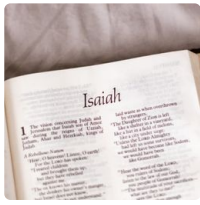


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Isaiah 11 - 14



Isaiah - Steve Gregg

Isaiah 11-14 reveals the characteristics of the Spirit of God, including true wisdom and knowledge. The judgment of the Lord is not always negative, as it can bring righteous decisions for the poor and vulnerable. The prophecies in this section also foretell the fall of Babylon and the eventual rebuilding of Israel, along with the downfall of the prideful and arrogant. Ultimately, the poor and needy will find safety and provision.

Transcript

We are now in Isaiah chapter 11. This chapter is so rich I could easily take a whole session in it, except that we've already taken most of the chapter piecemeal. In our earlier treatment of the topics in Isaiah, it seems like the majority of the topics had examples that came from this chapter, and we've looked at them.

We've looked at almost every part of the chapter already. We'll just put it together now and then move beyond it. This is a chapter which in its entirety is a Messianic prophecy.

It's the only chapter we've encountered so far which is a Messianic age prophecy in its entirety. There will be others, but it's the most lengthy we've encountered yet. It says, Now, this is the description of the king himself.

The rest of the chapter will go on and describe features of his kingdom, but as we look at the picture, we recognize this is of course Jesus. Many people think that for the most part this chapter is talking about the effects of Christ's second coming, but as we see in the opening verse, it is his first coming that is in view. He comes up like a shoot or a branch out of the roots of Jesse.

Jesse is David's father. I don't know why it doesn't say out of the root of David. That is more common in the prophets to speak of the Messiah's descent from David specifically, not just from Jesse, but it's perhaps poetic variety that dictates that it would be Jesse rather than David who's mentioned.

Obviously, any Jew reading the word Jesse thinks only of Jesse as the father of David. They don't think of the other seven sons of Jesse as having any relevance. They

amounted to nothing.

They're just the most famous of them. Jesse in a sense is almost equivalent to David. He is said to be a branch that grows.

We've mentioned that the word branch, first of all, is a term for the Messiah that occurs not only in Isaiah, also in Jeremiah chapter 23, also in Zechariah, a couple of places. It may be passages like this that Matthew had in mind when he said that when Jesus grew up in Nazareth, it was in fulfillment of what was spoken by the prophets, plural. He should be a Nazarene.

Of course, there's nothing in the Old Testament that says he should be a Nazarene, but since Nazarene means a person from Nazareth and Nazareth means the town of the branch, it may be that Matthew has this play on words in mind that the prophets, plural, had said he would be the branch. Therefore, that he would grow up in the town of the branch seems like a fulfillment of what the prophets said. His Nazarene association with the town that means the town of the branch could be seen as alluded to in the reference to him being the branch.

This is a very obscure connection, but Matthew is not afraid to make obscure connections in many cases when he's seeing parallels between Old Testament things and the things that actually took place in Jesus' life. Now, he's also called a rod, and a rod would just be a stick, but it's not just a stick, but a stick that's used for something. A rod was usually used to strike somebody or something.

A shepherd, for example, would use his rod to protect the sheep. There might be predators that would come after them. It's a weapon of sorts, but it's also a disciplinary tool.

Children were disciplined with a rod in Proverbs. Likewise, rebellious slaves were disciplined with a rod. A rod is an implement of discipline or ruling, and so here it is sort of like a scepter, more or less.

It says of Jesus in Psalm 2, in verse 8, that he will rule the nations with a rod of iron. A rod, in that case, probably, it's an implication of his being a ruler, of course, might be seen as a scepter of a king. In any case, there's a royal ruler coming from the roots of David, and he is qualified not so much by his descent from David as by the Spirit of the Lord being upon him and enabling him.

There are, after the reference to the Spirit of the Lord, there are six characteristics of the Spirit of God mentioned. Wisdom, understanding, counsel, might, knowledge, and fear of the Lord. All of these, except the fear of the Lord, all have to do with insight.

Him being made wise, knowledgeable, capable of giving good counsel, understanding. These things are really references to his wisdom, which is imparted to him by the Spirit

who possesses these traits. The fear of the Lord seems a little bit out of place in the list, although we know a proverb says that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

And also, the scripture says in Proverbs, the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. So, knowledge and wisdom are not really disconnected from the concept of fearing God. It is because Jesus fears the Lord, that is, he reveres his Father.

The Spirit of God inspires in a person the fear of the Lord, because he is the Spirit of the fear of the Lord, or reverence, we might say. And that leads to true wisdom and knowledge, and that is what he is full of. He is full of the Spirit.

We find, of course, a similar statement in Isaiah 61, 1, which Jesus quoted as being about himself. In Luke 4, when he is in the synagogue of Nazareth, he quoted Isaiah 61, 1, which begins with the words, the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord God has anointed me. And it goes on from there, but you see Jesus speaks of the Spirit of the Lord being upon him, and that is what this passage speaks about too.

Now, in verse 3 it says, his delight is in the fear of the Lord. That is, he doesn't fear God with trepidation, he does so with joy. Fear of the Lord is not a burdensome thing if it is the biblical fear of the Lord.

