

The Road to Jesus: The Gospel According to Isaiah
Oracles Against the Nations Part 2 - Isaiah 18 - 23
October 28, 2015

INTRODUCTION:

Up to this point, Isaiah has preached against primarily Jerusalem (Judah) - the southern tribes of God's people. At chapter 13, God directs His judgment *in these eleven chapters* against the nations surrounding Judah. This is done for a few reasons:

1. These nations are guilty of sin and sin has to be punished. This shows us that God has expectations of *everyone*. Everyone is obligated to learn what God wants them to do.
2. God had warned Israel not to trust in *men* (2:22); therefore, they should not trust in *nations of men* for their security. God, alone, is to be trusted.
3. God has promised that He will establish a new *body of people* (pictured as a temple - 2:1-4 and a Kingdom, with the Son of David as the King - 7:14; 9:6-7). How will these foreign nations react to this new kingdom? Well, on one hand, they will *flow* to this new kingdom (2:1-4); on the other hand, God will *destroy* the kingdoms so they cannot inhibit the establishment of this new kingdom.
4. In a culture in which gods of conquering nations were viewed as more powerful than those of conquered nations, God would show that He, indeed, was God Almighty. Israel should not trust *other gods* as Ahaz had done.

In the 21st century, I would have to emphasize to Americans not to trust our military for security and success. We cannot trust our financial strength for security. We cannot trust denominational, protestant churches for security. The reason why so many Protestant churches have given up the fight on the role of women in leadership (1 Tim. 2:11-12) is because they haven't respected Acts 2:38. It's all a matter of how you approach obedience to God's word. A loose approach in one area will eventually lead to a loose approach in other areas.

While I absolutely believe Americans ought to take part in the political process and vote, I also emphasize that we cannot trust either political party or any other political party for security. If I were teaching this lesson in a country like Romania, I would emphasize, do not trust the United States for security. Do not trust Great Britain, France, Russia, or the Chinese for security. You see, Isaiah's message is as relevant today as it was back then. *Why? Because man does not change nor does God change.*

In Isaiah's day, most of the punishment God will bring on these nations will be through Assyria, the "rod of His anger" (10:5). Smith comments these chapters: "teach the principle that believers should not be motivated by fear to compromise their beliefs about the sovereignty of God. They should confidently serve God regardless of their situation, knowing that his plans are being fulfilled" (292).

In the chapters we'll review tonight, there are seven nations under the judgment of God.

CUSH - 18:1-7:

"Cush" is an area upstream of Egypt beyond Nile's first cataract. During a period of Egyptian decline, leaders from Cush established supremacy in the late 8th century. In 715 B. c., they seized control of Egypt and reigned until they were defeated by the Assyrians in 663 B. C. When Cush established control over Egypt, they sent ambassadors to Judah, pledging assistance in the struggle against Assyria.

Should God's people make alliances with the people of the world for security? Isaiah's answer is "NO." God will punish Cush for their sin, just like He does every one else - 18:5-6.

But, there is also a word of hope in verse 7 - there is always a word of hope. These people will bring a "gift of homage" to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, even Mount Zion - 2 Chronicles 32:22-23. Beyond that, there will be Cushites among those who go to Jerusalem to learn of the ways of the Lord (2:1-4; 11:10-11; 14:1-2). In fact, understanding that Cush is another name for Ethiopia, we have a clear example of this promise coming to fulfillment in Acts 8:27.

EGYPT - 19:1-25:

JUDGMENT AGAINST EGYPT AND ITS LEADERS - 19:1-15:

As the 8th century drew to a close, there was a strong temptation to rely on Egypt for security. But Isaiah's message is: Why rely on Egypt when, without God, she can do nothing? Consider the words of 19:1. Please observe that this picture of God "coming" is not physical, in a body. It is coming in judgment. This is a typical prophetic picture and Jesus uses it before Annas and Caiaphas, the high priests (Matt. 26:64) and it is used by John in Revelation 2:5 and others.

