

## EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #29

Isaiah 21:1-17

**In 1947, the United Nations partitioned off a small piece of land in Palestine in order to establish the modern state of Israel. The moment this happened, the Arab world went on a rampage against Israel that has lasted to this very day.** In fact, there have been five major wars between the Arabs and Israelis. The **first war** occurred between 1947-49 when Arab guerillas attacked Jewish settlements to try to prevent the British mandate to give Israel her land. The **second war** occurred in 1956 when Arab guerrillas raided southern Israel and blocked Israeli shipping in the Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aqaba. The **third war** occurred in 1967 when Israel destroyed the Arab forces all the way to the Suez Canal in less than four days. The **fourth war** occurred in 1973 when Egypt and Syria attacked Israel for 18 days until the United Nations intervened. The **fifth war** occurred in 1982 when Israel invaded Lebanon to stop all border attacks against Israelis. In the last few years there has been and still is tremendous tension between the Israeli and the Arab world.

**Isaiah 21** is an amazing chapter for Israel because God shows Israel what He intends to do to the entire Arab world. **God wants Israel to know that just before He turns her night into morning, He will permit her to see the destruction of her Arab enemies.** **Isaiah 21** informs us that there will eventually be a major prophetic judgment that God will cause to hit the Arab world. God is going to level the Arab world for the terrible things it has done to Israel.

Joseph Alexander, a Biblical linguist and theologian of the mid 1800s, concluded after analyzing this chapter that what is predicted here had not fully happened anywhere in history. He said “future discoveries may throw light on these brief and obscure prophecies” (*Commentary On Isaiah*, p. 378). Our daily news is throwing light on these prophecies.

The main point of these verses is this:

**GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE TO KNOW THAT JUST BEFORE JESUS CHRIST RETURNS TO GIVE ISRAEL HER LAND, HE WILL PERMIT ISRAEL TO WATCH HIM DESTROY THE ARAB WORLD AND HE WILL USE VARIOUS NATIONS TO DO IT.**

God is going to permit Israel to watch Him demolish and destroy the Arab world because of all of the problems she has caused Israel. I believe there are times in this Church Age when God lets His people watch Him take care of an enemy. After all, even Paul said in the Grace Age that we are to leave room for the wrath of God because “vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord” (Romans 12:19).

When you look down through this chapter, it is quite obvious that the primary target of these oracles is the entire Arab world. There are references to the Negev (v. 1); Elam (v. 2); Media (v. 2); Babylon (v. 9), Edom (v. 11), Seir (v. 11), Arabia (v. 13), and Tema (v. 14). There are also references to certain groups of people mentioned in this chapter - Israel (21:10, 17); Dedanites (21:13); sons of Kedar (21:16-17). Before we embark on an exposition of this text, it would be well for us to identify these places.

The **Negev (v. 1)** is a 3600 square mile area that sits south of the Dead Sea, about 50 miles south of Jerusalem. It is a dry, desert-type region known for its windstorms. It is interesting that there have been Assyrian inscriptions found from the 9<sup>th</sup> century B.C., which specifically say that Arab kingdoms “arose on the fringes of the desert” (*Grolier International Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, p. 101).

**Elam (v. 2)** is southern land that was located beyond the Tigris river east of Iraq. This land today is the southern portion of Iran.

**Media (v. 2)** was the northern land that was located northeast of the Tigris river by the Caspian Sea and this land today is the northern portion of Iran.

**Babylon (v. 9)** is land that is known today as Iraq.

**Edom (v. 11)** is land south and east of the Dead Sea, which borders the Arabian Desert.

**Seir (v. 11)** is the range of mountains south of the Dead Sea in Arabia toward the Elanitic Gulf.

**Arabia (v. 13)** is Saudi Arabia, which comprises the Arabian Peninsula which borders the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean plus it borders Iraq and Syria and Jordan.

**Tema (v. 14)** is a place located in Arabia about halfway between Damascus and Mecca along the Red Sea.

So the key places being described in these verses are places that inhabit Arabs - Iran, Iraq, Arabia and southern Israel.

Now when we look at **verse 1**, we will notice that Isaiah classifies this as an “oracle.” This word “oracle” is used three times in this chapter (**21:1, 11, 13**). We may recall that an “oracle” (massa) is a heavy burdensome message aimed at a specific target. **We may assume that we have three distinct negative prophetic predictions against the Arab world**. One concerns the wilderness of the sea (**v. 1**); one concerns Edom (**v. 11**) and one concerns Arabia (**v. 13**).

