

# The Prophets

Lesson #14

Isaiah 13:1-23:18

## Outline

### I. **Denunciation (1:1-39:8)**

#### A. Denunciations against other nations (13:1-23:18).

1. Against Babylon (13:1-14:23).
2. Against Assyria (14:24-27).
3. Against Philistia (14:28-32).
4. Against Moab (15:1-16:14).
5. Against Damascus and Israel (17:1-14).
6. Against Ethiopia (18:1-7).
7. Against Egypt (19:1-20:6).
8. Against Babylon (21:1-10).
9. Against Edom (21:11-12).
10. Against Arabia (21:13-17).
11. Against Jerusalem (22:1-25).
12. Against Tyre (23:1-18).

## Notes

### **Isaiah 13:1-14:23**

- The call to arms (13:1-5).
  - Those who will execute the anger of the Lord against Babylon are later identified as the Medes. The army will be an instrument in God's hand.
  - Babylon, the nation that would rise to world domination and carry away Judah (Micah 4:10), would in turn be brought down by the mighty hand of God.
- The terror of the day of the Lord (13:6-16).
  - The day was at hand, but not from Isaiah's point of view, for Babylon had not reached its peak of power; it was not ready for destruction.
  - The prophecy goes beyond Babylon to include all those nations which she symbolizes, those nations which are motivated by pride and arrogance to conquer and destroy.
- The completeness of the destruction (13:17-22).
  - The ruthless cruelty and heartless spirit of the Babylonians would be equaled by the Medes.
  - Instead of being a place for human habitation, Babylon will be desolate. The prophet paints a very melancholy picture of wild creatures inhabiting the ruins of a once proud city.

- A song over the fall of the tyrant (14:1-27).
  - Compassion on Jacob (14:1-2).
    - The destruction of Babylon will be followed by the restoration of Israel. God will be gracious to them.
    - This prophecy was fulfilled as foreigners were conquered through the Spirit of God by means of the truth (2 Corinthians 10:5).
  - The song against Babylon (14:3-11).
    - This will not be a song of rejoicing at the misfortune of another, but a rejoicing in the work of God.
    - God's power has been pitted against the power of earthly rulers and their gods, and He has conquered.
  - The fall of the mighty (14:12-20).
    - Isaiah likens the Babylonian to a brilliant star whose glory is cut down by a fall from the height of heaven to the ground.
    - The mighty king of Babylon is subject to the weakness of all flesh, taking his place beside the smallest of the earth.
  - The vengeance of God (14:21-23).
    - The destruction would be such that the Babylonians would never again rise up and build cities.
    - A "besom" is a small broom used to sweep corners and clear out the trash. This symbolizes the completeness of Babylon's ruin.

### ***Isaiah 14:24-27***

- God would break the Assyrian in the land, tread him under foot upon His mountains and remove his yoke and burden from Israel.
- This destruction of Assyria would be an assurance to God's suffering people that He would likewise destroy Babylon, removing her yoke from Judah's neck (Jeremiah 50:17-46).

### ***Isaiah 14:28-32***

- In all likelihood, the Assyrians are the rod that is broken, Babylon is the serpent and the third power, which is not specified, is the fiery flying serpent that will complete the destruction.
- Though all the heathen nations be destroyed, God has founded Zion, which refers here to spiritual Zion, where all may find safety. When the Assyrians came, Zion stood because of the faith of Isaiah, Hezekiah and a small remnant.

### ***Isaiah 15:1-16:14***

- Crying, weeping and trembling over desolation (15:1-4).
  - The baldness of their heads and cutting of their beards, a practice at that time to display grief, give emphasis to their dejection and woeful condition.

