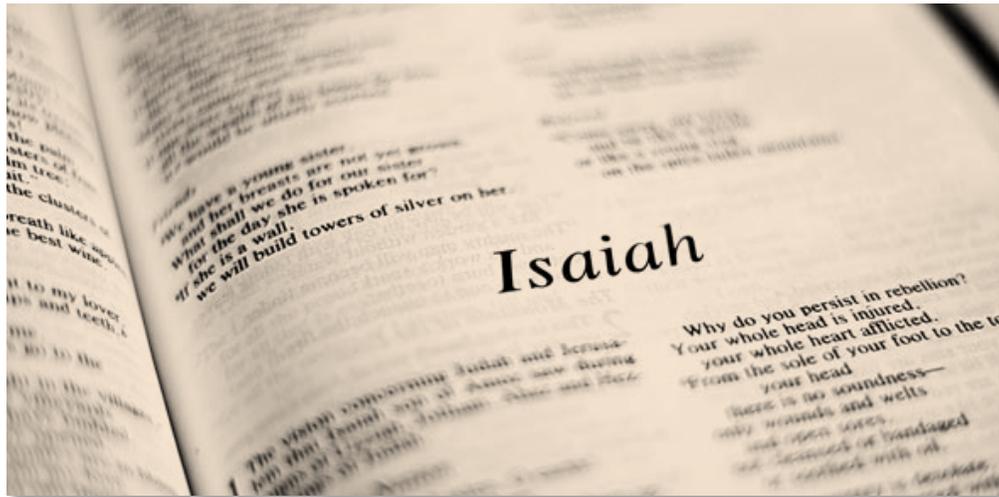


THE BOOK OF ISAIAH

PROPHECIES AGAINST THE NATIONS: ISAIAH 13-23



T. M. Moore

A Scriptorium Study

The Fellowship of Ailbe

Prophecies against the Nations: Isaiah 13-23
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Introduction to *Isaiah 13-23*

All the nations of the ancient world have reached a tipping point with the Lord. He is about to bring them all to judgment, one after the other. He will use the nations in war against one another, and couple that with various other works of wrath, including famine and pestilence.

But amid all the warnings of judgment, the central message of the book of Isaiah is that God is still gracious, His covenant is still in place, and He will bring revival and renewal to His people “in that day,” and awakening and restoration to the world.

God’s works of judgment – which many of the people to whom Isaiah preached would see them – would not fail, and His works of salvation and renewal would be equally reliable and sure. The faithful among God’s people will endure His discipline with patience, always looking to, living toward, and praying for the days of revival to come.

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1 Against Babylon

Pray Psalm 137.4.

How shall we sing the LORD's song
In a foreign land?

Read Isaiah 13.

Reflect.

1. Babylon is at this time merely a faint glow on the eastern horizon. Israel and Syria are the looming threat to Judah and Jerusalem, with Assyria waiting in the wings. Why do you suppose Isaiah is prophesying against Babylon?

2. The destruction of Babylon, yet many years in the future, is a type of the destruction of the unbelieving world. How can you see that?

Meditate.

After a prayer of praise for the promised restoration of God's people, Isaiah launches into a tirade against Babylon.

Who? What's with this sudden concern about a nation with which, to this point, Jerusalem has had no significant involvement?

The destruction of Babylon is called the "day of the LORD." It is spoken of in terms of cosmic cataclysm (cf. v. 10) and universal judgment (vv. 10-16). The destruction will be complete, and Babylon will never be rebuilt or inhabited (vv. 20-22).

As we shall see, Babylon will feature large in Isaiah's ministry, as he points the people of his day forward, beyond their lifetimes, beyond time itself, to future fulfillments and ultimate scenarios. But what God does at those times will seem like the world is turning upside-down. And when Isaiah's words prove true, the faithful among God's people will turn to Him in repentance and faith, and call upon Him to fulfill His promised restoration for His people.

Isaiah's words should also have served to warn the rulers of Israel against becoming too cozy with Babylon – a warning Hezekiah would fail to heed.

Prepare.

