

Lord of the Nations
Isaiah 13-18
September 29th, 2019

Intro –

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

All – including the challenging portions of Isaiah

All – including the portions of Isaiah that warn of God's judgment against nations, nations that no longer exist in the same form they did 2,700 years ago

Profitable – beneficial for us

They equip us for every good work

Sometimes those diamonds lie close to the surface.

Isaiah 41:10 'Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

We know what it is to be fearful and can see the immediate benefit of the Lord strengthening us and upholding us.

Sometimes those diamonds are deeper underground and require some mining.

The language might be poetic, loaded with figures of speech

They might be targeted at a group of people that lived long ago and we wonder about the relevancy to our lives

They might involve names of people and places that you don't know

We encounter one of those more challenging section today in Isaiah.

We'll handle it a little differently than usual. Usually I'll be picking one section out of the 6 chapters to explore in more detail. Today we will be looking at 4 themes that run through these 6 chapters.

1. God is a **global** God therefore we should care about **people** from all nations.
 - a. He addresses 10 cities/nations in chapters 13-23
 - i. Analogy: have you ever been in a conversation with people who all know each other and know all the same friends and relatives but you don't? The conversations move from one person you haven't heard of to another person you haven't heard of and your eyes get sleepy. (When my dear wife is talking with her sisters and mother) That can happen with reading portions of the Bible if you don't know the countries talked about. It's helpful to read with your finger on the maps in the back or if your study Bible has maps embedded at strategic points so you can place them on a map. Try to read about the locations a little and they won't seem like such strangers.
 - ii. Babylon and Assyria (13:1–14:27)
 1. Babylon was a major city under the Assyrian overlords. Already there were indications that they might overthrow the Assyrians and exert their own power.
 - iii. Philistia (14:28–32)
 1. Small nation along the Mediterranean sea
 - iv. Moab (15:1–16:14)
 1. Small nation to the east of the Dead Sea

- v. Syria and Israel (17:1–14)
- vi. Ethiopia (18:1–7)
 - 1. Described as Cush
- vii. Egypt (19:1–20:6)
- viii. Babylon continued (21:1–10)
- ix. Edom (21:11–12)
- x. Arabia (21:13–17)
- xi. Jerusalem (22:1–25)
- xii. Tyre (23:1–18)



- xiii.
 - b. Although God worked uniquely through the Jewish people, His plan from the beginning was global. His plan was to bless all nations through the Messiah.
 - i. **Genesis 12:3** And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."
 - ii. **Habakkuk 2:14** "For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.
 - 1. This should fuel global missions.
 - 2. John Piper: "Worship is the fuel and goal in missions. It's the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white-hot enjoyment of God's glory. The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples in the greatness of God."
 - iii. **Isaiah 56:8** The Lord GOD, who gathers the dispersed of Israel, declares, "Yet *others* I will gather to them, to those *already* gathered."
 - 1. Working in a unique way, but expanding far beyond gathering Israel
 - iv. **Isaiah 19:21** Thus the LORD will make Himself known to Egypt, and the Egyptians will know the LORD in that day. They will even worship with sacrifice and offering, and will make a vow to the LORD and perform it.

- v. **Isaiah 19:25** "Blessed is Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel My inheritance."
 - 1. Even using language that we would expect to be of Israel, His covenant people, to describe the other nations that have been antagonistic to Israel throughout much of their history.
 - c. We read the warnings in these chapters, and they are stark, but the warnings tell us God is not apathetic towards people.
 - i. Imagine if you see two different parents at the park with two different kids and both kids are disobeying in a way is dangerous. Imagine if one parent is angry over the disobedience and disciplines their child but the other parent barely glances up from his phone and continues to ignore their child. Which one is showing more love?
 - d. Read Isaiah 13:1-10 to get a sample of the language of warning and judgment, without going into the details of the language.
 - i. As you read through these chapters and the ones to come, you may feel overwhelmed by the language of judgment. It's good to ask the question, "why?" "Why is God giving such warnings and descriptions of judgment? What have they done wrong?"
2. God is opposed to the **proud** and oppressive therefore we should be **humble** and just.
- a. **Isaiah 13:11** Thus I will punish the world for its evil And the wicked for their iniquity; I will also put an end to the arrogance of the proud And abase the haughtiness of the ruthless.
 - i. Both global and individual
 - 1. The world for its evil, the wicked for their iniquity
 - 2. Not just an outpouring of indiscriminate wrath, each has been tried and judgment pronounced in light of the evidence.
 - ii. Gets specific – arrogance, proud, and haughty
 - 1. Haughty – comes from a verb meaning to boil or seethe and so it means insolent, inflated with self-importance, conceited
 - iii. Why is pride such a big deal?
 - 1. Consider how it is affecting their actions – they are ruthless.
 - 2. Ruthless refers to the arrogance that makes on lord is over another.
 - 3. Proud people stomp on others to get what they want. That's what these nations were doing. That's what we do when we're ruled by pride.
 - a. We stop caring about the feelings of others. We see people as a means to our own ends – even our own children or spouses.
 - b. **Isaiah 14:3-7** And it will be in the day when the LORD gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved, ⁴ that you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon, and say, "How the oppressor has ceased, *And how* fury has ceased! ⁵ "The LORD has broken the staff of the wicked, The scepter of rulers ⁶ Which used to strike the peoples in fury with unceasing strokes, Which subdued the nations in anger with unrestrained persecution.
 - i. Turns from addressing Babylon to assuring Israel of their future rescue.
 - 1. They will experience pain, turmoil, harsh service, and enslavement
 - ii. In that day they will taunt their former captor.

