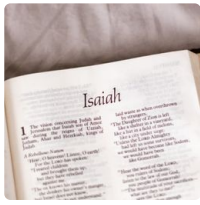


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Isaiah 15 - 23



Isaiah - Steve Gregg

Isaiah delivers a series of prophecies against pagan nations, including Moab, which is laid waste and destroyed. While Isaiah seems somewhat sympathetic towards Moab and the horrible things that the Assyrians do to them, he conveys a message of judgement against oppressors and those who engage in idolatry. The prophecies speak to the importance of staying true to one's faith and not turning away from God.

Transcript

Well, we broached the section of Isaiah where he's giving a series of prophecies against pagan nations, and we looked at chapters 13 and 14, which contain lengthy prophecy against Babylon, and shorter prophecies against Assyria and Philistia. The Philistines had, as I said, joined with Syria and Israel in what was intended to be a pact against Assyria. But all three of those nations were conquered by Assyria, and that is what is being predicted at the end of chapter 14 when the Philistines are told that they'll be defeated, and they were.

Now, we come to Moab in chapter 15 and 16. Amazing, such a small country would get such a long prophecy devoted to it. But the Moabites also were part of that confederacy.

They also joined against Assyria, and Egypt did too. There were a lot of these countries that were joining together. Judah was one of the few that did not, and Judah is the only one that was really spared at this time because Assyria did come down and defeat these other nations of the coalition, but at that time did not attack Judah.

They did attack Judah later on, but Moab had joined the confederacy, and it fell to Sargon along with the Philistines and Israel and others. They were all defeated. And so these prophecies are in the context of the Assyrians defeating these nations around Judah.

It says, the burden against Moab, because in the night R of Moab, we're going to have the names of towns in Moab, R is one of them, R of Moab is laid waste and destroyed because in the night, Kir of Moab is laid waste and destroyed. He has gone up to the temple of Dibon to the high places to weep. In the night, Moab will wail over Nebo, over Mediba.

On all their heads will be baldness, which is a sign of wailing and mourning, and every beard cut off. In their streets, they will clothe themselves with sackcloth. On the tops of the houses and in the streets, everyone will wail, weeping bitterly.

Heshbon and Elilah will cry out. Their voice shall be heard as far as Jahaz. Therefore, the armed soldiers of Moab will cry out.

His life will be burdensome to him. That is, Moab is personified as a man whose life is burdensome. My heart will cry out for Moab.

Isaiah actually finds himself somewhat sympathetic toward Moab in this because of the horrible things that the Assyrians do. By the way, when the Assyrians conquered people, it was not a pretty thing. They did horrendous things to their defeated captives.

Isaiah, who perhaps does not have that much of a grudge against Moab himself for any reason, is seeing the horrible things, and his heart is going out to them. My heart will cry out for Moab. His fugitives shall flee to Zoar like a three-year-old heifer.

For by the ascent of Luhith, they will go up with weeping. For in the way of Horanaim, they will raise up a cry of destruction. For the waters of Nimrim will be desolate.

For the green grass has withered away. The grass fails. There is nothing green.

Therefore, the abundance they have gained and what they have laid up, they will carry away to the brooks of the willows. For the cry has gone all around the borders of Moab. The wailing to Eglam, and its wailing to Bir Elim.

For the waters of Dimon will be full of blood, because I will bring more upon Dimon, lions upon him who escapes from Moab, and on the remnant of the land." Now, when it talks about those who have escaped from Moab, it now pictures those who escape, refugees from Moab, escaping from the war where Assyria is slaughtering them, and apparently probably coming to Judah, asking for refuge. And the first five verses are picturing these refugees from Moab coming and seeking shelter. So, send the lamb to the ruler of the land.

That is, they're sending gifts to Judah to get their favor so that they will take them in. From Selah to the wilderness, from the mount of the daughter of Zion, to the mount of the daughter of Zion. So, a lamb is being sent to Jerusalem as a gift to the king, hoping to seek his favor so that they'll take in the refugees.

For it shall be as a wandering bird thrown out of the nest, so shall the daughters of Moab be at the fords of Arnon. Take counsel, execute judgment, make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day. Hide the outcasts, do not betray him who escapes.

Let my outcasts dwell with you, O Moab. Be a shelter to them from the face of the

spoiler, for the extortioner is at an end. When devastation ceases, the oppressors are consumed out of the land.

In mercy, the throne will be established and one will sit on it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging and seeking justice and hastening righteousness. Now, this sounds like it's a reference to the Messianic Age thrown in here, and it could be, although it may be that the Moabites are saying, you know, it befits a nation that serves Yahweh like David did to be merciful. In mercy, the throne will be established, saying, you know, if you show mercy to us Moabites, God, your God, will no doubt bless you for that and establish your throne.

David actually had friendly terms with Moab. When David was pursued by Saul, David was afraid that since David was hard to catch, Saul might take his family, might just go down to Bethlehem and arrest Jesse and the brothers of David and hold them to get David to surrender himself. And so David, knowing this was a possibility, took his family down to Moab, and he asked the Moabites to keep them there.

