

## Isaiah 21-22:1-25

### “Clothed, Strengthened & Called.”

We’re in this section of scripture that’s dealing w/the judgment of the nations. But by way of reminder, Isaiah isn’t a book that’s kept in any consistent kind of chronological order. We shouldn’t think chronologically w/these writings. Probably more accurate to think thematically. Let’s not forget, his ministry spanned the reign of 4 different kings...

So, we’re reading of judgment here, judgment there, this is coming, that’s going to happen & if we’re not careful, it can take on the flavor of nonstop mayhem & madness all over the known ancient world in one giant whirlwind of judgment... That’s not what’s happening. These writings were taking place over the course of some significant stretches of time. We just happen to read them in a freefall of information, so it reads like global annihilation. – But in some cases, what Isaiah writes would take place hundreds of years after he wrote them... Such would be the case w/what we read beginning in Ch 21.

### Vs 1-2

This phrase, “Wilderness of the Sea” maybe your Bible says, “Desert of the Sea” is an interesting phrase, isn’t it? It’s like saying, “The dryness of the water.” I would remind you that the common rendering in Hebrew for any large body of water is “Sea”, where we might use the word “lake”. “The Dead Sea”, “The Sea of Galilee”. They’re just large bodies of water, not oceans by any stretch.

The reference here is to the kingdom of Babylon. We know that for 2 reasons. #1 It’s desert region that’s divided by swampy marshes between the Tigris/Euphrates rivers. #2 Isaiah tells us plainly in Vs 9, he’s speaking about “Babylon”. ☺

But what makes this prophecy so incredible is that Isaiah tells us that Babylon will be taken down by the Persians (“Go up, O Elam!”) & the Medes (“Besiege, O Media!”). At this point in history, not even *Babylon* is threatening to be any kind of world conquering kingdom. Much less the Medes & the Persians! They were still nomadic kinds of clans migrating around the desert! – But God says, “Babylon will one day be destroyed. & It won’t be the Assyrians that take them down, or Egypt, or Ethiopia. It’ll be a Medo-Persian Empire that brings Babylon down.” This is a prophetic word that God gave 100s of yrs before it would take place, & yet it would take place down to the detail!

I was talking to you last week about the fella I was sharing w/at the Duenweg Days festival. – As is common, one of the issues he had was believing that the Bible could be completely trustworthy. (Written by man & all, you’ve heard it all before)

But as I've made mention to you in times past, the Bible deals w/that kind of skepticism & God goes out of His way to verify & ratify His Word by detailing for us things that will take place (in some cases) minutes, months, yrs, decades, centuries & millenniums in advance & He never misses! The point being, "You can trust My Word!"

God is the Only One who knows the end from the beginning & can speak of things to come as though they happened in the past (because they're that certain)! We read in Isaiah 46, *"I am God, and there is none like Me, Declaring the end from the beginning, And from ancient times things that are not yet done,"*<sup>1</sup> & There's something about the written word that places a stake in the ground. If someone just "says" something, perhaps it could be walked back, restated, said in a different way to make it fit or even create plausible deniability (in the days before recording audio was possible). **But once you write something down, you're stuck w/it, you said it & that's the end of it! – There are in the upwards of 2,000 prophecies recorded in scripture & not so much as one of them have ever missed!**

Now. If in 6,000 (give or take) years of human history, not one prophecy written in scripture has failed or missed in the *past*, what are the odds of one missing in the *future*? What will it take for you to trust the certainty of the Word of God? What more do you want? ... **Let me say this. I've discovered that (w/out exception) when a person is ready to turn from their sin & cry out to J.C. They have no problem believing the Bible. It's when they need justification for sin in their life that they struggle believing it. \***

One more quick application for you. Notice, the vision that's declared to Isaiah is, "distressing". Why? Because the treacherous dealer deals treacherously & the plunderer plunders. We might say, "The Punisher punishes." It's the fact that these nations will do what they came to do. **& I just want you to know that your enemy will do what he came to do as well. Jesus said, "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy."**<sup>2</sup> & He's coming for your family, your loved ones, your friends, he doesn't care who it is... He wants to divide & destroy & that should "distress" you. Not in the sense that you need to walk around in a panic. (If God be for you who can be against you? He that is in you is greater than he who is in the world.) But it's his aim to deceive, divide & destroy. He wants to tear your family apart; he wants to deceive your loved ones. He wants to destroy people's lives.

