

ISAIAH

ISAIAH 34:9-17, THE LORD'S DAY OF VENGEANCE, PART 2

There are several questions that need to be answered concerning verses 9-17. One of the questions to be answered from an examination of this Scripture is whether or not this is talking about Edom alone or the world in general at the end of the Tribulation. Is this something that will happen to the land that once was Edom which no longer exists as a national entity? Is this an everlasting description of the land of Edom, or is it temporary? In chapter 34:1-8, we noted that Edom represented all the nations of the world; has the focus changed to Edom as a national entity alone, or is the nation still representing the world? How can this Scripture be harmonized with other references to Edom, and how does that affect the interpretive conclusions? The entire section from Isaiah 31:7 to 35:10 is eschatological in nature; the things described have never been historically fulfilled.

Edom had a long history of hostility towards Israel, but is that any different than any other nation of the world system that has always harbored a hatred of God's people? It is possibly different, due to the close familial relationships the two nations shared. On the other hand, the entire world has always hated Israel, and it still does. An examination of the history between the nations sheds some light on interpreting Isaiah 34:9-17 in which Edom is portrayed as Israel's representative world system enemy.

This Scripture describes some things that seem to characterize Edom's physical state during the Kingdom which comports with its eschatological nature. What causes some doubt about that is the representative world system nature that Edom fulfills in it. In other contexts that apply to Edom as a national entity, the same conditions are predicted to exist, but they also have an eschatological context.

Edom was related to Israel through Jacob's brother Esau. The animosity between the brothers is the foundational aspect of the nations' strained relationship. This animosity between the nations became overt after Israel became a nation when Edom refused to allow Moses and the Israelites to travel through Edom on the King's Highway despite their promise not to disturb or take anything including drinking water for their livestock. At the very least, Moses was willing to pay for the water if any Israelite allowed his livestock to drink.

Numbers 20:17-21 ¹⁷'Please let us pass through your land. We will not pass through field or through vineyard; we will not even drink water from a well. We will go along the king's highway, not turning to the right or left, until we pass through your territory.' ¹⁸Edom, however, said to him, "You shall not pass through us, or I will come out with the sword against you." ¹⁹Again, the sons of Israel said to him, "We will go up by the highway, and if I and my livestock do drink any of your water, then I will pay its price. Let me only pass through on my feet, nothing else." ²⁰But he said, "You shall not pass through." And Edom came out against him with a heavy force and with a strong hand. ²¹Thus Edom refused to allow Israel to pass through his territory; so Israel turned away from him.

The Scriptures confirm that Edom took advantage of Judah during the Babylonian invasion of the nation and assisted Babylon in Israel's destruction. That may explain the seriously bitter condemnation the prophets laid upon Edom.

Psalms 137:7 ⁷Remember, O LORD, against the sons of Edom The day of Jerusalem, Who said, "Raze it, raze it To its very foundation."

Amos penned a prophecy of the eschatological fate of Edom by linking it to the Lord's return at Bozrah.

Amos 1:11–12 ¹¹Thus says the LORD, "For three transgressions of Edom and for four I will not revoke its *punishment*, Because he pursued his brother with the sword, While he stifled his compassion; His anger also tore continually, And he maintained his fury forever. ¹²"So I will send fire upon Teman And it will consume the citadels of Bozrah."

Note the reference to Israel as Edom's brother. Edom was perpetually angry with Israel which was certainly the fruit of the brother's estrangement, although Jacob (Israel) reconciled with his brother Esau later in life, at least to some extent. Edom had no compassion for Israel. Edom's punishment will not be revoked because the Edomites lifted a sword against their brother Israel. One example of that is 2 Chronicles 28:17, which suggests that hostilities were an ongoing problem between the two nations.

2 Chronicles 28:17 ¹⁷For again the Edomites had come and attacked Judah and carried away captives.

Obadiah wrote a book that was written entirely about Edom. It suggests that Edom has not only been an adversary to Israel in the past, but the descendants of the nation who are still in the area will be an enemy of Israel during the Tribulation.