Now, perhaps because David had some Moabite blood in him. Ruth, his great-grandmother, was a Moabite, and it may be that there was some sense of family tie there that the Moabites saw David as sort of a remote relative of theirs and was willing to do this. Of course, Jesse, his father, was even closer to Ruth generation-wise than David was, just the grandson of Ruth.

So there was Moabite alliance there. So the Moabites, perhaps remembering David's friendship with them, says, listen, the throne of David will be established as you show mercy to people like us who are fleeing. And don't, you know, it says, hide the outcast.

Do not betray him who escapes. Verse 3 is basically saying, shelter us. Make your shadow like the night in the middle of the day.

That is, the heat of the day is relieved by the night, and therefore shelter us like shade from the sun. Poetic language. But basically the outcasts of Moab fleeing from the Assyrian invasion of their land are seeking refuge in Jerusalem.

Verse 6, we have heard of the pride of Moab. He is very proud of his haughtiness and his pride and his wrath. Now, we've seen earlier that this is one of the things that offends God most.

That's one of the things he complained most frequently about Israel and Judah and Assyria. And in the context of describing his judgment of them, his complaint more often than not was about their arrogance. Obviously God, when he sees someone proud, just takes that like seeing a guy with a chip on his shoulder that needs to be knocked off.

And here's Moab. They're following the same path of pride, and no surprise, they come under judgment. It says, his lies shall not be so.

At the end of verse 6, there's Moab's lies. Probably their lies, they're boasting about their invulnerability. That's a lie.

They're not invulnerable. It will not be so. Therefore Moab shall wail for Moab.

They'll wail for themselves. Everyone shall wail for the foundations of Ker, Hereseth you shall mourn. Surely they are stricken for the fields of Heshbon languish, and the vine of Sibma.

These are, again, all Moabite cities, of course, or towns. The lords of the nations have broken down its choice plants, which have reached to Jazer, and wandered through the wilderness. Her branches are stretched out.

They are gone over the sea. Therefore I will bewail the vine of Sibma, with weeping of Jazer. I will drench you with my tears, O Heshbon and Elila, for battle cries have fallen over your summer fruits and your harvest.

Now, in the most literal sense, this must mean that the Assyrians have come through and wiped out their crops, which was, of course, one of the things that would happen in an invasion. Although it talks about their branches are stretched out and gone over the sea, it might be speaking figuratively, as Judah is considered to be like a plant. In the context of talking about Moab, they have, as it were, their own plant, and their branches, maybe their refugees, have fled overseas or to other countries to escape the wrath that was coming upon them.

Gladness is taken away, and joy from the plentiful field. In the vineyards there will be no singing, nor will there be shouting. No treaders will tread out the wine in their presses.

I have made their shouting cease. Therefore my heart shall resound like a harp for Moab, and my inner being for Ker, Herez. And it shall come to pass, when it is seen that Moab is weary on the high place, that he will come to his sanctuary to pray, but he will not prevail.

Apparently meaning that he will come either to Jerusalem, to the sanctuary there, as in the early part of verse 16, they're fleeing there, or more likely, they will come to the sanctuary of their own deity and will not find their deity able to help them. In chapter 15, verse 2, it says, he, meaning the Moabite, has gone up to the temple and Dibon, to the high places to weep, apparently gone to their own sanctuary, their own god to seek help. Their god would be Chemosh, and Chemosh has not been able to help them.

They don't prevail. This is the word which the Lord has spoken concerning Moab since that time. But now, the Lord has spoken, saying, within three years, as the years of a hired man, the glory of Moab will be despised, with all the great multitude, and the remnant will be very small and feeble.

Now, these verses seem to be saying that the previous prophecy to Moab had been an earlier prophecy. Isaiah probably collected these. These prophecies were probably given at different times against different nations, and then when the book was organized, they were all organized together, put in together.

But it sounds like verse 13 is saying all these things that have been said in chapters 15 and 16 were prophecies that Isaiah has been saying for some time now. But now, at this point, he says, I've got a time limit. I've been telling you there's going to be this general destruction, but now I'm telling you it's going to be within three years.

And so the prophet actually sets a time limit on the fulfillment. The rebellion against Assyria, which included Israel, Syria, Egypt, Moab, and the Philistines, which was crushed by the Assyrians, the rebellion lasted three years. And therefore, it was apparently, Isaiah is saying within three years, you're going to be crushed.

He must have given this prophecy at the beginning of that rebellion of those Confederate nations against Assyria. Okay, now, Syria and Israel, we've talked about before. And there have been prophecies against them previously, but we have them again.

Primarily, it looks like this is going to be a prophecy against Israel. But Damascus is mentioned first. Damascus is the capital of Syria, or Aram, and was Confederate, as we know, with Israel when they were coming against Judah.

It says, the burden against Damascus, will cease from being a city, and it will be a ruinous heap. The cities of Arorah are forsaken. They will be for flocks, which lie down, and no one will make them afraid.

