

EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #23

Isaiah 14:24-32

One question that certainly one is led to ask when reading the Bible is why did God choose Israel? Since about four fifths of the Bible has to do with Israel, this certainly is a valid question to ask and answer. Let me give us some Biblical answers to that question:

- 1) God chose Israel because He is God and can sovereignly choose and do whatever He wants - Job 42:2; Psalm 103:19; Daniel 4:35
- 2) God chose Israel to know the only true God and to be a witness for Him - Isaiah 43:10-12
- 3) God chose Israel to receive, preserve and transmit His Word - Romans 3:2; 9:4
- 4) God chose Israel to show the blessings that come to those related to and chosen by the true God - I Chronicles 17:20-21; Psalm 144:15
- 5) God chose Israel to be a human pedigree for Jesus Christ, the Messiah and Savior - II Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; Matthew 1:1; Romans 1:3; 9:4

There is an amazing statement of God's sovereignty concerning Israel in the book of Jeremiah which says, "For I know the plans that I have for you ... plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). Well, one might ask, if this is the sovereign plan for Israel, what has gone wrong? Is the plan still on? Look at the enemies that surround her?

This principle of God's sovereignty concerning Israel also extends to all the nations of the world that surround Israel and that is something that is clearly stated in **Isaiah 14:24**. In fact, **verse 24** begins with the statement that "The LORD of hosts has sworn." This point is stressed three . times in Isaiah (**14:24**; 45:23; 62:8) and **the purpose of it is to emphasize God's unalterable . sovereign intention**. Why would God stress this to Israel? Because when you actually looked at Israel in Isaiah's day and in our day, you would never think it would be possible for all the wonderful things God has promised to happen. **But one day Israel will have all of the blessings, as verse 24 says, God has sworn it, intended it and planned it.** **Isaiah 14:24** is a critical verse which clearly teaches Israel and us that God's sovereign plan and program is being carefully worked out, even in the midst of conflicts between Israel and the Arab world. God has a sovereign plan and program that may even be seen in the context of enemies against His own people.

But know this - no force can stop the plan of God. No military can stop the plan of God. No individual can stop the plan of God. No one, Nobody, Nothing can stop the plan of God. God will bless His people and eventually take out all of their enemies - God has sworn it.

Think about that for a moment. God knows the precise plans He has for every one and every thing. He knows the plans He has for the nations and He knows the plans He has for individuals. God knows the plans He has for you and for your life. He knows who your enemies are and He will allow them only to go so far and then down they will go. God's plan is for you to become a powerful statement for Him. God's plan is for you to show how valuable you are because you are His property.

Beginning in Isaiah 13, Isaiah develops a major theme concerning judgment of various nations who have actually done things against Israel . In the big program and plan of God one thing is always certain - God blesses those who bless Israel and curses those who curse Israel. Both the Bible and history is filled with stories that prove the reality of this point and never is that more evident than when you come to this section in Isaiah.

However, the fact is God permits various threatening enemies to intimidate His own people. Why? Why would God permit a nation He has chosen, or an individual He has chosen, to be surrounded by enemies who are threatening to destroy His own people? We get one good answer right here:

GOD SOVEREIGNLY PERMITS VERY REAL THREATS TO COME AGAINST HIS OWN PEOPLE SO HIS OWN PEOPLE WILL TURN TO HIM AND LEARN THAT HE IS THE ONE WHO IS TAKING CARE OF THEM.

God is in sovereign charge of everything and His purposes are being worked out by individuals and by nations. God controls attacks that come from specific enemies in Israel and He controls specific attacks that come against you. He will in the end prove to be Israel's delivering God and the same is true for us.

Now as we have already seen, the first part of the prophecy was aimed against Babylon . (13:1ff). The second part of the prophecy is aimed against Assyria (**14:24ff**). As a matter of prophetic record, the Assyrian power came to its end **before** the Babylonian power came into its glory .

Yet in this section of Isaiah's prophecy, the Babylonian destruction is given before the Assyrian destruction. What is amazing about this is that God saw the eventual supremacy of the Babylonian power and He specifically predicts the fall of the Assyrian power that will make way for the Babylonian power.

What this clearly proves is that God is sovereignly controlling everything that relates to all powers. He controls big powers, small powers, and all powers, including the time of their glory and the time of their demise.

