11) because they forgot God. They turned from Him. But the Lord will act on behalf of His people against the nations that attack them (17:14).

Chapter 18 starts with the War Woe Against Cush (Ethiopia). It's simple. As the Cushites send emissaries on reed ships down the Nile and possibly to Judah, the Lord is sending emissaries to Cush. Only these emissaries are about war coming to Cush. The Lord's judgment on Cush is likened to a worker pruning a grapevine and leaving the scraps on the ground. And yet, Cush will eventually submit to Israel and sends a gift to the Lord in Jerusalem.

The War Woe Against Egypt is next in chapter 19, and it's an incredible one! When Yehovah draws near to Egypt, He'll allow a civil war to break forth to judge the nation (19:4). Next, Yehovah will bring rulers and a king who will rule them harshly. That will be accompanied by a drought that dries up the Nile (19:5-10). The Lord mocks Egypt's supposed wise men as givers of stupid advice. Now we come to an unbelievable word. There's coming a time when just the mention of Judah (Israel) and what the Lord is bringing against Egypt will terrify the Egyptian people. Incredibly, five cities will speak Hebrew and swear allegiance to Yehovah (19:18)! At the same time, the Egyptians will build an altar to Yehovah in the middle of Egypt and a marker in the Lord's honor on their border. When the Egyptians are attacked (possibly for swearing allegiance to Israel's God and not Allah), Yehovah will deliver them (19:20). On that day and at that time, the Lord will reveal himself to the Egyptians. They'll pray, and He'll answer! (This is *so cool*) And here's the really wild part. Two of Israel's long-time enemies, Egypt and Assyria (Syria), will become Israel's greatest allies in the Middle East. That's why we know this

prophecy is for the future because this arrangement has never been conceivable in human history. A major highway will stretch from Egypt to Syria through Israel, and the Lord will bless the trio of nations. Totally amazing!

So, do you want to be a prophet? I believe the Lord has prophets today, those men and women who hear His word clearly and can forth-tell (share God's message to others) and fore-tell (predict future events accurately). Why do I believe this? Because the same Holy Spirit that enabled the ancient and 1st c. prophets to prophesy accurately (2 Chronicles 20:14; Ezekiel 11:5; Acts 11:28) is the same Holy Spirit in the believers today. But before you ask God to make you a prophet, consider that Yehovah often had his prophets act out His word physically to affirm the prophecy (2 Kings 13:17; Acts 21:11). In Isaiah's chapter 20 prophecy, Yehovah had Isaiah walk around naked for *3 years* as a warning to Judah not to trust Egypt or Cush for help because they aren't strong enough to stand against Assyria and will be led away naked by their conquerors. Wow.

INSIGHT

It's incredible that the Lord would make Isaiah walk around naked for three years as a way to reinforce His message. But that's not the only instance in the Bible where the Lord told his prophet to do something bizarre. God told Ezekiel to make a model of Jerusalem and set up a toy army around it in a siege pattern. Why would God do that? For me, it speaks about how God wants to communicate His message to people. Some people are auditory learners, and some are visual learners. Isaiah's and Ezekiel's examples show the Lord communicating to both learning modes. What does that say to me? My Heavenly Father will "speak" to me in the best ways I understand because He intends to be heard, understood, and obeyed when He speaks. And sometimes, He just wants us to hear Him communicate, "I love you!"

July 26 : Scriptures Isaiah 21-24

SUMMARY

In chapter 21, we return to a War Woe against Babylon. In very pictorial language, Isaiah declares Babylon's impending fall at the hands of the Medo-Persian army that happens in 539 B.C. Isaiah's call to be a prophet came in about 740 B.C., and his death came at the hands of King Manasseh in about 687. At the latest date possible, this prophecy against Babylon came about 148 before it occurred. Isaiah has quite the track record! On the other hand, Isaiah was still alive when the word came of Babylon's destruction, so the word was accurate, just more immediate.