And by the way, fear of the Lord is not merely an Old Testament idea, it is a New Testament idea. Jesus said, do not fear him who can kill the body and can do no more, but fear him who can, after he has destroyed the body, he can destroy the soul in Gehenna also. So Jesus actually said we must fear God.

Peter said that too, in 1 Peter 1, 17. Peter said in 1 Peter 1, 17, if you call God your father, who without respect to persons judges everyone without partiality, he says, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. Obviously the fear of the Lord.

In 2 Corinthians 5, Paul said, knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men. There is a healthy fear of the Lord that the New Testament advocates as much as the Old Testament does. But the fear of the Lord, we might think of fear as strictly a tormenting thing.

After all, there is a fear that has torment, according to 1 John, which is not a good fear. Perfect love casts out that kind of fear. So what is the fear of the Lord? Well, many people obey God with craven fear.

They're terrified to step out of line. They just are quite convinced that God is going to damn them or judge them or punish them if they are not perfect. And they live a religious life.

They live essentially an outwardly obedient life, but they're motivated entirely by fear and not by love. They do not delight in the fear of the Lord like Jesus did. Jesus delighted

in the fear of the Lord.

Now the fear of the Lord is apparently something that is not always oppressive. Most fear is. But when we talk about the fear of the Lord, we're really talking about a healthy appreciation for the danger of being wrongly related to him.

To be on his wrong side, so to speak. Among the illustrations that come to my mind frequently would be that of freeway traffic. I'm not afraid of freeway traffic, as long as I'm going the same direction it is.

Freeway traffic is not frightening to me. I get on ramps and drive along at 75 miles an hour. I should have admitted that.

65 miles an hour and at a high speed, which is perhaps in some circumstances considered a very dangerous speed to travel. But I don't have a bit of fear. I delight in it.

It's not a problem. But you know, if I contemplate slamming on my brakes in the fast lane, that's scary. Or getting on the off ramp and going against traffic on the freeway, that's terrifying.

The idea of walking across a busy freeway blindfolded scares me. Why? Because traffic is scary. Traffic is dangerous.

Traffic is powerful. It can do you a lot of harm. But you never think about it when you're in right relationship with it.

When you're going the same direction it is, it's not an issue. But it is in fact the fact that traffic being in wrong relation with traffic is so scary that keeps you going the right direction. You try to maintain the same speed as the rest of traffic.

You avoid crossing busy freeways on foot if you don't have to do it. Why? Because that's scary. Therefore, the fear of traffic keeps you from foolishly putting yourself in a wrong relationship with it.

As long as you're in a right relationship with it, it's not an issue. It's always back there in the back of your mind. When you suddenly hit black ice that you didn't know was there.

You start spinning around on the freeway and there's other cars behind you. You come up and you realize, whoa, these guys might hit me. I'm not, as I was a moment ago, in the right relationship with the traffic here.

Suddenly your heart's beating like crazy. You didn't realize you were afraid of traffic until you suddenly were in wrong relationship with it. That's exactly, I think, what the fear of the Lord is.

If you're in right relationship with him, it's a delight. It doesn't worry you that God is big

and awesome and capable of doing a great deal of harm to those that are his enemies. You're not his enemy.

You're on his side. By the fear of the Lord, men depart from evil, Solomon said. The fear of the Lord keeps you on God's good side.

It is possible to fear the Lord and be still very happy, delighted. His delight is in the fear of the Lord. It's not oppressive and awful to fear the Lord.

It actually keeps you safe. It actually keeps you going the right way. And he shall not judge by the sight of his eyes, nor decide by the hearing of his ears.

It means that he's not going to make shallow surface judgments. Jesus himself said, do not judge according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment. In John 7, 24, I believe it is.

He told us not to make surface judgments. He certainly didn't do so. He was able to look at the Pharisees and see beyond what they were putting up front.

He could see a whitewashed tomb, but he could also see that that wasn't all it appeared to be. It was full of dead men's bones. He could judge a man other than simply by the appearance and the mask the person was wearing.

He will decide with righteousness. It says he will judge the poor. Judge the poor.

We think of judge as a negative thing. In the Old Testament, judgment is not always negative. In fact, David often cries out, judge me, O God, meaning judge my case, hear my case.

A person who is innocent actually looks forward to their day in court. They want their case to be judged because they know that they'll be vindicated by a just judge. It's frustrating if you're the victim and you're innocent and you can't get a hearing in court.

Being judged when you're the one who's going to be vindicated by the decision is a good thing. When it says with righteousness, he'll judge the poor, it just means he'll hear their case, he'll make a judgment. Obviously, assuming they're innocent and they're the victim, he'll vindicate them.

Judgment means vindication for the righteous. The poor who were not getting righteous judgments because they couldn't bribe the judges, and this has been mentioned in Isaiah previously, the corrupt rulers did not decide in favor of the poor, but on the side of the rich who could grease their palms. This is not so with this king.

This king will not be bribeable. This king will not favor those who can do favors for him, but he'll make a right judgment, and the poor will have something to rejoice in there. He'll decide with equity for the meek of the earth, the ones who are not able to assert

themselves in their case against their oppressors.

He will decide on their behalf. He'll strike the earth or the land with the rod of his mouth and with the breath of his lips. He will slay the wicked.

