

## EXPOSITION OF ISAIAH

Message #30

Isaiah 22:1-14

Years ago, I was backpacking into the mountains to hunt elk and I came to a spot where I decided to take a break. As I did, two guys came riding up on horses and they stopped and we chatted. This was their first time in this particular canyon and they asked me where it went and I told them. They said they intended to ride up on top. Now the trail that goes through this particular meadow looks like a good trail, but if you try it on horse you will put the horse in a bog. The reason I know this is because I did it. So I said to these guys, circle this area on the side of this mountain and come down on the other side and pick the trail up over there. The two guys smiled and said, "We'll make it," and with that I sat there and watched them ride on that trail and both horses sunk in up to their bellies and they had a terrible time getting them out. They would not listen, they would not learn from someone who knew the truth and they ended up in a disaster. That is the story of the history of Israel.

We have been traveling with Isaiah through various terrible judgments God will bring against the surrounding neighbors of Judah who are mostly Arabs. Some of the judgments have been partially fulfilled, but most of them will be completely fulfilled during the Tribulation. As Dr. Ironside said, many of these prophecies have "a second fulfillment in the last days" (*Isaiah*, p. 127). As Isaiah has been giving these prophecies, he challenges God's people to turn to Him.

**But the real problem with Judah was that she didn't learn anything and turn to God and was acting and living just like her pagan neighbors. She refused to turn to God (22:4), she refused to depend on God (22:11) and she basically lived her life with a philosophy that said, "Let's eat and drink for tomorrow we die" (22:13).**

Let me illustrate the point. Israel has just witnessed the removal of a major enemy - Saddam Hussein. God has directed history so that many of those who hate Israel have been destroyed. Now you would think that Israel would want to know if there is anything in the Bible that has to do with Iraq. You would think this would be a time when Israel would really want to know God and the Word of God. But that is not what is happening and that is not what will happen until God completely humiliates her during the Tribulation.

God could not get His own people to turn to Him, so when Isaiah was telling them about the specific judgments of various nations, he was moved by God to tell them of a judgment that would come against them.

Now you will notice that this is an oracle concerning the "valley of vision" (22:1, 5). The Hebrew word "valley" is one that refers to a valley or gorge or a flat low region that has water which flows in it (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 168). There is a different word used for "valley" in **verse 7**, which refers to a very long and deep valley (Ibid., p. 640). The word "vision" is one that refers to a direct revelation from God (Ibid., p. 269). Most interpreters believe that this is a reference to Jerusalem, which is confirmed by **verse 4** and to specific valleys of the city. Psalm 125:2 says mountains surround Jerusalem. This is the place known for prophetic revelations (Isaiah 2:3; Luke 13:33). Many believe this is a specific reference to the Kidron valley which runs directly east of the city.

**God often speaks to people when they are in deep valleys. When you find yourself in a valley it is a great opportunity to get into the Word of God and let Him speak to you. You will probably see the power of God more in valley times than at any other time.**

Now some of the things described here that would happen to Jerusalem do seem to apply to the Assyrian invasion of Judah during Hezekiah's day (Isaiah 36-37; II Kings 18-19; II Chronicles 32). In 701 B.C., Sennacherib, king of Assyria captured 46 cities of Judah and threatened to put Jerusalem "under siege." Some things described here seem also to apply to the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. But there are other things that clearly refer to what will specifically happen during the Tribulation. In fact, according to **verse 1**, there is a reference to people in Jerusalem being on the housetops. This specifically reminds me of what Jesus predicted would take place during the Tribulation (**Matthew 24:17**). Most believe that Isaiah 22:15-22, which describes two different individuals - Shebna and Eliakim, are a foreshadowing of the Antichrist who will be replaced by the true Christ. So what we have here is a prediction of what would happen to Judah and to Jerusalem ultimately in the Tribulation because she refuses to turn to worship the true God.