1. "taunt" is *mashal* – same word for proverb or parable – a saying or way of putting something whereby the inner truth comes to light. – you will bring to light the inner truth about the king
- iii. Think about modern examples of oppressive regimes to understand why this would be good news.
 1. Cameroon – French speaking portion attacking the English speaking portion, driving the people out so many are hiding in the bush to stay alive. (picture having to flee up into the juniper bushes outside of town to live for months to get a sense of what that must be like)
 2. North Korea – government policy of arresting 3 generations of people to punish someone accused of being disloyal to the government, sending them to years in a prison camp.
 3. Historical example – concentration camps – when they were liberated by allied forces, one group would cheer while another would be in dread.
- iv. These short verses describe a violent reign of terror.
- c. **Isaiah 16:6** We have heard of the pride of Moab, an excessive pride; *Even* of his arrogance, pride, and fury; His idle boasts are false.
 - i. Why focus on a description of Moab's pride?
 1. In v 1-5 refugees from Moab pleading for asylum in Judah. Moab has come under attack and is being ravaged. People running for lives and they beg Judah to open the border and let them in.
 2. But they have a problem. Judah is the throne of the Davidic messiah. Moab refuses help on those terms. They would rather take their chances that submit to the throne of the Messiah.
 3. **Isaiah 16:5** A throne will even be established in lovingkindness, And a judge will sit on it in faithfulness in the tent of David; Moreover, he will seek justice And be prompt in righteousness.
 4. Four words for pride in v 6 compare to the four words in v 5 – steadfast love, faithfulness, justice, and righteousness. Moab could have enjoyed all that, but no. they would have to humble themselves to enter in, and that's too high a price to pay.
 5. Ortlund - Refusing to humble ourselves before God is the essence of sin. Spawns all the misguided, destructive attempts at self-salvation that make life so rotten. But God is bringing true salvation to us.
 6. Mary's Magnificat in describing the birth of the Messiah
 - a. **Luke 1:51-52** "He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered *those who were* proud in the thoughts of their heart. ⁵² "He has brought down rulers from *their* thrones, And has exalted those who were humble.
 7. **Romans 12:16** do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly.
 - a. People say they want world peace. This is where it begins. It begins with not being ashamed to be seen with lowly people. And if we refuse to obey God in such a simple and obvious way, well within our reach, then we have nothing to say when whole nations step on one another in their guilty national pride. (adapted from Ortlund)
 8. James 4:6 – God opposes the proud
3. God ***reigns*** over world events therefore we have ***hope***.

- a. Multiple time horizons in Isaiah – present, short term future, long term future, end times
 - i. Interim fulfillments to assure them that He will fulfill the long-term promises as well.
 - ii. But these passages show us that God is here, involved in this world. He's not disinterested or disengaged.
- b. **Isaiah 14:24-27** The LORD of hosts has sworn saying, "Surely, just as I have intended so it has happened, and just as I have planned so it will stand, ²⁵ to break Assyria in My land, and I will trample him on My mountains. Then his yoke will be removed from them and his burden removed from their shoulder. ²⁶ "This is the plan devised against the whole earth; and this is the hand that is stretched out against all the nations. ²⁷ "For the LORD of hosts has planned, and who can frustrate *it*? And as for His stretched-out hand, who can turn it back?"
 - i. Motyer – the appearance of things is the exercise of power by human will; the reality is the exercise of sovereign rule by the will of God. The human mind cannot always trace out the course of the divine purposes, and often the believing mind cannot but agree that everything looks a terrifying mess.
 - ii. The interim fulfilment is the overthrow of Assyria, which is an earnest that the hand which mastered Assyria masters the earth. (adapted from Motyer)
 - 1. Example – imagine being a Christian in the Soviet Union as a young child in the 1930's. You saw your grandfather pulled out of his home late at night and beaten. You saw your father taken away and never returned. You assume he died in a gulag. You persevere in the faith as a young man in WWII and hope things might be better after the war but things get worse as the cold war intensifies. You pray for greater freedom, and wonder if it will ever come. Then in the 1980's there is a softening and in the 1990's as you are in your late 60's the government falls and there is a period of great religious freedom and thirst for the gospel. Your small house of prayer (church) grows as many young people come to Christ and there is a sense of excitement. There is hope, but still trouble, and in your late 80's you see the freedom restricting again. Yet you are given a foretaste a glimpse of what it will be like when God removes all oppression and injustice and you're encouraged.
- c. **Isaiah 16:13-14** This is the word which the LORD spoke earlier concerning Moab. ¹⁴ But now the LORD speaks, saying, "Within three years, as a hired man would count them, the glory of Moab will be degraded along with all *his* great population, and *his* remnant will be very small *and* impotent."
 - i. How would a hired man count years? Why is that description used?
 - 1. Exactly – as the way you watch the clock on Friday afternoon when you are ready to check out of work.
 - ii. Isaiah is specially concerned to offer interim fulfillments. This is important for if God cannot demonstrate his management of history in what people see before them, why should they trust him for what they cannot see?
 - 1. Motyer - Faith is not a leap in the dark but conviction reached on the basis of evidence.
- d. "When it comes to discerning what God is up to, Christian, you're a better historian than a detective. You have better hindsight than insight." John Onwuchekwa
 - i. True on a global scale as we think about Israel, the middle east, our own nation.
 - ii. Also true of our own lives. It's true that God is working all things together for good to conform us to the image of His son. But we can't always see how. Later we may look back with better hindsight.