When we were going through this topically, I pointed out that this verse probably sounds more than any other in this chapter, like the second coming of Christ because it talks about him slaying and striking with the rod out of his mouth, and therefore you'd say, well, Jesus didn't kill anybody or strike anybody. However, I pointed out at that time that this language is poetic language. You find the same imagery in Hosea in a place where it's much less ambiguous.

Hosea chapter 6 and verse 5, Hosea 6, 5, God says, therefore I have hewn them, and hewing is what you do with an axe when you're splitting wood, hewing. Therefore I have hewn them by the prophets. I have slain them by the words of my mouth.

Now, God's saying that the words of the prophets have cut these people like an axe cutting wood. It's killed them in a sense. No one was really physically killed by the words of the prophets, but the words of the prophets condemned them.

It's figurative language. And so if the prophets hewed and slew people with their words, certainly Christ can be said to do the same with his. His words against the Pharisees, for example, were very sharp, very cutting, very condemning.

And this is no doubt what it's referring to in verse 4 there. Righteousness shall be his belt of his loins, faithfulness the belt of his waist. This simply means that he is faithful and righteous.

Now, then we come to this famous passage, verse 6. The wolf shall also dwell with the lamb. The leopard shall lie down with the young goat. The calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them.

The cow and the bear shall graze. Their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, and the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. Now, I've already commented on this in an earlier lecture, so I'll be more brief about it at this point. But I believe this is referring to Jews and Gentiles being reconciled in Christ in the present age.

The language, of course, is very poetic. But elsewhere in Isaiah and the rest of the Old Testament, the Jews are likened to a flock of sheep or goats or calves or, in general, helpless domesticated animals. Animals that are domesticated because they're cared for by God.

They are His flock. He's the shepherd. And they are, therefore, like His livestock.

But the Gentiles throughout the prophets in the Old Testament are like carnivorous animals, predators. So that we find Daniel sees four successive Gentile empires rising out of the sea, and they are like a lion, a bear, a leopard, and another fierce beast. Both Isaiah and Jeremiah refer to Babylon as a lion.

And there are other places that speak of the Gentiles in this way. In Ezekiel chapter 37, where God is speaking of Israel in the imagery of His sheep, He says that when He saves His people, He'll eradicate the wild beasts from the land. And they will no longer be a prey to the Gentiles.

He specifically refers to the animals that prey upon the sheep as referring to the Gentiles. Here we have a listing of domesticated animals, and they are contrasted with predatory animals, and they lie down peaceably together. Imagery of God's flock and those formerly wild beasts, the Gentiles, who never had been domesticated by God's law.

Now they come under, and they live as peaceably as sheep. Notice the sheep don't become like the carnivores. The carnivores become like the sheep.

Because the sheep were domesticated by God's rule. So the Gentiles also come under God's rule. Now they behave like sheep.

The lion eats straw like an ox. It's transformed. It's got a new nature.

And so this, I believe, is what is being described here. And there's a couple of references, of course, to children. In verse 6 it says, a little child shall lead them.

Jesus said, he that would be chief among you must be like a little child. It's child-likeness. It's humility like a child that qualifies someone to be a leader.

And in verse 8, the nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole. The weaned child put his hand in the viper's den. It's not so much a reference to the child leading, but the child being invulnerable to deadly snakes.

And it says in verse 9, they shall not hurt or destroy my holy mountain. When we went over this before, I brought attention to Luke chapter 10. Jesus speaking to his disciples says in verse 19, Luke 10, 19.

Behold, I give you authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. That last line, nothing shall by any means hurt you, sounds like a paraphrase of they shall not hurt nor destroy. And I give you authority over serpents and scorpions.

The imagery is similar to that of the child being unharmed by the serpents. And of

course, Jesus equates the serpents here with all the power of the enemy, Satan. So this is talking about a spiritual invulnerability.

Even the little child who's a Christian has authority over the demonic powers and is delivered from their venom, as it were. Now when it says in verse 9, the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, this is an expression that is found also in Numbers and in Habakkuk. In Habakkuk, excuse me, chapter 2 and verse 14, it talks about this.

It talks about it in Numbers, in one of the prophecies of Balaam also. This idea of the, in one place it says the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the water covers the sea. Another says the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

And then it says the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, it combines them, shall cover the earth as the water covers the sea. We're not going to look at the passages to sort out which one is which, but the idea is the same in all three. That just as the water completely covers the sea, so the knowledge of the glory of the Lord will ultimately completely cover the earth.

Isaiah says the knowledge of the Lord. Maybe I should check and see if it's Habakkuk that has the knowledge of the glory. I forget which one has that.

Habakkuk 2.14 says the knowledge of the glory of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea. If you look at 2 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians 4.6 says, for it is God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, who has shown in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Notice that clumsy phrase, the light of the knowledge of the glory of God.

Well, the knowledge of the glory of God, he says he has revealed to us. We've received the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus. So in coming to know Jesus, we have come into the knowledge of the glory of God.

Now Habakkuk says that the knowledge of the glory of God will cover the earth as the water covers the sea. That's already happened to us. We have already now come into the knowledge of the glory of God, but apparently that's going to be much more widespread than it is today.

