

## Chapter 17-18:1-7

### "The Day Of Grief And Desperate Sorrow"

We've learned a lot in this section of scripture we've been studying. But perhaps the primary *overarching* theme threaded throughout it, is simply the faithfulness of God to warn the nations of impending judgment... *It just doesn't matter what tribe, what tongue, what people or what nation you belong to, there's simply no escaping the fact that we will all be called to stand before Him & give an account to Him! We are His creation; He is our Creator & as such we're accountable to Him... I know there are lots of people who don't like that, but that's just all there is to it!*

■ & Not only does God judge the nations throughout world history, but the day is coming when He will judge mankind w/finality. Jesus tells us in Matt 25 that the day will come when the *nations* will be gathered before Him. & He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. & He makes it very clear that He will judge between them. *Those who've honored Him, who've served Him, who've led lives set apart to Him will inherit the kingdom which God has prepared for them from the foundations of the world. Those who neglected Him, rejected Him, chose to do life on their own terms will be cast into the everlasting lake of fire which God prepared for the devil & those fallen angels who followed him.* Rev 20:11-15 speaks into it as well... The books will be opened before the throne of God & then another book will be opened (which is the Book of Life), & your name will either be found written in it, or it won't... & Our eternal destiny hinges *upon*, is directly connected *to* that fact.

What am I saying? I'm saying that God is faithful to warn us, to alert us to the fact that judgment is coming. The question that confronts us is, "What are we going to do about it?" We can either repent of our sin, humble ourselves before God & believe on the Lord J.C. ... Or we can carry on doing life, business as usual, turn a blind eye to it, choose not to believe it & reap the ramifications of our ways. ■

Last week we learned of the devastation & destruction that was to come to Moab. In Ch 17, the nation of Syria comes into focus. Now... when Isaiah wrote this, Israel, and Syria (again I remind you that at this time Israel was divided into 2 kingdoms, Israel to the north & Judah to the south) had formed an alliance of sorts. (Syria was the nation just north & to the east of Israel). *But they would ally themselves (often for the purpose of coming against Judah). So what we see here (in Ch 17) is that God links Israel together w/Syria in the judgment He pronounces against Syria... Partners in crime, partners in consequence.*

Now, if you've already glanced down at the 1<sup>st</sup> Vs of the 17<sup>th</sup> Ch you've noted that it says, "The burden against *Damascus*". Perhaps you're thinking, "I thought you said, 'Syria' was on the radar?" That's correct. Damascus is the capital city of Syria. It would be like saying, "The burden against Washington D.C." You would know the United States was in view because D.C. is the capital of the U.S.

### Vs 1-3

If you recall from last week, we were reminded that Assyria (which was north of Syria [2 different nations]) would be the nation that God would use as His instrument of judgment as they sat out in an effort to conquer the known world.

& Here God is making known the fact that they would make Damascus a ruinous heap. They would totally destroy the capital city of Syria. Of course, it would be rebuilt, it would be reinhabited, but the Assyrians would utterly annihilate it. It would be reduced to a "ruinous heap".

But what I want you to see is what I made mention of a moment ago. "The fortress will also cease from Ephraim." Now, I've mentioned this to you a time or two in the past. But by way of reminder, Ephraim was the largest, most influential tribe in the northern kingdom of Israel. **So, there are times that you'll read of *Israel*, there are times you'll read of *Ephraim* & there are times you'll read of *Samaria* (Samaria was the capital city of the northern kingdom of Israel), they all refer to the same territory. Sometimes (as we'll see in Vs 4), the region is referred to as "Jacob" who would *become* Israel (when God changed his name) & he (of course) was the father of the 12 tribes of Israel.** (Now, there a little caveat thrown in there in that involves Joseph & his 2 sons [1 of which was Ephraim, the other was Manasseh], but that's a lesson for another time). The point is, call it Israel, call it Ephraim, Samaria or Jacob, it's all a reference to the same place ☺. Simple enough?

But again, partners in crime = partners in consequence. Look at Vs 4.

### Vs 4-6

Now I know this is kind of obscure reading. The gist is this; judgment will find Syria. But since Israel is yoked together w/Syria, judgment is coming to them as well. "The glory of Jacob will wane." They'll be gathered up and taken like when a harvester gathers grain, very few will be left... **Now don't get me wrong. Israel had sins of its own (which we have discussed in detail in past studies) for which God was judging them. But there's also a very real sense in which they are being caught in the throes of the judgment that's aimed at Syria as well. What's the take home here?**

\*Be careful who you align yourself *with* & whom you join yourself *to*... The Bible is clear, *"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will dwell in them And walk among them. I will be their God, And they shall be My people.'"*<sup>1</sup>

Solomon said it this way, *"The righteous should choose his friends carefully, For the way of the wicked leads them astray."*<sup>2</sup> I think that's fairly self-explanatory. It's not that the scriptures forbid being friends w/unbelievers. Jesus Himself was called, "The Friend of sinners." If you're never around unbelievers, how can you show *to* them or share w/them who Jesus is?