4. We must look to our ***Maker***.

- a. **Isaiah 17:7-8** In that day man will have regard for his Maker And his eyes will look to the Holy One of Israel. ⁸ He will not have regard for the altars, the work of his hands, Nor will he look to that which his fingers have made, Even the Asherim and incense stands.
 - i. Look away from the little world we have made to the One who made us.
 - ii. He says this will be “man” not just Israel, probably using in a
 - iii. Motyer - Look is to look with steady regard, hence to keep one’s eye on the Lord as the sole object of confidence. Maker is used as a deliberate contrast to the handmade gods of v 8. The God who is the Creator is the only God
- b. **Psalms 96:5** For all the gods of the peoples are idols, But the LORD made the heavens.
 - i. Sounds intolerant, unless it’s true. Then it’s just a fact. And facts aren’t tolerant or intolerant. They just are.
 - ii. Idols – anything or anyone that captures our hearts, minds, and affections more than God. (Brad Bigney, *Gospel Treason*)
- c. **Isaiah 17:7-8** describes the reorientation that happens when we see God as God, holy and good.
 - i. *Till We Have Faces*, by CS Lewis – Not as well known as his other fiction novels, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, but he considered it his most mature. It is a retelling of a Greek myth that had haunted Lewis all of his life. The book has two parts. In the first part of the book it focuses on a woman named Orual writing in her old age describing the great wrongs done to her by “the gods” and she wants to set the record straight. After her mother died when she was young her father remarried and Orual gained a beautiful half-sister named Psyche. Her beauty was in stark contrast to Orual’s own ugliness but Orual loved her sister deeply. Psyche is so beautiful the people begin to offer sacrifices to her. A pagan priest proclaims that a powerful god is jealous and so Psyche must be sacrificed to the mountain-god. She is but when Orual goes to check on her, Psyche is alive and says she is living as a bride to the mountain-god. Orual doesn’t believe her and talks Psyche into disobeying her husband. When she does she is banished and forced to walk the earth in suffering. Orual is bitter but throws her energies into becoming a powerful queen, politician, and warrior even as her bitterness grows. The second part takes a dramatic turn. Orual is writing hastily as her life is almost over and she wants to make things right. She doesn’t have time to rewrite the whole book, although she wishes she could. She has realized that she has been wrong about everything. In the end she says she no longer hates the gods but sees their presence as the answer she always needed.
 - ii. Lewis began thinking about this story in his undergraduate years in college but it wasn’t until the end of his life that he published it. He originally imagined the story with Orual in the right and the gods in the wrong. What changed? Lewis changed. He came to faith in Christ, much to his own surprise.



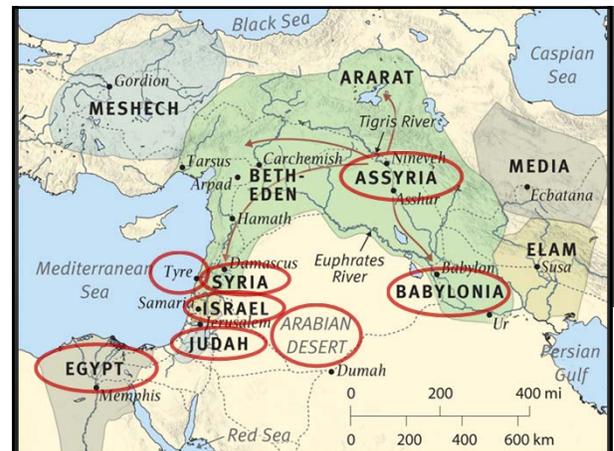
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