As we look through these verses, there are three majestic names of God which are repeated in combination four times: "the Lord GOD of hosts" (Adonai, Jehovah, Sabaoth) (**22:5, 12, 14**) and "LORD of hosts" (Jehovah Sabaoth) (**22:14**). The stress of the noun "Sabaoth" is that God is in sovereign charge of everything in heaven and on earth, including that which causes conditions which may be wretched and miserable (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 699). The emphasis of the noun "Adonai" is that God is the lord and master and owner over everything in heaven and on earth (Ibid., p. 12). The stress of the noun "Jehovah" is the eternal, immutable, self-existing God who always is and who does whatever He pleases (Ibid., p. 338). **The clear emphasis of these names is that God is in sovereign control of everything, and He can and will bless those who draw close to Him and can and will destroy those who will not.**

The main point is this:

**BECAUSE ISRAEL REFUSES TO HUMBLE HERSELF AND TURN TO THE ONE AND ONLY SOVEREIGN LORD GOD FOR HELP, GOD WILL PRONOUNCE A TERRIBLE DEATH JUDGMENT ON ISRAEL IN THE TRIBULATION.**

Right now, for most people in Israel, there is a sense that "imminent danger" is at hand. The question of what's coming next is always on an Israeli's mind. There is a God who specifically reveals what will happen next and it is to this God to whom Israel needs to turn.

The United States needs to understand this point. Just this week, I heard a famous religious leader say he wasn't sure if the United States is under the judgment of God. I totally disagree. When you see an economy collapse, and when you see hundreds of thousands of people who cannot even find a job, then you realize how sovereign God is in even causing miserable conditions. It is pretty obvious that God is judging this nation because it has mocked Him. If our political leaders would right now turn to the only, true God of the Bible, God would shine His favor back on this country. But just like Israel, she refuses to humble herself and things are going to get worse.

Now there are six main scenes Isaiah gives to this prophetic vision:

**SCENE #1** – The vision of the city under Divine judgment. **22:1-2a**

What is described in these verses is scary for Israel. Jerusalem is destined to become a city full of noise and laughter and joy. Shortly after the Rapture, the European Antichrist will enter into a peace treaty with Israel and Jerusalem will become a city in which most Jews will think they are safe and secure.

But it will change quickly. Word will come that the party days are over and people will go up on the housetops to see what is happening. Isaiah saw a time when the vast majority of people in Jerusalem ran up to their housetops to look to the valley to see an advancing military coming to destroy them. If this is a reference to the Tribulation, then whatever valley you may see from the housetop will be filled with enemies coming to destroy Israel; disaster everywhere you look.

**SCENE #2** – The vision of the people under Divine judgment. **22:2b-3**

Now Isaiah sees several specific actions regarding the people of Jerusalem:

**Action #1** - Isaiah sees many Israelis slaughtered . **22:2b**

Notice the end of **verse 2**; Israel was not killed fighting in war. The people did not die defending themselves. They were slaughtered by the Antichrist.

**Action #2** - Isaiah sees many Israeli rulers captured. **22:3a**

When Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem, King Zedekiah fled and was caught near Jericho (II Kings 25:1-7).

**Action #3** - Isaiah sees many Israeli escapees captured. **22:3b**

**SCENE #3** – The vision of Isaiah's response to God's judgment. **22:4-5**

What Isaiah saw overwhelmed him. He couldn't even look the Jewish people in their eyes because of the fierce judgment of God. God let part of this happen during the days of the Assyrians and He let part of this happen during the days of the Babylonians, but there is a time coming worse than both of these combined, a time of great wrath. There is nothing comforting about the Tribulation for Israel from the moment she is on the housetops (**Matthew 24:15-17**). Isaiah saw this as a time when the whole purpose and plan of God was the "destruction" of His own people (**22:4**). It is a day of judgment. It is a day of panic. It is a day of subjugation and confusion. Now Jerusalem in Isaiah's day was not a place of total tranquil peace. So what he sees here takes what will happen in Jerusalem to a new level. This was a vision of a military force coming into Jerusalem and leveling everything.