Obadiah 10–15 ¹⁰"Because of violence to your brother Jacob, You will be covered with shame, And you will be cut off forever. ¹¹"On the day that you stood aloof, On the day that strangers carried off his wealth, And foreigners entered his gate And cast lots for Jerusalem— You too were as one of them. ¹²"Do not gloat over your brother's day, The day of his misfortune. And do not rejoice over the sons of Judah In the day of their destruction; Yes, do not boast In the day of *their* distress. ¹³"Do not enter the gate of My people In the day of their disaster. Yes, you, do not gloat over their calamity In the day of their disaster. And do not loot their wealth In the day of their disaster. ¹⁴"Do not stand at the fork of the road To cut down their fugitives; And do not imprison their survivors In the day of their distress. ¹⁵"For the day of the LORD draws near on all the nations. As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your own head.

Edom will be cut off for forever for participating in the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah. This is apparently a historical reference to Edom's participation in the Babylonian destruction of the city and the nation, but the context is also eschatological; it deals with the day of the Lord. Edom will be a Tribulation enemy of Israel.

Ezekiel also addressed the historical strife between Edom and Judah in an eschatological context.

Ezekiel 25:12–14 ¹²Thus says the Lord GOD, “Because Edom has acted against the house of Judah by taking vengeance, and has incurred grievous guilt, and avenged themselves upon them,” ¹³therefore thus says the Lord GOD, “I will also stretch out My hand against Edom and cut off man and beast from it. And I will lay it waste; from Teman even to Dedan they will fall by the sword. ¹⁴“I will lay My vengeance on Edom by the hand of My people Israel. Therefore, they will act in Edom according to My anger and according to My wrath; thus they will know My vengeance,” declares the Lord GOD.

The vengeance Ezekiel refers to is the same vengeance Isaiah refers to in the Scripture before us today. “Although Edom lost its national identity and significance after the Roman period, the wrathful judgment described by Ezekiel does not yet seem to be fulfilled. But it will happen at the end of days when the Messiah will bring His judgment on the archenemy of the Jewish people.... The Edomites, presented here as the epitome of Israel's enemies, are no longer a distinctive people today. Nevertheless, the people that occupy their territory continue to mistreat the people of Israel even as the original Edomites did. Hence, this end-of-days judgment will fall upon the people in Edom in that day. God knows who His enemies are and will ultimately defeat them” [Charles H. Dyer and Eva Rydelnik, “Ezekiel” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1242].

Jeremiah described the horrors of the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, and in it, he described Edom's role. While they may rejoice at Judah's demise for a time, they will be punished for their role in it while Israel will be restored.

Lamentations 4:21–22 ²¹Rejoice and be glad, O daughter of Edom, Who dwells in the land of Uz; *But* the cup will come around to you as well, You will become drunk and make yourself naked. ²²*The punishment* of your iniquity has been completed, O daughter of Zion; He will exile you no longer. *But* He will punish your iniquity, O daughter of Edom; He will expose your sins!

“Edom is the epitome of Israel's enemies. She seems to have taken an active role in promoting Jerusalem's fall to Babylon and rejoiced to see it fall. Nevertheless, God's judgment of them was on the way (the cup will come around to you). Drinking from a cup pictured judgment. Edom's crimes against Jacob represented the actions of all the nations that profited at Jerusalem's expense. God had noted their actions, and would punish those nations for their sin, exactly as He had said He would do. Just as God judged Jerusalem for her sin in Jeremiah's day, so one day He would also judge Edom (and, by extension, all Gentile nations) for their sins. Jerusalem could look forward to restoration, but Edom could only expect judgment” [Charles H. Dyer and Eva Rydelnik, “Isaiah” in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1199].

Jeremiah described the conditions that will exist in Edom after the Tribulation, and they are very similar to the conditions Isaiah described. The prophet connected his prophecy to the Lord's coming at Bozrah.

Jeremiah 49:13 ¹³“For I have sworn by Myself,” declares the LORD, “that Bozrah will become an object of horror, a reproach, a ruin and a curse; and all its cities will become perpetual ruins.”

Jeremiah 49:17–18, 22¹⁷“Edom will become an object of horror; everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss at all its wounds. ¹⁸“Like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah with its neighbors,” says the LORD, “no one will live there, nor will a son of man reside in it.... ²²Behold, He will mount up and swoop like an eagle and spread out His wings against Bozrah, and the hearts of the mighty men of Edom in that day will be like the heart of a woman in labor.