Elam is the old name for Persia (21:2), and Elam's partner is the Medes. Together, they will come "from the desert, from the land of terror" to take Babylon. Now here's an interpretive sticking point. When Isaiah prophesied this, Assyria was still the world power, and they would attack and make it their vassal kingdom. The Assyrians were well-known for their ferociously vicious warfare, which fits the timbre of Isaiah's word. Plus, the Lord tells Isaiah to post a lookout to confirm what Isaiah has prophesied has come to pass. However, the Medes and the Persians are explicitly mentioned. Their alliance took Babylon "without a shot." So which empire was it that destroyed Babylon in this prophecy? The case can be made for both, and I think Isaiah was looking through the prophetic telescope, which sometimes squeezes aligned events together. *Both* empires hit Babylon. The Lord's point through Isaiah is that Judah should not rely on Babylon for protection because Babylon can't protect itself.

The next War Woe is for Dumah. It's a puzzle because there's not enough of it to nail much down. Here's what I could glean from others. Dumah was an oasis in Saudi Arabia that controlled significant trade routes. Babylon's last king (Nabonidus) moved from Babylone to Teman and hoped to take control of Dumah. Why? "He who controls the trade controls the region." Oh, yeah! They also make a lot of money! Apparently, Dumah will come under attack and suffer. The watchmen interchange might apply to how long the suffering will last. Their reply? They don't know.

The War Woes turn to Arabia. First, who are the Kedars? In Hebrew, the name is Qedar. Here is what Jewishvirtuallibrary.org says. "Kedar, nomadic tribe or league of tribes in the Arabian Desert. Kedar is mentioned in Genesis 25:13 and I Chronicles 1:29 among "the sons of Ishmael," the latter being tribes of Arabs known from the eighth century B.C.E. onward in the desert tracts surrounding Palestine (see *Ishmaelites). The mode of life of the Kedarites, as reflected in the Bible, was associated with the rearing of sheep and camels (Isa. 60:7; Jer. 49:28-29, 32; Ezek. 27:21), and with dwelling in tents (Jer. 49:29;

Ps. 120:5; Song 1:5) and in unfortified villages and camps (Isa. 42:11; Jer. 49:31).” The Qedarites lived in northwestern Arabia. In an inscription of Tiglath-Pileser III, “they are mentioned together with other nations in the west of the Fertile Crescent who surrendered to the Assyrian king and whose rulers paid him tribute in 738 B.C.E. From parallel inscriptions of Ashurbanipal it is evident that Hazail, king of the Arabs, against whom Senacherib’s (sic) army fought between 691 and 689 B.C.E. in the region of Duma (Jawf) in Wadi Sirhān, and who surrendered to Esarhaddon, was the king of Kedar.” Catch that? Duma/Dumah? Of course, Isaiah would prophesy about these two at the same time. The caravans meet fleeing refugees from the battle(s) who tell them of Qedar’s defeat.

Chapter 22 has a powerful prophecy against God’s city, Jerusalem. The situation is one of rejoicing, and the prophecy describes people celebrating on their rooftops as they watch a besieging army withdraw. But Isaiah saw it differently. Yes, the attacking army withdrew (likely the Assyrian forces), but it should be a time of mourning, not joy. People were lost during the siege. The people of Jerusalem looked to the House of the Forest (a nickname for the paneled cedar room in the palace where weapons were stored, for their defense (228)). While the people made reasonable defenses, reinforcing the walls and creating storage pools for water, these were signs of self-reliance, not dependence on God. The Lord’s rebuke through Isaiah was that the people’s sin had not been dealt with even though the army had retreated. The Lord will revisit Jerusalem’s sin.

The final prophecy of this chapter is about two of Jerusalem’s stewards, Shebna and Eliakim. Shebna had abused his office, and Eliakim was faithful. Therefore, the Lord would remove Shebna and replace him with a liar Kim. However, Eliakim would also fall short. Given the preceding prophecy, the Lord says through Isaiah that even politicians are not to be relied upon, and Israel was to rely on God alone.