<sup>1</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Is 46:9-10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>2</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Jn 10:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

& If he can convince people to leave this planet apart from J.C. then... as we read here, the treacherous deals treacherously, the plunderer plunders... & that should distress us, burden us. We want to see souls coming into the saving grace of God, not leaving this world w/out Jesus...

### Vs 3-5

\*We've spoken of this before. God's judgment didn't bring any joy to Isaiah's heart. His heart was hurting (my loins are filled w/pain). "I was distressed when I heard it, dismayed when I saw it... my heart waivered, fearfulness frightened me..." & At the risk of redundancy, judgment doesn't joy God's heart either! His righteousness/justice demands judgment, but His desire is that people would turn from their wicked ways & live! God's not willing (not wanting) that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the choice is ours, isn't it? Be it condemnation or salvation, God leaves the choice up to us.\*

Vs 5 reads in detail of the way that Babylon would fall. Belshazzar was partying, throwing a feast for 1,000 of his lords. They were eating, drinking... w/out a care in the world... They knew the Medo-Persian army was outside, but they were so confident in their ability to w/stand a siege, they didn't give it a 2<sup>nd</sup> thought. No one could *penetrate* the walls, no one could go *over* the walls (too/high, too thick)... They weren't worried about it.

So what did the army do? They stopped the flow of the river that flowed into Babylon, went *under* the walls on the riverbed & took the city by stealth in a single night... Again, Isaiah is writing this some 200 yrs before it would happen. The Babylonians were partying, their enemy was plotting. – Listen, don't be ignorant of y our enemy's devices. While we sleep, he strategizes. He never takes time off. Watch & pray lest you enter into temptation.

### Vs 6-10

The vantage point here is from the watchman on the wall. & There are lots of nuances in this little section (some of which I'm not altogether certain of) but the general gist is that he's doing his part, he's paying close attention, (listening earnestly, watching continuously, day/night) & he's reporting what he sees. & When you boil it down, what he sees is the fall of Babylon. This great world empire would crumble.

Now, if Vs 9 sounds familiar it's because it's picked up & used again in the Book of Revelation Chs 14/18. – Back in Isaiah Ch 13, I took the time to detail for you the fact that Babylon is mentioned more than any other city in scripture outside of Jerusalem.

It speaks, *not only* to the empire historically, but the world system apart from God presently as well the world's religious system apart from J.C.

Many people think that Christianity is a religion, it's not. God hates religion. Religion is all about what man needs to do, or not do, that we might somehow ascend to this place whereby we make ourselves right in the sight of God. Of course, the problem w/that is there's *nothing* we can do, or else Jesus wouldn't have come! We can't *do* a perfect work or offer perfect atonement for our sin because we come "flawed from the factory" we're born in *sin*... Which of course presents a problem. How do you bridge the gap between a perfect God & imperfect man if all man can present is imperfection, but God demands perfect righteousness? *So, God solves the sin dilemma in becoming a Man in the Person of J.C. Being born through Mary He's 100% human, (which means He's qualified to stand in the gap on behalf of man). Being the only begotten of the Father, He's 100% God (which means He's w/out sin, completely righteous, perfect in all His ways).*

& What does He do? The Bible says that w/out the shedding of blood there can be no remission, the wages of sin is death, & it's the blood (Lev 17:11) that makes atonement for the soul. So Jesus willingly lays down His life upon the altar of the cross. He shed *His* blood for the remission of our sin. He was made sin for us (though He never became a sinner, important distinction) that we might become the righteousness of God in Him... *It's by grace that we're saved through faith, & that not of ourselves, it's the gift of God, not of works lest any man should boast... Religion boasts/brags in the accomplishments of man. Christianity boasts in the work of J.C. on behalf of man.* Religion says, "Do". Christianity says, "Done". The work of salvation is complete in Christ. God hates religion, but He longs for a *relationship w/you through His Son; J.C. \**

But we see these same words echoed in the book of Rev 14:8, 18:2. "Babylon is fallen! Is Fallen!" *The angel declaring the downfall of Commercial/religious Babylon in the midst of the Great Tribulation. Again, God hates religious systems. He doesn't want you to be religious, He wants us to have a real/vibrant personal relationship w/Him.*

**Vs 11-12**

Dumah was another name for the ancient kingdom of Edom. The Edomites descended from Esau (Jacob/Israel's brother).

& Again, there may be a few things that could be said about this passage but the main thing I want you to see is the role/responsibility of the watchman. The watchman's responsibility is to be vigilant, to be observant/attentive to what's going on around him.

