

ISAIAH: JUDGMENT AND HOPE

19. Isaiah 22-23

The Oracles Jerusalem and Tyre

Let's turn in our Bibles to [Isaiah 20](#)

Tonight, we're going to look at the last two chapters of the second major section of the book of Isaiah. Beginning in chapter 13 and carrying on through chapter 23 Isaiah pronounced a series of "oracles" concerning and against the nations. Isaiah pronounced these oracles concerning those nations and against those nations directly to Judah and Jerusalem so they would understand the **justice** of YHWH, understand the **sovereignty** of YHWH, **and** understand **certainty** of YHWH's promises and the future hope concerning His people — **all to the end that** Judah repent of their idolatry (and the unrighteousness and injustice that always follows idolatry) — and return to YHWH.

I pray that in **Chapters 19 -21** we were in absolute awe at just HOW BIG God is! We were left speechless, thinking "Who is it that He can't save?!! Who is it that He won't save?!! In the oracle against Egypt in chapter 19 we learned that there is going to come a day when Judah will be so significantly powerful that even Egypt will fear Judah. Not only that — there is coming a day when Egypt will fear Israel and worship the God of Israel!

Isaiah 19:21 And the Lord will make himself known to the Egyptians,

The nation that once worshipped idols — brutally enslaved and killed the people of God — was judged by God in the Exodus — and judged again as described in the first half of chapter 19 — will one day truly and fully know the Lord as an entire nation!!

All of that is so totally inconceivable as we look at the landscape of the Middle East conflict today!

It got even more amazing! Isaiah said that Egypt won't be the only stepbrother of Israel — Assyria would be one too! Israel, Egypt and Assyria will one day be a family.

Isaiah 19:23 there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria, and Assyria will come into Egypt, and Egypt into Assyria, and the Egyptians will worship with the Assyrians. ²⁴In that day Israel will be the third with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, ²⁵whom the Lord of hosts has blessed, saying, “Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance.”

Until this passage in Isaiah, the terms ‘work of my hands’, and ‘my people’, are reserved exclusively for Israel. But here God applies it to Egypt and Assyria along with *Israel, his inheritance.*”

Just how shocked would Isaiah’s listeners be when he said EGYPT and ASSYRIA would be worshipping YHWH right alongside of Israel?

AGAIN — we are tethered to Genesis 12 —

Genesis 12:2–3 And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, **and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.**”

God’s redeeming plans and purposes run through Abraham to redeem the nations!

WOW!!

In Chapter 21 Isaiah pronounced another oracle against Babylon in which we were confronted by the way Isaiah was totally crushed when YHWH showed him what was going happen to the very people who were going to totally destroy Jerusalem and the Temple.

Isaiah 21:3 I am bowed down so that I cannot hear; I am dismayed so that I cannot see. ⁴My heart staggers; horror has appalled me;

AGAIN — The heart of the prophet is connected to the heart of God who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked!

After addressing eleven other nations — Isaiah zeroes in on JERUSALEM.

ISAIAH 22

Isaiah 22:1 (ESV) The oracle concerning the valley of vision. What do you mean that you have gone up, all of you, to the housetops,

The *valley of vision* is the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a city on a hill surrounded by still higher hills

Psalm 125:2 (ESV) As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people, from this time forth and forevermore.

Jerusalem is also surrounded by three valleys. Jerusalem was home base for Isaiah. It was in Jerusalem that YHWH was pulling back the curtain — giving Isaiah a vision of YHWH’s dealing with the other 11 nations. That’s what makes this next oracle so poignant. It’s a *you of all people* moment between YHWH and His people. It wasn’t shocking to hear from Isaiah that Egypt’s gods failed them, because they aren’t gods. It wasn’t shocking that the wisdom of Egypt failed because Egypt didn’t know YHWH. But Jerusalem should know better. So it’s from Jerusalem — from the *valley of vision* — that Isaiah declares that Jerusalem is not exempt from judgement.