Egypt's idols will prove to be worthless (vs 2) and their hearts will melt just as the Canaanites' did, after Israel crossed over the Red Sea on dry ground (Joshua 2:11).

God will bring Egypt down - vs 4. Just as God did to the Red Sea, He will do to the Nile River, the heart of Egypt's economy - vs 5. God's destruction will impact the business world in Egypt - vs 9. The wise men and religious leaders in Egypt will be at a loss - vs 11. Israel's God is the power behind this devastation - vs 14.

Egypt was eventually conquered by the Assyrians in 671 B. C.

EGYPT'S SUBMISSION AND RESTORATION - 19:16-25:

"Only a robust, pure faith in the God of the Bible can stand the shocks which must eventually come to every person and nation" (Oswalt, 368). There is good news for Egypt...

"In that day" - in what day? In the day that the Lord comes against Egypt (19:1). Verse 16 pictures an humble heart and God's purpose (vs 17) will start to be fulfilled.

Verse 18, cities in Egypt will start speaking the language of Canaan, the language of God's people! In Egypt? Yes! One Lord. One language. In fact, they will "swear allegiance" to the Lord of hosts. An altar to God will even be built in Egypt (vs 19). One Lord. One worship. Just as Israel once cried in Egypt because of *her* oppressors (Exodus 2:23-25), so here, Egypt will cry to the God of *Israel* because of *her* oppressors! And God will send a Savior and a Champion to them (vs 20). One Lord. One faith. "True religion is not people searching after God but people responding to revealed truth" (Motyer, 159).

Then, Egypt will know God, will worship Him, and offer sacrifices to Him (vs 21; "knowing God" is repeatedly used in Exodus 7-12) and He will heal them of their *sin* (vs 22). A *highway* will appear from Egypt all the way to Assyria and both will worship the God of Israel (vs 23). All three nations - Egypt, Assyria, and Israel - will one day all worship together! "Common enemies have beat their swords into plowshares (2:4)!" (Jackson, 42). Please observe verse 25 - "Blessed is Egypt *My* people, and Assyria *the work of My hands*, and Israel *My inheritance*." When was that, except in the time of Jesus Christ!

Now, it is true that a large Jewish population grew up in Alexandria, Egypt. It was there that the Old Testament was translated into Greek. Consequently, a large Christian population grew up in Alexandria and other places in Egypt. There were Egyptians in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10).

One world. One Lord. One church. "Verses 16-25 are saying it is foolish for Judah to turn to Egypt when Egypt is one day going to turn to Judah's God" (Oswalt, 375).

ISAIAH'S SIGN AGAINST EGYPT AND CUSH - 20:1-6:

In this short chapter, God tells Isaiah to go naked (not necessarily *entirely* naked; it may have been just with a "loincloth") and barefoot for three years as a sign to Israel that Assyria will, in fact, lead Egypt and Cush into exile. What a remarkable object lesson for three years - every time someone were to see Isaiah, they would be reminded not to trust in Egypt or Cush.

Ashdod was the most northern of the five great cities of Philistia, 33 miles west of Jerusalem. Ashdod fell in 711 B. C. One Ashdod fell, Egypt was ripe for picking by the Assyrians.

BABYLON - 21:1-10:

Babylon, at this time, was not the world ruler. But they wanted to be. At this point, Babylon has an alliance, or at least a friendship, with Judah. But Isaiah is going to warn against such an alliance. *Do not trust man!*

Elam and Media were allies of Babylon but Babylon is going to be defeated by the Medes (vs 2; under Cyrus 539 B. C.). With Isaiah's people wanting to trust in Babylon, it disturbs Isaiah, as we see in verses 3-4. "The prophet who does not feel some empathy for the personal horrors which destruction of his enemies will entail is not reflecting accurately the character of the God for whom he speaks" (Oswalt, 393).

Babylon is going to fall - vs 9, a passage quoted by John in Revelation 18:2. Assyria attacks Babylon in 689 B. C.

We see another statement of inspiration at 21:10 - what God had revealed, Isaiah had made known.