1. There's a lot of violence here, even a hint of Psalm 137 (v. 16). Nations are described as God's "weapons." Why do you suppose God used so much violence of one nation to judge another?

2. Verses 9 and 10 sound more like the final judgment of God than the downfall of Babylon. Explain. Does the rise and fall of nations like Babylon serve an *eschatological* purpose for believers?

3. It's pretty clear that God hates sin (vv. 9, 11, 13). How should this warn those who believe in Him?

The day of the Lord comes suddenly, it says, and in an unexpected way like the pains of childbirth, which forestall all one's efforts to hide them. Ambrose (333-397 AD), *Letter 32* (8.56.12)

Lord, let me never forget that a day of wrath is coming, and so I need to...

Pray Psalm 137.

This is a difficult psalm to pray. To understand it, and the anger that seethes in it, we have to put ourselves in the place of those who were carried away forcefully to Babylon, and who saw their loved ones murdered and their city and God's temple destroyed. To pray it today, we should think of the spiritual forces of wickedness which everywhere hold people captive to the lie, and which foment violent attacks on our fellow believers, and pray that God will restrain and even destroy them.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 137 (*Gift of Love: Though I May Speak*)

We sit beside the waters deep in broken pride, to mourn and weep
for Zion's woes and all our sin: How great our foes, without, within!

No songs have we of joy to sing. Our enemy, to taunt and sting,
bids us rejoice, as they oppress: We have no voice to praise or bless.

How can we sing, exalt Your Name, or praises bring amid our shame?
If we forget Your Church's fame, O Lord, then let our hands grow lame.

If ever praise forsake my tongue, if Zion's ways no more be sung,
if greater joy by me be found, my lips destroy, no more to sound.

Remember, Lord Your boasting foes, who hate Your Word and visit woes
on your dear sheep that they may die: Cause them to weep and mourn and sigh.

How blessed are You, our sovereign Lord, Who judgment true shall soon accord
to all who seek Your sheep to kill. Preserve the meek who serve You still.

2 Two Rulers Judged

Pray Psalm 46.1-3.

God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear,
Even though the earth be removed,
And though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;
Though its waters roar *and* be troubled,
Though the mountains shake with its swelling.

Read Isaiah 14.1-23.

Reflect.

1. Two rulers are addressed in these verses. What does each rule? What are the effects of their rule?
2. What insights do we gain from these verses about the larger context in which world events unfold?

Meditate.

After a brief aside promising restoration to His people (vv. 1, 2), Isaiah resumes his prophecy against the King of Babylon.

But there is more here than the King of Babylon.

First (vv. 3-11), judgment is pronounced against the King of Babylon. He oppressed nations and heaped gold unto himself (v. 4). He persecuted and poured out his wrath on many nations (v. 5), and he was brutal toward those he subjugated (v. 6) When he is destroyed and his kingdom is overwhelmed, the nations of the earth will know peace and rest and rejoicing (vv. 7, 8). Hell, and all those who have already made their way there, await the King of Babylon (vv. 9-11) and mock his undoing.

And all this will come to pass, just as Isaiah prophesied. But a larger victory is symbolized in the fall of Babylon and its king. Isaiah is shown a day when Lucifer, who now (in Isaiah's day) oppressed and weakened nations, and who is filled with pride and covets the throne of God (vv. 12-14) – this heaven-dwelling being will be himself cast down and destroyed (v. 15). He rules the nations, but he will be overthrown by the power of God.

The King of Babylon is a type of Satan. As he coveted the temple and gold of Jerusalem, Satan covets the throne of God. As the King of Babylon subjected many nations and peoples to captivity and brutal rule, so Satan governed the world in the time before the coming of Christ. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple of God; Satan sought to destroy God Himself in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ. The King of Babylon will be cast down and all his kingdoms become the possession of another king. Satan has been cast down and overthrown by Christ, and though he continues to struggle, he knows his doom is sure.

Isaiah is seeing into the unseen realm, where eternal verities and decisions determine everything that happens on earth, and where God rules supreme and for His own glory and the salvation of His people.

Prepare.