Herbert Wolf — *“It is strange to find a prophecy against Judah and Jerusalem in a section that deals with the nations. But since Judah had chosen to behave like her neighbors and to desert the Lord, she deserved to be judged.”*¹

¹ **The oracle concerning the valley of vision. What do you mean that you have gone up, all of you, to the housetops,**

The people went up to the housetops, but the prophet went down into one of the three valleys around Jerusalem; and there God gave him a vision.

Warren Wiersbe — *Visions and valleys often go together*²

What do you mean that you have gone up, all of you, to the housetops, you who are full of shoutings, tumultuous city, exultant town?

Isaiah asks the question — What’s the party for? Why is there this parade? Why all this celebrating? Why is it so loud in Jerusalem right now?

¹ Interpreting Isaiah; Herbert Wolf, Zondervan

² Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *Be Comforted* (p. 55). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Isaiah asks the question because he had a very different perception of reality. God has shown him what is ahead for Jerusalem

Your slain are not slain with the sword or dead in battle. ³All your leaders have fled together; without the bow they were captured. All of you who were found were captured, though they had fled far away. ⁴Therefore I said: “Look away from me; let me weep bitter tears; do not labor to comfort me concerning the destruction of the daughter of my people.”

He says, you're celebrating — but I'm weeping. At this point we don't know *why* they are celebrating. But Isaiah tells us what he's weeping about.

He sees people who are on the run from an incoming enemy, and they've all been captured — no battle, just people being capturing, people surrendering, people retreating. Isaiah says — Your day is coming. Destruction is on its way to you.

⁵For the Lord God of hosts has a day of tumult and trampling and confusion in the valley of vision,

AGAIN — We need to remember how many prophecies have both a near **and** far fulfillment.

For sure, some of this has a near application in the Assyrian invasion in Hezekiah's day (Isaiah 36–37; 2 Kings 18–19; 2 Chron. 32). But it also is looking forward to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Near fulfillment or far — He says, you're celebrating — but I'm weeping.

a battering down of walls and a shouting to the mountains.

We know that after 70 years captivity Nehemiah returns to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls that the Babylonians destroyed.

Herbert Wolf believes that this points to the distant fulfillment of Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem because it continues

⁶And Elam bore the quiver with chariots and horsemen, and Kir uncovered the shield.

Elam was Babylon's neighbor to the east, had strongly supported the Babylonians and the Chaldeans in the struggle against Assyria and it's believed that the Elamites were probably allies of the Babylonians."

⁷Your choicest valleys were full of chariots, and the horsemen took their stand at the gates. ⁸He has taken away the covering of Judah.

It's believed that this is a reference to a near fulfillment when Sennacherib and the Assyrian troops would come and surround Jerusalem — the idea of *the covering of Judah* being removed would be referring to all of the suburbs of Jerusalem, all of the military outposts that served as lines of defense on the way to the capital of Judah. They've all been defeated. So now the Valley of Vision itself, Jerusalem, Mount Zion, is surrounded on all sides with the chariots of Assyria.

In that day you looked to the weapons of the House of the Forest,

The house of the forest was built by Solomon (1 Kings 7:2 and 1 Kings 10:17; 21). It got its name from the huge cedar columns brought to Jerusalem from Lebanon. Armaments were still stored there in Isaiah's day.³

⁹and you saw that the breaches of the city of David were many. You collected the waters of the lower pool, ¹⁰and you counted the houses of Jerusalem, and you broke down the houses to fortify the wall.

In the face of Sennacherib's approach, they reinforce the city. They demolished the homes closest to the walls, and they took the rubble to strengthen the fortifications of the outer wall of the city.

On top of that

¹¹You made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool.

That is **clearly** a reference to Hezekiah's tunnel. He connected the Gihon Spring — Jerusalem's fresh water supply — with Pool of Siloam. It is an mind blowing feat of engineering. Two crews starting at opposite points cut through 1,700 feet and met in the middle. On our trip to Israel last year a few of us walked through that tunnel. That was high level strategic planning that protected Jerusalem's water supply in the event of attack.

³ Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1070). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Notice —

¹¹You made a reservoir between the two walls for the water of the old pool. But you did not look to him who did it, or see him who planned it long ago.

Placing this in the near fulfillment we can understand *why* the people were celebrating. They're celebrating because the fortifications are done. They're thinking, "*Man, things could have been really bad. We would have been out of water, our walls would have been weak, there would have been holes that they could have gotten through. But we are so smart — we took care of business — and now we're safe!*"

We've noted this on a number of occasions in Isaiah — God is actually going to deliver Jerusalem from Sennacherib on this particular day — but here's the deal: What were they looking to for their strength and safety? NOT YHWH. THAT is the issue.

REMEMBER — God has made it really clear that HE was the one at work in all of the other these oracles. Concerning Egypt — God uses Assyria. Concerning Kush — God uses Assyria. Concerning the Arabians — God uses Assyria. If Assyria is surrounding Jerusalem — WHO is it that is actually fighting against Jerusalem? GOD!

Isaiah says: *Here's the problem — You prepared the city, but you didn't prepare your hearts in repentance. You collected your armor, fortified the walls, secured your water supply in the event of a siege — but you never fortified the walls of your relationship with YHWH — you never secured your life giving relationship with YHWH.*

Here's the kicker — Israel was unique among those 11 nations in these oracles for this reason: YHWH had made Himself know to them. YHWH had entered into a covenant relationship with them. YHWH made it clear that He would do whatever it took to bring them to repentance. (Lev. 26:14–39; Deut. 27:15–26; 28:15–68)

And so, **verse 12**

¹²In that day the Lord God of hosts called for weeping and mourning, for baldness and wearing sackcloth; ¹³and behold, joy and gladness, killing oxen and slaughtering sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine. "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

He says today is a day of repentance, and you've turned it into a day of celebration.

¹⁴The Lord of hosts has revealed himself in my ears: “Surely this iniquity will not be atoned for you until you die,” says the Lord God of hosts.

Why is it that Israel won't be delivered? Because they won't cry out. God knows the disease of sin in Jerusalem is terminal. *I'm going to deliver you now, but it won't be permanent because I see what's in your heart, and I know the fruit of the next few years. I see where these things are going.*

¹⁵Thus says the Lord God of hosts, “Come, go to this steward, to Shebna, who is over the household, and say to him:

Up to this point everything has been on a macro scale — a national level. But now the Lord lets us see how this disease of sin is embedded in the fabric Judah and Jerusalem within the lives of individuals — and in particular individuals involved in places of authority and influence.

Shebna was a steward. He was part of Hezekiah's cabinet — most likely second in command. He's like the vice-president and treasurer of Jerusalem. YHWH tells Isaiah to go to Shebna for this reason: What's going on in Shebna is what's going on in Jerusalem.

HERE'S THE DEAL — You might not be in a position of authority but you do have a position of influence. INDIVIDUALS have INFLUENCE! As the mom and dad go — so go the children. As a home goes — so goes a neighborhood. As the neighborhood go — so goes a city. As the employer goes — so goes the business.

¹⁶What have you to do here, and whom have you here, that you have cut out here a tomb for yourself, you who cut out a tomb on the height and carve a dwelling for yourself in the rock?

Isaiah was sent into this cemetery to meet with Shebna who used his authority (and possibly the king's money) to build himself a monumental tomb. He was doing this while everyone was preparing the city for a siege by the Assyrians. While Hezekiah was overseeing the work of the tunnel Shebna says *I want to build my memorial.*

Isaiah says — you can carve out this massive tomb and memorial to yourself — but YHWH's going to deport you.

¹⁷Behold, the Lord will hurl you away violently, O you strong man. He will seize firm hold on you ¹⁸and whirl you around and around, and throw you like a ball into a wide land. There you shall die, and there shall be your glorious chariots, you shame of your master's house.