This is exactly what was said about Babylon, as we saw in chapter 13. And as I said at that point, it's not quite literal. The city of Babylon was not razed to the ground and never inhabited again.

And nor is that true of Damascus. It's obvious that these prophecies employ hyperbole. I mean, otherwise, we have to say the prophecies just failed to come true.

But I don't think that's it. I think that we recognize that throughout the books of the prophets, they're written in poetry. They use hyperbole.

And to say, you're going down, your days are over, is said in these very graphic ways. Sometimes, as it were, overstating the exact fulfillment, but not because of mistaken, but because of the use of hyperbole deliberately. In verse 3, then, it turns to Israel, or Ephraim, which is, again, in league with the pagan nations.

It says, the fortress also will cease from Ephraim, the kingdom from Damascus. So this is treating Israel and Syria together as a confederacy, and thus, as a pagan force. The kingdom from Damascus and the remnant of Syria, they will be as the glory of the

children of Israel, says the Lord of hosts.

That is, the glory of the children of Israel is fallen, and so will Syria be. Or maybe it's saying, the remnant will survive as the remnant of Israel. It's not entirely clear here, but the remnant will be very small in this case.

In that day, it shall come to pass that the glory of Jacob will wane, and the fatness of his flesh will grow lean. It shall be as when the harvester gathers the grain and reaps the heads with his arm. It shall be as he who gathers heads of grain in the valley of Ephraim, yet gleaning grapes will be left in it, like the shaking of an olive tree, two or three olives at the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in its most fruitful branches, says the Lord God.

Now, what he's saying here about Syria and Israel is that all that will be left will be very small remnant, a little bit like when they would shake the olive tree. That's how they get the olives down. When it was time to harvest the olives, they'd shake the tree.

The really ripe olives, the ones that were ready to be eaten, would actually fall down from the shaking. But there would be a few resistant ones at the high branches they couldn't reach. They're going to leave those behind.

The tree will have just a few olives left on it, or a few grapes on the vine, as it mentions in verse 6. The idea of gleanings here is what is in mind, that when they would harvest wheat, when they would bring in the vintage for the vineyard, when they would harvest the olives, they would take the majority, but they'd leave behind gleanings. When you're gathering wheat, it's just not convenient to stoop down and grab every head of grain that falls on the ground. So you just grab, in a large way, the harvest and go and take it in and thresh it.

But left behind are individual heads of grain that fall on the ground, a few that may be attached to the stock that didn't come off easily when you're passing through. The gleanings were actually left for the poor. The poor were permitted to go after the harvesters and just take what they found that was edible and take it home.

That was in the law. And that practice is referred to as sort of like what's going to be left of Israel and Syria after this judgment is no more than like the gleanings after a general harvest. A general destruction leaves very few remnant members.

Verse 7, In that day a man will look to his Maker, and his eyes will have respect for the Holy One of Israel. He will not look to the altars, the work of his hands. He will not respect what his fingers have made, nor the wooden images, nor the incense altars.

And so I believe what it's saying here is that remnant that survives will have learned their lesson and will no longer worship idols. There will be a remnant that's saved, but only a small remnant. And they will look to God then instead of their idols.

In that day his strong cities will be as a forsaken bough and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel, and there will be desolation. Now when it talks about an uppermost branch that's left because of the children of Israel, it's talking of course about again the imagery of the olive tree. It's been shaken and they leave behind a few grapes or a few olives at the top of a branch that they can't easily reach and the poor among the children of Israel can go and collect those.

So it's going to be like that. Their chief cities, their strong cities are going to be just like that, just a few people surviving. Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation and have not been mindful of the rock of your stronghold, therefore you will plant pleasant plants and set out foreign seedlings.

And in the day that you make your plant to grow, and in the morning you will make your seed to flourish, but the harvest will be a heap of ruins in the day of grief and desperate sorrow. In other words, you may be able to plant your crops, but you're not really going to ever get your harvest. Woe to the multitude of many people who make the noise like the roaring of the seas, and to the rushing of nations that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters.

The nations will rush like the rushing of many waters, but God will rebuke them and they will flee far away and be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind, like a rolling thing, like a tumbleweed in other words, before the whirlwind. Then behold it, Eventide, trouble, and before the morning he is no more. This is the portion of those who plunder us and the lot of those who rob us.

Since the context here is a prophecy against Syria and Israel, us must mean Judah. Syria and Israel were seeking to defeat Judah in the days of Ahaz, and yet their fate will be that they will blow away like a tumbleweed. They'll disappear overnight as it were, before morning, they're no more.

Now there's a prophecy against Ethiopia and Egypt. Actually, Ethiopia is mentioned in chapter 18, Egypt in chapter 19, and both of them together in chapter 20. So we've got a three-chapter section, and Cush is really the Hebrew word here.

We have Ethiopia in our translation, but the Hebrew word is Cush, which included in those days what we call Ethiopia, the Sudan, and Somaliland. Today would be those lands were all part of what's called Cush. In the time of Hezekiah, Cush and Egypt had merged into a single country, and that seems to be the case here.