1. Meditate on Revelation 12.1-7. When was Satan finally cast out of heaven (cf. v. 5)? What does that mean for the followers of Christ (Revelation 12.8-12)?

2. Why was Lucifer finally “cut down to the ground” (cast out of heaven)? What was his great sin? Are we ever tempted in this way? Explain.

3. These prophecies against Babylon, the King of Babylon, and Lucifer are all made prior to Hezekiah’s coming to the throne. What is the message Isaiah wanted Hezekiah to receive?

How injurious to the servants of God can be the proud one who exalts himself against God and says, “I will ascend into heaven and seat my throne above the stars of heaven; I will sit on the highest mountain above the tall mountains of the north; I will ascend above the clouds; and I will be like the Most High.” It is no wonder, then, that the stubborn of spirit who will not yield to God is also able to oppress humanity. Ambrose (333-397 AD), Exposition of Psalm 118.16.15-16

Lord, keep me from the sin of pride! Grant me a humble heart so that I...

Pray Psalm 46.

Praise God for His sovereign power over all the nations, all creation, and every created thing. Call on His power to be with you for the day ahead.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 46 (*Chrysostom: We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

God is our refuge and our strength; He is our help in times of need.

Thus though the earth beneath us should change, the sea consume the mountain range;

Waters may roar with raging speed; yet God will rescue us at length.

God’s everlasting, joyous grace gladdens the city where He dwells.

Safely in Him, we will not be moved; when morning dawns, His love will be proved.

Fears and distresses Jesus dispels for His beloved, chosen race.

Kingdoms arise and rage and roar, threat’ning the earth with sore distress.

Nations may fall, earth melt away, His Word is yet our hope and stay.

God is among us, ever to bless; He is our stronghold evermore.

Come see the works of God’s Right Hand! He breaks the nations of the earth, shatters their foolish weapons and pride, sets all their sinful strength aside.

Them He will show His infinite worth as they before His judgment stand.

Rest in the Lord and be at peace, all who are mired in sore travail.

Lift up our God, praise Jesus our Lord; proclaim to all the earth His Word!

God is our stronghold, never to fail: thus may our hope and joy increase!

3 Judgment Nearby and Soon

Pray Psalm 83.1-4.

Do not keep silent, O God!
Do not hold Your peace,
And do not be still, O God!
For behold, Your enemies make a tumult;
And those who hate You have lifted up their head.
They have taken crafty counsel against Your people,
And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.
They have said, "Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation,
That the name of Israel may be remembered no more."

Read Isaiah 14.24-16.14.

Reflect.

1. On a map, look up the nations God promises to judge in these chapters. Can you see that God is encircling Judah and Jerusalem with judgment? What do you suppose He wants them to learn?
2. Why is God bringing judgment against these nations?

Meditate.

God's patience with the nations, and with His people as a light to the nations, has run out. Suddenly, judgment is coming on Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Israel, Syria, and Jerusalem. These nations, and especially the people of Israel and Judah, pushed God to a tipping point of wrath, and the judgment He brings is terrifying and deadly.

And even Babylon, His instrument of judgment against all these nations, must fall to the judgment of God. As will the Persians who destroy Babylon, the Greeks who conquer the Persians, and the Romans who overwhelmed and replaced the Greeks in the West.

But there is hope. One is coming to sit on David's throne and to rule in truth and righteousness (16.5). The pride God judges in nations like Assyria and Moab will be contrasted by the humility of His suffering Servant/King Who is to come. Where gladness, joy, and life are forfeited by those who rebel against God, gladness, joy, and life will be full and free to all who look for and rest in the coming King of righteousness, peace, and joy.

Babylon's fall is still many years away, and many of those living in Isaiah's day would not live to see it. But Moab – and Assyria and Philistia – will be destroyed in just three years. The message is clear: When you see this happen, believe that all the rest will happen too, and repent.

Prepare.

1. Meditate on Romans 1.18-32. What forms does the wrath of God take in our day?
2. Is God judging the nations of the world? Is He judging this nation? Is there a message in this for His people? Explain.
3. Wherever we see the judgment of God, we should look to our own souls, confessing our sins and seeking repentance. How can we know when the King of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit is ruling supreme in our lives?