The warning is that we're not to develop intimate relationships w/the ungodly (or the unbeliever). Marriages, business partnerships, close relationships. Because when you get too close *to* them, or tied up w/them, when they stumble/fall or engage in some kind of sin, we're more prone to stumble/fall & engage alongside them. It's way easier for them to drag us down, than for us to lift them up. You can get caught up in their ways, & likewise the *ramifications* of those ways...<sup>3</sup>

### Vs 7-9

Last week we considered the frustration & exasperation of seeing the lives of loved ones going through trials & tribulations, trying to find reprieve in all the wrong places! It's something we've all seen at some point in our lives. *Someone we know is going through tremendously tough times & they go perhaps to a psychologist, or a therapist of some kind, they try support groups or various programs. They'll read a book about their situation, they'll go to just about anyone & try just about anything, but they won't turn to the Lord (& it just breaks your heart)!* Because it's in Christ that we find our hope, our healing & our help in time of need. – Jesus said, *"Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."*<sup>3</sup>

But we thank God when people allow those tough times to drive them to the feet of Jesus (& that's what we see here).

<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (2 Co 6:14–16). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Pr 12:26). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 11:28–29). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

“In that day (the day that the ramifications of their own ways find them) a man will look to his Maker... He will not look to the altars, the works of his hands, or what his fingers have made...” In other words, “All those things he’s been looking *to* & leaning *on*, he’s going to throw it in the proverbial trash & he’ll look to his Maker...” (Hallelujah)

■ This is one of the reasons God allows those difficult days to find us. So that we’ll turn away from the worthless/menial things we’ve been putting our weight on (our trust in) & look to Him! Our tendency is to drift from the Lord, begin to take comfort & security in our nice homes, the money we make, the influence we wield, the position we hold at work. We can make altars &/or idols out of just about anything (military might, scientific achievement, technological advancement)! God would have us look to Him, to trust in Him, find our comfort/security/identity, in Him (the One who has loved us and given Himself for us).

The Bible says, *“Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”*<sup>4</sup> The question is, will I be “trained” by it or will I kick against it? ■

God was going to separate them from everything that was keeping them from Him. Their strong cities would offer no protection, there would be utter desolation... why?

Vs 10-11

■ Let me break this down for you another way. To forget the God of your salvation, to not be *mindful* of the Rock of your stronghold, is to invite the day of grief & desperate sorrow. He says, “You’ll work hard, all things will point to a fruitful endeavor, but in the end, it comes to nothing. The harvest is a heap of ruins...”

It’s hard for me to read this & not think of our own nation. How we’ve forgotten the God of our salvation. We give way to the LGBTQIA rather than standing for the word of God. We support homosexual marriages & multiple gender identities, which is a direct assault on God’s Word. I googled, “How many genders are there?” There were various responses, but I commonly came across 72. The initial information I retrieved said this, “There are many different gender identities, including male, female, transgender, gender neutral, non-binary, agender, pangender, genderqueer, two-spirit, third gender, and all, none or a combination of these.” It came from a website called “Teen talk”. If you think Satan isn’t after your kids, you’re deceiving yourself! ... The Bible declares 2 genders! *“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”*<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Heb 12:11). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ge 1:27-28). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It's important that you recognize that *any* suggestion outside of that is an attack on the Word of God. You either subscribe to, "God has said..." & You refuse to be moved from the plain reading of the word of God, or you're willing to be moved by the satanic persuasion, "has God said?" He used it in the garden & he's using it today, there's nothing new under the sun...

They want guys like me to stay in my lane, not touch on these topics. Listen, truth is my lane & I can't stand by not speak into the reality of where we're at as a nation, what God's word says about it, & the fact that we need to repent! What's it going to take? – We're a country that's trying to integrate critical race theory in our schools. People stand & fight for the ability to murder innocent babies in the womb... People who want to rebrand pedophiles as "M.A.P.s" (Minor attracted persons) rather than protect your children whom these people want to use & abuse... Encouraging gender reassignment in children as young as 4-5. What will it take for us to "look to our Maker"?\*

Interesting the droughts we had this year, the fires in the food warehouses. Seedlings set out, plants made to grow, but the harvest a heap of ruins...

\*It happens on a *national* level; it can happen on a *personal* level. Haggai speaks to this as well, "*You have sown much, and bring in little; You eat, but do not have enough; You drink, but you are not filled with drink; You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm; And he who earns wages, Earns wages to put into a bag with holes.*"<sup>6</sup> Maybe that's where you're at. You're working hard, looking for side hustles, but it seems no matter how hard you work, how much you make, the wages go into bags w/holes! It just dries up & disappears w/nothing to show for it!

