
Day 184 - July 3

The Divided Kingdom (930-725 BCE)

Isaiah Prophecies against Nations

Readings: *Isaiah 14:28-32; Isaiah 13:1-22; 14:1-23; 21:1-10*

Reflections:

- With the death of Ahaz and the emergence of Hezekiah, a new hope for spiritual renewal appears. But in the continuing story of “what doesn’t work” this revival will be short lived and Isaiah’s prophecies make the future clear. The Philistines will face judgment for their ongoing threat against Israel. Babylon will ultimately be the kingdom that takes Israel into captivity in just a few short years.
- In God’s judgment against the Philistines, we see again God’s concern for the poor. “The poorest of the poor will find pasture, and the needy will lie down in safety.” We also see God’s ongoing commitment to his purposes for the people of Israel, “The Lord has established Zion, and in her his afflicted people will find refuge.”
- In the judgments against Babylon, we first see that God will bring judgment through foreign armies. God takes ownership for these armies and declares that he is the one that has mustered them for war. God’s judgment against Babylon will be carried out under God’s direction by these foreign invaders.
- God’s hatred for pride is highlighted again. “I will put an end to the arrogance of the haughty and will humble the pride of the ruthless.” The destruction outlined is horrible. “Babylon, the jewel of kingdoms, the glory of the Babylonian’s pride, will be overthrown by God like Sodom and Gomorrah.” It doesn’t get any worse than that.
- God, in the midst of this judgment against Israel’s captor, remains committed to Israel. “The Lord will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land.” Now notice this key prophecy. “Aliens will join them and unite with the house of Jacob.” Isaiah 14:1-2 has an interesting explanation. Essentially it says Israel will be taken and made a servant and then the nations will be captured by Israel and made their servants. What is striking is that there really is very little evidence for Israel being this dominant oppressor that basically does to the nations what Babylon did to her. It may be that this prophecy is actually symbolic in nature. Just as Israel was captured and made a servant of Babylon, one day through Israel (and the Messiah) the nations will be captured and made to be servants, servants of truth, God and the his

purposes in the world. In that way they are made servants within the community of the people of God.

- As we continue through Isaiah 14, at verse 12 and following we encounter a passage that again breaks away from the immediate context and seems to reveal insights into the spiritual realm. This passage is focused on the king of Babylon but clearly has references to Satan. “How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God. I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’ But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.” Just as Isaiah will often break away from the immediate context and share prophecies about the coming Messiah, here God through Isaiah uses the judgments against the proud and powerful king of Babylon as a launch pad to reveal the rise and fall of Satan. In Luke 10:18 Jesus says, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.” Revelations 12:7-9 has another similar passage. “And there was war in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down—that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”
- Now consider Ezekiel’s future prophecy (28:11-19) against the king of Tyre:

The word of the LORD came to me: “Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says:

‘You were the model of perfection,
full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

You were in Eden,
the garden of God;
every precious stone adorned you:
ruby, topaz and emerald,
chrysolite, onyx and jasper,
sapphire, turquoise and beryl.
Your settings and mountings were made of gold;
on the day you were created they were prepared.

You were anointed as a guardian cherub,
for so I ordained you.
You were on the holy mount of God;
you walked among the fiery stones.

You were blameless in your ways
from the day you were created
till wickedness was found in you.

Through your widespread trade
you were filled with violence,
and you sinned.
So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God,
and I expelled you, O guardian cherub,
from among the fiery stones.

Your heart became proud
on account of your beauty,
and you corrupted your wisdom
because of your splendor.
So I threw you to the earth;
I made a spectacle of you before kings.

By your many sins and dishonest trade
you have desecrated your sanctuaries.
So I made a fire come out from you,
and it consumed you,
and I reduced you to ashes on the ground
in the sight of all who were watching.

All the nations who knew you
are appalled at you;
you have come to a horrible end
and will be no more.' "

- Here within these passages we see revealed the basic story of the rise and fall of Satan. All who would follow the ways of pride and power and oppression will fall under the same judgment.
- The following verses of Isaiah provide another interesting point to consider, whether it applies to the king of Babylon or Satan or both: "Those who see you stare at you, they ponder your fate: 'Is this the man who shook the earth and made kingdoms tremble, the man who made the world a desert, who overthrew its cities and would not let his captives go home?" What powerful images of the work of the enemy: making the world a desert compared to the garden of Eden God intended; overthrowing communities rather than cultivating true family; taking people prisoner rather than offering them freedom. Evil self-centered leaders, whether spiritual or earthly, work directly against all that God purposes.

- The final judgment against Babylon culminates in this final declaration: “Babylon has fallen, has fallen! All the images of its gods lie shattered on the ground.”
- The corruption of Babylon’s great power and evil as well as the parallel that Isaiah saw with Babylon and the evil spiritual forces makes Babylon an excellent symbol of evil principalities and powers. In 1 Peter 5 and Revelation 17 and 18, Babylon will be used as the primary symbol of evil power structures under the influence of Satan. This is a strong reminder that just as God seeks to work through people to complete his purposes on the earth, Satan seeks to work through humans to bring about his destruction on the earth. Again we can say praise God for Jesus!