What God has reared up and wishes to remain, no one can tear down. In the same way, what he has destroyed and wishes to stay destroyed, no one can rebuild. John Chrysostom (344-407 AD), *Discourses Against Judaizing Christians* 5.11.6

Give me eyes to see your wrath and judgment on our world, Lord, so that I...

Pray Psalm 83.

As you pray through this psalm, listen for the Lord to bring to mind ways that national world leaders are seeking to throw off His rule or are oppressing His people. Pray for God to shame them into seeking Him, and pray for the Lord to be exalted over all the earth.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 83 (*St. Chrysostom: We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

O God, do not be quiet now; do not be silent, nor be still!
See how Your foes erupt in a row and those who hate You chafe at Your will.
Shrewdly they plan, conspiring as one, against Your daughters and Your sons.

“Come, let us wipe them out,” they say. “Let Israel’s name no more be heard!”
Bold they conspire to do us away, and covenant against You, O Lord.
Peoples and nations cast in their lot for this ambitious, wicked plot.

Deal with them, Lord, and bring them down, as You against old foes prevailed,
When You Midian cast to the ground and all her kings and princes assailed –
All who Your pastures sought to possess You brought to ruin and deep distress.

Make them like whirling dust, O God! Scatter them like the windblown chaff!
Rage like a fire consuming a wood, like flames that burn a mountain pass!
Blow like a tempest, bring them to harm, and terrify them with Your storm!

Fill with dishonor every face that they may seek Your Name, O Lord.
Bring them to shame, dismay, and disgrace, and let them perish under Your Word,
That they may learn Your infinite worth, O God Most High of all the earth!

4 Four More Nations Judged

Pray Psalm 75.1.

We give thanks to You, O God, we give thanks!
For Your wondrous works declare *that* Your name is near.

Read Isaiah 17, 18, and 19.

Reflect.

1. The “nearby and soon” judgment of God will begin in Israel and Syria (ch. 17). We recall that these two nations were preparing to gang up on Judah and Jerusalem at the time of Isaiah’s prophecy. How is the offense of Israel described (vv. 8, 10, 14)? A “gleaning” will remain in Israel (v. 6). To what does this refer? How is this “gleaning” characterized (vv. 7, 8)?

2. Ethiopia and Egypt also come under the wrath of God, but He holds out hope even for them (18.7; 19.18-24). To what time does “that day” refer in 19.18, 19, 23, 24? What happens “in that day”?

Meditate.

God’s judgment against the nations continues to unfold, as Israel, Syria, Ethiopia, and Egypt now come onto His radar screen. Their sins are the usual suspects: idolatry, hubris, self-vaunting, offenses against God and His people.

God will demonstrate the worthlessness of their idols. He will humble them and make a mockery of their arrogance and self-vaunting. And, as all these nations come to judgment, He will preserve Jerusalem as an island of safety and salvation amid a sea of wrath.

But God does not leave these nations without hope. A “gleaning” of those who look to their Maker and have respect for the Holy one of Israel will endure through Israel and Syria’s downfall. These are they who repent of their sins and make their way to Jerusalem to serve God.

God has a “present” for Ethiopia as well, in that He will bring them to Himself at Mt. Zion (18.7).

And He will prepare a Savior for Egypt “in that day” when His salvation begins to be known to the nations of the world (19.18-25). God announces His judgment on these nations – all at the hands of Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar – so that, when it comes to pass, they will remember His promise of a remnant and of salvation, and turn to Him in repentance and faith.

Prepare.

1. How is God glorified in judging the nations of the earth? Is this true yet today?

2. How is it clear that God intends His grace to reach to the nations of the world? How does He do that?

3. Assyria and Egypt mark the western and eastern limits of those nations God is judging. But He will put in place a “highway” to unite them (19.23). What does this mean? To what – or Whom – does it refer?