But that is not something that awaits the second coming of Christ necessarily. That's something that is the ultimate result of the present age as the gospel goes forward. Now, does that mean every last person is going to be a Christian? I don't think so.

Post-millennialists think so. But I don't think this is really saying every individual will necessarily be converted, but certainly every region of the earth will see the glory of God. Anyway, the point is that this is describing the advancing knowledge of the glory of God, which Paul says has happened to us already because we have come to know the

gospel and we know Jesus, we have come into the knowledge of the glory of God.

Well, that knowledge, that gospel is to fill the earth and indeed is filling the earth all over the world. The gospel is preached, and that is what is, I believe, discussed here. Now, in verse 10 it says, In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, who shall stand as a banner to the people.

For the Gentiles shall seek him, and his resting place shall be glorious. I've mentioned earlier when we were talking about this in a previous lecture that Paul actually quotes this verse, which kind of seals the deal. We know, therefore, that this is clearly talking about the present age because that's exactly how Paul applies it.

In Romans 15, 12, Paul, at this point, from verse 9, this is Romans 15, 9 through 12, Paul's quoting a series of Old Testament verses about the gospel coming to the Gentiles, which, of course, Paul sees as currently taking place through his ministry. And in Romans 15, 9, he says, And that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy as it is written. And then he quotes some Psalms, and he also quotes this verse in Isaiah, in verse 12.

Again, Isaiah says, There shall be a root of Jesse, and he who shall rise to reign over the Gentiles. In him the Gentiles will hope. This is no doubt the Septuagint version, and also it's a combination of part of verse 1 and part of verse 10 of Isaiah 11.

But Paul has this verse here in his mind. This is what he's quoting. So the Messiah reaches the Gentiles, and that somewhat confirms that the picture of the lion and the calf and so forth is a picture of Gentiles being included in the same body or reconciled together with Jews.

Verse 11 then says, It shall come to pass in that day that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people who are left. And the remnant, of course, is the remnant of Israel. But also, of course, the Gentiles who become part of that run by believing in the Jews' Messiah.

And he names a bunch of countries. As I pointed out before, these are ancient countries. This cannot be fulfilled literally with these countries, either in our time or in any future time, because many of them are no longer with us.

These are old countries that have changed. I mean, some of them are current. We still have Egypt, for example.

We still have the Jewish, Ethiopia, and so forth. But we don't have some of these. These are simply referring to what, in Isaiah's day, would be recognized as distant lands, distant Gentile lands.

And as such, they stand for the Gentile world in general. It says, he'll set up his banner, in verse 12, for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel and gather together

the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. Verses like this often have encouraged the dispensations to look at a gathering of Jews from all over the world into Israel in the last days, that is, into the geographical land of Israel in the Middle East, as being predicted.

But I think we've shown in previous lectures that this kind of language is referring to gathering people into the body of Christ, into the true Israel. Also, the envy of Ephraim shall depart, and the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off. Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.

That is, God's people will no longer have rivalries between them. They'll be one body in one kingdom. And they shall fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines toward the west.

Together, they shall plunder the people of the east. They shall lay their hand on the Edom and Moab. The people of Ammon will obey them.

These, of course, are countries that are all pretty much extinct now, all of them. And yet, what it means is the traditional enemies of God's people will be defeated. Now, flying down on the shoulder of the Philistines and, you know, the people of Ammon will obey them can refer to spiritual enemies that are defeated, like demons.

Or it could simply be a reference to the Gentiles through the Gentiles' submission to the gospel being conquered by the remnant. The remnant of Judah, of course, became Christians at Pentecost and thereafter. And then they went out to the Gentiles and, in a sense, began to conquer the Gentile world and bring Gentiles into submission to Christ.

That was, in fact, their commission. The great commission was to go and teach them to observe everything I've commanded you. And Paul said that we, our weapons are to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Going out, preaching the gospel, bringing everyone's thoughts into captivity to the obedience of Christ. That is submission to him that the people of Ammon and others will obey. So it probably, these enemies may not refer to spiritual enemies like demonic powers but actually to the Gentiles in general coming in to the kingdom and being conquered by the gospel itself.

The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt. With his mighty wind he will shake his fist over the river. Euphrates is implied.

Strike it in the seven streams and make men cross over dry shod. Now, the tongue of the sea of Egypt probably, although it's an unusual way of speaking probably refers to the crossing of the Red Sea. He certainly uses the word crossing over dry shod.

That's taken directly from Exodus when the Israelites crossed the Red Sea. He also talks

about the drying up of the river Euphrates which is something mentioned in Revelation chapter 16 to make way for the kings of the east. An allusion to probably the Persian conquest of Babylon where Cyrus rerouted the river Euphrates and his soldiers marched into Babylon under the walls in the dry riverbed.

They marched dry shod in the riverbed of the Euphrates. Both of these of course are similar because Israel escaped from Egypt by crossing the Red Sea and Israel escaped from Babylon by Cyrus conquering Babylon in this manner and liberating them. So there's a sense in which salvation in Christ is likened both to the Exodus and probably to the fall of Babylon and the return of the exiles at the command of Cyrus.

The drying up of the Euphrates and of the sea would be examples of this from the past. There will be a highway for the remnant of his people who will be left from Assyria as it was for Israel in the day that he came up from the land of Egypt. Again, like the Exodus.

