

Pentwater Bible Church

Isaiah Message 13

March 10, 2019



The Siege of Jerusalem from
<https://deadliestblogpage.wordpress.com/image-7/>

Daniel E. Woodhead – Pastor Teacher

Pentwater Bible Church

The Book of Isaiah

Message Thirteen

THE LORD STRETCHES OUT HIS HAND IN ANGER TO ISRAEL

March 10, 2019

Daniel E. Woodhead

Isaiah 5:24–30

²⁴Therefore as the tongue of fire devoureth the stubble, and as the dry grass sinketh down in the flame, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust; because they have rejected the law of Jehovah of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel. ²⁵Therefore is the anger of Jehovah kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them; and the mountains tremble, and their dead bodies are as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.

²⁶And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss for them from the end of the earth; and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly. ²⁷None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken: ²⁸whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses' hoofs shall be accounted as flint, and their wheels as a whirlwind: ²⁹their roaring shall be like a lioness, they shall roar like young lions; yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and carry it away safe, and there shall be none to deliver. ³⁰And they shall roar against them in that day like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, behold, darkness and distress; and the light is darkened in the clouds thereof (ASV, 1901)!

THE PRONOUNCEMENT OF JUDGMENT

Isaiah 5:24

²⁴Therefore as the tongue of fire devoureth the stubble, and as the dry grass sinketh down in the flame, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust; because they have rejected the law of Jehovah of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel (ASV, 1901).

The Lord had tried through several methodologies over time to speak of the judgment that would come upon the Israelites if they did not stop their sin. This is the concluding statement of all those warnings. Specifically, God says that the Vineyard has gone totally wrong and He is going to destroy it. The grapes are all bitter and all the leader's feeble excuses for their sins cannot make them sweet again. Now nothing else can be done to restore the Vineyard in its present condition except to destroy it and start over. This will all occur because the sins including judicial corruption, are a rejection of the LORD of hosts by the leaders of the Israelites. The root and the flower metaphorically refer to the strong and weak of the nation. The imagery of the people being punished are as "straw, stubble," "dry grass," "roots," and a "blossom." All of these parts of a plant

are important to preserving its life. If they wither and dry up the plant will die. When the dried-up flower is exposed to fire, it will quickly be devoured by the flames. If decay starts to destroy the roots of a plant, wind will blow off the petals of the beautiful flower. All plants are fragile and vulnerable to the forces of nature which can bring either life or death. In the same manner, the population of the nation Israel are like helpless plants dependent on what God might bring into their lives. As stubble is helpless before the flames of a windblown fire, so the people of Judah will be consumed by God's anger on their day of judgment. All of whom who have left the safety of God's Law for their own sinful desires and will therefore suffer the Divine retribution the Lord will mete out to them.

The text here is, 'The *tongue* of fire.' The figure is beautiful and obvious. It is referencing the shape of an actively burning flame, or tongue-like appearance of a *flame*. The word *devoureth* is *eateth* in Hebrew. So, the imagery projected is as a tongue of fire eats up the fuel. This is the only occurrence of this phrase in the Old Testament. Because of this uniqueness of this phraseology, the name tongue is given from the resemblance of a pointed flame to the human tongue. Anything long, narrow, and tending to a point is called a *tongue* in Hebrew. The word here references the fact that the Lord through Isaiah has spoken (anthropomorphically, with His tongue) to the Israelites and now uses tongues of fire as the last means for correction. Fire is a commonly used means of refinement, judgment, and testing in the Bible (e.g. Isaiah 66:16; Amos 7:5; Jeremiah 15:14; Ezekiel 30:48; I Corinthians 3:15 etc.). A rapidly occurring fire is the imagery of the quickly and suddenly appearing judgment coming upon the nation Israel.

THE LORD'S HAND IS STRETCHED FORTH IN ANGER

Isaiah 5:25

²⁵Therefore is the anger of Jehovah kindled against his people, and he hath stretched forth his hand against them, and hath smitten them; and the mountains tremble, and their dead bodies are as refuse in the midst of the streets. For all this his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still (ASV, 1901).

The imagery the Lord gives to Isaiah referencing plants and fire now turns to a more specific announcement. It is because Israel has rejected God's law and the Word of her Holy One that God has already decided to act in judgment. The Hebrew verb here for acting in judgment (*and hath smitten*) is *Vaicahoo* which is the wayyiqtol verb form indication completed action. So, in this prophetically perfect or completed verb, the action has already been decided and completed. In other words, God is saying the judgment is coming and cannot be stopped. They have felt his judgmental outstretched hand as if the fist is clenched already and that hand is still outstretched indicating further judgment already decided.