By this it is clearly promised that the glory of Israel and all her riches will be taken away, and only a few, who like the few berries on an olive branch can be counted easily, will be left. These are the ones who believe in the Lord. Just after this there is a prophecy of the entire human race turning away from the error of idolatry and recognizing the God of Israel. Eusebius of Caesarea (260-340 AD), Proof of the Gospel 2.3

Lord, You have a remnant You intend to save, even among the people in my Personal Mission Field. Help me to...

Pray Psalm 75.

Pray for the nations of the world, and for the chosen remnant of God, yet to be saved. Ask God to use you as His agent of grace today.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 75 (*Galilee: Jesus Calls Us*)

We give thanks, Lord, we give thanks for Your all-glorious Name is near!
Men Your wondrous works declare, Lord; let all living creatures hear!

When you choose the time of judgment, You will judge with equity.
Then the earth and all within it by Your hand no more shall be.

Warn the boastful, warn the wicked: "Do not boast or raise your horn!
Do not raise your boastful voices; do not speak with pride and scorn!"

Neither east nor west nor desert shall exalting bring to man.
God is Judge, He puts one down and makes another one to stand.

For the cup of judgment foams in Jesus' sovereign, holy hand.
He has mixed it and will pour it out on every wicked man.

As for me, I will declare it: Evermore to God be praise!
He abases all the wicked, but His righteous ones He saves!

5 “Go, set a watchman...”

Pray Psalm 83.1-4.

Do not keep silent, O God!
Do not hold Your peace,
And do not be still, O God!
For behold, Your enemies make a tumult;
And those who hate You have lifted up their head.
They have taken crafty counsel against Your people,
And consulted together against Your sheltered ones.
They have said, “Come, and let us cut them off from *being* a nation,
That the name of Israel may be remembered no more.”

Read Isaiah 20, 21.

Reflect.

1. Isaiah’s work was primarily one of word – primarily, but not exclusively. How else did God use him to warn the people of Jerusalem?
2. Is there a role for “watchmen” in the Church today? Explain.

Meditate.

All the words of judgment Isaiah pronounced against the nations – here returning to Babylon and including Edom and Arabia – came to fulfillment, just as he prophesied. Those who lived to see this judgment of God would understand that His Word was reliable and sure, even if it tarried for a while in its fulfillment. God intended this preaching of judgment to give His faithful people hope that, as surely as He accomplished all He had promised of judgment, He would accomplish all He had promised of blessing and restoration.

God sends Isaiah to undertake a little “performance art” to enhance the message he was proclaiming to the people of Jerusalem (20.1-6). This must have been rather shocking, to see the naked prophet walking about the city. This drama would have reinforced the message of God’s Word, making it more visible, palpable, and shocking. God frequently uses the arts to add emphasis to His Word, although most of the time, the arts He employs are rather more conventional than what we see here.

Babylon, Edom (vv. 11, 12), and Arabia (vv. 15-17) will also be judged. Isaiah is not specific as to *how* this will happen, but *that* it would happen we are surely to believe. Assyria and Babylon are God’s initial instruments of judgment, and the Medes and Persians are waiting in the wing for their cue. Sinful nations devouring other sinful nations is part of God’s plan to prepare the world for His grace. As we see how horrible sin can be, it makes us long for something more charitable, hopeful, and secure – and we only find this in the Kingdom of the Branch. Wherever we see the world coming under the judgment of God (cf. Rom. 1.18-32), we should be preparing to be His agents of grace for healing, renewal, and salvation.

“Go, set a watchman...” (Is. 21.6). The watchman’s job was to keep an eye out for coming trouble and call the people to action. He worked from a tower, above the city, so that he could see to the far horizon, and inform the city of trouble long before it arrived. The great fear of the people is that trouble will come in the night (v. 12). The watchman assures them that night – and its troubles – will come, but a new day will dawn as well.

Where are the watchmen looking out for the Church today, warning her that it is time for judgment to begin at the house of God (1 Pet. 4.17)?

Prepare.

1. What would the role of a watchman look like today? Whose responsibility is this?
2. God's judgment doesn't usually happen all at once, but gradually. Is our world under the judgment of God today (Rom. 1.18-32)? How do we know? What should Christians be doing in the light of this?
3. The false teachers of Jerusalem were telling the people, "You're going to be fine; it's all going to work out. God loves you." The true watchmen had a much more urgent, pointed, and serious message. Why do we need to hear both these messages today?