A second Exodus. We've talked about this at length. We will not belabor it anymore because there's material ahead to cover.

This second six chapter section, which is chapters 7 through 12, of course ends with 12, which is a very short chapter and seems to be a continuation of chapter 11 in that it's talking about the Messianic era. It says, In that day you will say, O Lord, I will praise you. Though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away and you comfort me.

Behold, God is my salvation. I will trust and not be afraid. For YAH, that is Yahweh, abbreviated, is my strength and my song.

He also has become my salvation. I'm surprised these words have not, to my knowledge, been put to music since it actually says that we will say this. We will worship with these words.

That entire verses 1 and 2 would make a good Christian song of salvation because God's anger has turned away from us and he has comforted us and he is our salvation and it says in verse 3, Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation, living water. And it reminds us perhaps of Jesus' conversation with the woman at the well. He asked her for water and she said, I don't expect you Jews to use the same buckets with us Samaritans.

He said, Well, if you had known who I was, you would have asked me and I would have given you living water. And this conversation taking place at a well reminiscent of drawing water from another well, the wells of salvation. Obviously the water is the water of salvation.

It's living water as Jesus said he could provide. And in that day you will say, Praise the Lord, call upon his name, declare his deeds among the peoples, make mention that his name is exalted. Sing to the Lord for he has done excellent things.

This is known in all the earth. Cry out and shout, O inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst. Most of this chapter could be found in the Psalms rather than Isaiah.

I mean, it's just very much fairly typical of the worship in Old Testament terminology, but referring obviously to final celebration of worship, similar to what we find in Revelation chapter 15, where they sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb and simply praise God for his deliverance. Many of the songs in Revelation actually are of this type, celebrating God's salvation and deliverance. And here we have a short chapter that rounds out the section.

I say it rounds out the section because chapter 13 clearly begins a different section, a long section. And that is chapters 13 through 23. Now, many of the prophets devote a segment of their books to oracles against pagan nations.

The prophets were sent primarily to Jews, to their own people, to Israel and to Judah. A few exceptions, of course, Jonah we know was sent to Nineveh, which was Assyria. And Obadiah prophesies with the doom of Edom.

Nahum also prophesies against Nineveh. So there's three of the shorter prophets that actually direct their prophecies against pagan nations. The rest of the prophets are principally sent to their own people, Israel and Judah.

But those prophets that wrote the most did not confine their vision to God's complaints and judgments on their own people, but also looked beyond the borders to the pagan nations around them and registered what God's complaints were against them too and often threatened God's judgment upon them. Isaiah does that in chapters 13 through 23. Jeremiah does that in Jeremiah chapters 46 through 51.

Jeremiah 46 through 51 is a section in Jeremiah very similar to this segment of Isaiah. Ezekiel does this also. Ezekiel chapters 25 through 32.

These are long prophetic books, the longest we have. And each of them devotes a block of chapters to focusing on what God will do to Egypt or Edom or Tyre or Babylon or Moab or Ammon or the Philistines or any collection of these. Likewise, even a shorter prophet, Amos, has his first two chapters filled with this kind of oracle, short oracles in his case, against various nations.

Although Amos includes Israel and Judah in his list. There's, I think, if I'm not mistaken, I think seven oracles in the first two chapters of Amos. And one is about Israel, one is about Judah, and the others are about pagan nations.

But this section of Isaiah is all about pagan nations with the exception of one chapter, chapter 22, just before you get to the end of the section. Because this section ends with chapter 23. In chapter 22, the focus is on Judah, Isaiah's own country.

And I mentioned before, I think this may be strategic, that he's sticking Judah in the middle. Not in the middle, but before you reach the end of the section. He doesn't denounce the pagan nations first and then tack Judah on as a separate category.

Just before he finishes the section, he sticks Judah in there. To make sure that they understand he's including them as being not really distinguishable from pagans. The prophecy against Judah in chapter 22 then becomes part of a block of prophecies against all disobedient people.

All except Judah are the pagan nations around them. Now, chapters 13 and 14 are about Babylon. And I don't know that I'm going to, I'm certainly not going to comment on any of those.

I'm not sure if we'll read every verse, but we do need to follow the train of thought. Babylon is taken first. And it says, It's really referring to Cyrus and the Persians who conquered Babylon.

Cyrus was a pagan. But throughout Isaiah, whenever Cyrus is mentioned, he's spoken of as if it's God's servant. The one God is calling.

The one who's executing God's will. Cyrus is treated almost like he's a willing servant of Yahweh. Though at one point Isaiah says that Cyrus doesn't know Yahweh.

But he's nonetheless a pawn in Yahweh's hand. Just like Assyria was a saw or an axe in the hand of God punishing Israel, the northern kingdom. So Cyrus, the king of Persia, is going to be such a pawn, judging Babylon.

Now, we know that this is talking about the historic fall of Babylon. If you look further into the chapter, verse 17, it says, Now, it was the Medes and the Persians together that conquered Babylon. It was under the Persian, Cyrus.

But the Medes and the Persians had joined together. And so this is not some future destruction of Babylon, but the historic destruction of Babylon that is described. And that's important to note when you come to a passage like verses 9 and 10.