When you look at these prophecies, it is clear that God has a case against Gentile nations and against the Arab world. **We know from Revelation that the case will be finally and fully settled during the Tribulation** . This is why prophecies from Babylon and Assyria may overlap. In the end, all powers against Israel will be destroyed by God during the Tribulation no matter what their geography.

Now when we analyze the powers in this text, it is very clear as William Kelly observed that these are all powers which comprise "the races and lands which surrounded the chosen people" (*Isaiah*, p. 169). We know that much of this has not yet been fulfilled because these powers are still in existence and still are a threat to Israel.

In this text there are two main judgments God brings against those who have done hurtful things against His people:

JUDGMENT #1 – God pronounces a judgment against Assyria . 14:24-28

The actual dimensions of the Assyrian Empire covered territory that formed a big loop. It starts at the Persian Gulf and swings northwest and then veers south toward Israel. It includes modern day areas such as Kuwait, part of Iran and Iraq, part of Turkey and Syria, and then swings south toward Jerusalem. **As the Church Age nears its conclusion and as the stage for the Tribulation is being set, we may expect to see some key alliances made between many of these nations.**

Most of these alliances will probably occur when the Antichrist enters into a peace covenant with Israel (Daniel 9:27). Dr. John Walvoord said, “The same area once conquered by Assyria will be subject to Christ after His second coming” (*Prophecy Knowledge Handbook*, p. 100).

Keep in mind that God was the One who was using the Assyrian Empire for His purposes in regard to His people, Israel and Judah, to draw them close to Him. But when Assyria stepped over the boundaries of her assignment and decided to move into Jerusalem and destroy it, including her connection to God (Isaiah 10:10-12), it was the beginning of the end. It is true that God may permit wicked powers to rule over His people for awhile, but in the end He will break those wicked people and powers to pieces.

Now Assyria invaded Judah during the reign of Hezekiah in 701 B.C. Sennacherib brought his Assyrian army against Jerusalem (Isaiah 37:10) and God single-handedly destroyed his army and Sennacherib went back to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, like a whipped pup (Isaiah 37:33-37). Then in 612 B.C., the Assyrian power was demolished by the Babylonian power. So in a very real sense Isaiah’s prophecy had a near application, but it also has a far-reaching application.

What is actually predicted here has profound prophetic implications as you will see, for it goes far beyond a prediction against Assyria in Isaiah’s day and extends to a prediction against the Antichrist. The actual nations that were involved when Assyria was in power will be nations also involved when the Antichrist is in power.

Everything you see here that was predicted against Assyria is also what will happen in the last part of the Tribulation under the rule of the Antichrist. Dr. H. A. Ironside said, “When the nations are gathered together for the Armageddon conflict, the Lord Himself will destroy the Assyrians with every other enemy of Christ and His truth” (*Isaiah*, p. 91).

In the process of all of these prophecies, God’s people may learn a very important lesson - we need to trust God and depend on God and draw close to God for help because God will not allow His people to be destroyed, no matter how threatening the situation.

There are five specific predictions made in this text:

Prediction #1 - God will break Assyria in His land. **14:25a**

God broke Assyria in Isaiah's day and He will do it again in the future. God will permit these very powers that formed Assyria to ban together and enter His land.

We know from prophecy that they will move toward Jerusalem to battle the Jews (Zechariah 14:2). God is going to see to it that they move toward Nazareth and Haifa and they will come to the valley of Megiddo, which is about 60 miles northwest of Jerusalem, and that will be where it will all end. In the battle known as the battle of Armageddon (Revelation 16:14-16), God will have put in their hearts to execute His purpose (Revelation 17:17) and His purpose is they move to a specific spot where He will destroy them all (Revelation 19:15-18).

Prediction #2 - God will trample Assyria in His mountains. **14:25b**

Verse 25 says God will not only break Israel's enemies, He will trample them. Palestine was and is a mountainous topography. There are mountains all over the land including some that surround Jerusalem. There are two main mountains or hills which are located near the valley of Megiddo, Mount Gilboa and Mount Moreh. This is possibly a reference to the very area God will destroy all of the nations. In fact, Harry Bultema said that this event will occur "near the mountains of Megiddo" (*Commentary on Isaiah*, p. 172). It is clear that God controls the very location where things happen in regard to His people.