*"The morning comes, and also the night." For by his presence has a new light shone out upon the world, and yet the former darkness remained in the hearts of unbelievers. Gregory the Great (540-604 AD), *Morals on the Book of Job* 2.6.34*

You have set me for a watchman, Lord, so that I will...

Pray Psalm 83.

Today as you pray this psalm, pray for the Lord to have mercy on the nations, so that they might seek Him (v. 16) and a great revival and awakening might sweep the world.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 83 (*St. Chrysostom: We Have Not Known Thee As We Ought*)

O God, do not be quiet now; do not be silent, nor be still!

See how Your foes erupt in a row and those who hate You chafe at Your will.

Shrewdly they plan, conspiring as one, against Your daughters and Your sons.

"Come, let us wipe them out," they say. "Let Israel's name no more be heard!"

Bold they conspire to do us away, and covenant against You, O Lord.

Peoples and nations cast in their lot for this ambitious, wicked plot.

Deal with them, Lord, and bring them down, as You against old foes prevailed,
When You Midian cast to the ground and all her kings and princes assailed –
All who Your pastures sought to possess You brought to ruin and deep distress.

Make them like whirling dust, O God! Scatter them like the windblown chaff!
Rage like a fire consuming a wood, like flames that burn a mountain pass!
Blow like a tempest, bring them to harm, and terrify them with Your storm!

Fill with dishonor every face that they may seek Your Name, O Lord.
Bring them to shame, dismay, and disgrace, and let them perish under Your Word,
That they may learn Your infinite worth, O God Most High of all the earth!

6 Against Jerusalem, Shebna, and Tyre

Pray Psalm 36.5-7.

Your mercy, O LORD, *is* in the heavens;
Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.
Your righteousness *is* like the great mountains;
Your judgments *are* a great deep;
O LORD, You preserve man and beast.
How precious *is* Your lovingkindness, O God!

Read Isaiah 22, 23.

Reflect.

1. Pride and misplaced trust are the primary sins bringing the judgment of God in these chapters. How do you see that?
2. How can you see that Eliakim is a type of Christ?

Meditate.

Jerusalem's moat (vv. 9-11) is a symbol of everything that had gone wrong in the nation. They were trusting in their own devices rather than in the Lord. They respected their own judgments above His. Now they would reap the consequences of such foolish choices: "trouble and treading down and perplexity" (v. 5). The vision of vv. 1-14 is of scattering, destruction, weeping, mourning, and destitution. This is where sin leads us.

Shebna's sin was the hubris of supposing he should be buried in the temple of the Lord (v. 16), like the kings of Judah, who were buried in a designated place of honor. In this he presumed on the Lord and overstepped the bounds of his calling as high priest. No priest before him had taken such a bold step, and now he would be replaced by Eliakim.

But there is a larger purpose to this, a purpose intended to send a word of hope to the people. Look at the way Eliakim is described in verses 20-24. He will be a "father" to the people – not just a priest, but a ruler as well. Hezekiah was king at this point, and a good king at that. But Isaiah pointed to Eliakim as "peg in a secure place" and "a glorious throne to his father's house" (v. 23). He will wield the "key of the house of David" and serve as gatekeeper to the Lord's covenant with him (v. 22). Isaiah seems to be pointing forward to another day and a greater One than Eliakim, although by attributing these roles to Eliakim, he points to a greater Eliakim to come. And when that Eliakim comes, "in that day" (v. 25), the actual role of Eliakim as high priest will be eliminated, for there will be no more need of that office when the true Eliakim comes to rule.

The city state of Tyre (ch. 23) was the Hong Kong of its day. It did business everywhere and with everyone. It prospered and was strong militarily, since it was protected by the sea. The people of Judah might have been tempted to think that they could be saved by commerce, diplomacy, and military might, like Tyre and Sidon. Wrong again.

Prepare.