The question that needs to be resolved is whether or not Isaiah was referring specifically to Edom, or whether he was referring to world conditions at the end of the Tribulation, or both. Given the context, which is eschatological, the Tribulation aspect is a possibility, because these verses are referring to the end times. We have established that Edom as a nation represented the world's nations in total in this chapter of Isaiah.

Constable believes this is a reference to Tribulation conditions immediately before the Lord returns. “How does this picture of devastation, so thorough that no human beings remain alive, harmonize with other revelation concerning the Tribulation? According to Revelation 6:8 and 9:18, half of the world's population will have perished by the end of the sixth trumpet judgment. Many more devastating judgments will fall on earth-dwellers after the sixth trumpet judgment, specifically the seven bowl judgments, the worst ones of all in the Tribulation. Therefore what Isaiah pictured may be what the earth will look like at the very end of the Tribulation, just before Jesus Christ returns to earth. There will be some people left alive on the earth then, but Isaiah's description was perhaps hyperbolic to make the point that God will judge all the earth's inhabitants” [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 96].

Constable also relied on the fact that Edom is not specifically mentioned in verses 9-17 as proof that the world was the subject. “The absence of specific references to Edom in verses 9-17 helps the reader appreciate that a judgment far beyond that one nation's future is in view. The only reason people will be able to inhabit the earth during the Millennium, following the Tribulation, is because God will renovate it” [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible, Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 96].

It is true that the world will need restoration at the end, but it is equally true that some people survived to the end in that world, and they will have to survive going into the Kingdom. The everlasting conditions described in these verses do not seem to be survivable for any length of time. What we do not now know is whether the Lord will suddenly and miraculously restore the earth's infrastructure by means of His Word, or whether He will appoint the survivors of the Tribulation to the task of restoring it which would take time. People would therefore have to live under some very adverse conditions until it is restored. It is also true that the Tribulation judgments on the world will not have everlasting effects on planet earth due to the Lord's restoration activities when the Kingdom begins. The judgments described here for Edom are everlasting suggesting that Edom is also being singled out for special attention apart from the other nations it has represented in this pericope. This does not violate the use of literal hermeneutics. Prophecy can have a double reference at times which seems to be the situation here (cf. Is. 7:10-16).

It is probably best to look at Edom as described in Isaiah 34 as a representative, Israel-hating nation of the world subject to God's wrath, but also as an individual nation that earned judgment beyond that of other nations, except Babylon, for the treatment she gave to her brother Israel throughout history. The judgments the Lord will levy against Edom that are revealed by Obadiah and Jeremiah support this conclusion. "Edom's primary sin was its prideful, unrelenting and violent hatred of Israel and rejoicing over Israel's misfortunes (Ob 3, 10-14). If nations unrelated to Judah were to drink the cup of the wrath of God (Jr. 49:12) and be punished for their mistreatment of her, then nations closely related to Judah deserved greater condemnation (cf. [Jer.] 25:15-19; Ob 10)" [Charles Dyer and Eva Rydelnik, "Jeremiah" in *The Moody Bible Commentary*, 1179].

Isaiah's description of Edom is a description of conditions that are from generation to generation that will last forever (Is. 34:10). That argues against the idea that these conditions are confined to the Tribulation period and that they apply to planet earth in total. Certainly, there will be extreme damage to planet earth during that time, but the earth will be restored—with the apparent exceptions of Edom and Babylon.

All of these Scriptures concerning Edom have an eschatological, end times context, but they also seem to be specifically about the conditions that will exist in Edom after the Lord's return. We know that He will first return to earth at Bozrah, in Edom, in order to rescue the Israelites and save all Israel.

Amos indicated that Edom has been perpetually angry with Israel. Obadiah revealed that due to the violence imposed on Israel by Edom, the nation would be cut off forever, but Israel would be restored. While the nation does not exist today in its ancient form as an independent nation with a national identity, it still exists in terms of people and territory—and they still hate Israel. Just as that hate manifested itself into action during the Babylonian invasion, it will manifest itself again when the antichrist persecutes and tries to destroy Israel during the Tribulation.