According to **verse 2**, Isaiah classifies this as a “harsh vision.” So we may assume that what Isaiah sees here is scary prophetic business. This is a vision of awful judgment against the Arab world. These prophecies were serious business. Isaiah was not a man of God who was emotionally elated about having to communicate all of these negative prophecies.

Now the text breaks down into three main oracles:

**ORACLE #1** – The oracle concerning Babylon. **21:1-10**

There are six key parts to this oracle:

## **Oracle Part #1** - The prophecy against Iraq. **21:1-2**

The specific oracle is aimed at what is called the “wilderness of the sea,” which is identified in **verse 9** as being Babylon. What we learn from **verse 1** is that this oracle against Babylon will take place “as the windstorms in the Negev sweep on.” The Negev is the land in southern Israel. What I gather this means is that Iraq will be destroyed as things continue to be horrific in Israel.

During the Tribulation, Israel will come under satanic attack from the Antichrist for 1260 days or 3½ years (Revelation 12:6). As he continues his attack against Israel, **Iraq is going to be attacked by Iran.**

Now notice from **verse 1** that this attack comes from the wilderness, from a terrifying land. Iran is a land in which large areas are uninhabited. It is like a wilderness area. Now we may also observe from **verse 2** that this happens as the “treacherous one still deals treacherously” and “the destroyer still destroys.” This is a clear reference to the fact that the Antichrist is on his rampage against Israel when Iraq will be obliterated.

In the midst of the Antichrist’s assault on Israel, God commands Elam (southern Iran) and Media (northern Iran) to go to Iraq and make an “end of her” for all the trouble she has caused. Iran is comprised of Aryans with the largest ancestry group being Persians. Seventy-five percent of those in Iran are under the age thirty. Ninety-eight percent of all Iranians are Muslims and ninety-three percent are Shiite Muslims of the Islamic religion. I do not believe we are very far away from Iran attacking Iraq.

Just this week, Newsweek Magazine featured data concerning Iran. In that article it is clearly revealed that there is real tension between Iran and Iraq. On September 22, 1980, Saddam Hussein invaded Iran from Iraq and the United States provided support for Iraq to do it. In January 2007, Iranian agents were arrested in Iraq having been accused of fueling sectarian warfare. This tension continues to build and this is no coincidence because God is going to use Iran to destroy Iraq (“Everything You Think You Know About Iran is Wrong,” *Newsweek Magazine*, June 1, 2009, pp. 28-52).

## **Oracle Part #2** - Isaiah’s reaction to the prophecy against Iraq. **21:3-4**

The prophecy Isaiah was seeing was so disturbing that he describes his reaction in **verses 3-4**:

**(Reaction #1)** - His loins are full of anguish - **21:3a**

**(Reaction #2)** - Pain hit him like the pain of a woman in labor - **21:3b**

**(Reaction #3)** - He was bewildered and terrified - **21:3c**

**(Reaction #4)** - His mind was horrified - **21:4a**

**(Reaction #5)** - He had initially thought it was twilight time, but it was trembling time - **21:4b**

Now Isaiah is no squeamish, namby-pamby prophet. He was a prophet who presented many negative prophecies. We may be certain of this - if Isaiah has this reaction to events of the Tribulation, then the Tribulation will be the scariest and most horrific catastrophe ever to hit this world. It is no wonder that we read that people are hiding in caves trying to escape “the wrath of the Lamb” (**Revelation 6:15-17**).

**Don't be fooled by the nonsense theology of many today - the God of the Bible is a God of serious and ferocious judgment that even causes a powerful man of God to shudder.**

**Oracle Part #3** - The attitude that will exist in Iraq just prior to her destruction. **21:5**

Now **verse 5** describes the fact that Iraq's destruction will come when they think they are secure. The attitude that will prevail just prior to her annihilation will be one of a carefree, worry-free life. They will be having banquets and eating and drinking. They will learn of the terrible things happening to Israel, but they will take a nonchalant attitude toward it and will just have their military leaders clean their military weapons but not use them.

The stage is being set for this right now. Just this past week reports came out of Iraq that said things are beginning to calm down and that Iraq is becoming more secularized. In fact, many new bars and restaurants are opening and there is a record number of applications for liquor licenses. This fits this very prediction.

I believe the war in Iraq will produce a rebuilding of the nation to the point where this will become a major center of the world for business and a major center for revelry (Revelation 17:2). One of the offshoots of this is that there will be nice motels, restaurants and other amenities that will draw people from all over the world. Iraq will appear to become somewhat of a safe zone for a short time. But that will change quickly. God will destroy it.