DON'T MISS THIS — Shebna was not a lover and server of the people; he was a self-serving politician who wanted to make a name for himself. But using the king's time and resources to build his own memorial was a symptom of Shebna's real problem. He didn't listen to anything YHWH had spoken through Isaiah. Isaiah is telling Judah that YHWH is going to judge them; that no matter how much they fortify and prepare Jerusalem, Jerusalem will ultimately be destroyed and the men and women of Judah will ultimately be carried away into captivity. In the face of Isaiah's prophecies Shebna says: *I'm not going anywhere! I'm going to be buried right here in Jerusalem in my big beautiful tomb.*

¹⁹I will thrust you from your office, and you will be pulled down from your station. ²⁰In that day I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, ²¹and I will clothe him with your robe, and will bind your sash on him, and will commit your authority to his hand. And he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.

FIRST — That's God's job description for those lead the people of God leaders. Not self-serving, but loving, protective, providing — like a father.

²²And I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David. He shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.

In that day, the chief royal steward would have the large master key of the palace fastened to the shoulder of his tunic. The key was a picture and demonstration of His authority.

That is a statement of full authority. And in the case of the steward — authority over the treasure and resources of the king.

Isaiah said — *Eliakim is going to have your role, your clothes, and your authority.* God continues to make the point that He pulls down the self-exalted.

BY THE WAY — Jesus uses this same imagery in the book of Revelation

Revelation 3:7 (ESV) “And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: ‘The words of the holy one, the true one, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, who shuts and no one opens.’

The church in Philadelphia wasn’t a huge church with a huge bank account. But they had a high regard for the Word of God. To that church Jesus said: *I have the authority to open and shut doors in your lives as I pleases.*

F.B. Meyer — *“Down a long corridor of closed doors we may sometimes have to pass. It seems heartbreaking to see doors labelled, Friendship, Love, Home shut against us; but beyond them there is the one unclosed door through which we shall enter into our true life. Oh do not lose heart and hope in useless weeping over the closed doors of the past. Follow Him, who has the keys.”*

²³And I will fasten him like a peg in a secure place, and he will become a throne of honor to his father’s house. ²⁴And they will hang on him the whole honor of his father’s house, the offspring and issue, every small vessel, from the cups to all the flagons.

In those days, houses didn’t really have cupboards or storage closets as we think of them. Things were stored on pegs set up all around the room. If something was on its peg, it was safe and secure, stored properly and ready for use at the appropriate time. Eliakim was a going to be secure peg in desperate times

²⁵In that day, declares the LORD of hosts, the peg that was fastened in a secure place will give way, and it will be cut down and fall, and the load that was on it will be cut off, for the LORD has spoken.”

TEWO WAYS for us to look at this.

1. This is referring back to Shebna — every person that Shebna has hired, everyone who’s in on his wealth conspiracy, everyone who’s learned from his model and followed in his unrighteous footsteps, they’re all going to be gone. It’s going to be a political housecleaning.

2. When we read “in that day” — it is looking forward to the day when judgment comes to Jerusalem despite the presence of a few godly people. When you read through 2 Kings we find that some of the last kings were really good kings — but it was too late!

One more chapter

ISAIAH 23

Here we have, “The oracle concerning Tyre.”

Tyre is a really interesting nation in the Bible. They’re not known for their military might. They’re known for their economic dominance. Tyre was the definitive culture of merchants of the ancient near east. We know that Tyre straddled both an island and the mainland. Tyre was literally built accommodate commerce based on import and export.

This oracle is going to talk the destruction that comes on Tyre — but Tyre would be destroyed five times.

Ezekiel talks about Tyre, and he says that one day all that will be left of Tyre is the rocks where fishermen throw their fishing nets to let them dry. That’s what exists of Tyre today.

¹The oracle concerning Tyre. Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for Tyre is laid waste, without house or harbor! From the land of Cyprus it is revealed to them.

Those ships were docked at the island of **Cyprus**, about 150 miles northwest of **Tyre**, when the news of Tyre’s destruction reached them.⁴

²Be still, O inhabitants of the coast; the merchants of Sidon, who cross the sea, have filled you.