1. Are Christians today tempted to put too much trust in material things and favorable conditions? Explain.
2. Eliakim never fulfilled the roles Isaiah prophesied about him, and this suggests Isaiah was pointing forward to one *like* Eliakim – a high priest – who would also have the keys to the Kingdom of David. How do you suppose the people of Isaiah's day might have puzzled over this prophecy? Why was it needed at just this

time?

3. Pride, self-seeking, trusting in material prowess, compromising with unbelieving ways, turning away from the Lord and trusting in our own devices: these are the sins that brought the judgment of God against the nations in Isaiah's day. Should we expect God to do the same in our day? How should we prepare for this?

*On you, then, he will bring these things; but on the other, Eliakim, whom he has assessed as his good servant and slave, he will invest with your robe and will honor by placing on him the crown of the high priesthood, whose ministry you had hitherto been entrusted with. For he is a man worthy of it. And since he has been promoted by God, unlike you he will not be proud and boastful. He will hold the place of a father toward all those who are going to be governed by him. Therefore, as to one who is soothing and gentle, [God] will give the glory of David, the most just and gentle king, in order to rule the people with great authority, so that none will gainsay his deeds. Eusebius of Caesarea (260-340 AD), *Commentary on Isaiah 148.6-20**

Protect me, Lord, against the temptation to trust in things or circumstances or my own best ideas, rather than to...

Pray Psalm 36.

This psalm begins and ends with a focus on the wicked. In between it's all about seeking the Lord. Linger over the verses of this psalm as you pray, and let the Spirit speak into your soul and the day ahead.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 36 (*Landas: My Faith Has Found a Resting Place*)

Transgression speaks within the heart of him who fears not God.
He swells with pride to flaunt his sin and boasts in wicked words.
He ceases to be good or wise; he plots a wicked way.
His pathway is unrighteousness and evil all the day.

Your lovingkindness, Lord, is great, it reaches heav'n above;
Your faithfulness mounts to the skies, and keeps us in Your love.
Your righteousness like mountains high and judgment like the deep
preserve Your creatures one and all and in Your mercy keep.

How precious is Your love, O Lord; we shelter in Your wings.
We drink refreshment to the full from Your abundant springs.
You give us freely of Your grace, we drink it with delight;
life's fountain is with You, O Lord, in Your light we see light.

O let Your love continue, Lord, to those who love You well.
Grant righteousness to all who trust and Your salvation tell.
Keep wickedness and pride away; Lord, keep us in Your grace!
For sinners fall before Your wrath, rejected from Your face.

7 Lord of All Nations

Pray Psalm 81.1, 2.

Sing aloud to God our strength;
Make a joyful shout to the God of Jacob.
Raise a song and strike the timbrel,
The pleasant harp with the lute.

Review Isaiah chapters 13-23.

Reflect.

1. Why are the judgments of God, described in these chapters, just?
2. How does Isaiah point forward to God's promise of restoration?

Meditate.

In Part 3 of our study of the book of Isaiah, God shows clearly that He is Lord of all nations. Armies and empires can seem strong and invincible, but they cannot stand against the judgment of God. He uses even His enemies to accomplish His good purposes. Even the mightiest kings and unholy spiritual princes are subject to His power and justice.

And the people to whom Isaiah was sent, the people of Judah and Jerusalem, would live to see God's Word coming true, right before their eyes. This should have provided a powerful incentive to repent and return to the Lord, but the hardness of men's hearts can resist even the most dire and fearsome judgments of God (cf. Rev. 16.8-11).

The promise that God would not abandon His people, but would return to renew and restore them, blinks like a lighthouse beacon throughout this section. God's grace continues to His chosen ones, even though they may have to pass through deep waters and know the boot heels of their foes at times (cf. Ps. 66.5-12).

A day of mercy is coming (14.1). David's Descendant is coming to rule in truth, justice, and righteousness (16.5). The blessing of God is coming even to the enemies of His people, when they all begin to swear by the Name of the Lord (19.18) and join as one on His Highway (19.23-25). An eternal High Priest and Ruler will bring glory and prosperity to His people (22.20-25). As Judah and Jerusalem saw the power of God casting down the nations of the earth, they should have been moved to turn to Him with incessant pleadings (Is. 62.6, 7), that He would wield His power for their restoration, that His people might be a source of praise in all the earth.