**Oracle Part #4** - The prophetic attitude that should exist among God's man. **21:6**

God's man is called to carefully watch and look and report what he sees. Here is a serious charge given to men called by God to carefully study Biblical prophecy and be on the lookout for world events and report what he is seeing in view of what God has said in His Word.

**Oracle Part #5** - The actual method God will use to obliterate Iraq. **21:7-9**

The destruction of Iraq will come when Iranians come into the land riding horses, donkeys and camels. God calls us to pay close attention to this fact. The thing that is significant for us to see here is that God is not going to wipe out Iraq by some nuclear bomb dropped on her from Iran. He is going to literally bring the Iranians on horse, donkeys and camels into Iraq and use them to destroy Babylon.

In fact, the words of **verse 9**, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon," are the very words of judgment pronounced against Iraq by an angel in charge at a specific moment in the Great Tribulation (Revelation 18:2).

**Oracle Part #6** - The actual purpose of this prophecy is to make it known to Israel. **21:10**

Now why would God want Israel to know about this terrible prophecy against Iraq? Because when Israel hears that Iran is invading Iraq, her affliction will be just about over.

God wants His people carefully knowing and seeing and understanding Biblical prophecy. God does not want us to be eschatological imbeciles. He wants us to accurately understand His Word. When the Tribulation is nearing its conclusion and Israel is being attacked by the treacherous one and she learns about Iran attacking Iraq, she can know with certainty her dark night is just about over and she will soon be in her land.

**ORACLE #2** – The oracle against Edom. **21:11-12**

Edom is the name given to Esau after he sold his birthright to Jacob for some red stew (Genesis 25:30). The particular geographical spot where the Edomites settled is land south and east of the Dead Sea; land that slopes down into the Arabian Desert and into Saudi Arabia. It is predicted by Ezekiel that God will target Edom for His wrath all the way across the Arabian Desert because they have dealt so treacherously with Israel (Ezekiel 25:13-14).

At that time, these Arabs will realize they cannot get answers to any of this from Mecca; they must find someone who knows God's Word. Arabs will want to know what is happening and how long it will last.

I love what Isaiah says at the end of **verse 12**; if you want to know you must continually inquire and come back again and again to the Word of God. You must sit under someone who knows the Bible and inquire of him.

**ORACLE #3** – The oracle concerning Arabia. **21:13-17**

Now the "Dedanites" are mentioned prophetically here and also in Jeremiah 25:23; 49:8 and in Ezekiel 25:13; 27:15, 20; 38:13. Dedan was the son of Jokshan, who was the son of Abraham by Keturah (Genesis 25:3; I Chronicles 1:32). These Abrahamic relatives were known for their ability to travel as "caravan merchants" from the Persian Gulf area all the way to Israel (Ezekiel 27:15, 20) (Merrill Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, p. 296). Saudi Arabia sits between the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf just south of Israel.

During the Tribulation many Israelis will literally flee Israel and head into this part of the world. Tema (**verse 14**) is a spot located about halfway between Damascus and Mecca along the Red Sea. We may also recall that according to John in Revelation, when God levels Babylon, He tells His people to get out of there (**Revelation 18:4-6**). There will be some Arabs who will help God's people who are fleeing for their lives. God will actually raise up a Schindler-type group of Arabs in the middle of the desert to take care of His people. They will provide some water and food. The end result will be that they also will enter the Kingdom (**Matthew 25:31-46**).

**When God's people obey the Word of God in any dispensation, God will raise up people who will help care for His faithful people.** They could be in the middle of the desert and God would still raise up people to help care for His own.

Kedar (**verse 16**) was the second son of Ishmael who formed a tribe who bore his name (Genesis 25:13; I Chronicles 1:29). Little is known about these Arab nomads, but what is predicted here is there will only be a few Arabs left when all is said and done. This whole prophetic mess with the Arab world will take about one year for God to fulfill. He will literally wipe the Arabs out in about one year.

What God says in this text is this - Israel is going to have terrible trouble for awhile but when she sees God topple the Arab world, she can know that He is about to deliver her and give her all of the land He has promised to give her.

Perhaps right now you are going through a real lonely, desert, wilderness-type of situation. Perhaps you are overwhelmed with enemies at every turn. You purpose to return over and over again to hear the Word of God and purpose to apply it and you will see God do great things for you. You will see God eliminate your enemies and shower you with His blessings.