Chapter 23 gives us the War Woe Against Tyre of Phoenicia (Lebanon), on the coast north of Israel. It’s a fascinating prophecy because we don’t know if it applies to the Assyrians who tried to attack Tyre repeatedly, the Babylonians, or some other group. The prophecy says after the attack, the citizens of Tyre will become refugees and flee to their trading partner, Tarshish, which we think is Spain. Egypt will mourn because they lost a valuable trading partner. However, Tyre’s destruction is only temporary. After 70 years (70 also being a general number meaning a time of judgment), Tyre will again be restored (23:17-18). This time, though, Tyre’s revenue will go to the Lord. We haven’t seen that happen yet in history, so it might refer to a time yet to come. The big question, though, is this – “Who did this to Tyre?” The Lord, Yehovah (23:8-9). That’s Isaiah’s point.

We've come to the end of the War Woes, and now Isaiah sees a global catastrophe. This prophecy extends from chapters 24-27. All humanity, every person, will be judged. The reason is humanity's sin and that they broke their covenant with God and Israel (24:5). The utter destruction of God's judgment stops all celebrating (24:7-11). According to Isaiah, only a remnant of humanity will survive (24:13). The earth will be utterly devastated. Sin causes the world to sway and fall like a drunk or a top-heavy hut on poles (24:19-20). The critical point of focus is that the earth will never rise again. To me, this place is the fulfillment of this prophecy at the end before the Lord makes a new heaven and earth. This event would be after Jesus' millennial reign and seems to fit with the nations breaking the covenant with Jesus and Israel. Jesus' judgment will be to go after the rebellious nature nations that have attacked Israel at the end, led by Satan (Revelation 20:1-3, 7-15. Verse 11 seems to line up with this prophecy of the earth "fleeing" from God). In 24:21-13, the "on that day" appears to be the final Day of the Lord when all God's enemies are destroyed, and He will reign over Jerusalem. I'm not going to be dogmatic about this day of the Lord estimate. Prophecy, especially long-term prophecy, is tough to pigeonhole in time. I've often gone by the principle that prophecy is best judged in retrospect. That means looking backward after it's happened.

INSIGHT

Isn't it interesting that humanity's sin affects the earth according to the Lord? Sure, we do things that wreck our environment like litter or using lawn fertilizers indiscriminately, which leech into a local pond or lake, causing algae to bloom and harm the aquatic life. But there are spiritual things we do that affect our environment. God says three things defile the land: idolatry, immorality (Leviticus 18:25), and shedding innocent blood (Numbers 35:33). Now, while this applies explicitly to Israel's God-given land, it seems to me that it would also apply to any nation's land for "The earth and everything in it, the world and its inhabitants, belong to the Lord" (Psalm 24:1). As for the United States, our nation has Judeo-Christian roots, and our Constitution is based on biblical laws. That's beyond dispute except by pugnacious people trying to erase the nation's foundation. So if our roots are firmly dug into the spiritual soil of the Bible, then we might be in a precarious place. Why? Over the last 60 years, movements have worked hard to push God out of the public square claiming "separation of church and state," and the Supreme Court legalized abortion in 1973 (innocent blood) and same-sex marriage in 2015 (immorality). Have we defiled our land to the point where God will or has released judgments on us? But in 2022, the Supreme Court reversed the Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion on a federal level and threw the decision back to individual states. That's a start, but abortion is still allowed in too many states. Will the Lord have mercy on us, or do we face His anger? Have we defiled our land and, like the Israelites, face

expulsion or enemy oppression in the future? Who knows? But what we do know is God is not mocked.

July 27 : Scriptures Isaiah 25-27

SUMMARY

Chapter 25 continues Isaiah's grand vision that stretches toward the end of human dominion on earth. The first section (25:1-5) praises Yehovah for His judgment on sin. We don't know what particular city to which Isaiah is referring. But the example of being judged for sin is Isaiah's point. The strong are humbled, and the poor and needy are protected.