Do we see God at work in our world, bringing His promised judgment against those who reject Him (Rom. 1.18-32)? Do we believe the promises of the Lord that, in the last days, He will raise up His Church as a sign and outpost of His Kingdom (Is. 2.1-4)? Then we must be careful to repent of all our sins, seek the Lord's way and walk in it, and plead, plead, plead with Him for revival, renewal, awakening, and restoration in our world.

Prepare.

1. What is the primary message of Isaiah 13-23 to you? What does God require of you?
2. Why does God judge the sins of the world? How does He judge them in our day?

3. What promises of revival, renewal, awakening, and restoration do you appeal to before the Lord each day?

Truly his will shall be fulfilled swiftly and suddenly, as the Scripture testifies. Clement of Rome (fl. 92-101 AD), *1 Clement* 23

Lord, bring revival to my soul, renewal to our churches, awakening to the lost, and restoration of your goodness throughout the earth; and help me today, in all these ways, to...

Pray Psalm 81.

This psalm calls us to praise and proclaim the Lord, and to make sure we are not compromising with the world in any way. It offers a sweet hope of renewal for all who will listen to the Lord and walk accordingly. Use it to commit yourself to Him today.

Sing to the Lord.

Psalm 81 (*St. Petersburg: My Hope is Built on Nothing Less*)

O sing for joy to Jesus our strength; to Jacob's great God shout joyfully at length!
And strike the drum, and offer a song; all instruments, your glad music prolong.
"O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!"

Let every kind of instrument play to celebrate God's deliverance today.
It is His statute and His command to worship and praise all over the land.
"O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!"

Declare His mercy, tell of His grace; our enemies flee the look of His face.
In mighty deeds strong witness He gave, and powerfully did His chosen ones save.
"O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!"

God set us free from bondage to sin and graciously brought us near Him again;
He rescued us whenever we cried and often our faltering confidence tried:
"O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!"

"Let no false gods among you be found; but scatter their altars over the ground.
Pursue not wealth, nor leisure nor fame, but worship the Savior's glorious Name:
O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!"

For You are God, Your Name is the Lord, who faithfully keeps His covenant Word,
Who rescued us from bondage and pride; our mouths He would fill, we open them wide.
"O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!"

"My people would not listen to Me, but hardened their hearts most hideously;
I cursed them for their hard-hearted ways to wander in darkness all of their days:
O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!"

Now let us all abandon our ways and listen to God, and offer Him praise!
Our foes He will so quickly subdue, extending His hand to save and renew.
"O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!"

Then even those despising the Lord would falsely obey and follow His Word;
In vain they seem to follow His way, yet judgment awaits on God's chosen day.
"O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!"

The finest foods for us He will buy, and furnish us an abundant supply;

Prophecies against the Nations: Isaiah 13-23

How sweet our lives can be in the Lord, when only we heed His glorious Word.
“O Israel, hear, admonished now be; My people, repent, return to Me!”

Prophecies against the Nations: Isaiah 13-23

Questions for reflection or discussion

1. What are the primary sins for which God judged the nations of Isaiah's day? Do we see these sins at work in our world today? Has God left off judging such sins in our day?
2. Only God can bring revival, renewal, awakening, and restoration of all things. What does He call us to do?
3. Summarize the words of hope laced throughout this section of the book of Isaiah? Is this hope still valid today? Explain.
4. Do you pray daily for the Lord to do what He has promised? Explain.
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Isaiah 13-23? How are you putting that lesson to work in your life?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

The Fellowship of Ailbe offers many opportunities for training, prayer, personal growth, and ministry. Visit our website at www.ailbe.org to learn more.

We hope you found this study helpful. If so, please consider making a gift to The Fellowship. You can contribute to our ministry by using the donate button at the website, or by sending your gift to The Fellowship of Ailbe, 19 Tyler Dr., Essex Junction, VT 05452.

Thank you.