Because it says, Now, in the connection of the fall of Babylon, God calls this the day of the Lord. Now, when we come to the expression the day of the Lord when we read the New Testament, we're more accustomed to it being a reference to the second coming of Christ. Paul speaks about the day of Christ and the day of the Lord, and sometimes of the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

These terms all seem to refer to what Jesus called the last day, when he'll raise up his people on the last day. Paul associated the day of Christ as the end of the church's career on earth also. That God, who began a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ.

Or that God will confirm his work in you until the day of Christ, or the day of the Lord Jesus Christ, and so forth. So the day of the Lord in the New Testament is more often than not a reference to the last day. But in the Old Testament, the day of the Lord is somewhat more generic.

The day of the Lord is the day when God judges any particular nation. It's the day of the Lord for them. It is the day that God settles his score with that nation.

In this case, with Babylon. And it says, behold, the day of the Lord comes. Cruel, with both wrath and fierce anger.

And this is where Babylon fell to the Medes and the Persians. But it says in verse 10 that the constellations and the stars of heaven go dark. Even the sun and the moon go dark.

And this language we should become aware of because it's repeated in other places in the Old Testament. In chapter 32, or 34, excuse me. We read in Isaiah 34.

It says in verse 4, the host of heaven, meaning the stars, will be dissolved. The heavens should be rolled up like a scroll. All their hosts, meaning the stars, shall fall down as the leaf falls from the vine.

And the fruit falling as a fruit falling from a fig tree. The stars falling. The heavens rolled up like a scroll.

Sun, moon, and stars going dark. These are typical images that the Old Testament prophets use for the destruction of certain nations, some kingdoms, and so forth. In Ezekiel chapter 32, it's talking about Egypt.

And in this case about Babylon conquering Egypt. And it says in Ezekiel 32, 7. When I put out your light, I will cover the inhabitants and make its stars dark. I will cover the sun with a cloud and the moon shall not give her light.

So the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars are mentioned in a number of places and others besides. And in the New Testament, you'll find it in Revelation 6, when the sixth seal is broken. You'll find it in Matthew 24, when Jesus says, Immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened and the moon shall not give her light.

The stars also will be dark. And so we have, this is what we call apocalyptic imagery. If you're not familiar with its usage in the Bible, you'd think it was the end of the universe.

It's the end of the solar system anyway, and the stars too, so it'd be the whole universe. But it's really talking about something local, something military usually. It's talking about a military conquest and the end of a nation, or at least temporarily the end of it.

So that it's like its universe has collapsed and the stars are not giving their light anymore

to it. Now, in verse 19, it says, The hyenas will howl in their citadels, the jackals in their pleasant places. Her time is near to come and her days will not be prolonged.

Now, this is not exactly literal. It talks as if Babylon will be totally, you know, uninhabited. When I was younger, some prophecy teachers used to say, Well, you know, where Babylon used to be, no one really lives.

In fact, where it says the Arabians won't pitch their tent there, I was told that Babylon is a region where there's superstitions. The Arabs are afraid to camp there overnight and so forth, and therefore this is literally fulfilled. However, not having been there myself, I have to distrust reports like this.

After all, Saddam Hussein, in his lifetime, actually was rebuilding Babylon. And there were photographs of it, satellite photos and so forth that were published. And he actually seemed to be wanting to rebuild Babylon as a tourist attraction.

But the point is, there is some rebuilding. I don't know that he completed it. But the point here is that it will never rise again to what it was.

What Babylon was in its glory will be forever done. And when it talks about it will just be a desert with owls and ostriches and hyenas and so forth, this is really not very different than many of the passages in Isaiah we saw that spoke of the garden-like or the forest-like condition being reduced to a wilderness. This was essentially a figurative language.

And no doubt it is here too. It's not necessary to take this with absolute literalness. But in chapter 14, the prophecy against Babylon continues.

It says, For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob and will still choose Israel. Now, the fall of Babylon, therefore, is for Israel's sake. Because Israel has been taken captive into Babylon 70 years earlier.

And God has promised to restore them. So for Israel's sake, in order to fulfill his promises to them, he's going to cause Babylon to fall and they'll be released to go back. And it says, And settle them in their own land.

The strangers will be joined with them, that's Gentiles, and they will cling to the house of Jacob. Then people will take them and bring them to their place. And the house of Israel will possess them for servants and maids in the land of the Lord.

They will take them captive, whose captives they were, and rule over their oppressors. We don't know much of the details of this. When the Jews left Babylon, I don't know specific cases of them taking Babylonian slaves back with them.

This may, in fact, have literally happened. I don't believe there's any reference specifically to it in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which talks about this return of the

exiles. But it's not impossible that the Jews, suddenly vindicated, suddenly enriched by Cyrus giving them money to go and rebuild their temple and so forth, may very well have purchased local slaves, including Babylonian slaves, to take with them.

I can't vouch for it. But there's nothing that would make this impossible or even unlikely. Verse 3, It shall come to pass in the day the Lord gives you rest from your sorrow, that is Israel, from your fear and the hard bondage in which you were made to serve, that you will take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, how the oppressor has ceased, the golden city ceased, the Lord has broken the staff of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers, he who struck people in wrath with a continual stroke, he who ruled the nations in anger is persecuted and no one hinders.