The second section (25:6-9) is stunning in light of Jesus' death and resurrection. Okay, so what do you do after a great triumph? Have a big feast! But this feast is for a great reason, "On this mountain (Zion – where God's presence is) he will swallow up the burial shroud, the shroud over all the peoples, the sheet covering all the nations. When he has swallowed up death once and for all, the Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face and remove his people's disgrace from the whole earth, for the Lord has spoken" (25:7-8). In other words, Isaiah sees Yehovah putting an end to the death penalty and the threat of death overall humanity from the place of Mount Zion. This place is where Jesus was sacrificed, resurrected, and is where Jesus ascended to heaven. And this place is where Jesus will return. It's Jesus' work that will finally bring about the end to death and the beginning of life eternal as human beings were initially designed to enjoy. I would say that's caused for a big feast. And by the way, doesn't the Bible talk about the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7, 9)?

The third brief section (25:10-12) uses Moab, a small nation east of Jerusalem on the other side of the Jordan River, as the example of a prideful nation swimming in liquid dung after Yehovah judges it for its pride (yuck!).

Chapter 26 starts with the awesome, "On that day." The phrase describes some time in the future. Figuratively, the cities used in this prophecy depict the place where God does and does not dwell. God dwells in a strong city because He is the city's protector. Salvation is God's city. When we enter salvation through Jesus, He protects us like walls and ramparts. Gates are open so the righteous people can enter, people that will remain faithful (26:2-3). What are the characteristics of the righteous? People whose minds are set on the Lord, who trust him.

On the other hand, the city the Lord doesn't live in is the lofty place, the prideful city. This city is the one God brings down and tramples. 26:6 says it's the humble and poor who trample the proud. This verse echoes the Bible: "Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5).

What follows is Isaiah rejoicing in God's judgments. Why? Because when the wicked are judged, righteousness prevails, and the wicked don't learn from favor, good things. Wicked learn from judgment like a child learns from a spanking. Amid judgment, Isaiah prays that God would let the wicked see the judgment upon them as a sign of God's favor toward his people. He praises God because God is their king. The wicked people that God punishes stay dead (26:14). On the other hand, Yehovah blesses the righteous (26:15). And yet, the righteous still endure God's discipline (26:16). Though they suffered under God's discipline, His people produced nothing. They writhed in pain like a pregnant woman in labor but only produced gas. (I know. Funny picture, isn't it?) God's people couldn't do anything in their own strength.

However, God gets results. He promises the righteous that although they will die, they will live again. "Your dead will live; their bodies will rise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in the dust! For you will be covered with the morning dew, and the earth will bring out the departed spirits" (26:19). This is one of the earliest words from God about a future resurrection of the righteous dead. The following two verses are an interesting prophetic warning for the people to "go into their houses and hide" while God's judgment passes by them. Isaiah seems to be using the Passover story to make his point that God's judgment will pass over the earth in the end, yet the righteous will find safety by being hidden away with God. Because of this "hidden with God" idea, prophecy scholars see the rapture as a way God separates the righteous from the wicked so he can execute judgment on the wicked. Pretrib rapture scholars say it will happen before the tribulation, which they believe is God's wrath. I beg to differ. God's wrath is executed when Jesus returns. God's people will be raised into his presence when He descends from heaven with a shout and a shofar call (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). Both sides have the same point, just different timing.

Chapter 27 opens with God slaying Leviathan, a tremendous twisting serpent. Many Christian and Jewish scholars see Leviathan as representing God's adversary, Satan, and this parallels Yehovah destroying Satan at the end (27:1; Revelation 12:9, 20:2).

Isaiah uses the vineyard analogy to describe God's people and is a picture of God's restoration after judgment. The Lord did indeed judge His people, but not as harshly as He judged those nations He used to discipline His people (27:7-8). As part of their discipline, Yehovah scattered His people throughout the nations (27:8). But Israel will be restored, and it was through His discipline and exile that Israel's national sin was forgiven. What was their sin? Idolatry (27:9). Israel wasn't sent through final national destruction but a cleansing process. As the Lord completes His threshing process (27:12-13), He will gather His people again to their God-given land to worship Him in Jerusalem.

