

The Book of Isaiah
Chapters 13-23

Introduction: Today—a new section and a new focus altogether. Four issues that inform this section.

1. Issue of Trust (7-12 and 36-39) are bookends dealing with the way two kings (Ahaz/Hezekiah) approached trust in God in the face of military/political threats to Judah. In between—“Lessons of Trust.”
 - a. Why trust the nations when they are under the judgment of God? (13-23)
 - b. Why trust the nations when all of history is in God’s hands? (24-27)
 - c. Those who counsel you to trust flesh and blood instead of God’s Spirit are fools! (28-35)

2. Issue of Judgment
 - a. International scene at time of Isaiah was world dominance by cruel and aggressive Assyrians. Buffer state had two options: 1) submission 2) protective alliance
 - b. Foreign foes were instruments of God’s judgment on His people. They were not to submit or seek alliance. They were to trust God.

NOTE: There is a huge problem when God’s people try to ally with the lesser of two evils as if being with God is not enough.

(ILL) Captain of the Lord’s Host

3. Issue of the Nations 11 oracles
 - a. Oracle—Message given by a religious leader often ambiguous or obscure
 - b. Other places when there are oracles against nations (Jeremiah 46-51; Ezekiel 25-32; Obadiah and Nahum)
 - c. Reminder: Just because God uses them as a trial to judge His people does not mean they will escape judgment for their sins.
 - d. Placed here to point to the foolishness of trusting the nations. Ahaz does and Hezekiah is tempted to.

4. Issue of Messianic Kingdom

- a. Primary focus of 6-12 was to show the triumph of divine grace for Judah and Israel—a remnant would return under the reign of a perfect and Davidic King.
- b. This section reveals a universal vision of one world, one people, one king, and one God.

Arrangement of the Oracles

- No pattern distinguishable
- Inclusive, taking in whole Ancient Near Eastern world—except Ammon
- Begins with great commercial power of east (Babylon) and ends with great commercial power of west (Tyre)

I. **Oracle Against Babylon** (13:1-14:27)

The burden against Babylon which Isaiah the son of Amoz saw. Isaiah 13:1 NKJV

A. Not yet a world power in day of Isaiah

1. Some argue for late editing
2. Prediction prophecy is revealed

(13:1 says it's Isaiah)

- ##### B. While not world power—were center of culture and civilization of Mesopotamian Valley
- ##### C. Also Babylon represents more than a particular people—all creaturely pride that rebels against God

1. Universal focus 13:10, 11
2. Nebuchadnezzar did this

D. Isaiah 13

1. Terror of coming judgment (13:4, 5, 8)
2. Their great sin is pride (13:11, 13)
3. Their power will collapse (13:14-16; 17-19)

"And this is the inscription that was written: MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN. 26 This is the interpretation of each word. Mene: God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; 27 Tekel: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; 28 Peres: Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians." 29 Then Belshazzar gave the command, and they clothed Daniel with purple and put a chain of gold around his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. 30 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Chaldeans, was slain. 31 And Darius the Mede received the kingdom, being about sixty-two years old. Daniel 5:25-31 NKJV

NOTE: How this symbolizes human pride and power (see Revelation 18:2-3, 10)

(ILL) Importance of NOT trusting human power

"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock. Matthew 7:24 NKJV

- E. Words of promise to Israel (14:1-4)
- F. The relief of world and rest for people (14:7)
- G. Ultimate end of human pride (14:9-11)
- H. Heaven's message to prideful (14:12-15)

(Pride Genesis 3, 11, all satanically inspired)

NOTE: Lucifer—heylel (hay-lay-al)—shining one

- I. Tragedy of fallen king (14:16-20)
- J. Conclusion
 - 1. No offspring (22)
 - 2. As Assyria falls, so will Babylon (24-27)

IMPORTANT:

- Death is the great leveler of pride
- Don't trust the great—God will bring them down
- God's plans prevail

There are many plans in a man's heart, Nevertheless the Lord's counsel — that will stand. Proverbs 19:21 NKJV

