

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #21

Isaiah 13:1-22

Just recently we watched a home renovation program. A couple decided they wanted to purchase a vacation home in Colorado. The home was a lovely home, but they decided it was not big enough or lovely enough so they hired a contractor to expand it and remodel it. The project took a year and since the couple lived in Atlanta, several times during the year the wife would fly to Colorado to see the progress. It was not uncommon for her to go into a newly constructed area and say, "I'm not happy with this, tear it down and start over." When the house was finally completed, the refurbishing cost was over one million dollars.

Now when you are a believer in Jesus Christ and you have just learned you are getting laid off from your job and you don't even know whether or not you will be able to make your mortgage payments, and then you look at someone who doesn't seem to have any interest in God whatsoever, spending over a million dollars for a vacation home they may use once or twice a year, you can begin to wonder whose side is God actually on. If we aren't careful, we can get so focused on the big and impressive that we can neglect to use our own circumstances as a means of drawing close to the Lord.

That was exactly the problem Judah had. Instead of her drawing close to the Lord as she looked at a world of big powers and threats, she focused more on them. Instead of her using her circumstances to really get serious about her relationship with God, she tried to develop relationships with powers that not only couldn't help her, but powers that would be demolished by God. This is where these next chapters in Isaiah become so critical.

Now we are nearing the end of the reign of Ahaz (14:28), who reigned from 735 B.C. - 715 B.C. and we are about to enter into the reign of Hezekiah, who reigned from 715 B.C. - 686 B.C. Ahaz was an evil king of Judah, who led Israel to believe that her hope and help would come from a foreign Assyrian power, not God (II Chronicles 28:16). His time was winding down and Hezekiah who would take his place would be tempted to do the same thing; so Isaiah presents some riveting chapters which are designed to get Judah to turn to the Lord, just as she did back in the days of Jehoshaphat (II Chronicles 20:3-13).

In **Isaiah chapters 13-23**, Isaiah's message is this - Do not trust in the surrounding nations for help, because all the surrounding nations will go down by judgment of God.

In **Isaiah chapters 24-27**, Isaiah's message is this - Do not trust in any nation because the whole world is controlled by God and will be totally devastated by God so that your only hope of deliverance must come from God.

Now you will notice that **Isaiah 13:1** begins with the word "the oracle." This specific prophetic word will be used in chapters 13-23 ten times (**13:1**; 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; 19:1; 21:1; 21:11; 21:13; 22:1; 23:1). The Hebrew word "oracle" (massah) is one that refers to a specific prediction that is very threatening and burdensome (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 512). So these are ten very threatening messages aimed straight at ten specific political powers.

These predictions are so amazing that liberal scholars suggest they would have been impossible for Isaiah to predict. However, they are all silenced when they read **verse 1** which says this is what “Isaiah the son of Amoz saw.”

When we look at the ten powers, we may notice two things:

- 1) They were all literal powers that were a surrounding geographical threat to Israel in her land.
- 2) They were all powers that for the most part were Arabs.

God specifically lets His people know exactly what will happen to powers they were tempted to trust in for help. The ten oracles are as follows:

- (Oracle #1) - Prophetic message against Babylon - 13:1-14:27 present day Iraq .
- (Oracle #2) - Prophetic message against Philistia - 14:28-32 present day Gaza Strip .
- (Oracle #3) - Prophetic message against Moab - 15-16 present day Jordan .
- (Oracle #4) - Prophetic message against Damascus - 17:1-11 present day Syria .
- (Oracle #5) - Prophetic message against Egypt - 19-20 present day Egypt .
- (Oracle #6) - Prophetic message against Babylon - 21:1-10 present day Iraq .
- (Oracle #7) - Prophetic message against Edom - 21:11-12 present day Jordan .
- (Oracle #8) - Prophetic message against Arabia - 21:13-17 present day Saudi Arabia .
- (Oracle #9) - Prophetic message against Jerusalem - 22 present day Jerusalem .
- (Oracle #10) - Prophetic message against Tyre - 23 present day Lebanon .

Now there are three observations we may be made concerning these oracles:

- 1) These prophetic oracles were only of value to God's people. Isaiah was not out evangelizing the nations mentioned in the oracles, he gave them to Israel so that God's people would reverence Him and worship Him and draw close to Him as they see these things happen. Biblical prophecy is for the family of God to know so they will learn to depend on God.
- 2) The whole point of this information is to get God's people to turn to Him and trust in Him - 17:10; 22:11.
- 3) There are things in these prophecies that have not been fulfilled yet, but will be during the Great Tribulation . Notice how many times the reference is to “in the day” or “in that day” (13:6, 9, 13; 14:3; 17:4, 7, 9, 11, 11; 19:16, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24; 20:6; 22:5, 8, 12, 20, 25; 23:15). The day being referred to here is the Great Tribulation that precedes Israel being in her land experiencing all of the blessings we saw in chapters 11-12.