That seems to be why Cush and Egypt are treated together. They had merged into a single entity under the 25th dynasty of Egypt, which happened to be Ethiopians. That is, Egypt's 25th dynasty, which was ruling at this time, were of Ethiopian ethnic origin.

So there's quite a blending of Cush and Egypt, or Ethiopia and Egypt at this time. So it

says, Woe to the land shadowed with the buzzing wings. I wonder if they're referring to locust plagues that frequently plagued North Africa, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia, which sends ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of reed, on the waters saying, Go, swift messengers, to a nation tall and smooth of skin, to a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation powerful and treading down, whose land the rivers divide.

This is, as I believe, a reference to Egypt and Ethiopia, and perhaps a reference to the fact that messengers were sent by Judah seeking aid from Egypt against Assyria. We know that this was a bad call, but there were those in Judah who advised it, and I believe there were some communications sent, some negotiations made. Egypt actually never showed up to help, but I believe Judah had already sent gifts down and had made some arrangements for Egypt to help that just never materialized.

Now, in other words, the messengers from Judah are swiftly going down to these people who are described as smooth of skin. Of course, these are dark-skinned people, and apparently the Jews thought of them as having smooth skin, particularly smooth skin. They're a terrible people.

A nation powerful and treading down, whose land the rivers divide. Now, people who are looking for America in the Bible often quote this verse. Our land is divided by rivers.

We're a strong people from our origin. We're a tall people, a smooth-skin, at least a few of us, so this must be America. Well, are we the land that's beyond the river of Ethiopia? I don't think so.

All the inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth, when he lifts up a banner on the mountains, you see it, and when he blows the trumpet, you hear it. For so the Lord said to me, I will take my rest, I will look from my dwelling place like clear heat and sunshine, like a cloud of dew in the heat of harvest. For before the harvest, when the bud is perfect and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he will both cut off the sprigs with pruning hooks and take away and cut down the branches.

They will be left together for the mountain birds of prey and for the beasts of the earth. The birds of prey will summer on them and all the beasts of the earth will winter on them. Now, why these particular images are used, I don't know, but they're fairly familiar images of this agricultural sort, wild animal sort.

This is just really talking about invasion. This is talking about the Assyrians conquering the coalition, which included Egypt and Ethiopia along with the others. In that time, a present will be brought to the Lord of Hosts from a people tall and smooth of skin and from a people terrible from their beginning onward, a nation powerful and treading down, whose land the rivers divide to the place of the name of the Lord of Hosts, to Mount Zion.

Now, at that time, a present will be brought to the Lord from these people. It suggests that the Ethiopian, Egyptian people will actually worship God or else maybe send a gift to the people of Judah. Maybe there was some small encouragement sent back with these messengers who were looking for aid.

Egypt never really did show up and help Judah ever in any of its attempts. Egypt was always a nearby nation that Judah was tempted to seek help from whenever there were larger nations like Assyria or Babylon coming against them. But Egypt was always a broken reed that never did provide any real assistance.

But here it talks about the people down in Africa sending a gift up to Zion. This can be, of course, spiritualized as a reference to Gentiles coming to the Messiah, but I don't know that that's intended here. It may be that as the messengers, swift messengers in verse 2 have gone down to Egypt to negotiate something.

Well, something is being sent back, perhaps some kind of token of agreement that they'll be in coalition. It's hard to really know the specifics when the language is so poetic and so difficult to attach to specifics. In chapter 19, the burden against Egypt.

Behold, the Lord rides on a swift cloud and will come into Egypt. The idols of Egypt will totter at his presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt in its midst. This is, of course, the Assyrians coming against Egypt.

Although it is said to be the Lord riding on a swift cloud, we've certainly pointed this verse out on occasion as a cross reference to some New Testament passages that talk about Jesus coming on clouds. It's obviously the same language, the same imagery. God coming on a cloud means an army coming to invade at God's behest. God is the one who sends this judgment, so it's like God coming in the person of the agents, the armies that he sends.

In this case, the Assyrians. I will set Egyptians against Egyptians. Everyone will fight against his brother and everyone against his neighbor, city against city, kingdom against kingdom.

The spirit of Egypt will fail in its midst. I will destroy their council, and they will consult the idols and the charmers, the mediums, and the sorcerers. And the Egyptians I will give into the hand of a cruel master, which would be Assyria, and a fierce king will rule over them, says the Lord, the Lord of hosts.

The waters will fail from the sea, and the river will be wasted and dried up. Rivers will turn foul, and the brooks of defense will be emptied and dried up. The reeds and the rushes will wither.

The papyrus reeds by the river, by the mouth of the river, and everything sown by the river will wither, be driven away, and be no more. The fishermen also will mourn all those

who, all those who will lament, who cast hooks into the river, and they will languish who spread nets on the waters. Moreover, those who work in fine flax and those who weave fine fabric will be ashamed, and its foundations will be broken.

All who make wages will be troubled of soul. People in every line of work, in other words, are going to be having occasion to mourn and weep because of the national disaster. Surely the princes of Zohan, which is an Egyptian city, are fools.