- Must humble ourselves to experience power

II. Oracle Against Philistines (14:28-32)

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- A. 716 BC Ahaz died—Hezekiah began to reign
- B. Philistines had made some gains against Assyria and urged Hezekiah to join them
 - 1. Warning not to trust
 - 2. Snake will turn again
- C. God founded Zion (32) no need to trust Philistines
- D. Trust God—not other powers or resources

Trust in the Lord with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding. Proverbs 3:5 NKJV

III. Oracle Against Moab (15:1-16:14)

- A. Unlike other two oracles, a general sorrow is seen over the destruction of Moab (see 15:5, 6:7, 11)
 - 1. Elimelech/Naomi
 - 2. Boaz and Ruth
- B. Contents of Oracle
 - 1. Moabite gods have failed (15:2)
 - 2. Military helpless (15:4)
 - 3. Nature falls (15:5, 6)
 - 4. No place to flee (15:9)

NOTE: Why should Israel or Judah flee to Moab—their hope is in the same God.

- 5. Cry of refugees (16:1-4a)—wanting help from Judah
- 6. The only hope for all (16:4b-5)
- 7. From hope back to judgment (16:6-13)
- 8. Promise of Isaiah

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, Devastation ceases, the oppressors are consumed out of the land. Isaiah 16:4 NKJV

715 BC—Assrians pummeled the Moabites

TRUTH: They did seek help from Judah and not Edom. Why? Was there something different in their God? Church must be prepared to help people find God!

IV. Oracle Against Damascus/Israel (17:1-14)

A. Background

1. Attack of Israel and Aram on Judah is what precipitated the crisis of faith.
2. Ahaz aligned with TP III—Assyria
3. God is making the point not to trust the nations because they are all subject to Yahweh

B. The Oracle's Contents

1. Syria's fall (1-3)
2. Their glory will fade like Israel's (4-11)

C. The nations may plan to plunder God's people but no need to fear (17:12-14)

V. Oracle Against Cush (18:1-7)

A. Biblical Cush is translated Ethiopia

1. Actually larger than modern-day Ethiopia
2. Sudan and Somalia—at limits of normal biblical geography
3. Part of Egypt's territory but in 8th century Egypt was ruled by Ethiopian dynasty

B. The Oracle itself (1-3)

1. Land shadowed with buzzing wings (Egypt—Nile area—swarms of insects)
2. Ambassadors coming to cement rebellion against Assyria
3. Return home quickly—might be a politically expedient plan but spiritually irrelevant
4. God would bring Assyria down (3)

C. Patient plan of God (4-6)

D. Even Ethiopia would ultimately worship Yahweh

(ILL) READ: Acts 8:26-39

VI. Oracle Against Egypt (19:1-20:6)

A. Prediction of Egypt's fall (19:1-15)

1. Their gods will fail them (1-4)

NOTE: It was Yahweh not Assyria they should fear (1)

ALSO: Egyptians known for order—hated the chaos (2-3)

2. Their natural resources will fail them (5-10)

NOTE: Called the Nile “The gift of the Nile” If no Nile—eastern extension of Sahara Desert

3. Fabled wisdom failed them too (11-15) see v. 12-Joseph narrative

B. Egypt turning to Yahweh (16-25, judgment/hope)

1. Already given negative reason not to trust Egypt
2. Now—positive reason—they too will turn to Judah's God
 - a. God's ultimate plan is not to destroy Muslim nations but for them to come to Him
 - b. Speak Hebrew (18), altar (19), Yahweh will be known (21)
 - c. Jews are to be a blessing to all nations

In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria — a blessing in the midst of the land, 25 whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance." Isaiah 19:24-25 NKJV

C. First, the coming judgment (20:1-6)

1. Probably only backside bare
2. Only time Isaiah acted out prophecy
3. Ancient Hebrew mind—symbol and reality connected—symbol brought reality to pass
4. Isaiah knew the only terms upon which people could relate to God were His. He would not water it down.