& He's to keep people informed so that they are adequately prepared for anything coming. \*Today, many Christians (including pastors) would rather bury their head in the sand & pretend everything is ok, rather than sound the alarm & be honest w/people that they might have the opportunity to be prepared for what's coming! Because if you sound the alarm, people might be offended, or people might leave your church, or you might create a divide... & Listen, it's never my heart to create a divide, it's my heart to speak the truth in love. But I'm also sober to the fact that Jesus said, *"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. 'For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; 'and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household.'"*<sup>3</sup>

In other words, the truth of the word of God will draw a line in the sand. & People have to decide on which side of that line they're going to stand, & the sad fact is that not everyone will decide to side w/Christ... which creates division. That's not God's *desire*, but it's the result of people choosing to reject J.C. & the truth of God's Word.

But you & me, we have a responsibility to sound the alarm. "The morning comes but also the night." What does that mean? It means grace is available (morning comes), but judgment is on the way (& also the night). *That's why the urgency of the call goes out, "If you will inquire, inquire; return! Come back! In the NT vernacular we read it like this, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."*<sup>4</sup> & In the Book of Hebrews, *"Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts..."*<sup>5</sup> There's hope *currently*, grace is available *presently*, but judgment is coming *inescapably*... Time is short. Seek the Lord while you still can.

### Vs 13-17

Again, Isaiah prophesies w/specificity. "W/in a year". I'm just gonna draw out a quick application. "Bring water to him who is thirsty, w/their bread they met him who fled." Jesus is the bread of life... He said, "If any man thirsts, let him come to Me & drink." Jesus alone can satisfy the deepest thirst & the deepest hunger that resides in the heart of every man. *People are thirsting for more than this world has to offer. Don't be ashamed, don't be embarrassed to share the Lord w/the people He's placed w/in the parameters of your life. The gospel is the power of God to salvation for all who believe. Let God use your life to quench the thirst, the hunger of those looking for the refuge they can't find in this world.*

<sup>3</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Mt 10:34-36). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>4</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (2 Co 6:2). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>5</sup> *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Heb 3:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

## Chapter 22

### Vs 1-4

The Valley of Vision is a reference to Jerusalem. I'm not really sure if it's a reference to Jerusalem proper or perhaps a particular valley that surrounds it, maybe the Kidron valley? But since Judah is behaving in the same manner as their pagan neighbors, judgment will find them as well.

But he envisions people coming out upon their housetops to make sense of the noise that they're hearing. Is it tumultuous, is it joyous? & What they see coming is calamity... Not people dying from a battle (not slain w/the sword), but famine/disease would find them, Babylon would surround the city & starve them out. & Those who would seek to flee would be captured by the Babylonian army.

& In Vs 4 we see again how this devastates Isaiah. We recognize Jeremiah as the "weeping prophet", but Isaiah certainly did his fair share of crying over coming judgment.

### Vs 5-7

The Elamites were neighbors to the Babylonians, probably seen here as allies in the attack. But hordes of chariots/horsemen surrounding the city & the Lord would not deliver them. In fact he removed His protection from them... notice.

### Vs 8-11a

Do you guys see the problem here? Listen, you can employ all the *strategy*, you can strengthen/fortify every area *practically*, but when the Lord removes His protection, those things won't help you even *marginally*. & Truthfully, the problem isn't that they took practical measures to try & ensure their safety, the problem is that they didn't make seeking the Lord, *His heart, His plans* a priority... Notice.

### Vs11b-14

You get the idea, don't you? They did everything they could practically, they beefed up their security, tried to shore up their economy, sought to be prepared militarily... then they adopted this fatalistic mentality. "We've done all we can do! Let's just live it up man & whatever will be will be!" ... But they *hadn't* done all they could do. They didn't inquire of the Lord. They didn't say, "God are You trying to get our attention here? What would You have us do!? God we humble ourselves, we repent of our sin, lead us O God in the way that we should go!" They didn't do that...

God says, "Instead of feasting, I'd have called for fasting! Instead of slaying the sheep, I'd have called for girding up w/sackcloth!"

“I’d have called for a time of repentance & lamentation... You opted for rejoicing & celebration...” “Surely for this iniquity there will be no atonement for you, even to your death,” says the Lord God of hosts... Wait, what? What is this sin that can’t be forgiven, can’t be atoned for? The choice to live in sin rather than humble yourself before the Lord, turn from your sin & seek after Him! If you reject the Lord, His word, His ways... there is no atonement...