The Sidonians are shocked to hear it because their wealth was built on the back of Tyre and it’s gone now. Their economy was pulled out from under them.

³And on many waters your revenue was the grain of Shihor, the harvest of the Nile; you were the merchant of the nations. Be ashamed, O Sidon, for the sea has spoken, the stronghold of the sea, saying: “I have neither

⁴ Martin, J. A. (1985). Isaiah. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, p. 1071). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

labored nor given birth, I have neither reared young men nor brought up young women.” ⁵When the report comes to Egypt, they will be in anguish over the report about Tyre. ⁶Cross over to Tarshish; wail, O inhabitants of the coast! ⁷Is this your exultant city whose origin is from days of old, whose feet carried her to settle far away?

That’s the way Tyre became the economic giant of the world. They’d land some place — establish their presence there — harvest resources.

⁸Who has purposed this against Tyre, the bestower of crowns, whose merchants were princes, whose traders were the honored of the earth?

WHY is Tyre being judged? Not because they were violent and brutal like the Assyrians. But because of their pride concerning their wealth. God says, *I’m going to bring it all down.*

⁹The Lord of hosts has purposed it, to defile the pompous pride of all glory, to dishonor all the honored of the earth. ¹⁰Cross over your land like the Nile, O daughter of Tarshish; there is no restraint anymore.

Perhaps this means that Tyre is going to be washed away like in a flood. In the context here, clearly, we’re talking about the destruction of Tarshish.

no restraint anymore is the word for girdle. In the immediate context it carries the idea of protection — no defenses left, there’s no safety.

¹¹He has stretched out his hand over the sea; he has shaken the kingdoms; the Lord has given command concerning Canaan to destroy its strongholds.

¹²And he said: “You will no more exult, O oppressed virgin daughter of Sidon; arise, cross over to Cyprus, even there you will have no rest.”

¹³Behold the land of the Chaldeans! This is the people that was not; Assyria destined it for wild beasts. They erected their siege towers, they stripped her palaces bare, they made her a ruin.

AGAIN — we see the tool in the hands of the Lord is the Assyrian people. They’re the ones who bring the destruction on Tyre.

¹⁴Wail, O ships of Tarshish, for your stronghold is laid waste. ¹⁵In that day Tyre will be forgotten for seventy years, like the days of one king.

At the end of seventy years, it will happen to Tyre as in the song of the prostitute: ¹⁶“Take a harp; go about the city, O forgotten prostitute! Make sweet melody; sing many songs, that you may be remembered.” ¹⁷At the end of seventy years, the Lord will visit Tyre, and she will return to her wages and will prostitute herself with all the kingdoms of the world on the face of the earth.

Tyre and Sidon would not be involved in business for seventy years. History tells us that the Assyrians restricted Phoenician trade from 700–630 B.C.; but when Assyria began to weaken in power, Tyre and Sidon revived their businesses.

Isaiah compared the revived city to an old prostitute who had to sing lovely songs in order to get attention. Apparently the shipping business would not be as easy or as lucrative as it once was.

¹⁸**Her merchandise and her wages will be holy to the Lord. It will not be stored or hoarded, but her merchandise will supply abundant food and fine clothing for those who dwell before the Lord.**

I believe this is looking forward to the time when Jesus returns. During the millennial rule of Jesus the wealth of Tyre will be given to the Lord as a holy offering.

SUMMARY

In these 11 chapters we’ve learned several huge truths about God.

God is in control of the nations of the world, and He can do with them what He pleases. **No matter** how frightening the national or international situation may become — We can have peace because we know Almighty God is on His throne.

God pulls down the arrogant and the proud

God always gives a word of promise and hope to His people. Babylon will fall, but God will care for Judah (Isa. 14:1–3, 32). Moab will not accept sanctuary from Jerusalem, but God will one day establish Messiah’s throne there (16:5). Assyria and Egypt may be avowed enemies of the Jews, but one day the three nations will together glorify God (19:23–25).