The fence (The Lord's protective Laws) of the Vineyard is about to be taken away and the animals summoned to come in and trample the vines (Isaiah 5:5). The animals in this instance will be the Assyrian army who will invade the northern kingdom in 722 B.C. The judgment includes as its first stage the severe earth quake with an estimated magnitude of 7.8¹ that happened in the reign

¹ Steven A. Austin, Gordon W. Franz, and Eric G. Frost, "Amos's Earthquake: An Extraordinary Middle East Seismic Event of 750 B.C." International Geology Review 42 (2000) 657-671.

of Uzziah (Amos 1:1) which is described in this verse. The dates of it are estimated to be anywhere from 760 B.C. to 725 B.C. The Lord used the earthquake initially as He brought His judgment in stages to show the Israelites that if they continued with their unbridled sin further judgment would come. The imagery of fire is surely war and the destruction it brings. It is certain that the nation Israel would not heed the earthquake any more than the enemies of God in the future Tribulation who will not repent (Revelation 9:20–21). Because the people and especially the leaders sinned greatly the prophet describes the visibility of *their dead bodies are as refuse in the midst of the streets*. They will be treated like refuse and be repugnant in the eyes of the adjacent nations. Because the Lord knew that the people would not repent in the first stages of the judgment He would continue to punish them as the prophet says, “*his anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still.*” This is what will happen to them as He brings the Assyrians in to Israel.

GOD SENDS THE ASSYRIANS TO ISRAEL

Isaiah 5:26

²⁶And he will lift up an ensign to the nations from far, and will hiss for them from the end of the earth; and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly (ASV, 1901).

The Lord Jehovah will raise a military signal, as a stimulus, to *the nations from afar*, i.e. the Assyrians, and hiss to them, as a beekeeper to attract his bees for them to invade Israel. They will come swiftly and attack mercilessly. All God has to do is to plant a simple signal of opportunity to this war like people to incite them to invade. With this simple notion in their leaders minds they will quickly rush to an opportunity of war. They possessed deadly weapons, were invincible with their horses and chariots, as they leaped upon their prey. God foretold this to them in the Torah.

Deuteronomy 28:49–52

⁴⁹Jehovah will bring a nation against thee from far, from the end of the earth, as the eagle flieth; a nation whose tongue thou shalt not understand; ⁵⁰a nation of fierce countenance, that shall not regard the person of the old, nor show favor to the young, ⁵¹and shall eat the fruit of thy cattle, and the fruit of thy ground, until thou be destroyed; that also shall not leave thee grain, new wine, or oil, the increase of thy cattle, or the young of thy flock, until they have caused thee to perish. ⁵²And they shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fortified walls come down, wherein thou trustedst, throughout all thy land; and they shall besiege thee in all thy gates throughout all thy land, which Jehovah thy God hath given thee (ASV, 1901).

The text in Deuteronomy goes on to describe the specific effects of war and exactly what the Assyrians would do the Israelites for the unrepentant sin against God.

THE ASSYRIANS EAGER TO ATTACK

Isaiah 5:27

²⁷None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken (ASV, 1901):

In their eagerness to respond to the Lord's leading they will travel a great distance quickly but will not stumble on the road or become weary due to the arduous journey. They will not even sleep by day or open their belts and untie their shoes when they sleep at night so as to be prepared for a quick assault on Israel.

THEIR WEAPONS WILL BE READY

Isaiah 5:28

²⁸whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent; their horses' hoofs shall be accounted as flint, and their wheels as a whirlwind (ASV, 1901).

The Assyrians would be completely prepared to attack. They did not need any additional time to get ready or prepare their weapons. They being a war like nation were in a constant state of readiness for war. All they needed was the incentive and target which the Lord gave them. Their horses were prepared and specially bred with hooves that were exceptionally hard so they did not need to be shod. The chariots will race down the road as fast as stubble blows in the wind.

FEAR WILL COME IN TO ISRAEL

Isaiah 5:29–30

²⁹their roaring shall be like a lioness, they shall roar like young lions; yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and carry it away safe, and there shall be none to deliver. ³⁰And they shall roar against them in that day like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, behold, darkness and distress; and the light is darkened in the clouds thereof (ASV, 1901)!

The prophet Isaiah is now describing the fear that will come into the Israelites when God brings His judgment. They will be seized with terror as if a lion was nearby roaring before it strikes its prey. Against Israel Assyria will roar like the roaring of the sea. It is a time of fearful roaring; first that of a lion, now that of the sea. The darkness, however, describes God's judgment and that there will be no one to deliver them. The wicked will go away eternally into the outer blackness separated from God for all eternity. Israel will look across the land but *there shall be none to deliver*. No nation will come to their aid. They will find only *darkness and distress; and the light is darkened in the clouds thereof* which, describe massiveness of the onslaught of the Assyrian army.