When Edom is finally cut off forever, it will have no national identity, no leadership, and no people. It will be a wasteland.

It would appear then, that in the midst of this eschatological period of judgment on the entire world, special attention is given to Edom not only as a representative, Israel-hating world nation, but also as a national entity that was not only Israel's brother, but was also Israel's perpetual, mortal enemy. Due to Edom's treatment of Israel throughout history culminating in the Tribulation, Edom was also singled out for judgment that was beyond what any other nation, except Babylon, was going to experience. These two areas, Edom and Babylon, will not be restored as the rest of the world will be restored in the Kingdom.

What is Edom going to look like during the Messianic Kingdom? It is going to be a desolate, forsaken mess. Some of this, if not all of it, is going to happen throughout the Tribulation culminating in the Lord's return to Bozrah to rescue the Israelites (Jer. 49:22).

Isaiah 34:9–10 ⁹Its streams will be turned into pitch [תַּחַשׁ], And its loose earth into brimstone [גַּפְרִית], And its land will become burning pitch. ¹⁰It will not be quenched night or day; Its

smoke will go up forever. From generation to generation it will be desolate [הָרָב]; None will pass through it forever and ever.

This method of destruction and the results therefrom are reminiscent of Sodom and Gomorrah as Jeremiah mentioned in Jeremiah 49:18.

Genesis 19:24, 28 ²⁴Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the LORD out of heaven ... ²⁸and he looked down toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the valley, and he saw, and behold, the smoke of the land ascended like the smoke of a furnace.

Fire and brimstone are elements of God's judgment and expressions of His wrath on man and particularly focused on Edom and Babylon in the sense of being an everlasting judgment.

Pitch, זָפֶת, means tar or pitch. It is a bitumen meaning a black, viscous mixture of hydrocarbons obtained naturally or as a residue from petroleum distillation. It was a naturally occurring substance in the Middle East. It was used as mortar for the bricks used to build the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:3). Tar pits were dangerous if a person fell into one according to Genesis 14:10 when the armies of the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fell into some tar pits in the Valley of Siddim which was full of them. Pitch was used to waterproof the basket Moses was placed in before setting him adrift in the Nile River (Ex. 2:3). Tar, תַּבָּהּ, and pitch, זָפֶת, are synonyms, and they are used together in Exodus 2:3. One can imagine what a foul-smelling, hot mess that will be in addition to the noxious, poisonous smoke it produces when it burns.

Brimstone, גִּפְתִּית, is a combustible form of sulphur.

Used together, these two words present a foul picture of burning petroleum products, sulphur, and toxic smoke. The fire will be a continuous fire, night and day, and it will last forever. It will never be extinguished. The stream beds will be filled with pitch and the dirt will become brimstone. This is not a metaphor for the nation as a political entity; the topography will be filled with and burned by pitch and brimstone.

Unsurprisingly then, this place that will be so toxic and hostile to human existence that the land will no longer be inhabited. This has been a continuously inhabited part of the world for thousands of years, but during the Millennial Kingdom, no one will live there. Beyond that, people will not even travel through it. Just as ancient Edom refused to allow Moses to travel peacefully through the country on the King's Highway, no one will be passing through it during the Kingdom.

Desolate, הָרָב, means to be waste, to be desolate, to dry up, or to be in ruins. In this context, it refers to being laid waste by the Lord. He will cause extensive destruction in the land of Edom and utterly ruin it.

The world in total will be laid waste and ruined, but there is a crucial difference between the everlasting destruction Edom and Babylon will experience when compared with the rest of the world which will be restored to the way the Creator God originally intended it

to be. The destruction will be so devastating that the Lord said unless the days were cut short, no one could survive.

Matthew 24:22 ²²“Unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short.

Only birds and animals will live in Edom during the Kingdom. Some of the meanings of the words concerning these animals are uncertain. For example, pelican [קָצֵת] is more likely a reference to owls, but it is variously translated large bird, hawk, owl, desert owl, or cormorant. Hedgehog, קָפֹד, is thought to be a porcupine, a hedgehog, and in some lexicons, an owl or other bird. The point is that the land will be unfit for human habitation, and it will therefore be given over various species of birds, animals, and thorny vegetation.