Pharaoh's wise counselors give foolish counsel. How do you say to Pharaoh, I am the son of the wise, the son of ancient kings? Where are they? Where are your wise men? Let them tell you now, and let them know what the Lord of hosts has purposed against Egypt. In other words, the wise men of Egypt who are no doubt those of verses 3 and 4, especially verse 3, who consult idols and charmers and mediums, they can't tell what the fate of Egypt is.

But Isaiah, Yahweh's prophet can. The counselors of the king of Egypt don't know what God's up to because they don't know God. They don't know what the Lord of hosts has purposed against Egypt.

The princes of Zohan have become fools. The princes of Noth, which is Thebes, are deceived. They have also deluded Egypt.

Those who are the mainstay of its tribes, the Lord has mingled a perverse spirit in their midst, and they have caused Egypt to err in all their work, in all her work, as a drunken man staggers in his vomit. Neither will there be any work for Egypt, which the head or the tail, palm, branch, or bulrush may do. Now, one thing interesting here is there's reference to the fact that they seek occult means of guidance.

Idols, charmers, mediums, sorcerers in verse 3. And it says in verse 14, the Lord has mingled a perverse spirit in their midst. That is, they've gone kind of nuts. Their counselors don't know how to give good counsel.

It's all a spiritual delusion that apparently God has brought upon them, perhaps because of their occult involvement. There's not many places in the Bible that actually tell us how it is that evil spirits come upon people or how people become demon-possessed. In the New Testament, we find many references to people demon-possessed, but never any indication of how they got that way.

And that being the case, we might look to the Old Testament, and there it's rather confusing because the only people we know who had evil spirits there, if we learn how they got them, it's usually the Lord sent them. An evil spirit from the Lord came against Saul. An evil spirit from the Lord came against the people of Shechem in the days after Gideon and confused them.

We have God sending a lion spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets in 1 Kings 22. Evil

spirits seem to be a judgment from God in many cases. Now, we also read in the law of people who are not specifically said to receive their demons from God who are said to have them.

People who have a familiar spirit usually were mediums, witches. They had a demon. They were demon-possessed.

They had a familiar spirit, but we're not told how the familiar spirit came to them. It may be, in fact, that the familiar spirit came to them as a result of their following occult practices. In this case, these people are said to be consulting wizards and mediums and so forth, and then God sends a perverse spirit among them to confuse them and so forth.

God sends them a strong delusion. Perhaps this is saying that demons often do afflict people as a result of their involvement in the occult, although sometimes people who are involved in the occult are said to be empowered by demons in the first place, like fortune tellers, like the spirit of Python that was cast out of the fortune teller in Philippi in Acts chapter 16, a girl with a demonic spirit. It enabled her to do occult things, so it's not sure which came first, the chicken or the egg.

Was she involved in the occult and the demon came, or did the demon come that made her able to be a fortune teller? The connection between the occult and demons, however, is made in a number of ways. Exactly the relationship between the two is never taught on in a didactic portion of the scripture. Verse 16, In that day Egypt will be like women and will be afraid and fear because of the waving of the hand of the Lord of hosts which he waves over it.

And the land of Judah will be a terror to Egypt. Everyone who makes mention of it will be afraid of him in himself because the counsel of the Lord of hosts which he has determined against it. I'm not sure why the land of Judah would be a terror to Egypt.

It may simply be saying that Egypt would be so intimidated and so given over to fear that even a small bordering country like Judah would intimidate them. Not that there's any reason to be intimidated by Judah, but that they'd be afraid of everything, even little countries that are not much of a threat. Hard to say.

Now, this passage at the end of chapter 19 is messianic. It doesn't mention the Messiah, but it talks about the highway that is in so many of the messianic age prophecies. And Syria and Egypt, who are enemies in this particular context, now become friends along with Judah.

All become the people of God. It's a reference, as I pointed out earlier, to the Gentiles and Jews becoming one in the body of Christ, but it's told in imagery of Old Testament figures, the Syria, Egypt, a highway in the desert, and so forth. In that day, five cities in the land of Egypt will speak the language of Canaan and swear by the Lord of hosts.

One will be called the city of destruction. In that day, there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt and a pillar to the Lord at its border. And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt.

For they will cry to the Lord because of the oppressors and he will send them a savior and a mighty one and he will deliver them. Then the Lord will be known to Egypt and the Egyptians will know the Lord in that day and will make sacrifice and offering. Yes, they will make a vow to the Lord and perform it.

Now, this is language of the old covenant worship, offering sacrifices, making vows. These are things that people did under the temple system, but it's actually talking about spiritual worship. It's talking about the kingdom of the Messiah, and therefore, the imagery of Old Testament worship forms stands for that of more New Testament type worship, more spiritual in nature, but described in terms of the old ritual.

And the Lord will strike Egypt. He will strike and heal it. They will return to the Lord and he will be entreated by them and heal them.