- The armed men cry aloud -- not in victory but in despair -- as their hearts tremble within them because of their terror and distress.
- The prophet's lament (15:5-9).
  - The soul of the prophet is deeply touched by the severity of his prophecy, as evidenced by his words, "*My heart shall cry out for Moab.*"
  - The judgment of God will continue until the total destruction of the nation has been accomplished.
- Moab's hope (16:1-5).
  - In her distressed condition, Moab can find hope only in Zion, for God had founded Zion as the refuge of the afflicted (14:32).
  - Isaiah advises Moab to make a plea to Judah, for God would then show them mercy. Salvation is always from God.
- Moab's rejection of this hope (16:6-12).
  - Although He gave them the ability to turn from destruction, they did not because of their arrogance, pride and wrath against Judah.
  - Moab will wail for himself; every individual will join in the wailing, for the basis of the nation's pride and boasting will be taken away.
- The time of the visitation on Moab (16:13-14).
  - Isaiah's prophecy against Moab had probably been spoken earlier in his prophetic ministry. It is now about to be fulfilled.
  - "*The years of a hireling*" indicates a definite period. All of the glory of Moab will be brought into shame and dishonor. Of all her inhabitants, only a very small remnant were spared (Jeremiah 48:45-47; Zephaniah 2:9).

### **Isaiah 17:1-14**

- The judgment against Damascus (17:1-3).
  - The prophet states that Damascus will never again be the city of importance that she one was; her glory will be as a ruinous heap.
  - With its neighboring cities, it will be so completely forsaken that the land will be a place for flocks to graze, a place where they can lie down in peace with no one making them afraid.
- The leanness of Jacob (17:4-11).
  - Three figures are employed to emphasize how few will make up the remnant of Israel.
  - Realizing the futility of trust in other gods, the small remnant will look instead to their Maker, the Creator of all things, as the only one worthy of respect and worship.
- The destruction of the invader (17:12-14).
  - Assyria will come with the destructive force of a raging sea; but it will not always be so. God uses the nations to accomplish His purpose and then scatters them, bringing them to an end.

- The meaning of the prophecy in vs. 14 became clear with the destruction of Sennacherib's army before the gates of Jerusalem.

### **Isaiah 18:1-7**

- The ambassadors and the prophet's word (18:1-3).
  - The "*shadowing with wings*" represented a land of insects. They probably represented the multitudinous army that Ethiopia could mobilize.
  - From the hills and mountains in the land of Judah Jehovah is going to act, and His action will serve as a rallying point for those who worship Him and as a warning of judgment for those who do not.
- God is in control (18:4-6).
  - In the midst of world foment and upheaval, God speaks through Isaiah, declaring His calm control of world affairs.
  - The Assyrian had boasted of his greatness, but he had failed to realize that he was dealing with God and not with an idol.
- Ethiopia's homage to the Lord (18:7).
  - The Ethiopians will be so awed by the mighty power of God and so grateful for their deliverance that they will send a present to Him (Zephaniah 3:10).
  - Glory and honor belong to God, but shame and destruction will come to those who trust in their own vanities.

### **Isaiah 19:1-20:6**

- Threats (19:1-17).
  - The failure of idolatry (19:1-4).
    - God's stirring up Egyptians against Egyptians indicates a state divided by internal strife and anarchy.
    - In the midst of this internal strife and confusion counsel will fail, for God will bring it to nought (Psalm 33:10).
  - Natural and economic disaster (19:5-10).
    - The dry rivers were probably a symbol of the wasting and decline of the nation, the death of her empire.
    - The whole economy of a once great empire will wither away. The glory of Egypt will be brought low.
- Foolish counsel (19:11-15).
  - No prince can claim that he is the son of the wise, the son of the ancient kings, for his advice and its consequences will betray him.
  - The strong leaders of the people, instead of directing them properly, have led them on a course of destruction. Their actions are comparable to the staggering of an intoxicated man who falls and wallows in his own vomit.

