

Wednesday, August 23, 2023 • Read Isaiah 17–18

Questions from the Scripture text: Against whom is this new burden stated (17:1a)? What will happen to the city (v1b–c)? And to what other Syrian cities (v2)? Who is joined with them in their judgment (v3)? Says Who (v3e)? What will wane (v4b) and grow lean (v4c)? How bare will it be (v5)? How much will remain (v6)? Says Who (v6e)? What result will this have in Israel (v7–8)? But what will have happened to their strong cities (v9)? Why, what had their idolatry revealed that they had done (v10a–b)? What fruit will such a people have from their best efforts (v10c–11d)? What will occur to bring this judgment about (v12a–13a)? But for all this international bluster, Who will do what with just a word of rebuke (v13b–c)? What, specifically, will happen to whom, specifically (v14)? Unto whom does 18:1 pronounce woe? To whom are they sending ambassadors (v2)? But how does Isaiah answer this false hope (v3)? Who has spoken to him such an answer (v4a)? How does He explain the period of time when men are permitted to think they may prevail (v3b–4)? But what happens when YHWH is ready to act (v5)? And in what condition are the warring nations left (v6)? What else will happen in that season—who will be bringing tribute to YHWH (v7, cf. v2)?

Why must all self-made, self-sustained plans ultimately fail? Isaiah 17–18 looks forward to the first serial reading in morning public worship on the coming Lord's Day. In these twenty-one verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **any plan made apart from dependence upon God and obedience to God will fail because the Lord will wait until the ripe time, then devastate man with but a word.**

The folly of Israel, v1–4. The section is titled “the burden against Damascus” (Aram/Syria, v1), but what is hidden within is the woe that is coming upon Ephraim/Jacob (v2–4). Israel threw its lot in with Syria, and now the two are under woe together.

The mercy of God, v5–8. What is even more amazing than the stupidity and wickedness of Israel is the mercy of God! First, God leaves them a remnant (v6). The destruction is exhaustive like reaping (v5), but God leaves a remnant like in gleaning (v6). Second, and even more mercifully, God uses the affliction to turn Israel from idols back to “the Holy One of Israel” (v7–8).

The powerlessness of self, v9–11. v9 details the greatness of the devastation, and v10c–11 explain it. vv10a–b tell why. God is a constant salvation and refuge, but they are the opposite of His constancy; they have forgotten Him and not been mindful of Him. Why? Because they are living not by His grace but by their own plans, and trusting in their own power.

You plant (v10c), you set out (v10d), you make grow (v11a), your plant (v11a), you make to flourish (v11b), your seed (v11b). A self-driven life is the express train to forgetfulness of God. And it is a mercy when He makes it fail (“the harvest will be a heap of ruins,” v11c).

The omnipotence of God over a world coalition, v12–14. God, in these three verses, is a strong (literally) contrast to Israel in the previous three verses. Look how strong the nations are in v12–13a! A multitude of peoples who roar and rush like oceans! But even all of them together are nothing by comparison to God. One word from Him sends them flying like a tumbleweed in a tornado (v13b–c). To attack God's people is to sign up for overnight destruction (v14).

The mercy of God to His coalition from the world, 18:1–7. The parallel between the unnamed nation in v1 and the multitude of nations in v12 is underscored by the opening “Woe” in each verse. Now, we see how that coalition came to be. They looked for the best. “tall and smooth” is more literally “long and polished.” The word “skin” is supplied by the English version and doesn't belong. The sense is “of long standing” and “polished skill.”

But the Lord takes over the coalition. Now it is He addressing them in v3, telling them that His part will be to lift the banner and blow the trumpet, but their part is merely to “see” and to “hear.” For His part, YHWH has not had to exert Himself (v4); devastating a world coalition is like a quiet afternoon on the veranda for Him.

God's timing is exact (v5) and His judgment complete (v6). But in the last day, there will be a people of long-standing and polished skill who aren't fighting anymore. The description of the people in v7 is the same as in v2, but now they are bringing tribute to Zion, where they have come under the Kingship of YHWH of hosts. How merciful is the Lord; He is the God of salvation!

What have you been hoping will make the difference in your life for the better? How do you intend to pursue that? If you're not hoping in the Lord by use of the Lord's means, how can you expect that to end up? How do His power and mercy encourage you to navigate this life and eternity?

Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us for how foolishly we have trusted in our own plans and our own power. Truly, in doing so we forget the God of our salvation, and we are not mindful of the Rock of our stronghold. It is in mercy that You afflict us and cause such plans and efforts to fail. Grant that our hearts would not be hard but turn to You. Truly, one word from You is stronger than all the nations put together. How merciful You are that rather than destroying them all, You are saving a multitude that You are gathering from among them. Grant us humility by Your Spirit to rest upon You alone in Jesus Christ, through Whom we ask it, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP46 “God Is Our Refuge and Our Strength” or TPH244 “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God”

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via hopewellarp.org)

Isaiah chapter 17 and 18 these are God's words. The burden against Damascus. Behold. Damascus will cease from being a city. That will be a ruinous heap. The cities are aware are forsaken. They will be for flocks which lie down and no one will make them afraid. The fortress also will cease from Ephraim.

The kingdom from Damascus. The remnant of Syria. They will be as the glory of the children of Israel. It says, you have hosts in that day, it will come to pass. That the glory of Jacob will be as the fatness of his flesh. Go grow lean. To be as when the harvester, gathers, the grain and the and reaps, the heads of his arm, which will be as he who gathers heads of grain in the valley of Raphaim.

Yet cleaning grapes will be left in it. Like the shaking of an olive tree two or three, olives at the top of the outermost bow. Four five and it's most fruitful branches. Says y'all might go out of Israel. And that damn man will look to his maker and his eyes will have respect.

For the holy One of Israel. The work of his hands. You will not respect, what his fingers have made. Nor the wooden images nor the incense alters in that day, is strong cities will be as a forsaken bow, and an uppermost branch, which they left because of the children of Israel.

And there will be desolation. Because you have forgotten the God of your salvation and have not been mindful of the rock of the stronger. They're therefore, you will plant pleasant plants and set out foreign seedlings. In the day you will make your plant to grow. And in the morning you will make your seat to flourish spot.

Harvest will be a heap of ruins. In the day of grief and desperate sorrow. Well, to the multitude of many people who make a noise like the roar of the seas. To the rushing of the nations that make a rushing like they're rushing of mighty waters. The nations will rush like the rushing of mighty waters, but God will rebuke them.

But they will flee our way. And be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind like a rolling thing before the world went. Then behold it even tied trouble. And before the morning, He is no more. This is the portion of those who plunder us in the lot of those robots.

Low to the land shadowed with buzzing wings which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia which sent and ambassadors by sea. Even in vessels of read on Walter saying go swift messengers. To nation long and smooth of skin. To people terrible from. They're beginning, onward nation, powerful, and treading down his land.

The rivers divide. All inhabitants of the world and dwellers on the earth. When he lifts up a banner on the mountains, you see it blows a trumpet. You hear it? For. So you always said to me, i will take my rest and i will look for my dwelling place.

Let's clear heat in the sunshine, like a cloud of dew and the heat of harvest. Okay. Before the harvest. My butt is perfect to. The sour grape is ripening. In the flower. You will cut off He will both cut off the springs with pruning hooks and take away and cut down the branches.

There will be left together for the mountain birds of prey. And for the beasts of the earth, the birds of prey will some are on them and all the beasts of the earth will winter than them. And that time a present will be brought to yah way of hosts.

From a people of tall and smooth skin from a people terrible. From their beginning onward. A nation powerful and treading down. Land the river's divide to the place of the name of your posts. To Mount, Zion. So far the reading of god's inspired and inherent work. Chapter 17. Begins.

The burden against Damascus, which is the capital city of Syria. So To this day, even But we realize that it's really about. The folly of israel and the folly of. Nations. Putting their hook and one another. Instead of putting their hope in the board. And you see the Mixture of ephraim and israel.

Two names for the northern kingdom. With Syria and its capital city Damascus. In verse 3. That god is punishing, his people. And to throw your lot in with them as they are being punished. Is. To volunteer for punishment with them. And you have the Lord is merciful. Even when he Causes devastation that is like harvesting or gleaning.

Let you notice. He leaves them. A small remnant in verse 6. It's very small. The emphasis is on its smallness. It's most fruitful branch. Has four or five? Olives, in this. Um, olive tree image in first six. And yet, you see that? God leaving them. The remnant in verse 6 is definitely in mercy.

Because look at what he describes spiritually of the remnant. In verses seven and eight, but god will use The chastening. To turn the remnant of israel. From their idols. And yet. It will be a severe chastening and many. That will be lost physically in spiritually. In this judgment. Because verse 10, They forgot the god of their salvation.

And not been mindful of the rock of their stronghold now, that's a strong rebuke to us, isn't it? Don't we find ourselves very forgetful of god. Even during our days, we worship. Together. We've here the good word of god. We call upon his name together. We sing the praises that he himself has put in our mouths.