In other words, Babylon was once the oppressor, now Babylon has fallen and is weakened and is now being oppressed and no one's going to help them. The whole earth is at rest and quiet, they break forth into singing. Indeed, the cypress trees rejoice over you and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, since you were cut down, no woodsman has come up against us.

That is, the nations that had been victimized by Babylon, now Babylon's no longer in power and there's no one fathering the nations anymore. At least Babylon is not. Hell from beneath, actually, shale should be what it says here, because the word hell is not in the Old Testament, but shale, which just means the place of the dead.

Shale from beneath is excited about you, to meet you at your coming. It stirs up the dead for you, all the chief ones of the earth, it has raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. They all shall speak and say to you, have you also become weak as we? Have you become like us? Your pomp is brought down to shale and the sound of your stringed instruments, the maggot is spread under you and worms cover you.

Now, the king of Babylon then is seen to be a mere mortal. He seemed like a god when he was conquering all the nations, but when he comes down, he comes down like any other man. And he finds himself in shale and poetically says that the others in shale will be stirred up to welcome him and say, oh, look at you, you're as weak as we are.

Now, this is really the only place I know of in the Old Testament that talks as if there are persons in shale who are conscious and say, could communicate. We have, obviously, the story of Jesus, Jesus' story about Lazarus and the rich man that has that kind of imagery. Many people believe it's not a true story, then it's not even a true to life story.

I think all scholars would agree that this is mere poetry here. It does not indicate that the people in shale are really alive. In fact, they have to be stirred up.

Shale has to stir them up and wake them up so they can see that the king of Babylon has fallen to their level as well. It's poetry, of course. It's impressionistic.

It's not necessarily affirming that this is the way things are in shale, really. Then he says, how are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning? How are you cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations? For you have said in your heart, I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God.

I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds. I will be like the most high.

Yet you should be brought down to shale, to the lowest depths of the pit. Those who see you will gaze at you and consider you, saying, is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house of his prisons? All the kings of the nations and all of them sleep in glory, everyone in his own house, but you are cast out of your grave like an abominable wretch, like the garment of those who are slain, thrust through with a sword, who go down to the stones of the pit like a corpse trodden underfoot and will not be joined with them in burial, because you have destroyed your land and slain your people. The brood of evildoers shall never be named.

Prepare slaughter for his children because of the iniquity of their fathers, lest they rise up and possess the land and fill the face of the world with cities. In other words, once the king of Babylon is slain, they say kill off his children too, because they might try to reassert their father's dominion again. You don't want to have that happening.

Usually when a king fell, his conquerors killed off his whole family, because if there would be an uprising against the new ruler, it was often the seed of the previous ruler that held popular support from the people who were still loyal to the old ruler who died. His sons would normally be his successors, and as long as they lived, they might try to reassert the power. So their children were usually destroyed when kings were conquered.

Now, of course, this reference to Lucifer in verse 12 is traditionally applied to Satan. In fact, Lucifer is almost universally used in popular parlance as a name for Satan. So much so that when you find the word Lucifer, you just think Satan, almost like it's a proper name.

Just like when you find the name Christ, you think, oh Jesus. No, it's another name for him. But is it? Lucifer, there's no place in the Bible that identifies Lucifer with Satan.

The word Lucifer has a meaning. It means morning star or star of the dawn. In most modern translations, in fact all of them, except for the King James and the New King James, Lucifer is translated along with the rest of the Hebrew words in the text.

Why not? Why not just translate it? It was the King James that treated it as a proper name. And they left it untranslated as if it was a person's name. But it isn't necessarily a

person's name.

Morning star is more like a title. Remember in the book of Revelation, chapter 22, Jesus is said to be the bright, the morning star. It's a title that Jesus assumes in Revelation 22, 16.

And here it is applied to apparently the King of Babylon. Verse 4 says you take up this proverb against the King of Babylon. There's no indication that the addressee has changed here.

In fact, the things that are said to so-called Lucifer are the same things that are said to the King of Babylon. It talks about going to Sheol and being greeted by and mocked by kings that were once your victims, now you're like them. It's almost the exact same prophecy.

Now, if the King of Babylon is called the morning star, which is the meaning of the name Lucifer, which as most translators agree should just be translated as morning star, and Jesus is called morning star, doesn't that confuse matters? It does for some people to say, why would Jesus be called by the same name as this person? Whoever it may be is bad, not good. But then Jesus in the New Testament is also called King of Kings. And so is Nebuchadnezzar.

The King of Babylon is called the King of Kings. Daniel in Daniel chapter 2 said to Nebuchadnezzar, you are King of Kings. These are simply titles of royalty, rulers.

A king who rules over other kings is a King of Kings. He might be referred to as the morning star as a means of flattery. And so Jesus is also a king.

Nebuchadnezzar was a king, so is Jesus. And some of the normal Middle Eastern titles for royalty would be applied to both because they're both kings. Actually, the word king when we apply it to Jesus is really in all other respects applied to ordinary kings.

To call Jesus a king is to adopt a term that we use to speak of men in a certain office. And we now say, now Jesus is the king. To call him the morning star would be to do the same thing, taking a royal title of sorts, which was applied to the King of Babylon when he was in power, and to apply it to Jesus, who's now the reigning king.