Now the first oracle is aimed against Babylon . What is so odd is that at the time Isaiah makes this prediction, Babylon wasn't a main threat to Israel or even a major political force. If we are nearing the death of Ahaz, this prediction is being made somewhere near the year 715 B.C. The big threat was the Assyrian power at that time. Babylon will not become a major power until 605 B.C., so Isaiah is making this prediction well over 100 years before she is a threat.

Why does he begin with Babylon? Two reasons:

- (Reason #1)** - Babylon would be the power that would actually destroy Judah and Jerusalem.
- (Reason #2)** - Babylon is the beginning place of all false works religion, including the satanic religion of Mohammed, the Islamic.

God wants His people to know Babylon is going down. It will not just be conquered; it will be wiped off the face of the earth.

The main message Isaiah communicates to Israel is this text is this:

ISRAEL SHOULD ALWAYS TRUST IN GOD AND NEVER TRUST IN ANY FOREIGN POWER FOR DELIVERANCE, EVEN AN IMPRESSIVE FOREIGN POWER LIKE BABYLON, BECAUSE EVENTUALLY GOD WILL COMPLETELY OBLITERATE HER FROM EXISTENCE.

It is very clear when you study the Bible in regard to Babylon (Iraq) that she will be eventually wiped off the face of the world. You see that here in Isaiah and you see the same thing in Jeremiah 50-51 and again in Revelation 17-18. By virtue of the fact that this same point shows up in Revelation, we know that this will ultimately happen in the Great Tribulation.

Now based on what Isaiah predicts, here is what we may believe will happen. The world economy is going to collapse and Iraq is going to come to the world's forefront to help it economically. Iraq will become a major source of income, helping people all over the world. It seems very probable that in the aftermath of the war, she will lure the major business powers of the world and it is possible that she will eventually be viewed as the one spot in the world that bailed out the economic crisis. This will especially be true during the Tribulation and as the Tribulation begins to near its conclusion, God is going to wipe this place out of existence forever. Now in this first oracle, there are two main parts:

ORACLE MAIN PART #1 – God will call His own army to come against Babylon. **13:1-5**

Now God is going to wave His hand and call a specific military group and command them to go to Iraq and completely demolish it. The Hebrew “I command” is very emphatic here, so God wants us to know that He is the one commanding this army to go into Iraq to carry out His orders. Notice there are at least seven classifications Isaiah gives to them:

(Classification #1) - They are God's consecrated soldiers. **13:3a**

The Hebrew word “consecrate” is one that means God views this group as something He has set apart for use in a holy and sacred way (Ibid., p. 725). God calls an idolatrous group of Arabs His consecrated soldiers.

(Classification #2) - They are God's mighty warriors. **13:3b**

This is the Hebrew word “gibbor” which means God has given them His own power and might to accomplish this task.

(Classification #3) - They are God's proud exalted warriors. **13:3c**

What we learn here is that this army will be prompted by its own pride and ambition to carry out this assignment. In other words, this army is not moving because they had a great prayer meeting and decided this was the will of God; God is using their arrogance for His purposes. This army has no desire to know God or even do God's will, but God is in sovereign charge. As Paul said, God determines the existence and purpose of “every nation” (Acts 17:26).

(Classification #4) - They are executing God's anger . **13:3d**

The word Hebrew word “anger” means God is burning mad at Babylon. He is enraged and His nostrils are flaring (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 69).

(Classification #5) - They are God's army to carry out God's battle . **13:4**

This army has no sense that they are being directed by God. They have no clue that they are God's army being used for God's purposes.

(Classification #6) - They are God's instruments of indignation . **13:5a**

This army is being used to carry out the intense, hot anger of God on Iraq.

(Classification #7) - They will destroy the whole land of Iraq. **13:5b**

This statement right here at the end of **verse 5** means this hasn't fully happened yet. It is true that there were times in history when Babylon was overthrown. For example, in 689 B.C. the city of Babylon was destroyed by Sennacherib and the Assyrian army but it was rebuilt by Sennacherib's son. In 539 B.C., Darius the Mede captured the city (Daniel 5:31) but did not completely destroy it. During the days of Alexander the Great, the city declined and to this point has not been rebuilt. In fact, Strabo said that by 20 B.C., Babylon was a “vast desolation.” However, right now there is a major movement not only to rebuild Iraq but also rebuild Babylon. So we are completely convinced that what is described in the next verses has yet to be fulfilled and is soon to be fulfilled.

Now the thing I want you to see is that the major group God is going to use is the group known during the days of Isaiah as “the Medes” (**13:17**). The Medes have always been a warlike people who love to fight. In fact, it has been said they love to fight more than rule and that is why sometimes when you read the O.T., you will discover that Medes may be linked to the Assyrians, the Babylonians and the Persians. They love to fight. The specific place that they are called from is “the mountains” (**13:4**) and from a “far country” (**13:5**). The mountains were the Zagros Mountains located east of the Tigris River. **This group of people known as the Medes is none other than modern day Iran** . The Iranians are an arrogant group of fighters who will link themselves to Russia or any other power. **What Isaiah is predicting here is that God is going to bring Iran into Iraq and use Iran to totally demolish her.**

It is no coincidence that right now the President of Iran is Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. It has been said that he makes Saddam Hussein look like Santa Claus and that he is the most dangerous man on this earth. It is no mere coincidence that he has said, “We don't shy away from declaring Islam is ready to rule the world. We must prepare ourselves to rule the world” (Mark Hitchcock, *The Apocalypse of Ahmadinejad*, p. 1-3). One of the things that this madman has wanted to do was to get the United States out of Iraq so he can take it over (Ibid., p. 56). Do you think this is a mere coincidence? This is setting the stage for the very thing predicted by Isaiah.