And how easily we would come forgetful of him. And unmindful happen. Even in. The rest of our day. And so, It's a mercy to us that we see here that We serve a god. Who is merciful even to some such sinners? And we cry out to him to be merciful.

Praise god. He's given us christ through whom to cry out. And, And we claim to him. And then we see it as a mercy. In. Verse 10 and verse 11. That. Well, the second half of verse 10 in verse 11, That he doesn't allow their. Forgetful of god, plans.

Not. Flourish. They're harvest is a heap of ruins. In a day of grief and desperate sorrow. It's a mercy of god to us when we forgetful of him. And he doesn't allow it us to prosper. Last, we Come to a place of pride and arrogance. In which we don't feel our need for him.

Anymore. And so, we lord. Grant to us repentance to be. Mindful of him. Indeed. His power. So great, you have this. This worldwide alliance. In verses 12 through 14. And just like we see. In the final great worldwide alliance in the book of revelations. And, The lord jesus casts.

Satan. Casts the beasts. Into the lake far, and the Rastic destroys with the The sword that comes from his mouth. So, also here you have the nation's rosh, egg and roaring, like mighty waters. And god. Speaks or rebuke, and they all get driven away, like, chaff. One word. Just one word like we see, and Psalm 46.

Other places as well. Praise God. And this is pictured another way for us in chapter 18 where at the beginning of this worldwide coalition, There is the ambassadors that go to a nation. Um,

And the, the nation is described as That beyond the ethiopia and then verse 2. You see, the Some interpretive translation. It's go to a nation. That is long and polished. And i think the idea in translation is of long-standing. And highly skilled. But they choose to say tall and smooth of skin.

They're trying to. Implied, that it is ethiopia since the nation is from beyond Ethiopia. Either way, the The whole sense of the text is. That they're, they're trying to get The most powerful. Allies that they can.

And, So, you have this great big. International. Coalition. That the that the nation beyond ethiopian verse 1. That has. Has a Assembled for themselves. But then, The the coalition is waiting in verse 3, all the inhabitants of the world and dwellers in the earth. And their arranging, and there's the banners and the trumpets and they're waiting for battle.

The picture. Uh, in in verse 4 is Of. The lord, like the great warrior, just Enjoying his afternoon out on his porch. Watching things happen, waiting for right, just the right moment and that's the That's the point of verse 5. As the lord abiding this time and picking just the right moment.

When he is going to act. And then suddenly Um, suddenly when That he acts. The, the verse 6 aftermath is. This whole worldwide coalition has gone and the the animals. Are having are having their feast. And then you have a different worldwide coalition verse 7. It's the same. The lord is taking people from the same people, the one the long-standing and polished Of people who are terrible from their beginning, onward and nation powerful dreading down.

It's whose land the river's divide. Same description as in verse 2, but the lord is taking him ever. He will And, He is not sending presents to them. So that they will come into alliance of him, they are bringing tribute. Because he has rated their kingdom to take for himself.

Subjects. And so, There's this competing worldwide coalition, to worldwide, coalition of war against thought. And then this The lord assembling for himself for people and he takes a subjects. From the whole world. And indeed he is doing. So it was mercy as the gospel goes out. And he takes subjects for for himself, and they all come Um, To the place of the name of yahweh posts.

To Mount, Zion. That's the Lord is still doing. Rejoice, when he takes us, we pray. For him to finish. Taking others. We? Are ashamed of all of our hope and man and all of our esteem of man over against god. All of him banded together cannot stand up to a one word of rebuke.

From. The living god and yet, He speaks not on the rebuke, but mercy. As he gathers to himself, a people of his own. And may, he gather Us. With all of his elect, he Grant to us, not to be forgetful of him. Or a mindful of him like israel was and required chastening.

What to remember him to know him? And all that we do. The Lord granted to you. My dear family to know him. And all that you do today and for the rest of your lives. So then, of course, forever. Let's pray.

And father in heaven and pray that you had blessed this household with the knowledge of you. That you would not allow us to live on mindfully of you or put our hope. In our tactics are, put our hope in others. Grant that we would neither serve ourselves. Ultimately, Nor the purposes of anyone else ultimately but that you would be Our master and then all service.

Under you. Give us oh lord, not to be afraid. Of your enemies. Conferring inspiring against you. Knowing that. You are unafraid and Will act just the right time. And that one weren't shall destroy all of your enemies. We thank you for your mercy. That even when we were your enemies christ died for us.

And that you have decided to show your love this way. Make us to know your love. To love you with all our hearts. We ask In jesus name.