INSIGHT

Isaiah 25:6-12 is a beautiful example of the Gospel in the Old (Older) Testament. The scriptures say that the prophets looked ahead the best they could to see what the Holy Spirit revealed. However, the time from their day to the prophecy's fulfillment could get extremely long. Therefore, the prophets are looking through a spiritual telescope. They see the image but not the whole vista. That's why we need to study prophetic scriptures so we can piece the puzzle together, and when it fits with the Newer (New) Testament, we can see both declaration and fulfillment. But what about prophecies that haven't been fulfilled yet? Then we struggle as the prophets did. We have the image, hold it, and watch as the vista of time passes us. When the time comes for the prophecy to be fulfilled, and it will because God always keeps His word, the prophecy should snap into place. But sometimes, it's tough to figure out if a prophecy is being fulfilled in real-time. As I've said before, prophecy is best judged looking backward. For example, when Israel became a nation in May 1948, it was easily recognized as a prophecy fulfilled. "Who has heard of such a thing? Who has seen such things? *Can a land be born in one day or a nation be delivered in an instant? Yet as soon as Zion was in labor, she gave birth to her sons*" (Isaiah 66:8). But when Jesus was presented to Judah's spiritual leader, they rejected the prophecy that was walking right in front of them. It was only late that the Holy Spirit opened some of their eyes to see Jesus as prophecy fulfilled (Apostle Paul, Acts 9). So let's learn prophecy and have fun speculating. But let's not get dogmatic about what we think we see coming. Time, and God, will tell us.

July 28 : Scriptures Isaiah 28-30

SUMMARY

We now move to another “Woe.” In chapter 28, Isaiah levels this one against the northern kingdom of Israel, also referred to as Ephraim or by its capital, Samaria. Isaiah gets a little snarky here. He belittles Israel’s capital, Samaria, as the “majestic crown” of the drunkards and a fading flower and warns them of coming judgment. Isaiah’s use of “drunkards” could be a reference to rampant drunkenness by Israel’s leaders or, as my Bible says, it could refer to the recipients of God’s judgment (grapes of His wrath). Isaiah warns them an invading army is their coming judgment from Yehovah (28:2). The flower will be trampled. Like a ripe fig, the invading nation will take Samaria and swallow it up (28:4). In contrast, God will be a crown, but to only the remnant who will stay faithful to Him.

Isaiah continues his “drunks-staggering-around” theme in rather vivid pictures. The opening verses (1-6) addressed the leaders, and these verses address the priests and prophets. The priests and prophets are so literally and figuratively drunk that they puke all over the place. The prophets can’t think straight, and the priests, who served as judges, can’t judge straight. And all their teachings and ruling were just jibber-jabber to the people, stupid and repetitive (28:10). Who do they think they’re teaching? Toddlers?” (28:9). Because the people refused to rest in God, Yehovah will give them jibber-jabber to listen to, only it’ll be from the foreign language of the invading forces (28:11-12). Are the leaders concerned? Nope. In their drunkenness, they reply no harm will come to them because they’ve made a deal with “Death,” i.e., likely referring to treaties with nations not to attack them (28:15). Yeah, it ain’t gonna work. They should have made a solid, firm, foundational pact with Yehovah rather than people. But that would have meant Israel had to live up to God’s standards (28:16-17). Since they didn’t, those treaties won’t protect them. The treaties will be broken, and God’s judgment, the invading nations, will repeatedly sweep through Israel like a series of floods, carrying everything away. So they better stop mocking God, or it’ll worsen (28:22).

But now comes a parable. In brief, it’s about agriculture. As the farmer plows, cultivates the soil, plants seeds, and threshes the grain appropriately, God’s dealings with His people have an order to them, and He doesn’t stay with one thing – prosperity or discipline – continually. Israel will be judged, but it won’t last forever (28:23-29).