ORACLE MAIN PART #2 – God will order His army to totally destroy Babylon. **13:6-22**

I want to tell you, if I were some Arab or any other person who lived in Iraq, I would trust Jesus Christ right now so I could be raptured and miss the Tribulation. What has been happening in Iraq right now is nothing compared to what will happen.

Verse 6 kicks off the section with a command for Iraq to wail because the day of the Lord is near and the day of the Lord will bring the destruction of Almighty God. **Verse 7** predicts that “all hands” will fall limp when this happens, “every” man’s heart will melt. People will be so afraid they will lose all strength and courage. As **verse 8** says, they will be terrified because every person will experience pain and anguish because, as **verse 9** says, God is targeting Iraq and intends to exterminate every sinner.

Now in **verses 10-22** God gives specifics of when and how this will take place in Iraq:

Specific Revelation #1 - Iraq will be destroyed when God does unusual things in the heavens .
13:10

This tells us that this hasn’t happened yet, for even when the other powers were conquering Babylon, nothing like what is described here is recorded. This concept of things happening in the sky is clearly a Tribulation concept and specifically it is an event that is predicted to happen at various times during the Tribulation (Revelation 6:12-17; 8:12), and also just before Jesus Christ returns in all of His glory (Matthew 24:29). When Iraq sees these things happening, she needs to realize that she is about to be obliterated.

Specific Revelation #2 - Iraq will be destroyed when God punishes the world for its evil.
13:11-12

We are living in a world that deserves the wrath of God and one day will receive the wrath of God.

Again this is a Tribulation wrath prediction. God will destroy proud, arrogant, haughty man. He will put an end to him, and mathematically speaking, there will be so few men left on this earth that he will be more scarce or rare than pure gold. The gold of Ophir was a rare, expensive, pure gold that came from South Arabia. During the Tribulation, one will have a better chance finding this gold than a living human.

Specific Revelation #3 - Iraq will be destroyed when God shakes the heavens and earth.
13:13

The idea of a great earthquake is very closely connected to the destruction of Babylon and Iraq (Revelation 16:18-19).

Specific Revelation #4 - Iraq will be destroyed when all people try to escape. **13:14-16**

During the Great Tribulation, many Jews will flee from the Antichrist and apparently go into Iraq (Jeremiah 51:5-6) thinking it is somewhat of a safe haven. God warns His people that when she sees these things happening, she needs to get out of Iraq as fast as possible.

Very few will make it out alive from this part of the world. Those who do will need to leave fast. People will be hunted down and killed - men, women and children.

Specific Revelation #5 - Iraq will be destroyed when Iran destroys her and leaves her desolate like Sodom and Gomorrah. **13:17-19**

No amount of money will buy them off. Iran will pity no one and will mow down the Iraqis.

On October 26, 2005 the deranged President of Iran, Ahmadinejad, made his famous statement that there was a need to “wipe Israel off the map.” He apparently doesn’t read the Bible because what is actually going to happen is that Iran will “wipe Iraq off the map” and then God will wipe out Iran (Dore Gold, *The Fight For Jerusalem*, p. 232).

Specific Revelation #6 - Iraq will never be inhabited again. **13:20-22**

This is a key prophetic prediction about this part of the world (i.e. Jeremiah 50:39-40; 51:26, 37, 43; Revelation 19:21). When God brings this all about, she will never, ever be inhabited again. This tells us, to this point this prophecy has not been fulfilled during the millennium; the only inhabitants will be the animals and the birds.

President James Garfield, the 20th President of the United States, called history “the unrolled scroll of prophecy.” I don’t know whether he got this idea from this section in Isaiah, but he sure could have. What we are seeing right now with Israel, Iran and Iraq is a movement among the very powers predicted by Isaiah.

One of the most difficult things to get people to believe is that God sovereignly controls everything in this world, the good and the bad. But when you read this text of Scripture in Isaiah and then you look at what is presently happening in this world, you cannot help but see God’s prophetic plan is clearly in full movement.

Don’t waste your time fearing the circumstances of the world; invest your time fearing God and drawing close to Him. He controls the circumstances including your life.

Now Babylon was known for its works religion. It began with man trying to work his way to God by building a tower. Do you see what happens to works religion? It leads to the wrath of God. Do not make the mistake of thinking that your works will save you. Your works will lead you to the wrath of God. Turn to Jesus Christ, the One and Only God/Savior. Trust in Him and you shall be saved.