

Isaiah Lesson 17

Isaiah Chapters 17

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Introduction: Another 'burden' of judgment is foretold, this time against Damascus in Syria. Though the prophecy is primarily of impending judgment against Damascus, there are a few glimmers of end-time events.

I. An Oracle Concerning Damascus

Isa 17:1 The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap.

Isa 17:2 The cities of Aroer are forsaken: they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

Isa 17:3 The fortress also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria: they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the LORD of hosts.

Judgment from the Assyrians upon the cities ruled by Syria was at hand. God would use the Assyrians to judge the wicked nations neighboring Israel. The time of this prophecy evidently was prior to the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom. Ussher dates the time as 741 B.C. At that time, the northern kingdom (Ephraim) was in a confederacy with Damascus. As God was about to judge the northern kingdom of Israel, would he also bring due judgment on Damascus.

Isa 17:4 And in that day it shall come to pass, that the glory of Jacob shall be made thin, and the fatness of his flesh shall wax lean.

Isa 17:5 And it shall be as when the harvestman gathereth the corn, and reapeth the ears with his arm; and it shall be as he that gathereth ears in the valley of Rephaim.

Isa 17:6 Yet gleaning grapes shall be left in it, as the shaking of an olive tree, two or three berries in the top of the uppermost bough, four or five in the outmost fruitful branches thereof, saith the LORD God of Israel.

The harshness and severity of the Assyrian invasion against the northern kingdom is foretold. God was about to remove Israel (the northern kingdom) from its land. Even as a farmer would harvest his fields, so God was about to lay the sickle of his wrath upon Samaria. The valley of Rephaim literally meant a

'valley of giants' wherein the ears of grain were very large. The harvest there was very thorough because of its profit.

God would deal with Israel as they did with their crops. There wouldn't be much left to glean. The thought is how that only a few of Israel would escape. As in a harvest when only a small remnant is left in the field, so it would be with Israel. Some have understood this to refer to Judah and Jerusalem which were small in comparison to the northern kingdom. Indeed, Judah was spared destruction by Assyria when God slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers. In any event, judgment was coming against the northern kingdom.

Isa 17:7 At that day shall a man look to his Maker, and his eyes shall have respect to the Holy One of Israel.

Isa 17:8 And he shall not look to the altars, the work of his hands, neither shall respect that which his fingers have made, either the groves, or the images.

Isa 17:9 In that day shall his strong cities be as a forsaken bough, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel: and there shall be desolation.

There is no record of any in Samaria or Damascus seeking their Maker when judgment fell at the hand of the Assyrians. The application very well may be to Judah under the leadership of Hezekiah. He certainly did so as he sought God's deliverance from Sennacherib. There also may be eschatological hints of Israel during the Tribulation. At that day, Israel will begin to truly turn to its Maker for the first time in ages.

There may have been limited fulfillment of this during Hezekiah's day, though Judah was well infected with idolatry even then. The greater fulfillment undoubtedly will be during the Day of the Lord during the Tribulation. There likely is dual fulfillment here.

Though the Assyrians wrought destruction, certainly in the northern kingdom and to a lesser degree in Judah, the final fulfillment likely will be in the Day of the Lord. When the antichrist turns against Israel during the Tribulation, there will be desolation.

II. Judah Had Forgotten the God of Their Salvation

Isa 17:10 Because thou hast forgotten the God of thy salvation, and hast not been mindful of the rock of thy strength, therefore shalt thou plant pleasant plants, and shalt set it with strange slips:

Isa 17:11 In the day shalt thou make thy plant to grow, and in the morning shalt thou make thy seed to flourish: but the harvest shall be a heap in the day of grief and of desperate sorrow.

The pattern of dual fulfillment continues. The reason for God's chastening judgment is clear. Israel had forgotten their God. They had ignored the Rock of their strength. It was true in the day of Isaiah, and it will be true in the Day of the Lord. Israel today is primarily a secular nation with only a minority following rabbinical Judaism. Their religion is the religion of the Pharisees and God has little regard to it.

The analogy of planting a garden is set forth. "Pleasant slips" were domesticated, desirable plants. "Strange slips" were weed-type plants. The analogy likely is this. Israel in that day would be trodden down by gentiles. It happened during the incursions of the Assyrians and Babylonians. Today, up to one third of the total population in the land of Israel is Arab and Palestinian. That likely will be so during the Tribulation. Gentiles will be found amongst Israel in the land.

A plant is planted with hopes of a good harvest. However, the result here is a heap (i.e., a mess). The time was coming of "grief and of desperate sorrow." The analogy is of impending judgment. That undoubtedly happened during the days of the Assyrian and Babylonian incursions. It also will be the case in Israel during the Tribulation.

Isa 17:12 Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters!

Isa 17:13 The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind.

Isa 17:14 And behold at eveningtide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us.

Again, there appears to be dual fulfillment. Verse 12 likely found its fulfillment in the invasions by the Assyrians and Babylonians against Israel (and Judah). The day was soon coming when vast armies would sweep across the land. Their noise would be like the roar of the surf of the sea. However, a greater fulfillment is in view (verse 13). Though some might argue that this is referring only to Assyria and Babylon in their respective invasions, the implication is that of many nations.

Foretold here is how that God would drive those many gentile nations from the land of Israel. That has not yet happened but will at the end of the Tribulation

when Jesus returns in power and great glory. Verse 14 clearly seems to foretell the judgment against the Assyrian army as fulfilled in II Kings 19:35 when the angel of the Lord slew 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night.

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Prov 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

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