VII. The Oracle Against the Wilderness of the Sea (21:1-10)

A. Ironic Oracle

1. Wilderness or desert by sea (desert is not wet and sea is not dry)
2. Probably again about Babylon—why obscure title? (NOTE: Medes of v. 2—so probably the 540 destruction being referenced)
3. Title—Babylonian rebel Merodach-Baladan (39:1) lived in southern Mesopotamia “the Sealand.”
 - a. Is he any help?
 - b. About as much help as a desert might offer

B. The Oracle

1. Sudden destruction (1, 2)
2. Grief for those who trusted Babylon (3, 4)

NOTE: The Babylon they will trust to save them from Assyria will ultimately be their oppressor that will be destroyed.

3. Picture of Daniel 5 (v. 5)
4. The fall—fleeing chariots (6-9)
5. Crushing (10)

VIII. The Oracle Against Dumah (21:11, 12)

- A. Arabian oasis—Dumah—300 miles southwest of Jerusalem
- B. It appears they are seeking the word of the prophet too. Dumah located on trade route

IX. Oracle Against Arabia (21:13-17)

- A. Desert between Judah and Babylon
- B. Tema also on Oasis---200 miles, south of Dumah
- C. Dedron about 90 miles south of Tema (both in northwest Arabia—area called Kedar)
- D. War will overtake them in a year

Message: God is faithful—humans are not.

X. Oracle Against the Valley of Vision (Jerusalem 22:1-25)

A. The context of this Oracle (22:1-3)

1. Some say the retreat of Assyria under Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:13-19:27)
 - a. An outbreak of joy over temporary victory that sickened Isaiah
 - b. No evidence that rulers fled (3)
2. Others see a time when Sennacherib seemed to have accepted Hezekiah's gift

And in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them. 14 Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, "I have done wrong; turn away from me; whatever you impose on me I will pay." And the king of Assyria assessed Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. 15 So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the Lord and in the treasuries of the king's house. 16 At that time Hezekiah stripped the gold from the doors of the temple of the Lord, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria. 2 Kings 18:13-16 NKJV

- a. People probably rejoiced
 - b. But Assyrians came back
 - c. Elam in v. 6 was Babylon's ally not Assyria's
3. Probably predicted prophecy of what was coming

B. The explanation

1. People rejoiced/prophet weeps—he sees what they do not see (1-8)
2. He sees the coming fall (5-7)
3. You are trying to save yourself (8-11)

NOTE: Possible Context

Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah — all his might, and how he made a pool and a tunnel and brought water into the city — are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 2 Kings 20:20 NKJV

This same Hezekiah also stopped the water outlet of Upper Gihon, and brought the water by tunnel to the west side of the City of David. Hezekiah prospered in all his works. 2 Chronicles 32:30 NKJV

4. God called for humility but they rested in self-sufficiency (12, 13)
5. Judgment will follow (14, 15)
 - a. The sin of trusting self
 - b. The sin of trusting human ingenuity, not God

C. An illustration of trust (22:15-23)

NOTE: Only time in oracle section when focus is individual not national. Message: choice between faith and works is individual.

1. Shebna—Kings right hand man—in charge of palace (16-18)
 - a. All about himself—his own tombstone
 - b. His position of prestige—glorious chariots
 - c. Kicked out of his job
2. Eliakim his replacement (20-25)
 - a. Even he will break down
 - b. People will trust him too much
 - c. Peg will fall

D. Truths

1. Must not assume that secular success equals spiritual development
2. Must guard ourselves as leaders so that we do not take on too much responsibility

XI. Oracle Against Tyre (23:1-18)

- A. Tyre—Canaanite seaport city—100 miles northwest of Jerusalem
 - a. Commercial king on west—Babylon to east
 - b. Modern Lebanon (Jonah fled there)
- B. Their destruction (1-14)
 1. A decree of God (9)
 2. Have proudly resisted God
 3. Same fate as Babylon (13)

C. Their return to the Lord (15-18)

POINT: Why trust Tyre instead of the Lord since the Lord holds Tyre in His hands?

Concluding Thoughts:

- A. Whole section 13-23 reminds us that God knows the future of all nations and they are accountable to Him.
- B. They are in His hand not He in theirs as is true of idols.
- C. Isaiah trying to show his people and his generation the foolishness of trusting nations and the wisdom of trusting God.
- D. There is no security in trusting ourselves.
- E. Self-sufficiency is a sin that will destroy.