He's now the morning star. He's now the King of Kings. Now, there's really nothing in this passage to suggest that the morning star, who's addressed in verse 12, is anything other than the King of Babylon.

To suggest that he's an angel who fell, which is the popular view of this passage, just doesn't have any merit at all. For one thing, it says in verse 16, those who see you will gaze at you and consider you, saying, is this the man who made the earth tremble? The person addressed is a man, not an angel. He's a man.

He goes to Sheol with other men who die. He is said to be cast out of his grave in verse 19. The devil isn't buried in a grave.

Angels, as far as we know, are never buried in graves. He's thrust through with a sword in verse 19. He's not joined with others in burial, other kings.

All of this applies just to a man who's a king. Now, some people say, but wait a minute. What about his ambitions in verses 13 and 14? Aren't those ambitions something that a man could not have? He says, I will ascend into heaven.

I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I'll sit on the mount of the congregation, et cetera. Well, those ambitions are not impossible to be applied to the King of Babylon.

As a matter of fact, the Tower of Babel was the beginning of Babylon. And the Tower of Babel was, you know, that was exactly the ambition of the Babylonians or the early Babylonites. When they built the tower, they wanted to ascend up into heaven above the stars of God.

But even if this were not literally true, it is the case that this kind of language is used figuratively in scripture. In Obadiah, for example, it's talking about Edom. In Obadiah, verses 3 and 4, it's talking to Edom and says, the pride of your heart has deceived you, you who dwell in the clefts of the rock, whose habitation is high, you who say in your heart, who will bring me down to the ground? Though you exalt yourself as high as the eagle, and though you set your nest among the stars, from there I will bring you down, says the Lord.

This is poetic hyperbole. The Edomites didn't really have their nest above the stars. In Matthew chapter 11, Jesus is talking about some of the cities that he had preached in, Capernaum and such.

And he actually says to Capernaum this, in Matthew 11, 23, and you, Capernaum, who are exalted into heaven, will be brought down to Hades, or Sheol. Now, Capernaum is exalted into heaven, but will be brought down to Sheol. Actually, if you have cross-references in your Bible, look at Matthew 11, 23, and the cross-reference there, it will say Isaiah 14, 13.

In other words, Jesus is alluding to what is said to the morning star in chapter 14, and using the same language to talk about Capernaum. Well, if it could be applied to Capernaum, if it could be applied to Edom, there's certainly no criminality in applying it to Babylon. But Babylon seeks to ascend to the highest position, but God brings it down to the lowest position.

This is figurative language. You will be brought down to Sheol, Isaiah 14, 15 says. So this language about the king of Babylon is just the king of Babylon as near as we can tell.

There's no indication here that there's anyone other than the human king intended. Now, just real quickly, verse 22. For I will rise up against them, says the Lord of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name and remnant and offspring and posterity, says the Lord.

I will also make it a possession for the porcupine, the marshes of muddy water. I will sweep it with the broom of destruction, says the Lord of hosts. The Lord of hosts has sworn, saying, surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass.

And as I have purposed, so shall it stand, that I will break the Assyrian in my land and on my mountains tread him underfoot. So he's done talking about Babylon now. He's talking about Assyria briefly here, just for a few verses.

Then his yoke shall be removed from them and his burden removed from their shoulders. This is the purpose that is purposed against the whole earth. This is the hand that is stretched out over all the nations.

For the Lord of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back? Babylon will fall. Assyria will fall. These are the great nations that were invincible in their day, but each of them have an end to their career as well.

And then there's a brief prophecy against the Philistines. Verse 28, this is the burden which came in the year that King Ahaz died. Do not rejoice, all you of Philistia, because the rod that struck you is broken.

Meaning Ahaz. Ahaz had apparently attacked the Philistines. The Philistines had joined the Confederacy, by the way, with Israel and Syria.

And they were among those who were trying to get Ahaz to join them. And he was resisting. And he apparently, without being recorded, had attacked the Philistines in resisting them.

And he was the rod that struck them. But he's now broken. He died.

For out of the serpent's roots will come forth a viper, and its offspring will be a fiery flying serpent. The firstborn of the poor will feed, and the needy will lie down in safety. I will kill your roots with famine, and I will slay your remnant, the Philistines.

They're gone now. There are no more Philistines. Wail, O gate, cry, O city.

The Philistia are dissolved. For smoke will come from the north, and no one will be alone in his appointed times. What will one answer, the messengers of the nation? That the Lord has founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall take refuge in it.

Since this is the year that King Ahaz died, it seems to be telling the Philistines that though Ahaz had resisted them, and apparently even struck them in some way, probably in a military resistance that he provided, that he's dead, but their problems are not over.

There will be, out of the roots, out of the serpent's roots will come forth a viper. By the way, Shalmaneser III had died recently.

That was the Assyrian that the Philistines had also resisted, but out of his roots came his son, who conquered the Philistines, and so this is what's referred to. Don't get too confident. Just because some of your enemies have died, you're not out of the woods.

You're going to be wiped out. Well, we're out of time for this. We're going to take the rest of chapters 15 through 23 next time, and we'll get through that big section.