Isaiah 34:11 ¹¹But pelican and hedgehog will possess it, And owl and raven will dwell in it; And He will stretch over it the line [קו] of desolation [תהו] And the plumb line [אָבֶן] of emptiness [בְּהוּ].

Some theologians suggest that the animals mentioned in the verses in question at this point in Isaiah represent demonic spirits. The use of these birds and animals dwelling in Edom highlights the fact that no human beings will dwell there. It reveals that the place will not be suitable for human habitation, which is due to the judgment of God who imposed these inhospitable conditions onto the area.

Line, קו, means a string, a measuring line referring to an instrument used for measuring.

Plumb line, אָבֶן, means a stone, but it is used to represent a plumb line which is a string with a weight on the end used to determine whether not a vertical surface is plumb, i.e., whether or not it is perfectly vertical from top to bottom. In Amos 7:7-8, Yahweh related the plumb line to the standard He was going to use to judge the nation of Israel. That is the same situation in our Isaiah verse concerning Edom. Edom's historical behavior will be measured against God's standards set for the world, they will be found wanting, and they will face judgment as the result of their rebellion.

Isaiah used some interesting language in verse 11 that is not apparent to us in English, and this language is a reminder of the primeval chaos present on earth immediately before His creative work began. In Genesis 1:2, these same words are translated “formless and void.”

Desolation, תהו, means formlessness or confusion, representing the sense of something that is worthless or unsubstantial and in a state of chaos, confusion, and disorder.

Emptiness, בְּהוּ, means emptiness, void, or waste referring to an empty area or space.

“The level and the measure are commonly employed for the purpose of building up; but here Jehovah is represented as using these fore [sic] the purpose of pulling down, inasmuch as He carries out this negative reverse of building with the same rigorous exactness as that with which a builder carries out his well-considered plan, and throws

Edom back into a state of desolation and desert, resembling the disordered and shapeless chaos of creation" [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, 7:347]. The buildings Edom, and by extension the world system, constructed were not built according to God's building code. He will inspect them using the appropriate measuring devices, and, when found deficient, He will destroy them.

While the earth is going to suffer devastating destruction during the Tribulation, it will not be reduced to the state of emptiness that is described here, but Edom will. The world will still be capable of sustaining human life, but Edom will not.

Verse 12 verifies for us that no human habitation will occur in that place; therefore, there is no one to rule over even if a king could be found to hold office—but all that will be inhabiting that land is birds and animals.

Isaiah 34:12 ¹²Its nobles—there is no one there *Whom* they may proclaim king— And all its princes will be nothing.

Some theologians believe that Edom's princes elected their king, but that doesn't seem to be standard Middle East operating procedure for placing a king on his throne. This verse has had a number of different interpretations, but it simply seems to be saying that the land will be uninhabitable and therefore uninhabited meaning there is no kingdom for a king to rule over. "The phrase is confessedly difficult, but the following is a possibility: 'As for the nobles, there is none there that they call a kingdom.' In other words, the object of the verb is found in the words 'and there is none there.' All the former nobles of Edom have disappeared, and there are none at all remaining who might constitute a kingdom" [Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah: A Commentary*, vol. 2, 2:439].

The next verses again describe the confusion, chaos, and wasted state of Edom that will only be fit for weeds and animals.

Isaiah 34:13–15 ¹³Thorns will come up in its fortified towers, Nettles and thistles in its fortified cities; It will also be a haunt of jackals *And* an abode of ostriches. ¹⁴The desert creatures will meet with the wolves, The hairy goat [זָעִיר] also will cry to its kind; Yes, the night monster [לַיְלִית] will settle there *And* will find herself a resting place. ¹⁵The tree snake will make its nest and lay eggs there, *And* it will hatch and gather *them* under its protection. Yes, the hawks will be gathered there, Every one with its kind.