I can't say where you're at personally (it's not always God's judgment, perhaps you've just made poor decisions & you're living beyond your means), but have you gotten distracted? Forgotten the God of your salvation? The One who created you? Turn back to Him, seek after Him, allow Him to correct you, to direct you & He'll bless your life.█

Vs 12-13a

God is saying that nations will rush in like a flood against them & there won't be anything they can do to stop it.

Vs 13b-14

This is a common thread woven throughout this section. God may use a nation (or nations) as instruments of judgment. But that doesn't exempt *them* from His judgment as well.

We will *all* give an account. Look at Vs 14a (read). This is exactly what happened when the Assyrians were camped outside of Jerusalem & in one night the angel of the Lord went through their camp & killed 185,000 of them.

“This is the portion of those who plunder us.” What that means for you (child of God) is that you’re not a victim of circumstance. In giving your life to God, you’re now at the mercy of God. You are in the careful hands of your Creator. But His aim isn’t to make me *happy* (though He’s not against happiness), His aim is to make me *holy*.

But the Ch ends reminiscent of Isa 54:17, *“No weapon formed against you shall prosper, And every tongue which rises against you in judgment You shall condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, And their righteousness is from Me, Says the Lord.”*<sup>7\*</sup>

## Chapter 18

### Vs 1-2

Ch 18 is kind of interesting in that there’s no rebuke for the Ethiopian nation. In fact, it seems to be more of a “thanks but no thanks” kind of word from the Lord. The word “woe” in Vs 1 isn’t really a good translation. It would be better translated “Ho, to the land” or we might understand it, “Listen to me, land shadowed w/buzzing wings...” Presumably a reference to the insect infested (perhaps locust swarmed) land.

One thing I’d have you realize is that at the time Isaiah was writing this, Ethiopia (also known in scripture as “Cush”) wasn’t some poor, 3<sup>rd</sup> world little area. It was a major world power. Egypt was actually being ruled by an Ethiopian dynasty at this time, it encompassed the areas of the Sudan & Somalia as well.

But the picture here is one of Ethiopia sending ambassadors to Judah to offer an alliance against Assyria, & asking them to swiftly send back word that they would join forces together. (In Isa 36 you find Assyria warning Judah not to trust Egypt, not to join forces w/them).

The reference to a “terrible” people is simply that they are to be feared. They’re respected as a major player on the world stage.

### Vs 3-4

Another way to understand that? God isn’t worried about Assyria at all. He’s chill. Thanks for the offer, but I don’t need your help. The picture is one of contrast. The frantic activity of men on the earth Vs the calm patience of God upon His throne.

<sup>7</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 54:17). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

Sometimes it can seem as though God's not moving, He's not paying attention to what's going on. Truth is, He's waiting, He's watching & He's always right on time.

He's patiently allowing Assyria to ripen, then (when the time is right) He'll reap them in judgment.

\*As for an application for us. There are times (maybe you're in one now) when it seems insurmountable odds are in front of us. Or maybe we're in an incredibly difficult situation. So we frantically try to figure out what adjustments we can make, who we need to partner up w/or whatever. But the Lord is on the throne. He's not worried, He's watching, He's waiting, & He says, "If you'll trust in Me, you'll see what I will do." Look at Vs 5.\*

Vs 5-6

You see? The picture is of a vineyard in a field. Little buds form on it, they form into tiny flowers, then the fruit appears. But in this situation, God says, "Not only will I harvest the fruit, I'm going to cut off the entire branch. He will destroy the Assyrian army so completely (185,000 bodies left dead in 1 night) that they'll be left in the fields for the birds & beasts of prey to feed on them throughout the summer & the winter.

Vs 7 Close

"You're asking Me to join *you*. But the day will come when you join *Me*, worship *Me*, & offer gifts to *Me*..." We can see this fulfilled in the book of Acts when Phillip led the Ethiopian Eunuch to Christ. We can see it fulfilled in the Millennial kingdom when the nations will come to Jerusalem to worship J.C. & offer gifts to Him there (Isa 60:1-7).

But it's the same point over & over again. God will bless the nation, the people, the person who looks *to* Him, trusts *in* Him, waits *on* Him. But to those who insist in their own abilities, ultimately, they'll only fail miserably. So... trust in the Lord w/all your heart. Lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, & He shall direct your paths...

Prayer Points:

God, we thank You that You love us. Help us God that we not look *to*, or lean *on* our own understanding, our own works, our own efforts or ingenuity. But that we look to You... our Maker. Heal our land, forgive us our sins, & make us one nation, under God once again. May we never forget, the God of our salvation.

God loves You. Jesus came to save you. You can't come your way. You've got to come His way. & That's only through J.C. Salvation is by grace through faith alone. So turn from your sin, place your faith in Jesus & you'll be saved.