**SCENE #4** – The vision of the military used in God’s judgment. **22:6-7**

There are two groups of people named in these verses, Elam and Kir, two known allies of Assyria. As we said last week, **Elam** is southern land that is located beyond the Tigris river east of Iraq, and today this land is the southern portion of Iran. **Kir** is land just north of Iran and east of Turkey known as modern day Armenia who has a close history with Russia. So here is what Isaiah sees; he sees a huge military force comprised of Russians and some Iranians who are coming into Israel to destroy the Jews and Jerusalem after the destruction of Iraq. This fits nicely with Iran demolishing Iraq and then continuing westward toward Israel while Russia moves from the north. This is all in very close time proximity to the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

**SCENE #5** – The vision of Israel’s response to God’s judgment. **22:8-11**

F. C. Jennings said when you read **verses 8-11**, you get a mixture of “the historical with the prophetic” (*Studies in Isaiah*, p. 260). Some of the data here has to do with that which is described in II Chronicles 32, when Sennacherib, king of Assyria, invaded Judah during the days of Hezekiah. However, the totality of what is described as happening in Jerusalem is yet to happen.

**Verses 8-11** describe Israel as depending on herself and her military to get her out of this. **God is the One who gave Israel this land (Joshua 1:1-3) by His strength and not Israel’s strength and she refuses to look to Him for help.** It is much like a person’s salvation. God miraculously gives a person salvation and then they think they can live a victorious life on their own. They can achieve it without dependency on Him. It cannot be done.

God is going to remove all defenses from Israel (**22:8**). He is going to let Jerusalem be attacked. As this happens, those who are left will try to figure out how they can survive. They will do anything except turn to God. They will try to depend on their weapons, on their water and on their fortifications, but they will not turn to God or depend on the God who planned this whole thing. There are nearly one million people who live in Jerusalem right now. Twenty-five percent are Arabs and seventy-five percent are Jews. When the Antichrist invades Jerusalem, there will be people literally counting houses and hiding in the city. They will fortify places they are hiding with torn down boards of houses.

W. E. Vine said the lesson of these verses is this - “Whatever we attempt by our own efforts is futile and disastrous unless directed by God and wrought by His power. Evil can never be averted by means adopted by our natural wisdom. Forgetfulness of God leads to reliance upon human resources and means, and ends in disappointment and misery” (*Isaiah*, p. 64).

Listen, you cannot save yourself from your sins no matter how hard you try. Perhaps right now your world is totally falling apart. Did you ever think that there is a Sovereign God who has planned this whole thing so that you will turn to Him? Maybe you are a believer and your whole world is falling apart. Did you ever consider that there is a Sovereign God who has planned this so you will turn to Him?

Our greatest resource and defense is God. Not our planning or scheming but God Himself.

**SCENE #6** – The vision of the reason God permitted this judgment. **22:12-14**

Israel has never humbled herself to God. So God says in **verse 12**, in that day I will humble you and you will be weeping and wailing. Judgment time is no time for boasting and self-congratulation and parties. Judgment time is a time to mourn. She has never willingly wept over her rebellion against God. She has not ever really mourned her sin. In fact, for the most part, she has lived a life of gaiety even though surrounded by hostile threats.

But when you look at **verse 14**, it is very solemn. Isaiah says, listen to me because God has revealed Himself to me and because of your iniquity and your refusal to turn to Jesus Christ, He has given you the death penalty.

God and God alone is the foundation of all hope and joy and peace. The most important thing to do when we find ourselves in dark and dangerous times surrounded by many threats is to turn to the Lord and make certain our lives are lined up with His Word and will.

#### **PARTING THOUGHTS:**

- 1. There is a Sovereign God who is in total charge of everything in heaven and on earth, including all that is happening in the national world and in your world.**
- 2. The Grace and Mercy of God are always available to one who will turn to the true God.**
- 3. You will not ever be able to save yourself from sin or anything else by your planning and by your works?**
- 4. When one is willing to humble himself to God and trust totally and only in God, He will give a life sentence and not a death sentence.**