\* ...I’m sure you’ve noticed as of late that I’ve been a bit more intentional about speaking into where we’re at currently as a society. & That’s *important*, because God could’ve put you in any time, any place, any culture, but He chose to put you at this time, in this culture & in this place. He’s called *you* to a time such as *this*. So I want to do my very best to equip you & fortify *in* you a biblical world view. To encourage you to stand *boldly* for the truth (not rudely, but boldly) so that you might be a light in this dark world & speak the truth in love... People *deserve the truth*. That they might have the opportunity to prepare accordingly...

It’s also accurate to say that as a society, in our nation currently, this is where we’re at. – We do all we can do militarily, technologically & economically to secure ourselves against opposing forces. We live it up culturally, eat drink & be merry for tomorrow we die! – We focus on celebration when we should be humbling ourselves in lamentation & returning to the Lord...

But in this moment, I want to change the focus from where we’re at *nationally* & I want to ask you, where are you at *personally*? What do you look to, to make you secure? To fortify yourself against opposition? “Well, I’m learning to garden for the coming economic apocalypse! I’m learning to hunt, to fish, how to live off the land when everything goes south!” “I’m kind of a low-key prepper...” Are those things wrong? Not in & of themselves, not at all! It’s good to (as my buddy Victor Marx likes to say) be prepared, not paranoid. But the question that confronts us isn’t so much *what* we’re doing as it is, *why* we’re doing it. Are we acting out of fear? Uncertainty, doubting God’s ability to defend & take care of us? Have you looked to your Maker? Have you sought Him for direction & (if necessary) correction in your life? Let’s be careful that we don’t neglect to *seek* the Lord & that we maintain a humble attitude of repentance *before* the Lord.

### Vs 15-19

Shebna was a servant/steward in the house of king Hezekiah. The short of it is that he thought way more highly of himself than he ought to have.

& God confronts him concerning his pride. “Well, well... who have we here!? *What have we here!?*” He was making himself a high/lofty, prestigious tomb that would show his power/wealth & worth long after he was gone.

But essentially God says, “Listen, you *are* nothing & you *have* nothing. I’m going to seize you, through you away violently into another country & there you will die in obscurity.” He was the kind of man that the Lord spoke of in Luke 12:16-21 (Write it down, look it up l8r). We see it/say it over & over again, God hates pride... Look at **Vs 19**

We read in Ps 75 (6-7) that promotion doesn’t come from the east or the west or from the south. But God is the Judge. *He* puts one down & exalts another.

God would remove this man who was full of himself & establish a faithful man who served Him.

### **Vs 20-24**

Spoiler alert, Eliakim becomes for us a type of Christ. Jesus identifies w/him in Rev 3:7, “*These things says He who is holy, He who is true, “He who has the key of David, He who opens and no one shuts, and shuts and no one opens”*”<sup>6</sup>All authority, all power belongs to J.C. whom none can oppose. He can choose to open a door for you, or He may close a door for you, but the authority to do so is His alone.

& He is the “peg in a secure place”. In the ancient world, they didn’t really have closets for storage. They would place a peg (a dowel) in a wall & hang their cups or their coats or clothes, upon them. If something is on its peg, it’s safe & secure, it’s stored properly, it’s ready for use at any time. You & me, we are the “vessels” of the Lord. He is the peg in a secure place. Meaning that when we “hang on Him” “abide *in* Him” we’re safe, we’re secure & we’re ready for His use... It’s not about the size or quality of the vessel, but its attachment to the peg.

### **Vs 25 Close**

Shebna had to go so that Eliakim could be established. What’s the take home? 2 Things. #1 Whatever you’re attached to, or depending on, if it’s not the Lord, it has to be removed so that Jesus might have that place in your life. Make sure you’re “resting on” the right peg... That Jesus is anchored in your heart as the peg in a secure place.

#2 Vs 20-21. We love the title, “My servant Eliakim.” That’s what we all long for God to see us as, “My servant \_\_\_\_.”



& Notice what God does, He clothes you (robes you in the righteousness of Christ), He strengthens you, then He commits responsibility to you (or He calls you). Clothes you, strengthens you, calls you... Humble yourself *before* the Lord, live your life set apart, as *unto* the Lord & God will be glorified in your life.

### Prayer Points:

Lord Jesus, we recognize our complete dependance upon You. Forgive us when we get out in front of You or fail to seek after You. We don't want to be a people who maybe look to You eventually, we desire for You to be our utmost priority. That we might be Your servants, clothed, strengthened & called by You, our lives bringing glory to You. Have Your way in this place & in our lives.

God hates religion, He wants a relationship w/you. He wants to clothe you in the righteousness of Christ, to strengthen you, to call you to Himself. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, turn from your sin & believe in J.C.