In that day, there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria and the Assyrian will come into Egypt, this time not to invade, but to fellowship, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians will serve with the Assyrians. In that day, Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed is Egypt, my people, and Assyria, the work of my hands, and Israel, my inheritance. Since, of course, my people, the work of my hands, my inheritance are all terms used of Israel in the Old Testament, the idea that Egypt and Assyria will be called by these terms, too, means that there will be a oneness under God of these former enemies, Gentiles and Jews.

Of course, more Gentiles than Jews. Assyria and Egypt outnumber Israel, but they will be with Israel in a new confederacy, and that will be under the Messiah. Chapter 20 is really short.

It's about Isaiah's active vision. It's the last chapter that has to do with Egypt and Eviopia. He's going back now to talk about the judgment coming on Egypt.

It says, In the year that Tartan came to Ashdod, Ashdod was a Philistine city, and Tartan was the Assyrian who came to attack the Philistines who were involved in this coalition against Assyria. This year, the Philistine revolt was from 713 to 711 B.C. It was in 711 B.C. that Sargon crushed Ashdod, and Tartan was, I believe, the commander-in-chief of the armies under Sargon. So Tartan was not the Assyrian king, but the Assyrian general.

It was Sargon. When Sargon, the king of Assyria, sent him, and he fought against Ashdod and took it. So the Philistine city, Ashdod, its rebellion against Assyria was crushed here.

At the same time, the Lord spoke by Isaiah, the son of Amoz, saying, Go and remove the

sackcloth from your body and take your sandals off your feet. And he did so, walking naked and barefoot. It's interesting this is spoken in the third person.

Isaiah, someone's talking about Isaiah. He walked around naked. Then the Lord said, Just as my servant Isaiah has walked naked and barefoot three years for a sign and a wonder against Egypt and Ethiopia, so shall the king of Assyria lead away the Egyptians as prisoners and the Ethiopians as captives, young and old, naked and barefoot, with their buttocks uncovered to the shame of Egypt.

Then they shall be afraid and ashamed of Ethiopia, their expectation, and Egypt their glory. And the inhabitants of the territory will say in that day, Surely such is our expectation. Wherever we flee for help to be delivered from the king of Assyria, how shall we escape? So Isaiah acts out his prophecy.

This is the only acted prophecy Isaiah does. Some prophets do more. Ezekiel particularly does a lot of them.

But this is, he's acting the part of an exile from Egypt going into captivity, carried off by Assyria and with his butt showing, which is strange. A strange thing for God to have the prophet do. But definitely got the attention of the people, I'm sure.

And that's what these acted parables were for. They're supposed to be weird. Makes people say, What? What's going on here? What's this about? And then they get the answer.

Now, interestingly, chapter 21 is the burden against the wilderness of the sea. It's very clear that this is Babylon. I mean, this is stated plainly in verse 9. Look, here comes a chariot of men with a pair of horsemen.

And he answered and said, Babylon is fallen, is fallen. And so burden of the wilderness of the sea is obviously a poetic name for Babylon. Why? It's not clear.

The word sea here may very well refer to the Gentiles rather than any particular sea since Babylon isn't necessarily bordering a coastline. So the sea may simply refer to the Gentile world in general. And Babylon being representative in its day, this would be looking forward then to the time beyond Isaiah's time when Babylon would rise and be significant.

And then, of course, looks at its fall. Both this and chapters 13 and 14 are looking way beyond Isaiah's time because Babylon in Isaiah's time was not really a large, threatening country. And it didn't fall until much later.

And it mentions specifically the Medes and the Persians involved here in verse 2. A distressing vision is declared to me. The treacherous dealer deals treacherously, and the plunderer plunders. Go up, O Elam.

Elam equals the Persians. At this time, they were an ally with Babylon, but later they became its conqueror. That is, in Isaiah's day, Elam and Babylon were in league.

But he prophesies a time a couple hundred years off from his time when the Persians would no longer be in league with Babylon but would be the conquerors of Babylon and Medea. So the Medes and the Persians are here mentioned. I don't want to read all this only because I'm out of time.

We don't have time to read all of it. But a lot of cities of Edom then are mentioned. Apparently a separate, very short prophecy against Edom in verses 11 and 12.

Duma and Seir. Duma, by the way, the burden against Duma, the Septuagint reads against Idumea, which is Edom. Duma is actually a tribe in the North Arabian Desert.

And so it would seem strange since this is a prophecy against Edom, or it would be strange to talk about Mount Seir in verse 11, which is part of Edom, why would it mention Duma? But like I said, the Septuagint reads Idumea, so it would really be a burden against Edom. And he calls me out of Seir, which is the mountainous region which was possessed by Edom. Watchmen, what of the night? Watchmen, what of the night? The watchmen said, the morning comes, and also the night.

If you will inquire, inquire, return, come back. This is about as vague as any prophecy I've ever encountered. Apparently it is saying that refugees from Edom are waiting for news of how the battle's going at home in Edom.

And they're saying, well, watchmen, any news? What's going on? How's the night going? And he's saying, well, the morning's coming, but it's not going to be good for very long. The night's coming again. It's very, very, almost impossible to know exactly what this prophecy means.