The fact that weeds will grow in the formerly occupied fortified towers and cities speaks to the empty nature of these places; no one will be there to maintain the infrastructure. Thorns, nettles, and thistles are worthless plants that are invasive and have spiny thorns or needles that make working the land difficult. They must be controlled or they take over; therefore, this presents a picture of no human presence to control them. The fortified cities and towers represent the need for housing and defensive infrastructure, but in the absence of people, those things will no longer be necessary. This kind of place will only be fit for animal life and noxious weeds.

Some people claim that demons will be living in this place based on the reference to the hairy goat and the night monster.

Hairy goat, קֶזֶיִר, means a male goat or a buck. Figuratively, it may mean a hairy one signifying a hairy goat in the manner a pagan goat god was portrayed. This word is translated "satyrs" in 2 Chronicles 11:15. It may be a reference to the goat that was worshiped as an idol in Canaanite religion. The Israelites engaged in worshiping the goat demons which Yahweh subsequently prohibited in Leviticus 17:7. The Greeks named this god Pan, the Egyptians Min, and the Romans Faunus. He was a fertility god who looked like he was half man and half goat in appearance with the horns and the hind legs of the goat.

Night monster, לילית, refers to a night creature or to a night demon who haunts the desolate places. Lilitu was an Assyrian and Babylonian female night demon wandering around in the desert. Some theologians believe this is a reference to a night creature such as a screech owl.

Most theologians do not believe this a reference to demons dwelling in Edom, but rather it is figurative speech referring to the desolation and waste the area will experience. "It is likely that *lilit* was an actual desert animal, a bat or an owl, who was animistically endowed with demonic qualities by superstitious pagan worshipers. Isaiah's reference, however, does not make *lilit* the object of worship. Rather, the term is used to symbolize the forthcoming desolation of judgment. The severity of this desolation is exhibited by the fact that the once fertile land is now only capable of supporting a few desert scavengers" [Willem A. Van Gemeren, gen. ed., s.v. "לילית", *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis*, 2:795].

Some translations opt for interpretations that do not involve demons. Due to the uncertainty concerning the meaning of some words in these verses, it would not be wise to get overly dogmatic about the interpretation. Identifying the correct species or name of an animal is not a doctrinally critical issue. Identifying whether or not demon spirits are the issue in this verse is somewhat more important. Most English translations reject the demonic aspect.

Isaiah 34:14¹⁴... And the wild goat shall bleat to its companion; Also the night creature shall rest there, And find for herself a place of rest. (NKJV)

Isaiah 34:14¹⁴ ... wild goats will bleat to one another. Yes, nocturnal animals will rest there and make for themselves a nest. (NET Bible)

Constable believes that the goat demon and the night monster represent the most detestable of animals that will be roaming the land at the end of the Tribulation [Thomas L. Constable, *Thomas Constable's Notes on the Bible: Volume IV: Isaiah-Daniel*, 96]. Animals are animals and to ascribe human emotional conditions to them such as "detestable" seems to be a bit over the top. There is nothing about this list of animals that earns them the label "detestable."

My thought is that during the time of the Messianic Kingdom, which I believe this prophecy about Edom represents, demons will be locked up just as Satan will be locked up, and they will not be free to roam about on earth as they are now. Therefore, the non-

demonic interpretations of this verse seem to be correct. Isaiah and Zechariah support that position.

Isaiah 24:21–22 ²¹So it will happen in that day, That the LORD will punish the host of heaven on high, And the kings of the earth on earth. ²²They will be gathered together Like prisoners in the dungeon, And will be confined in prison; And after many days they will be punished.

Zechariah 13:2 ²“It will come about in that day,” declares the LORD of hosts, “that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered; and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land.

“It would seem that not only Satan but all his angels will be cast into the abyss for this kingdom age. It is unthinkable that Satan would be bound and his angels free, for the picture of the millennial kingdom is one free from satanic influence” [C. Fred Dickason, *Angels: Elect & Evil*, 232].

The tree snake's identity is also questionable. It may refer to an owl, and the description here seems to relate more to birds than it does to snakes.

In Isaiah 34:1, the prophet issued a call to the nations to hear and listen to his message. In Isaiah 34:16, the prophet tells them he has recorded what they need to know; it is available to them for reference.