- Fear and terror (19:16-17).
  - There would be a spirit of softness and timidity likened to women in contrast to the fierce determination of male warriors who fight and defend.
  - At no time in history has the nation of Judah been a terror to Egypt; it is Judah's God that inspires dread (Deuteronomy 2:25).
- Promises (19:18-25).
  - The transition from threats to promises (19:18).
    - The phrase "*in that day*" ties the prophecy of blessings to the time period in which the prophecies of judgment will be fulfilled. Out of days of judgment come experiences of blessing.
    - Amid idolatry and confusion there will be some who swear to God while they continue to speak the mixed language of error and truth until the pure spiritual language of God comes.
  - God will be known to Egypt (19:19-22).
    - The true worship of God will be established in the midst of that idolatrous land. The "*altar*" and "*pillar*" were symbolic (2:2-4; 11:10; 42:6; 56:7).
    - The prophecy seems to look for its fulfillment in the Messiah. This is confirmed in the following verses. When they call upon God in the midst of affliction and chastening, He will answer by healing them.
  - The universal worship of God (19:23-25).
    - Assyria and Egypt will travel over a highway so that they might worship together, having been reconciled in a common faith.
    - The carnal spirit which has dominated and controlled all the actions of Assyria and Egypt will be brought under the power of God's Spirit (11:6-9).
    - God has redeemed the enemies of Judah and brought them together into one body with His people.
- The trust that failed (20:1-6).
  - The year that Tartan came to Ashdod was 731 B.C. This was not the name of an individual but the title of the Assyrian commander-in-chief.
  - As Isaiah, God's servant, has walked for three years naked and barefoot, so the king of Assyria will lead away into exile the captives of Egypt and Ethiopia.
  - A decisive blow was struck between Assyria and Egypt when, in 663 B.C., Ashurbanipal invaded the land and sacked Thebes (No-amon, Nahum 3:8), carrying away captives and large quantities of booty.

### **Isaiah 21:1-10**

- The hard vision (21:1-5).
  - This judgment against Babylon will cause the sighing of the oppressed peoples, especially Judah, to cease; judgment against Babylon provides deliverance for God's people.
  - The horror of the vision so frightened him that his heart fluttered; the twilight which he had desired for Babylon has now turned him to trembling.
- The watchman and his mission (21:6-10).
  - God's power will triumph and the powerless gods of the great heathen kingdom will be brought to nought and cast down.
  - After Judah has been threshed and winnowed by God, and He thus gets His grain, the floor (Babylon) will be destroyed.
  - The prophet now declares that he has been true to his commission; he has declared the message to both Babylon and Judah.

### **Isaiah 21:11-12**

- The crier symbolizes the deep anxiety and misery of the nation, whereas the watchman is the representative of God, the only one who can give an answer to the question.
- Edom is a people destined to the silence and night of death. Night after night came upon the nation until finally, about the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, they either drifted or were driven into the desert and disappeared.

### **Isaiah 21:13-17**

- The people of Arabia were known as "*the children of the east*" (Judges 6:3; 7:12), and were renowned for their wisdom (1 Kings 4:30; Obadiah 8).
- The fate of Arabia was guaranteed. Babylon would complete what Assyria had begun. The silence of death would descend upon Arabia as it had upon Edom; the night would finally come.

### **Isaiah 22:1-25**

- The rebuke of the people's spirit of frivolity (22:1-14).
  - The rulers and judges who should defend and lead the people will fail them and be captured, bound and carried afar off.
  - The people's error was in their failure to look to God, the source of protection and deliverance, the one who had determined their destruction if they turned away from Him (Deuteronomy 28:15-68).

- The failure of the stewards (22:15-25).
  - Like a strong man, God will lay firm hold on Shebna and violently hurl him away. Repeatedly it is demonstrated in scripture that God raises up and debases men; all are in his hand.
  - The "key" refers to Eliakim's responsibility to exercise the power of the office entrusted to him. This is seen in the New Testament as well (Matthew 16:19).

### ***Isaiah 23:1-18***

- The judgment of Tyre and the effect of her fall (23:1-7).
  - Tyre has never borne children. When finally slain or destroyed, she will leave nothing permanent; she has provided nothing of a lasting nature, for the gain of commerce or commerce itself is of the world and passes away.
  - In the pursuit of trade many of her people had sojourned in distant lands, leaving her without a permanent posterity anywhere.
- God is the executioner of the judgment (23:8-12).
  - Only God would dare to plan the overthrow of such a nation at the zenith of her glory.
  - The shame of the people of the coastland will be like that of an oppressed or abused virgin.
- The fate of Phoenicia (23:13-18).
  - Like an old harlot who has been forgotten for years, she will take a harp and go about the streets or in the taverns playing and singing in an effort to revive her business by enticing her former customers.
  - So, as judgment is of God, so also is a nation's prosperity of Him; all is in His hand. He controls the destiny of nations and of men.