At least I have contemplated it many times and don't make a whole lot of sense of it. Then there's this burden against Arabia at the end of chapter 21. The burden against Arabia in the force of Arabia you will lodge, O you traveling companies of the Dedanites, O inhabitants of the land of Tima.

Bring water to him who is thirsty and their bread they met with, they met him, excuse me, with their bread they met him who fled, for they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, from the bent bow, from the distress of war. I wonder whether this is referring to the Edomites fleeing to the Arabian tribes. The Dedanites and Tima are the North Arabian tribes and may well be receiving Edomites who are fleeing from battle as mentioned in the previous section and telling to bring water and bread to those who are fleeing.

For thus the Lord has said to me within a year, according to the year of a hired man, all the glory of Kedar will fail and the remainder of the number of archers, the mighty men

of the people of Kedar will be diminished for the Lord God of Israel has spoken it. Well, I can't make much insightful comment on that. Much of this is so vague it's really hard to know exactly what it's talking about.

Now, chapter 22, it says the burden against the valley of vision and this valley of vision is actually a reference to Judah. Why it's called the valley of vision is not entirely clear. Whether it's the area that the vision pertains to or the vision comes from because Isaiah was in Judah.

But it says, what ails you now that you have gone up to the housetops, you who are full of noise, a tumultuous city, a joyous city. Your slain men are not slain with a sword nor dead in battle. All your rulers have fled together.

Now, this verse 2 seems to describe things before the judgment has fallen. The noise that is here is joyous noise. The city is celebrating.

Exactly what the time frame is is not given. But apparently it is before judgment has fallen. But a condition is going to change according to verse 13.

Instead, joy and gladness, slain oxen and killing sheep, eating meat and drinking wine. Actually, this is what they are doing instead of repenting. I'm sorry.

It says in verse 12, In that day the Lord God of hosts called for weeping and for mourning, for baldness and for grinning of sackcloth. But instead, they're celebrating. They have joy and gladness, slain oxen, killing sheep, eating meat, drinking wine.

Let us eat and drink. Tomorrow we die, they say. It seems that what he's saying is there is imminent danger and they're ignoring it.

In verse 3, it says, Your rulers have fled together. They're smart enough to get out of there, but they've been captured by the archers. They knew there's danger, but the people in the city are acting like there's no danger.

They should be repenting, calling on God, but they're not. Instead, they're just celebrating and having a good time. But it is talking about Judah.

We see that in verse 8. He removed the protection from Judah. Also, verse 9, You also saw the damage to the city of David. That's Jerusalem.

That it was great. Verse 10, You numbered the houses of Jerusalem and the houses you broke down to fortify your wall. So, it's obvious that Judah and Jerusalem are the subject matter here and in general, like so many other passages, there's a kind of vague, generic prophecies of judgment coming upon them, but saying that the people are not paying attention or else they just heard we're going to die tomorrow anyway, so instead of repenting, we'll just party, die drunk.

And that seems to be what the mood of the people is that's being complained about here. But the last part of chapter 22 is more specific. It talks about two men, Shebna and Eliakim.

And this is something we can say something about. Shebna was an official under Hezekiah and Eliakim was also. They are mentioned in chapter 36 and verse 3. And actually, when the Assyrians encamped outside the wall of Jerusalem, Shebna and Eliakim were among the people that were sent out by King Hezekiah to try to negotiate and see what peace could be made.

Nothing was negotiated, but they were officials in his court. But at the time of this prophecy, Shebna is being denounced by Isaiah or by God. He's being deposed from his position.

What he has done is not known. We don't know what his sin is, but he's been arrogant. He's building a tomb for himself high in the rocks, which is where the kings and nobles and rich people had their tombs, above the common people.

He seems to be arrogant, and we know that that's one of the things that God doesn't like about a person. And he's going to be replaced in his office by a man named Eliakim. So it says, Thus says the Lord of hosts, Lord God of hosts, Go, proceed to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the house that is over the king's house.

He's a steward. And say, What have you here? And whom have you here that you have hewn a sepulcher here as he who hews himself a sepulcher on high who carves a tomb for himself in a rock? Indeed, Yahweh will throw you away violently, O mighty man, and will surely seize you. He will surely turn violently and toss you like a ball into a large country.

There you shall die, and there your glorious chariots shall be the shame of your master's house. So I will drive you out of your office, and from your position he will pull you down. Now, we don't know, again, what the guy did wrong.

The guy had glorious chariots. He was apparently exalting himself. He had government position.

He was the steward over the king's house. He was starting to dig a sepulcher for himself in a lofty place among the most honored people. He was obviously exalting himself in some way, and yet he says, What have you here? Who have you here? It's been suggested that he was not a Jew.

He might have been a foreigner. He is listed with other people, for example, in chapter 36 and verse 3, but he doesn't have a father mentioned there. The others who are mentioned have Jewish parents who are mentioned.