Israel gets their word of judgment from Isaiah, but don’t think Judah and Jerusalem are left out. It’s Judah’s turn for a prophetic “woe” in chapter 29. Ariel is a nickname for Jerusalem and can mean “lion of God,” but it can also mean “Altar hearth,” where things

are burned. Even though the Assyrian army will do the deed, God says He's behind it all. "I will camp in a circle around you; I will besiege you with earth ramps, and I will set up my siege towers against you" (29:3). He's going to take down Jerusalem, and it will be as a dead, buried person, "you will speak from the ground, and your words will come from low in the dust" (29:4).

But suddenly, the prophecy shifts. It's about Jerusalem's attackers, Assyria. If you recall the story, Assyria laid siege to Jerusalem. But because Hezekiah humbled himself along with all the people before the Lord, the Lord dropped a plague on the marauding army and wiped them out. This prophecy points to that event. Those who attack Jerusalem will be denied, and they'll wake up from their conquering delusion dissatisfied (29:7-8). Then the prophecy shifts back to God's people. Because of their spiritual condition (hardened, blind eyes), Jehovah will make them sleep. He will "shut down" their priests and prophets, who won't be able to help them out of their spiritual stupor (29:9-10). The spiritually blind people won't be able to understand Isaiah's words, just as the Lord told Isaiah in chapter 6. This blindness will last as long as it takes God's judgment to be fulfilled.

Jehovah judges them for their empty and meaningless worship. They were going through the motion of being devoted to God, but their hearts weren't in it (29:13-14). Others thought they could do a thing against God's plans and keep them hidden from Him. Perhaps this had to do with allying with Assyria to get them back off (29:15). Jehovah's visual rebuke is vivid. Does the clay get to tell the potter what to do? Does the clay get to second guess the potter? Absolutely not. But the judgment now becomes hope. Lebanon, the nation that was famous for its cedar trees, will have vast orchards. Cedars were sometimes symbols of pride (Isaiah 2:12-13), and orchards likely represent fruit-bearing, humble people. Those who couldn't understand God's word will be able to do so. The righteous will rejoice, for the wicked will have been removed, and God's promises to Abraham will have been fulfilled. And finally, the confused and grumblers will get it (29:22-24).

Chapter 30 opens with another woe against God's people. This woe is because they allied with Egypt to stand against the Assyrian threat. By doing so, Israel placed itself in an inferior position to Egypt. It likely resulted in paying tribute to the pagan nation. But according to the Lord, Egypt's "help" would be no help at all. The Negev is the desert that covers the southern part of Israel (check it out online). This description is a picture of Israel carrying tribute to that "Rahab Who Just Sits," (Do-Nothing) Egypt (29:6). So, God tells Isaiah to write it down as a testimony against Judah for their rebellion against Him. They tell God's seers to "shut up" because they don't want to hear God's word.

Unless smooth and pleasurable words prophesy prosperity and good things, God's people aren't interested, and God can just get out of the way (30:10-11). Therefore, God's judgment will be to let them go their own way and do their own thing by trusting Egypt. But their iniquity will cause Judah's sudden collapse, like a wall giving way (30:13-14). He told them to trust Him and rest on Him, but they wouldn't. They said, "We will ride," and so they shall, trying to escape an inescapable enemy.

It frequently happens that God's mercy comes through even amid His proclamations of judgment. This prophecy suddenly erupts into Yehovah's proclamation of mercy after His judgment comes (30:18-26). He'll turn and bless His people richly. As for the attacking Assyrians, Yehovah will go after them and rain down His wrath on them as His people, Judah, celebrate. Metaphorically, Assyria is going to burn!

INSIGHT

I've liked Isaiah 30:21 for decades since I became a born-again disciple. "And whenever you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear this command behind you: 'This is the way. Walk in it.'" In context, this verse is God's promise to Israel to lead and guide her along His right ways of living. But Isaiah 30:21 was one of those verses that came alive to me early on, and I've often trusted the Lord during times of decision. He is my Teacher, and His self-proclaimed job is to lead and guide us in the way we should go. Here are a couple more to encourage you. "I will instruct you and show you the way to go; with my eye on you, I will give counsel" (Psalm 32:8). "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth. For he will not speak on his own, but he will speak whatever he hears. He will also declare to you what is to come" (John 16:13).