According to the prophet, Ezekiel, when God actually does this there will be so many dead bodies that it will take seven months just to bury them (Ezekiel 39:12). The numbers that God will slay will be staggering.

Prediction #3 - God will remove the yoke and burden of Assyria from His people. **14:25c**

The demise of Assyria will mean the deliverance of Israel. Israel is outnumbered right now and she carries a heavy yoke of many burdens, but one day God will deliver her by His grace. Israel will finally have peace in her land and all of her burdens will be removed. All of the Arab enemies will be broken to pieces. Israel will be in her land and she will be in charge of the Middle East.

Prediction #4 - God will do the same to all the nations of the world. **14:26**

Some have said this is just verbal hyperbole and just Isaiah's way of communicating the massiveness of the Assyrian and Babylonian territory. But when Isaiah says "all nations of the world," that is literally and exactly what he means. Isaiah saw a world judgment in which Israel comes out the winner.

This verse right here teaches us that this goes far beyond just Assyria, for this prophecy extends to "the whole earth." This is a judgment that will hit all the nations of the world. This will all happen when God is pouring out His wrath against "all the nations" which, of course, fits the content of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 6:16-17). The Tribulation will be a time when God pours out His wrath on all God-mocking and Christ-rejecting and Israel-threatening nations all over the world.

Prediction #5 - God has planned this and no one can stop it. **14:27**

No one can stop or thwart the plan of God no matter how hard they try or what trick they use. Everything God purposes will happen. When God stretches out His hand against the world in anger, no one will be able to stop it. No one will be able to turn back God's wrath.

Verse 28 places these prophecies in the year that King Ahaz died (715 B.C). One reason for giving us this information is because God is saying - I am showing you exactly what will happen years before it does. It would be another 14 years (701 B.C.) before Sennacherib would bring his Assyrian army against Judah and be dropped by God, but that is precisely what happened.

At that time of this prophecy, Judah was at an extreme spiritual low. Ahaz had been a dud of a king. While he reigned, the Philistines actually recovered some of the cities (II Chron. 28:18), which had been taken by Ahaz' righteous and godly grandfather, Uzziah, who died in 739 B.C. In just 20-30 years Ahaz had lost the Arab cities that Israel once had (II Chron. 26:6-7). Now that Ahaz was dead, the people of Judah felt that they were doomed. They felt as if all the Arab powers and the Philistines would wipe them out and it was at that moment when God gave her this remarkable prophecy and said, look, I'm in sovereign control and I am caring for you and I will give you your land including the Gaza Strip.

JUDGMENT #2 – God pronounces a judgment against Philistia . **14:29-32**

The death of Ahaz could naturally excite the hopes of the Philistines. They had already taken back some of their cities, and now that Ahaz was dead the Philistines probably thought they could now regroup and conquer even more.

Now the actual geographical location of Philistia is very close to the present day Gaza Strip. In fact, King Hezekiah, who replaced Ahaz, actually took this land from the Philistines (II Kings 18:8). But it is quite obvious that today Israel is not enjoying life in the Gaza Strip.

This area is a hotbed of political turmoil. For example, in August of 2005, Ariel Sharon pulled Israeli troupes and settlers out of Gaza which ended up allowing al-Qaeda cells to form there for the first time. Gaza has become a present day sanctuary for militant Islam. This area will become more and more significant as we near the Tribulation. As Dr. Ironside said, this part of Palestine "has been a veritable battleground." But that is all going to change one day because God will destroy all Islamic and Arab forces. Israel will get this land.

Now there are four prophetic warnings given here. Present day Gaza Strip Arabs would do well to carefully consider these warnings:

Prophetic Warning #1 - Philistia's joyful arrogance will be swiftly turned to total destruction . **14:29**

When Ahaz died, the Philistines rejoiced because another from David's house was gone and they figured their victory was secured. But God warned against this mindset.

Some believe that the reference to the “viper” refers to Hezekiah and the reference to the “flying serpent” refers to Assyria. In fact, one of the first things Hezekiah did was to defeat the Philistines as far as Gaza (II Kings 18:7). Then, four years after this oracle was given, the Assyrian Sargon attacked Ashdod and made Philistia an Assyrian province. So two key players were used to bring the joy of the Philistines to a swift end. Their rejoicing literally was short lived and it was quickly turned to sorrow.