In God's law is never correct to sin. Conversely God does and will use sinful people to achieve His will. He encourages them to perform the sinful acts that they are prone to do. As in this example God encouraged the Assyrians that they should pursue their sinful warlike methodologies toward God's chosen children the Jews. He wanted to judge them and this is how He chose to do it. One may say this is wrong. God is a God of love He would never do this. The Scripture states otherwise. The Bible makes it quite clear that God uses sin and sinful people to achieve His will.

The Bible states that Asshur was the first-born son of Shem, and the progenitor of the Assyrian people (Genesis 10:22). He founded Nineveh, Rehoboth and Calah in the land of Sumer. This is also known as the biblical Shinar, (Genesis 10:10-11).

The Assyrian conquerors invented a new policy towards the conquered: in order to prevent nationalist revolts by the conquered people, the Assyrians would force the people they conquered to migrate in large numbers to other areas of the empire and then colonize the conquered nation's land with people groups from other countries (II Kings 17: 24). Besides guaranteeing the security of an empire built off of conquered people of different cultures and languages, these mass deportations of the populations in the Middle East, Mesopotamia, and Armenia, turned the region into a melting pot of diverse cultures, religions, and languages. Whereas there would be little cultural contact between the conquered and the conquerors in early Mesopotamian history, under the Assyrians the entire area became a vast experiment in cultural mixing. It was the Assyrian monarch, Sargon II (721-705 B.C.), who first forcefully relocated Hebrews after the conquest of Israel, the northern kingdom of the Hebrews.

The Assyrians were warlike and ruthless people. They lived for the glory of war and loved their military exploits. They had a highly advanced war machine using sheer terror to place their subjects into submission. Some of the methods they employed upon conquered peoples included burning them alive, flaying alive and blinded then beheading. Following this they impaled the heads on sharp stakes for other to see. The terror they produced was widely communicated to other nations. Some of this is described in Deuteronomy 28.

They further employed a psychological technique that was designed to frighten their targeted conquests. After approaching the walls of a city and prior to attacking they would address the defenders in their native tongue (Isaiah 36:4-21).

God used these ruthless people to remove the Northern ten tribes of Israel because of the extreme sins they had committed themselves to in turning away from Jehovah. In fact, God did not have to use much coercion to achieve His goals. To activate the Assyrians to come against Judah, He simply gave them the notion. God used this whistling or making them aware of an opportunity for conquest such as He did with the Egyptians and Assyrians in Isaiah 7:17-19 and in our passages in chapter 5. Because they were a sinful people the Assyrians only had to sense the notion God placed in their minds to carry out their desire to engage in war, torture and death with another nation. They did not realize that it was Jehovah God giving them the notion to attack the Jews.

God does judge all sin and He used the Assyrians to harm the Jews as a result of His judgment upon them for their sin. In keeping with this judgment upon sin and sinful people God then judged the Assyrians for being sinful. Both Isaiah and Nahum predicted the downfall of the Assyrians.

The Assyrians were an overbearing and blasphemous people who were intoxicated with their own strength as so many despotic nations are. In 612 B.C. the allied forces of the Babylonians, the Medes and the Scythians captured the Assyrian capital Nineveh and it became a desolate ruin just as the biblical prophets predicted. Again in 609 B.C. the Medes and the Babylonians jointly attacked the remnants of Assyria and divided it among themselves. Nahum's prediction of their destruction is quite clear from a prophecy of eighty years or so earlier, prior to the Assyrian destruction.

Nahum 2:12; 3:1, 7.

The lion tore enough for his cubs, Killed enough for his lionesses, And filled his lairs with prey And his dens with torn flesh. Woe to the bloody city, completely full of lies and pillage; Her prey never departs. And it will come about that all who see you Will shrink from you and say, 'Nineveh is devastated! Who will grieve for her?' Where will I seek comforters for you?" (NASB)

Therefore, it is quite clear that God will judge sin. Sometimes He uses sinful people acting out their sinful desires to achieve His goals. The example of the Assyrian utilized to judge Israel demonstrated the permissive will of God allowing the sins of the Assyrians to carry out God's will. The Apostle Paul characterized this well in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 2:11-12, 14

For there is no partiality with God. For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, (NASB)

The central focus of Paul's verses is a discussion of the Law and those who are penalized by God for sins. In describing this Paul makes clear that under God's economy all who sin are judged. Therefore, whether God uses the sinful people to carry out His divine judgment or not, all who sin will be judged. This does not mean that we can fully understand how God works (Job 42:3). What is clear though is that the God of all creation controls all things and we must accede to Him His sovereignty.

Next message: THE THRONE ROOM OF GOD

E-mail: Pentwaterbiblechurch@scofieldinstitute.org Call: 877-706-2479