Isaiah 34:16-17 ¹⁶Seek [דָּרַשׁ] from the book of the LORD, and read: Not one of these will be missing; None will lack its mate. For His mouth has commanded, And His Spirit has gathered them. ¹⁷He has cast the lot for them, And His hand has divided it to them by line. They shall possess it forever; From generation to generation they will dwell in it.

At some point in the future (this chapter is eschatological) when these things begin to happen throughout the world, some people will want to know what is going on. Isaiah is telling them the revelation is recorded in his book. Seek, דָּרַשׁ, means to seek, to seek with care, to investigate, to inquire of, or to examine. Just as the nations were commanded to listen and to hear in verse 1, they are commanded here in verse 16 to seek. When these things begin to happen, it will not be too late to turn to the Lord. For those seeking answers at that time, this book is confirmation that God is in control, and He is doing exactly what He said He would do to judge the world.

“The prophet applied the title ‘The Book of Jehovah’ to his collection of the prophecies with which Jehovah had inspired him, and which He had commanded him to write down. Whoever lived to see the time when the judgment should come upon Edom, would have only to look inquiringly into this holy scripture; and if he compared what was predicted there with what had been actually realized, he would find the most exact agreement between them” [C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament: Isaiah*, vol. 7, 7: 348].

This is, of course, a statement concerning the inspired, inerrant nature of the Word of God. Isaiah was referring to his book, but the application applies to all the Scriptures. The

Scriptures are timeless, true, and available to anyone who seeks them out. That is particularly providential in this age of technology when Bibles are available worldwide via the internet.

Yahweh is going to judge Edom with desolation and emptiness just as He formed the creation out of desolation and emptiness by means of His Word. "The sequence *mouth ... Spirit... hand* guarantees that the event will correspond to the Lord's word, be implemented by his power, and come about through his direct personal touch" [J. Alec Motyer, *Isaiah: An Introduction & Commentary*, 217].

God will impose judgment on the world and on Edom to the measure He has decided to do so. The full complement of this judgment has yet to be imposed, but many theologians apply it to the downfall of the Edom of old. Buksbazen, for example, wrote, "Edom, desolate, deserted, still the lair of wild creatures after more than twenty-six centuries, is a mute witness to the truth of God's Word" [Victor Buksbazen, *The Prophet Isaiah: A Commentary*, 278]. The problem with this is that Edom is not uninhabited, and it is not characterized by burning pitch and brimstone. Many of us have been in Edom, and there are people, businesses, and human social activities going on there. Edom today is no different than any other dry, relatively barren, desert area of the world—but it will be during the Messianic Kingdom. The desert areas we have now will become extremely productive places to live—but Edom will not. This prophecy, for the world and for Edom, is to be realized in what is to this day still in the future.

It is clear that Edom will be left to the animals, meaning no humans will live there, and that will be a condition that lasts forever. The concept of eternity is expressed twice here: once by use of the word עולם translated "forever," and by means of the idiom "from generation to generation" both of which represent the nation's complete desolation according to the previous verses.

I previously mentioned that Babylon will also be judged with judgments that have everlasting consequences and the language used by the prophets to describe that situation is remarkably similar to the language used by Isaiah to describe Edom.

Isaiah 13:19–22 ¹⁹And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. ²⁰It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation; Nor will the Arab pitch *his* tent there, Nor will shepherds make *their flocks* lie down there. ²¹But desert creatures will lie down there, And their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there. ²²Hyenas will howl in their fortified towers And jackals in their luxurious palaces. Her *fateful* time also will soon come And her days will not be prolonged.

The conquest of Babylon by the Medes and the Persians was the background to this prophecy, but the conditions described here have never been completely fulfilled. The fulfillment of this prophecy awaits the end of the Tribulation and the beginning of the Messianic Kingdom. Jeremiah also used the near-term conquest of Babylon as a picture of that nation's long-term fate.

Jeremiah 50:39–40 ³⁹“Therefore the desert creatures will live *there* along with the jackals; The ostriches also will live in it, And it will never again be inhabited Or dwelt in from generation to generation. ⁴⁰“As when God overthrew Sodom And Gomorrah with its neighbors,” declares the LORD, “No man will live there, Nor will *any* son of man reside in it.