EDOM - 21:11-12:

Edom, of course, was the ancient brother of Jacob, the forefather of Israel. They will not escape God's punishment. Obadiah, the prophet, hones in on Edom and he prophecies that Edom - at least those who respond to God in faithful obedience - will be absorbed into the kingdom of the Messiah (vs 21).

ARABIA - 21:13-17:

The Dedanites (vs 13), who dwell in Arabia, also have no means of giving Judah security. The Dedanites were also ancient relatives of Israel, being descended from Abraham through his second wife, Keturah.

JERUSALEM - 22:1-25:

JERUSALEM'S SEIGE - 22:1-14:

Once again, here in the midst of sermons against the Gentile nations, Isaiah rebukes his own people, his own capital city (vs 4 refers to Jerusalem) - "the people of Israel are no better off than the Gentiles around them" (Oswalt, 405). Rather than being a mountain, as pictured in

chapter 2 from where all can be seen, Jerusalem is more like a valley, where nothing can be seen.

God's punishment comes on them, too (vs 5). The Jews made all sorts of defensive measures to protect their city but they did not turn to God (vs 11). Today, the economy is good, so who cares if the Supreme Court has authorized abortion and legalized homosexual marriages. Even some Christians seem to reason the same way. The attendance is good and the contribution is good, who cares what is preached from the pulpit. It is all false security if God is left out of the picture.

How did Israel respond to God's discipline? They went back to their old way of life (vs 13). "...they were glutting and guzzling" (Jackson, 45). But, God promises death (vs 14) with no forgiveness.

SHEBNA & ELIAKIM - 22:15-25:

Now, Isaiah turns his attention to two individuals who epitomize the Jews. One is arrogant and self-righteous, the other is more faithful but still, being human, is not ultimately dependable.

First, Shebna (vs 15-20), in charge of the royal household, a steward. He made a tomb for himself (vs 16), a large monument. But God is going to take care of him and depose him (vs 18).

In Shebna's place, God calls on Eliakim (vs 20-25), the son of Hilkiyah. God will care for him and give him Shebna's authority. He will hold the "key of the house of David" (vs 22), a passage pointing to Christ and His authority over the house of David in Revelation 3:7. He will be like a tent peg, holding the family in place and will be a throne of glory to his father's house. Yet, being human, one cannot put all his trust in Eliakim for he, too, will break.

"Like Judah, we refuse to trust God and instead deify human leaders in the hope that they can save us. Inevitably, we must be disappointed, as Judah was. Our only hope is in God" (Oswalt, 424).

TYRE - 23:1-18:

A CALL TO LAMENT - 23:1-7:

Finally, Isaiah turns his attention to the city of Tyre.

Tyre was well known as a commercial center but when she is defeated by God, the whole world feels the pain. So close is this chapter to 21 and the destruction of Babylon that John will use much of the imagery from the destruction of Tyre in describing the nature of the city of Babylon, Revelation 18. As with so many nations, the sin of Tyre (vs 9) is pride. Tyre is ultimately to be forgotten after 70 years (15). This is about 700 B. C.; 70 years would take us to the time when Assyria collapses in 630 B. C. and the Babylonian Empire will rise.

TYRE'S JUDGMENT AND FUTURE - 23:8-18:

After being weakened by attacks from the Babylonians, Tyre was ultimately defeated by Alexander the Great in 332 B. C. Notice the positive end of Isaiah's prophecy against Tyre - vs 18. One day, churches of Christ, the Kingdom of Christ, will sprout up in Tyre. Once again, we see 2:1-4 being fulfilled.

CONCLUSION:

"If the glory of the nations (chs. 13 and 14) is nothing; if the scheming of the nations (chs 14-18) is nothing; if the wisdom of the nations (chs 19-20) is nothing; if the vision of the nation (chs. 21, 22) is nothing; if the wealth of the nations (ch. 23) is nothing, then the question is: Why trust the nations? The answer is clear: There is no reason to do so" (Oswalt, 437).