But again, as Dr. Walvoord said, this prophecy was only “partially fulfilled” (Ibid., p. 100). Furthermore, I have a hard time connecting the “serpent” imagery to someone Davidic. Typically the “serpent” imagery refers to someone satanic. **This is an amazing prediction because it shows that God will use satanic forces to accomplish His purposes.**

This warning has serious Tribulation ramifications. For it is predicted that there will be a serpentine led assault that will come to the Gaza Strip and all the promised land about 3½ years into the Tribulation (Rev. 13:15). The “serpent,” Satan, will move through the Middle East in an attempt to destroy any of the offspring of Israel. The satanic Antichrist and false prophet will be his emissaries (Rev. 19:20). Those joyful, arrogant Arabs now occupying the Gaza Strip, those Islamic radicals and al-Qaeda mercenaries will be destroyed by the very Devil they now serve. They will be demolished by the satanic Antichrist (Daniel 11:16-18, 41-45), under the directive of Almighty God.

There is a good principle for us to see here - when we are surrounded by adversity and the ungodly are arrogantly rejoicing because it looks like we are losing and ruined, wait on God and watch for God to step in and drop our enemies by using all kinds of weapons including those evil and satanic.

Prophetic Warning #2 - Philistia would be destroyed and survivors would be killed. **14:30**

What a contrast between what God will do for His own people versus those who aren't. The prophetic script has been written. Here is God's “final solution.” God is going to exterminate all God-mocking, Jew-hating people. He will destroy the root of this and will kill off survivors. He will totally wipe out Israeli-hating Arabs by war and famine. In the end, Israel, who appears to be so helpless, will be living in the land in total security. Any arrogant Arab power or non-Jewish power who has demeaned Israel will be gone forever. Again, there has never been a time in the Middle East when all evil powers have been completely destroyed. Right now the Gaza Strip is a political quagmire from which Israel has pulled out. One day, she will live securely right there. This is exactly what Isaiah saw.

Prophetic Warning #3 - Philistia should wail because a northern power is coming like an uncontrollable cloud. **14:31**

The attitude of the Arabs in the Gaza Strip should be, we should weep because we are doomed. We will melt away like the snow. It is predicted in this verse that a major unstoppable military force from the north will move down into this area and obliterate it.

As we said, Assyria did sweep into Philistia from the north like a cloud of smoke. But this will be fully filled at the end of the Tribulation. People in that Gaza Strip will be howling and wailing because an unstoppable military force will level them.

Prophetic Warning #4 - The testimony of these events will be about the survival of Israel not the destruction of the Philistines. **14:32**

Don't miss this - the whole point of all of this prophetic plan is to get Israel into her city and land and that will be the testimony of the whole world. The Jews will head for Jerusalem. The whole world will be talking about Israel and the Promised Land. Think about this - there is coming a day when all people of the world will know Israel/Zion is the refuge spot of the whole world.

When we see the prophetic reference to Mount Zion along with a reference to the "messengers of the nation," we cannot help but think of events of the Tribulation, because this very spot becomes a critical spot of action, especially concerning 144,000 Jews who are sealed (**Revelation 14:1**). **It is very possible that God will use this army of 144,000 sealed Jews to carry out certain assignments, including military assignments and messenger assignments, during the Tribulation as a prelude to the glorious return of Jesus Christ.** It is not beyond possibility that the very destruction of Arabs in the Gaza Strip will occur near the moment of Revelation 14:1. If this is accurate, then the demise of the Gaza Strip is a key prophetic moment which zeroes in on God's blessings in Jerusalem. **When people ask what all of this destruction in the Middle East means, people will say, the LORD has founded His nation in Zion.**

So the wonderful news of all of the trouble in the Middle East is that there will come a day in which the world will stand in awe of God because He will destroy all Arab nations and put Israel into her land and even the poorest of the poor Jews or the neediest Jew will lie down in total security. That sliver of land known as the Gaza Strip which sits along the coast of the Mediterranean will one day be a secure refreshing spot for Israel.

Practical Applications:

- 1. God is a sovereign God over everything connected to His people - the good and the bad.**
- 2. When we find ourselves surrounded by threatening enemies, draw close to the Lord.**
- 3. God will track down the enemies of His people in His time and they will pay severely.**
- 4. God's people are very valuable to God and when one tampers with God's property, he will ultimately learn how valuable those people are.**