His parents were never mentioned, and so maybe he is not a Jew. Maybe he has no Jewish heritage, and that's why he's saying, Who do you have here that you should be settling in this area and positioning yourself on high in the government of Judah? But in terms of specifics, we're given none, but he's going to be thrown out. He's going to die in exile.

He's not going to be buried in this high tomb that he's digging for himself in this lofty place. Then verse 2 says, Then it shall be in that day that I will call my servant Eliakim, son of Hilkiah. Now his dad is mentioned, and it's a Jewish name.

Eliakim, I will clothe him with your robe and strengthen him with your belt. I will commit your responsibility into his hand, and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. The key of the house of David I will lay on his shoulder, so that he shall open and no one shall shut.

He shall shut and no one shall open. I will fasten him as a peg in a secure place, and he will become a glorious throne to his father's house. Now here, he'll have the key of David on his shoulder, and he'll open and no one will shut.

This means that he'll have the authority to admit or not people into the king's house, the house of David, the king's house. He was an official who people would have to come to if they wanted to see the king. He had access.

He alone had the keys. He could admit or restrict access to the king. Jesus actually quotes or alludes to these verses in Revelation chapter 3 where he describes himself as the one who has the key of the house of David, the key of David.

In chapter 3 and verse 7 it says, These things says, He who is holy, who is true, he who has the key of David, he who opens and no one shuts and shuts and no one opens. This is saying that Jesus has the authority in God's kingdom, in God's house, that Eliakim was given in Hezekiah's administration. Therefore, Jesus admits or does not admit people into the king's house is the idea.

Now, it says Eliakim is fastened like a secure peg. He's not going anywhere, not initially, but he becomes glorious to his father's house. Apparently, there's nepotism here and he allows his family members to come, as it were, on his coattails into government positions and this becomes a burden that he can't bear.

It says in verse 24, They will hang on him, that is the people of his father's house, all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity from the cups to all the pitchers. This is an imagery of a kitchen peg that you'd hang things on, but he's the peg and his relatives are the pitchers and things hanging on the peg till the peg is overburdened. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, this peg that is fastened in a secure place will be removed and be cut down in fall and the burden that was on it will

be cut off for the Lord has spoken.

How this was fulfilled, we don't know, but what is predicted is fairly clear. This man is put into the position that sheep no one's held. It's a privileged office.

Apparently, he's got his father's household, the offspring and the issue, his brothers and sisters and cousins probably. They say, oh, we've got a relative in a high place. I can get a job in the government.

And so they do and they're like hanging on him. He's the peg that all they're hanging on, but they're not worth much. They're like vessels of small capacity, but there's so many of them apparently that come in that it somehow ruins his position.

Perhaps they're people of poor character who bring reproach upon him and it causes him to be removed from his place. The actual fulfillment of this is absolutely unknown to us. There's no historical information about this, only the prediction.

Now, I'm going to quit here, although we have not covered Chapter 23 yet, and we will not. We're going to pick it up at Chapter 24 the next time we come together. Chapter 23 is simply prophecy against Tyre and there are prophecies against Tyre also in Ezekiel and essentially it would apparently be a reference to Sennacherib attacking Babylon.

Also, it comes up here, it's hard to know exactly how all these themes mix because you've got Cyprus, you've got Sidon, you've got Egypt, you've got Tarshish mentioned, and it says in verse 13, Behold the land of the Chaldeans, that's Babylon, this people which was not Assyria founded it for wild beasts of the desert. They set up its towers, they raised its palaces, they brought it to ruin. Wail, you ships of Tarshish, for your strength is laid waste.

This wailing of the ships of Tarshish is also in verse 1. The meaning of this chapter is incredibly difficult because it names several different countries. It does not set a time frame for its fulfillment, so it's not clear exactly what is being predicted. Now, presumably, in the time it was uttered, or at least in the time that it was fulfilled, its predictions made sense to the original readers.

What we have a problem with with many of these prophecies against these nations, these burdens against the nations, is that we don't have extensive information about the ancient history of these nations. That is, if the Bible doesn't tell us about the fulfillment, we don't have a lot of extraneous secular information about it. One reason we have so much information about the history of Judah and Israel is because the Bible was preserved and preserved that much history.

But these other nations, you know, we have monuments that have been found, some tablets here and there, but we don't really have an extensive history that would give us all the things that would tell us how these were fulfilled. So the prophecies remain

mysterious to us. And, you know, commentators sometimes fumble around with them trying to make some sense of them and sometimes can make a plausible case.

But frankly, some of these chapters are just befuddling. And chapter 23 is one of those I've never been able to figure out is this. It says Tyre, but then it deals with other nations.

It talks about the land of the Chaldeans, which is Babylon, but it talks about the Assyrians founded it. And, you know, there's all these different nations being mentioned separately. And how they tie together is beyond me to tell you the truth.

I mean, this section of the Burden of the Nations has its challenges. And chapter 3, to my mind, is one of the ones that's extremely difficult to make sense of. But we've run out of time, which makes it more frustrating too.

I mean, I don't have time to even try to sort it out. And we'll come to chapter 24 in our next session.